Feature Report

“America’s Strategy-Resource Mismatch: Addressing the Gaps Between U.S. National Strategy and Military Capacity”. Published by RAND; May 7, 2019

https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2691.html

Significant gaps exist in the ability of the United States and its allies to deter or defeat aggression that could threaten national interests. For example, NATO members Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania remain vulnerable to Russian invasion. South Korea is vulnerable to North Korea’s artillery. China’s neighbors — especially Taiwan — are vulnerable to coercion and aggression. Violent extremists continue to pose a threat in the Middle East. Solutions to these problems will take both money and time. In this report, RAND researchers analyze the specific technological, doctrinal, and budgetary gaps between the stated strategic and defense policies of the United States and the resources and capabilities that would be required to implement those policies successfully.

Absent a change in administration policy or a new political consensus in favor of a defense buildup, there will not be enough resources to close the gap between stated U.S. aims and the military capabilities needed to achieve them. This leaves the Trump administration and this Congress with some difficult choices. The United States could decide to focus primarily on its own security, devoting to allies and partners only those forces and capabilities that could be easily spared. At the other end of the spectrum, the Trump administration could take the central role in defending U.S. allies against aggression by Russia, China, and other potential adversaries. The hard-to-find middle ground would be to provide the military with sufficient capabilities to ensure that aggression that imperils U.S. interests in critical regions would fail while helping allies build the capacity to do more for their own and the collective defense.
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NUCLEAR WEAPONS

VOA (Washington, D.C.)

Are Super Missiles Fueling New Global Arms Race?

By Henry Ridgwell

Aug. 13, 2019

LONDON - New missile technologies, including so-called hypersonic systems capable of traveling at more than 25 times the speed of sound, are fueling a new global arms race, according to a new report from analyst group the European Leadership Network.

The research warns that the collapse this month of the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty between the United States and Russia is just the latest example of the growing pressure on the global security architecture. The researchers say new treaties are urgently needed to counter the threat of emerging technologies.

Russia conducted the latest test flight of its "Avangard" hypersonic missile system in December of last year. Moscow says the Avangard is able to evade all current defense systems.

The Avangard system involves attaching a regular intercontinental ballistic missile to a "glide vehicle" that travels at more than 11,000 kilometers per hour on the edge of the atmosphere, then releases the weapon once over its target. It would be able to carry nuclear and conventional payloads.

The United States, China and Australia also are developing their own systems, said report author Katarzyna Kubiak of the European Leadership Network.

“These are going to outmatch existing missile systems by speed and by maneuverability, and are going to be able to potentially bypass any existing air and missile defense systems for years to come. And on top of this, we also witness an exploration in anti-satellite technologies, which include missiles,” said Kubiak.

Furthermore, the development of dual-capable missiles that can carry conventional or nuclear warheads has introduced a new level of ambiguity, and the potential for devastating miscalculation, said Kubiak.

“In a crisis situation, the military is acting under very heavy pressure. And not knowing what kind of missile is flying into them, they might either assume the worst-case scenario or misjudge a situation, which could then lead to an inadvertent escalation,” Kubiak added.

The failed test of a missile in the Russian Arctic earlier this month killed at least five workers and led to a spike in local radiation levels, underlining global concerns over Moscow's development of nuclear-propelled missiles.

In this grab taken from footage provided by the Russian State Atomic Energy Corporation ROSATOM press service, a woman holds roses as people gather for the funerals of five Russian nuclear engineers killed by a rocket explosion in Sarov, Aug. 12, 2019.

In this grab taken from footage by the Russian State Atomic Energy Corporation ROSATOM press service, a woman holds roses as people gather for the funerals of five Russian nuclear engineers killed by a rocket explosion in Sarov, Aug. 12, 2019.

Kubiak said the global security architecture surrounding missile proliferation is under a huge strain and is being rapidly outpaced by developing technology.
“The already very complex security calculus is going to be even harder. So an unbound missile proliferation will aggravate inter-state competition, it’s going to increase costs of maintaining regional and global stability, it’s going to increase the costs and the risks of military encounters,” said Kubiak.

The report says the international community urgently needs to put the subject of missiles higher on the political agenda, including the strengthening of existing non-proliferation and transparency measures and negotiating treaties to address new technologies.

https://www.voanews.com/europe/are-super-missiles-fueling-new-global-arms-race

VOA (Washington, D.C.)

Pakistan Says Not Seeking Military Option with India over Kashmir

By Ayaz Gul

Aug. 8, 2019

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan has suspended the only passenger rail service with India and banned the screening of Indian movies in the country's theaters, a day after downgrading relations with New Delhi for its "illegal" revocation of the constitutional autonomy of Kashmir.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist government announced Monday it was revoking the special rights granted to the disputed majority Muslim Himalayan region, which is claimed by both New Delhi and Islamabad.

