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Feature Report

“NUCLEAR WEAPONS: NNSA Has Taken Steps to Prepare to Restart a Program to Replace the W78 Warhead Capability”. Published by U.S. Government Accountability Office; Nov. 30, 2018

<https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-19-84>

The National Nuclear Security Administration is preparing to restart a program to replace the W78 nuclear warhead, which is used in Air Force intercontinental ballistic missiles. The goal is to produce the first W78 replacement warhead in fiscal year 2030. Pending further study, this replacement warhead may also be used in Navy submarine launched ballistic missiles.

NNSA has taken steps in

- program management, such as developing a risk management plan
- assessing technologies for potential use
- coordinating with facilities needed to provide warhead components

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NUCLEAR WEAPONS

VOA (Washington, D.C.)

Putin Threatens to Build Nuclear Missiles if US Does the Same

By Henry Ridgwell and Wayne Lee

Dec. 5, 2018

Russian President Vladimir Putin said Wednesday his country would start developing intermediate-range nuclear missiles if the United States leaves a key arms agreement and begins developing the weapons as well.

Putin told Russian news agencies that a U.S. withdrawal from the treaty would mean Washington has concluded it "has to have these weapons" and that Moscow "will do the same."

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo told NATO ministers in Brussels Tuesday it will begin the six-month process of withdrawing from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty in 60 days if Moscow does not regain compliance with the treaty.

Pompeo accused Russia of deploying "multiple battalions of the SSC-8 missiles," a land-based, intermediate-range Cruise missile capable of carrying nuclear warheads. Moscow has denied deploying such weapon systems.

"It makes no sense for the United States to remain in a treaty that constrains our ability to respond to Russia's violations. Russia has reversed the trajectory of diminishing nuclear risk in Europe," Pompeo told reporters in Brussels.

The 1987 INF treaty, negotiated by then-U.S. President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, eliminated all nuclear missiles with a range between 500 and 5,500 kilometers, reducing the ability to launch a nuclear strike at short notice.

NATO allies have voiced concern over the U.S. threat to withdraw, fearing a new arms race in Europe; however, NATO foreign ministers agreed Tuesday to formally declare Russia in "material breach" of the treaty.

Pompeo delivered a pointed message to European allies, says Jonathan Eyal, international director at the Royal United Services Institute in London.

"Instead of complaining all the time about the United States walking away from the treaty, the Europeans should spend a bit of time looking at why the United States is withdrawing from the treaty," he said.

"No European state has contradicted the American position. That intelligence information indicates a Russian gross violation of that treaty. So I think the American argument would be, 'Let us get together and convey a strict message to Moscow that if it wants the treaty saved, it will have to make a concession and it will have to abide by the treaty,'" Eyal told VOA.

Meanwhile, in Brussels Tuesday, during a separate speech hosted by the German Marshall Fund of the United States, Pompeo dismissed claims that the United States was withdrawing from the international stage under President Donald Trump's "America First" policy.

"In the finest traditions of our great democracy, we are rallying the noble nations to build a new liberal order that prevents war and achieves greater prosperity," Pompeo said.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo speaks at a conference of the German Marshall Fund of the United States on "Reforming the Rules-Based International Order", in Brussels, Belgium, Dec. 4, 2018.

He added that President Donald Trump was reshaping the global system based on nation states, not multilateral institutions.

"We are acting to preserve, protect, and advance an open, just, transparent and free world of sovereign states," Secretary Pompeo told the audience of diplomats and government officials.

He took aim at the European Union and said Britain's decision to quit the bloc was evidence that supranational organizations were not working.

A spokesperson for the European Commission said Pompeo was "one of those people who come to Brussels and coin an opinion without knowing how our system works."

<https://www.voanews.com/a/putin-threatens-to-build-nuclear-missiles-if-us-does-the-same/4687630.html>

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Omaha World-Herald (Omaha, Neb.)

Gen. Hyten Defends Updating U.S. Nuclear Arsenal, Aims to 'Strike Fear' in Potential Enemies

By Steve Liewer

Dec. 2, 2018

Gen. John Hyten badly wants to rebuild the aging nuclear force he commands, which carries a price tag estimated at more than \$400 billion over the next 10 years.

Lately, though, there are political threats to the wide consensus that supported his plans to replace the 50-year-old gravity bombs, 30-year-old ballistic-missile submarines and bombers and 50-year-old ICBMs.

The U.S. Strategic Command chief commands the nuclear force from Offutt Air Force Base south of Omaha.

Hyten gave a full-throated defense of nuclear modernization in a recent interview with The World-Herald.

He said the U.S. relies on those defenses to deter attacks by nuclear-armed adversaries such as Russia, China and North Korea.

Hyten said that U.S. adversaries are updating their nuclear arsenals at a rapid clip. The U.S. can't stop improving its nuclear arsenal unless those countries do, too.

"The world demands that we be able to respond to the threats we're facing," he said.