The unprecedented move fueled tensions between the nuclear-armed rival nations, which have already fought two wars over Kashmir.

On Wednesday, Pakistan announced it was downgrading diplomatic and trade ties, and order the expulsion of the Indian high commissioner.

Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi reiterated Thursday his country is taking India's move to the United Nations Security Council, saying the world body has long declared and recognized Kashmir as a disputed territory.

"Pakistan is looking at political, diplomatic and legal options. We are not looking at a military option," Qureshi said in Islamabad, when asked whether his country is anticipating another war with India.

Qureshi, however, warned of an internal backlash if and when India eases unprecedented security and communications restrictions it has imposed in Kashmir.

Since Sunday, Indian authorities have disabled internet services, the mobile phone network and landlines in the region. Indian media reported troops have been on the streets and a strict curfew remains in place.

Minister Qureshi noted that "illegal" Indian action coupled with a military buildup in Kashmir are a matter of serious concern for Pakistan. He says the Pakistani government has instructed the military to intensify "vigilance" along the so-called Line of Control, which separates Pakistani and Indian portions of the disputed region.

He rejected Indian assertions that removal of Kashmir's autonomous status will help bring peace and prosperity to the violence-hit region.
Qureshi spoke hours after New Delhi urged Islamabad to review its decision to lower bilateral diplomatic ties.

“Are they ready to review their steps? Let’s do it jointly because the review will be on both sides and not unilateral,” the foreign minister stressed, when asked whether his country intends to reverse its decision of downgrading ties with India.

Qureshi confirmed that Pakistan has shut down the cross-border Samjhauta Express train, which has been running for decades but faced suspension during times of heightened tensions.


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US COUNTER-WMD

Defense News (Washington, D.C.)

Slippery Slope: MDA Boss Fights Transfer of Missile Defense System to Army

By Jen Judson

Aug. 14, 2019

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. — The new U.S. Missile Defense Agency director is opposed to the transfer of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense System, or THAAD, to the Army — something Senate authorizers want to do this year in the fiscal 2020 authorization bill.

Talk of transferring THAAD to the Army has been ongoing for roughly a decade. The Army officially operates the system, but the MDA conducts its development and continued modernization.

Both MDA and Army leadership have said if Congress were to authorize a transfer, they would not oppose the move as long as the necessary funding is made available and not taken from other portfolios within the service.

But there’s still a fear that programs transferred to the services is where they go to die, either in their entirety or at least the chance of continued system modernization. For instance, there could be a plan down the road to extend the range of the THAAD interceptor.

Historically, at times, when programs are transferred, funding meant to further improve systems has been cannibalized for more pressing, immediate needs within the armed services.

“Why would we hand that off to the Army or Air Force, that sort of transfer to a service where it won’t be prioritized? They have many other priorities,” MDA Director Vice Adm. Jon Hill told Defense News in an exclusive interview at the Space and Missile Defense Symposium in Huntsville, Alabama.

“I don’t like organizational experiments on programs that are delivering more fighting capability,” he added.

Before Congress, the military or the MDA consider transferring such a capability, a better definition for “transfer of services” must be ironed out, Hill said. He considers defining this one of his top challenges.
“It gets suspicious when we don’t have a fully defined term because all it really results in is fracturing of a program during a time where it’s most critical to have those programs stable and taking care of the war fighter,” Hill said. “There’s been a lot of discussion about the THAAD and the SM-3 [missile] transfer to the services. What does that mean?”

The definition of transfer “ranges everything from a full-up transfer of the system over to the service, which assumes that the system is static and how it’s designed today is how it’s going to be designed forever,” Hill said.

If it means transferring operations and sustainment responsibility, and then “put that in the done pile. The Army invests heavily in the operations and sustainment of that. I don’t know what more we would want out of them,” he said.

The argument

MDA is examining whether it is doing enough to support the Army’s successful operation and sustainment of the system, he noted, such as whether the service has the right logistics line in place and the right training.

A THAAD transfer could also be disruptive to production at a time when THAAD interceptors are in high demand and orders continue to grow.

Even if the transfer of THAAD meant the service would responsible for interceptor procurement, the MDA would have to break contracts for the Army to take over, which could result in delayed production, according to Hill.

“We know right now, in today’s operational environment, we need more,” Hill said. “So that makes no sense to me.”

And for Hill, a THAAD transfer is a slippery slope. If the Army took complete control of the batteries, “then there’s this discussion, ‘Well, let’s include the TPY/2 radar and let’s walk it a little bit further and let’s take the homeland defense radars that are deployed globally that have a totally different mission.”

The resistance to transfer THAAD in its entirety is not a sign of a resistance to transfer where it makes sense, Hill noted.

“I often hear that we don’t know how to transfer. Well look at the Aegis ships today. Navy procures those ships with ballistic missile defense capability. The Navy has come in and said: ‘Hey, we’re going to build a multimission radar to include BMD capability in a SPY-6 [radar],’ ” Hill said. “Man, what’s wrong with that? That’s fantastic.”

MDA has also fully transferred the Patriot air and missile defense system to the Army. “Where Patriot is different, is it’s a multimission system,” Hill said. “They have air defense as part of the maneuver force. It’s sort of like cruise missile defense on a ship. We don’t need to take over the Navy’s cruise missile defense. … Patriot is sort of the same thing.”

THAAD is part of a wider integrated missile defense system, he added.

“THAAD has to stay in MDA … for the interoperability and integration into the other domains from across the services,” Riki Ellison, chairman and founder of the Missile Defense Advocacy Alliance, told Defense News. “THAAD is not an Army-centric weapon system. It should never be deployed as a standoff, alone weapon system.”

The Joint Urgent Operational Need out of the Korean theater that calls for the integration of THAAD and Patriot is a prime example, Ellison noted. “MDA is the only one that has cross-domain
[Command and Control, Battle Management and Communications] development and operational development as proven with the [Ground-Based Midcourse Defense] System," he said.

Rebeccah Heinrichs, a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, said: "I'm afraid the Army won't fund THAAD if it's their responsibility. We need to free up more money in MDA so it can focus on research and development, so we have a dilemma. Something has to give."

Short of the defense secretary directing the services to fund and support systems like THAAD, Heinrichs said, "they're probably just going to have to stay in MDA. That means we need a much bigger top line in MDA ... to fund the new technologies needed for advanced threats, especially."

The agency is currently advising the Pentagon and Congress on the right plan for where THAAD should live.

“That’s something that we have to work internally," Hill noted, "and so we need to get our act together on both sides.”


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US ARMS CONTROL

VOA (Washington, D.C.)

Trump Shares Kim’s Opposition to US-South Korea War Games

By VOA News

Aug. 9, 2019

Shortly after the top military leaders in the U.S. and South Korea preached closer cooperation on multiple issues confronting Asia, U.S. President Donald Trump sided with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in his opposition to U.S.-South Korean war games.

Speaking to reporters Friday outside the White House, Trump said he received a "very beautiful letter" from Kim that said the North Korean leader "wasn't happy with the war games."

Trump added, "You know, I've never liked it [them] either."

The U.S. president said Kim explained in the letter that the ongoing war games are the reason Pyongyang has been conducting missile tests, despite a June 30 meeting between Trump and Kim, during which the two agreed to revive denuclearization talks, which have yet to resume.

Trump said Friday, before embarking on his annual August vacation at his New Jersey golf club, that he could meet again with Kim in an attempt to resolve North Korea’s nuclear weapons program, but did not say when a meeting would occur.

Esper comments

A few hours earlier, U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper said the U.S. and South Korea share a "vision of a peaceful" Korean Peninsula and declared the two allies would keep collaborating on North Korea and other issues.

On his first international trip since being confirmed last month, Esper addressed the media in Seoul after meeting with South Korean counterpart Jeong Kyeong-doo amid heightened regional tensions.
Esper said the Washington-Seoul alliance is "ironclad" and the "linchpin of peace and security" in Southeast Asia. He added the two allies would ensure the "readiness of our combined forces to defend ourselves while also creating space for diplomacy."

Washington and Seoul have not always enjoyed the warmest of relations and have not always agreed on how to address the nuclear-armed North. On Wednesday, Trump said the U.S. has been supporting Seoul militarily for 82 years, and "we get virtually nothing" in return. South Korea is, nevertheless, increasing efforts to connect with the U.S. on North Korea, trade and other issues.

South Korea comments

South Korean Defense Minister Jeong said his country was the "U.S.'s closest ally" and cited recent "urgent developments" in the region.

Jeong said North Korea launching new short-range ballistic missiles amid ongoing efforts to denuclearize the peninsula do not help relieve regional tensions. But with the 2020 U.S. presidential elections on the horizon, Trump has been quick to tout his North Korea policy as a success. Trump has attempted to downplay the missile launches, maintaining they do not violate Kim's promise to halt nuclear and long-range tests.

Jeong also said Japan's export trade restrictions against South Korea are "causing adverse effects on South Korean-Japan relations and security cooperation among South Korea, the U.S. and Japan."

Jeong praised Trump's "amazing imagination that transcends conventions" for meeting with Kim at the inter-Korean border on June 30. He also expressed a desire to open "a new chapter" in the U.S.-South Korean alliance based on trust.

New ambassador to U.S.

During their meeting, Esper asked Jeong to commit troops to a U.S.-led maritime force off the coast of Iran in the Strait of Hormuz, according to South Korea's Yonhap News Agency.

Jeong responded that Seoul was considering options to help protect South Korean people and vessels that use the strait.

While Esper was visiting Seoul, South Korean President Moon Jae-in appointed an experienced former diplomat as his new ambassador to the U.S. Moon tapped 70-year-old Lee Soo-hyuck, who was South Korea's chief negotiator at disarmament negotiations between 2003 and 2005. Lee is also a former deputy foreign minister and first deputy director of the National Intelligence Service.

Esper concluded his visit to South Korea on Friday. His overseas trip also took him to Australia, Mongolia and Japan.


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North Korea Tests ‘Short-Range Ballistic Missiles’

Author Not Attributed

Aug. 10, 2019

North Korea has fired two missiles into the sea, its fifth such launch in recent weeks.

The missiles are thought to be short-range ballistic missiles, South Korea's military says.

If the use of such missiles is confirmed it would be a breach of 11 UN Security Council resolutions.

The launches come after US President Donald Trump said he had received a "very beautiful letter" from North Korean leader Kim Jong-un.

Mr Trump said Mr Kim was unhappy with the current US-South Korea joint military exercises.

What do we know about the latest test?

The missiles were fired from near the eastern city of Hamhung in South Hamgyong Province and landed in the Sea of Japan to the east of the Korean peninsula.

Launched at 05:34 and 05:50 (20:34 and 20:50 GMT Friday), they flew a distance of around 400 km (250 miles), at an altitude of about 48 km with a maximum speed of more than Mach 6.1, a South Korean military statement said.

North Korea has fired a series of missiles and rockets since Mr Trump and Mr Kim agreed during a meeting in June to restart denuclearisation negotiations.

What did Kim write to Trump?

Shortly before the latest launches, the US president spoke of a letter he had received from the North Korean leader.

"It was a very positive letter," Mr Trump told reporters at the White House. "I think we'll have another meeting. He really wrote a beautiful, three-page - I mean great from top to bottom - a really beautiful letter."

The North Korean regime has expressed anger over the US-South Korean military drills, stating that they violate agreements reached with Mr Trump and South Korea's President Moon Jae-in.

Later on Saturday, Mr Trump said Mr Kim had complained "about the ridiculous and expensive" military exercises.

But he said the North Korean leader had offered a "small apology for testing short-range missiles" in recent weeks.

What about the US-South Korean exercises?

While the main drills will start on 11 August, low-key preparation has begun.

The exercises are mainly computer-simulated and are more low key than previous drills between the US and South Korea, which the North has deemed as provocations.

Over recent weeks, the North has test-fired what South Korean officials said appeared to have been a new type of short-range missile, with the previous one coming on Tuesday.

The missiles fired on 25 July - one of which travelled about 690km - were the first since Mr Trump and Mr Kim held an impromptu meeting in June at the demilitarised zone (DMZ), an area that divides the two Koreas.
Our Efforts to Prevent Nuclear Terror Are Shrinking. The Threat Is Not.

By George Schultz and Lee Hamilton

Aug. 13, 2019

Few have done more to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and materials than the late Sen. Richard Lugar, R-Indiana, who passed away in April. Our current generation of lawmakers must not take the legacy of bipartisan leadership he left behind for granted – it is in grave danger.

Despite progress made at four Nuclear Security Summits between 2010 and 2016 to address the existential threat of nuclear terrorism, a new report from Harvard University’s Managing the Atom Project warns that “High-level political attention to nuclear security and overcoming obstacles has largely faded, international mechanisms for fostering nuclear security action and cooperation have not managed to fill the gap created by the absence of nuclear security summits, and political disputes continue to impede efforts to sustain or expand cooperation in crucial areas.”

Recent years have seen an erosion of congressional expertise and experience on preventing nuclear terrorism, while successive administrations have proposed to shrink spending on core nuclear material security and nonproliferation programs. Last July, a first-ever study assessed congressional attitudes on nuclear security. Undertaken by the Arms Control Association and Partnership for a Secure America, the study found that effective congressional oversight of this issue has been constrained in recent years by numerous obstacles, including limited institutional knowledge, misunderstanding of the subject, skepticism of mission need, competing priorities, and funding constraints.

Yet historically, Congress has been the source of bipartisan innovation and the key supporter of efforts to advance global nuclear security. Senator Lugar, along with Sen. Sam Nunn, D-Georgia, embodied this reality as the architects of the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction program, which from 1992 to 2012 deactivated 7,500 nuclear warheads and 2,000 intercontinental ballistic missiles in Russia and the states of the former Soviet Union. Even in recent years, bipartisan leaders like Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., Sen. Lamar Alexander, R-Tennessee, and Rep. Marcy Kaptur, D-Ohio, have championed sizable funding increases for nuclear security programs.

But the global nuclear security enterprise is at a critical crossroads. While the worldwide use of nuclear and radiological materials has grown, including in unstable regions of the world, and emerging technologies such as additive manufacturing and offensive cyber tools pose new challenges, the issue of nuclear security has all but faded from the U.S. national conversation. As these materials become more widespread, they will be vulnerable to criminal and terrorist organizations without sufficient security efforts.

Unfortunately, for the third year in a row, the Trump administration is proposing to reduce funding for core U.S. nuclear security and nonproliferation programs at the semiautonomous National Nuclear Security Administration.
In addition, the Los Angeles Times recently found that the administration has scaled back or ended programs at the Department of Homeland Security designed to combat chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats.

That’s why we and 30 other former high-ranking government officials representing both political parties, including Sen. Lugar, signed a statement earlier this year urging immediate Congressional action to step up efforts to secure nuclear and radiological materials globally to prevent any possibility of a nuclear terrorist attack. We recommend these five courses of action:

- The Office of Management and Budget should be required to prepare an annual report summarizing the aggregate U.S. budget for nuclear security and non-proliferation programs;
- A blue ribbon, bipartisan congressional commission should be established to develop a comprehensive strategy to prevent, counter, and respond to nuclear and radiological terrorism;
- A program of activities should be designed to prevent nuclear theft and trafficking in North Korea;
- Periodic hearings should be held with government and non-governmental nuclear security experts; and
- A sustained effort should be pursued to promote a mandatory international system of monitoring, reporting, and accountability in all countries with nuclear and radiological materials and the facilities that house them.

Some members of Congress are heeding the call.

For example, we applaud Rep. Jimmy Panetta, D-Calif., and Rep. Chuck Fleischmann, R-Tennessee, for recently introducing the “Nuclear Security and Nonproliferation Accounting Act,” [link] which would direct the Government Accountability Office to submit annual reports on the budget for international and domestic nuclear security programs of the United States. Programs to prevent nuclear and radiological terrorism are spread throughout the government; a consolidated summary would offer a clear picture of gaps and overlaps.

As the nation continues to mourn the passing of a statesman who made crucial contributions to reducing nuclear threats, it is the responsibility of his successors in Congress to sustain and build on the legacy they have inherited.

—

George Shultz is a lifelong civil servant who has served in four cabinet level positions: Secretary of State (1982-89), Secretary of the Treasury (1972-74), Director of the Office of Management and Budget (1970-72), and Secretary of Labor (1969-70).

Lee Hamilton is a former member of the United States House of Representatives who represented the 9th congressional district of Indiana from 1965 to 1999.


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Intermediate-Range Missiles Are the Wrong Weapon for Today’s Security Challenges

By Tom Countryman and Kingston Reif

Aug. 13, 2019

On Aug. 2, the United States formally withdrew from the landmark 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, heralding the end of an era and the beginning of a new, potentially more perilous one.

Russia’s breach of the INF Treaty is unacceptable, and the United States and NATO should ensure Russia doesn’t gain any military advantage from its violation. The Trump administration’s decision to terminate the agreement and plan to develop new ground-launched intermediate-range missiles may be justifiable as a response to Russia’s violation. But “justifiable” is not the same as “smart.” The costs and risks of building new missiles would outweigh the benefits. Without the treaty, there needs to be a more serious arms control plan to avoid a new missile race in Europe.

Negotiated by President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, the INF Treaty required the two sides to “eliminate and permanently forswear all of their nuclear and conventional ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges of 500 to 5,500 kilometers.”

Unfortunately, the treaty went on life support in 2014, when the United States first accused Russia of violating the agreement by acquiring the nuclear-capable “9M729” ground-launched cruise missile. Since then Russia is believed to have deployed four battalions of the missile.

With the treaty gone, attention has turned to how the United States and NATO should approach a world without the agreement. The Defense Department has announced plans to test, beginning later this month, two types of mobile, conventionally armed, ground-launched missiles with ranges that exceed the treaty’s limits. The department requested nearly $100 million in its fiscal year 2020 budget to develop intermediate-range missile systems.

Defense Secretary Mark Esper told reporters that he would like to see the deployment of intermediate-range missiles in Asia, ideally as soon as possible, and that the end of the INF Treaty would allow “proactive measures to develop the capability that we need for” Europe as well.

Other administration officials have stated that any deployments are likely years away. Eric Sayers, a leading advocate of leaving the INF Treaty, told Politico Pro, “I think Esper got a little ahead of his skis in saying he wants to get things out there quickly, in months if it was up to him. This will take a few years to consider options, concepts of operation and to do the testing and integration.”

Regardless, supporters of pursuing the missiles argue that the weapons would provide the United States with additional military options against Russia and especially China, which is not a party to the treaty and has deployed large numbers of missiles with ranges that Washington and Moscow were long prohibited from deploying. As one recent study published by the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments puts it, such missiles “could arrest, if not reverse, the erosion of longstanding American military advantages, enhance warfighting, shore up the U.S. competitive position, and ultimately strengthen deterrence, the cornerstone of U.S. global strategy.”

But the push for new missiles has been controversial in Congress. The Democratic-led House versions of the fiscal year 2020 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) and defense appropriations bill eliminated the Pentagon’s funding request for the missiles. Given the Republican-led Senate’s support for developing the weapons, the issue is likely to be a contentious one when the two chambers try to reconcile their versions of the defense authorization and appropriations bill in the coming weeks.
Where’s the Strategy?

The Trump administration has yet to answer repeated congressional calls for information on its decision to withdraw from the treaty or a strategy to prevent Russia from deploying additional and new types of prohibited missiles in the absence of the agreement. The Defense Department’s budget request for new intermediate-range missiles lacks key details about the types of missiles the Pentagon plans to develop, justification of the need for the missiles, or plan to base them.

Indeed, the House version of the NDAA would require the Pentagon to do some important things before providing funding for these missiles: present a detailed arms control proposal to replace the INF Treaty; demonstrate what military requirements will be met by new intermediate-range missiles; and identify a country in Europe or Asia willing to host the missiles (and in the case of Europe, the legislation requires that any deployment has the support of NATO). The bill also requires the Pentagon to conduct an analysis of alternatives that considers other ballistic or cruise missile systems, including sea- and air-launched missiles, that could meet current capability gaps due to the restrictions formerly imposed by the INF Treaty.

Without such information, it’s hard to see how accelerating development of these missiles would deny Russia the offensive military advantage it seeks. New ground-launched, intermediate-range weapons would need to be deployed on the territory of NATO members to be of meaningful military value against Russia. Russia would undoubtedly see any U.S. intermediate-range missile deployments, particularly in eastern Europe, as a provocative threat. NATO’s eastward expansion in theory allows these weapons to be placed on Moscow’s doorstep, where they could hit key targets deep inside Russia within minutes. Russia has warned that it will respond to U.S. deployments by deploying more intermediate-range missiles, possibly including ballistic missiles, pointed toward Europe. If all this comes to pass, Europe will be less secure and the risk of a military incident or miscommunication leading to military conflict with Russia will increase.

Perhaps, then, we should not be surprised that no country has said that it would be willing to host such missiles. Several countries, including Poland, have made it clear that any deployment of the missiles in Europe would have to be approved by all NATO members. A unilateral U.S. attempt to force the alliance to accept them would be a significant source of division within NATO, one Russia would be eager to exploit.

NATO defense ministers met in Brussels on June 26 to discuss defense and deterrence measures “to ensure the security of the alliance” if Russia fails to resolve U.S. allegations of treaty noncompliance. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said the alliance is considering several military options, including additional exercises, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, air and missile defenses, and conventional capabilities. Stoltenberg has repeatedly stated that NATO does not intend to deploy new nuclear missiles in Europe, but he has been silent on whether the alliance is considering the deployment of conventional variants. NATO is likely to decide on which options to pursue during the next head-of-state summit scheduled for early December.

Fortunately, there is no military need for the United States to develop a new and costly intermediate-range missile for deployment in Europe. Even some proponents of the administration’s decision to withdraw from the INF Treaty admit as much. The United States can already deploy air- and sea-launched systems, which were not covered by the INF Treaty, that can threaten the same Russian targets that new ground-launched missiles could. If additional military measures are required, such as additional deployments of land-based missiles with a range up to 500 kilometers, air- and sea-launched cruise missiles, and cruise missile defenses, these can be pursued with less controversy and risk than the deployment of longer-range ground-based missiles.

The China Angle
While Russia was the administration’s primary rationale for withdrawing from the treaty, proponents of developing ground-launched, intermediate-range missiles see the greatest utility for them in Asia. They insist that China, which is not a party to the treaty, is gaining a military advantage in East Asia by deploying large numbers of the missiles, which can easily target U.S. and allied military bases in the region. Fielding similar U.S. missiles in the region along the first island chain capable of hitting high-value targets in China, and in the South and East China Seas, they claim, would help to reverse the growing regional imbalance and make a Chinese effort to overrun vulnerable U.S. allies in the region more difficult.

But it remains to be seen whether the Pentagon could find a place to base intermediate-range missiles in East Asia outside the U.S. territory of Guam. Despite concerns about China’s growing military power and more assertive behavior in the region, allies such as Australia, Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines aren’t exactly rushing to host them. Following Esper’s comments, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison stated that basing intermediate-range missiles has “not been asked of us,” is “not being considered,” and has “not been put to us.” “I think I can rule a line under that,” he added. And a South Korean defense ministry spokesperson said, “We have not internally reviewed the issue [of basing U.S. intermediate-range missiles] and have no plan to do so.”

Efforts to base the missiles in the region would face significant opposition domestically and from China. Following the U.S. withdrawal from the INF Treaty, Fu Cong, director general of the arms control department at China’s foreign ministry, warned China’s “neighbors to exercise prudence and not to allow the U.S. deployment of intermediate-range missiles on their territory.” Securing basing agreements would require a major investment of political capital from Washington at a time when the Trump administration has done significant damage to several of these alliance relationships.

Meanwhile, Guam, unlike the Pacific Ocean around it and the air above it, is small and more than 3,000 kilometers from the Chinese coast. Land-based missiles on Guam, even if mobile, would be vulnerable to Chinese attack, thereby increasing crisis instability. Moreover, deploying INF Treaty-range missiles in East Asia would likely increase China’s threat perceptions. Fu said that “If the U.S. deploys [intermediate-range] missiles in this part of the world, at the doorstep of China, China will be forced to take countermeasures.” Esper maintained that China “should be unsurprised” by talk of possible U.S. intermediate-range missile deployments. Clearly the United States and its allies shouldn’t demur from taking actions to confront China simply because China objects to them. But if U.S. deployments prompt China to accelerate its own deployments over its vast land area, U.S. security and the security of its allies would suffer.

It is also unclear why new intermediate-range missiles are essential, in the words of Elbridge Colby and Rep. Mike Gallagher (R-WI), to help to deny China’s “ability to quickly overrun America’s most vulnerable allies.” For example, land-based missiles with a range of 499 kilometers, such as the Army’s Precision Strike Missile, currently under development, would be able to strike some disputed and Chinese-held islands in the East China and South China seas from bases in Japan and the Philippines. But such missiles would not be able to strike targets inside of China. Longer-range air- and sea-based missiles that were never restricted by the treaty could hit the Chinese mainland, though doing so in a limited conflict (for example, one designed to deny China the ability to overrun Taiwan or disputed territory such as the Senkaku Islands) would be escalatory.

Mindful of the basing challenge, some analysts argue that intermediate-range missiles need not be permanently deployed on the territory of allies and instead could be rapidly deployed from the United States during a crisis. But this too would be problematic. In fact, allies are likely to be even
more skittish about accepting missiles during a crisis than in peacetime, since doing so could escalate the crisis.

Finally, purchasing INF Treaty-range missiles, especially longer-range ballistic missiles, would not be cheap, and every dollar spent on them is a dollar that can't be spent on more flexible air and sea alternatives. As former Undersecretary of Defense for Policy James Miller has noted, “For the Asia-Pacific theater, there’s a great advantage to both undersea where U.S. has dominance ... and to airborne systems. ...Particularly long-range stealthy systems that can deliver munitions and provide a more capable and credible counter to Chinese capabilities.”

Options to augment U.S. air and sea power in the region include: increasing the number of attack submarines; pursuing more agile, resilient, and distributed airpower capabilities; and strengthening the survivability of naval strike systems through unmanned surface and subsurface systems and long-range unmanned aerial platforms.

An Arms Control Approach

Could developing land-based intermediate-range missiles in Europe convince Russia to return to the negotiating table to discuss new arms control approaches in the same way that the U.S. deployment of nuclear missiles in Europe during the early 1980s convinced Moscow to agree to the INF Treaty? Such an approach is unlikely to be successful for a number of reasons.

Unlike during the Cold War, when several NATO leaders urged the United States to deploy the missiles despite strong public opposition, and the Soviet military threat was much greater, it is far from clear that NATO would agree to such deployments today. And then there is the fact that Donald Trump is not Ronald Reagan and Vladimir Putin is not Mikhail Gorbachev.

Fanning the flames of a missile race with Russia and China will not enhance U.S. security or the security of allies. The maintenance of appropriate military readiness must be paired with dialogue and regional confidence-building and arms control measures.

Rather than spur Russia to deploy more missiles by deploying missiles America and its allies do not need, the United States and NATO should more aggressively pursue arms control options to mitigate the risks of the collapse of the treaty. One option would be for NATO to declare as a bloc that no alliance members will field any intermediate-range missiles in Europe so long as Russia does not deploy them where they could hit NATO member territory. Moscow has said that it won’t deploy such missiles so long as NATO members do not.

But this proposal would require Russia to dismantle or move at least some currently deployed 9M929 missiles, namely those believed to be deployed within range of NATO member-state territory. As the United States and Russia dispute the range of that missile, they could agree to bar deployments west of the Ural Mountains. The agreement could take the form of an executive agreement and be verified through national technical means of intelligence, monitoring mechanisms available through the Open Skies Treaty and Vienna Document, and new on-site inspection arrangements as necessary.

This approach should allay Russian concerns that the United States could place offensive missiles in the Mk-41 missile-defense interceptor launchers currently deployed in Romania and that will soon be deployed in Poland as part of the European Phased Adaptive Approach. If additional assurances are required, the United States and NATO could agree to modify the Mk-41 missile-defense launchers that Russia believes could be used for offensive purposes in a way that allows Russia to clearly distinguish them from launchers that fire offensive Tomahawk missiles from U.S. Navy ships, or agree to other transparency measures to allay Russian suspicions that the launchers contain offensive missiles.
Another possible option would be to negotiate a new agreement, perhaps as part of a follow-on to the 2010 New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START), that verifiably prohibits ground-launched, intermediate-range ballistic or cruise missiles armed with nuclear warheads.

As bad as the collapse of the INF Treaty is for European security and the future of arms control, the situation could get even worse. Following the U.S. withdrawal from the INF Treaty, New START, which is slated to expire in February 2021, will be the only remaining bilateral agreement constraining the size of the world’s two largest nuclear arsenals. If New START disappears, there would be no legally binding limits on the two countries’ nuclear arsenals for the first time in nearly half a century.

The treaty can be extended by up to five years until 2026 if both Trump and Putin agree. But the administration has shunned talks on an extension, raising concerns that New START could soon go the way of the INF Treaty and the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, both of which have been discarded without a viable plan to replace them.

Russia’s violation of the INF Treaty is a serious matter. But the U.S. pursuit of new ground-launched intermediate-range missiles is militarily unnecessary, would divide NATO, and would lead Russia to increase the number and type of intermediate-range missiles aimed against NATO targets. Congress would be wise to withhold its support for a new Euromissile race.

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ABOUT THE USAF CSDS

The USAF Counterproliferation Center (CPC) was established in 1998 at the direction of the Chief of Staff of the Air Force. Located at Maxwell AFB, this Center capitalizes on the resident expertise of Air University — while extending its reach far beyond — and influences a wide audience of leaders and policy makers. A memorandum of agreement between the Air Staff’s Director for Nuclear and Counterproliferation (then AF/XON) and Air War College commandant established the initial personnel and responsibilities of the Center. This included integrating counterproliferation awareness into the curriculum and ongoing research at the Air University; establishing an information repository to promote research on counterproliferation and nonproliferation issues; and directing research on the various topics associated with counterproliferation and nonproliferation.

In 2008, the Secretary of Defense’s Task Force on Nuclear Weapons Management recommended "Air Force personnel connected to the nuclear mission be required to take a professional military education (PME) course on national, defense, and Air Force concepts for deterrence and defense." This led to the addition of three teaching positions to the CPC in 2011 to enhance nuclear PME efforts. At the same time, the Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center, in coordination with the AF/A10 and Air Force Global Strike Command, established a series of courses at Kirtland AFB to provide professional continuing education (PCE) through the careers of those Air Force personnel working in or supporting the nuclear enterprise. This mission was transferred to the CPC in 2012, broadening its mandate to providing education and research on not just countering WMD but also nuclear operations issues. In April 2016, the nuclear PCE courses were transferred from the Air War College to the U.S. Air Force Institute for Technology.

In February 2014, the Center’s name was changed to the Center for Unconventional Weapons Studies (CUWS) to reflect its broad coverage of unconventional weapons issues, both offensive and defensive, across the six joint operating concepts (deterrence operations, cooperative security, major combat operations, irregular warfare, stability operations, and homeland security). The term “unconventional weapons,” currently defined as nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons, also includes the improvised use of chemical, biological, and radiological hazards. In May 2018, the name changed again to the Center for Strategic Deterrence Studies (CSDS) in recognition of senior Air Force interest in focusing on this vital national security topic.

The Center’s military insignia displays the symbols of nuclear, biological, and chemical hazards. The arrows above the hazards represent the four aspects of counterproliferation — counterforce, active defense, passive defense, and consequence management. The Latin inscription "Armis Bella Venenis Geri" stands for "weapons of war involving poisons."

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