Rep. Adam Smith, D-Wash., in line to become the new chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, has said nuclear spending must be reined in. He wants a new Nuclear Posture Review, which is a full-scale assessment of nuclear needs, even though the last one was published less than a year ago. And he wants to scrap Hyten's plans for new "low-yield" nuclear weapons launched from submarines, which are being developed to match new Russian capabilities.

Smith also has questioned the need for the nuclear triad of air, land and sea-based nuclear weapons that has formed the bedrock of U.S. nuclear capability since the 1960s.

“We need to fundamentally rebuild our nuclear strategy, and to use it as a deterrent, not as this overwhelming force,” Smith told a conference of the Ploughshares Fund, a group that opposes nuclear weapons, on Nov. 14. “At the end of the day, the reason we have as many weapons as we have is based on plans that were contemplating how to win a nuclear war. But you can’t win a nuclear war.”

Critics have long said the triad is no longer necessary, and have advocated scrapping land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles because they are immobile and most vulnerable to a first strike.

But Hyten said the triad is still needed. He said the Air Force’s roughly 400 ICBMs, spread out over five states (including Nebraska) in the upper Midwest and Rocky Mountain regions, can be instantly ready and are a massive set of targets for an adversary to overcome.

The submarines are highly survivable because their exact location at any moment is unknown — even to Hyten. The chances are small that an adversary’s first strike could destroy them.

And air-launched weapons are needed for their flexibility, because they are the only nuclear bombs that can be recalled even after the planes take off.

Hyten said he has no problem with a U.S.-Russia deal that lowers the number of nuclear weapons. Currently, each side has about 1,400 deployed warheads. But he doesn’t approve of any plans that include the United States unilaterally giving up one part of its arsenal.

“I can’t imagine how we could respond without all three legs,” Hyten said. “They have to strike fear into the hearts of our potential adversaries.”

Hyten’s job has grown a lot bigger in recent weeks. On Oct. 3, Defense Secretary James Mattis signed off on a plan developed by StratCom to centralize the nation’s antiquated nuclear command, control and communication structure — which the Pentagon refers to as “NC3” — under Hyten’s control.

NC3 oversees daily readiness and security of the command and control system, not the highly classified launch orders that would be used in a crisis.

Until now, responsibility for nuclear command and control had been spread out among several military commands and managed by a committee-like structure at the Pentagon.

Hyten said he and Mattis spent a lot of time talking about NC3 when the defense secretary visited Offutt in September 2017.

“He said, ‘A committee can’t be in charge of anything. I need a commander in charge,’” Hyten recalled.

The Nuclear Posture Review, released in February, noted problems with aging components in NC3 warning satellites and radars, communications satellites, aircraft, ground stations and nuclear control centers. Some of these systems haven’t been updated for several decades, the report noted.

Hyten said much of his time now is consumed with setting up a new “enterprise center,” based at Offutt, to carry out nuclear command and control. Eventually it will bring several hundred new civilian and military jobs to the base, though he said a more precise number hasn’t been determined yet. Many of them will be engineers.

“We’re going through the process of hiring the leadership,” Hyten said. “There’s a lot of work that’s going to be happening in the next year.”

Last week, StratCom posted a “request for information” on the federal website FedBizOps.gov, seeking ideas from industry and the academic world on how nuclear command and communications might be improved over the long term, during the years 2030-2080. The notice

said the ideas “will help inform how we effect the transition into the next generation NC3 enterprise architecture.”

StratCom’s employees soon will be moving into a new headquarters building, recently constructed near the Capehart Road entrance to Offutt. The Army Corps of Engineers turned over the completed building to the Air Force on Oct. 31. Now StratCom will install a sophisticated communications and electronic security suite, estimated to cost \$679 million. That’s more than the cost of the building itself, which totaled \$617 million.

Hyten said the new building will be far more efficient than the current headquarters, which was built in 1957, at the dawn of the computer age. It consists of five buildings and was poorly designed for nuclear command and control.

“In the new building, I can get anywhere in 30 seconds,” he said. “It’s going to be awesome.”

He expects the building to be ready for occupancy in a year or so for the command’s nearly 4,000 employees.

“If everything goes perfect,” Hyten said, “we’ll be in by next Christmas.”

https://www.omaha.com/news/military/gen-hyten-defends-updating-u-s-nuclear-arsenal-aims-to/article_acbed90e-f083-5122-9e12-e09d87f8f299.html

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Military.com (San Francisco, Calif.)

Air Force Secretary: B-21 Bomber Completes Another Review, Remains on Schedule

By Oriana Pawlyk

Dec. 3, 2018

SIMI VALLEY, California -- The B-21 Long Range Strike Bomber program recently completed a developmental review and remains on schedule, the top civilian of the Air Force said at the Reagan National Defense Forum.

"Our most recent review was last week, and the B-21 is on schedule and performance," Air Force Secretary Heather Wilson said during the forum in Simi Valley on Saturday.

While Wilson noted the development process is in its early stages, "We are pleased with how that program is going forward," she said.

Officials have said the Northrop Grumman-made B-21 is expected to reach its critical design review milestone in December. It was not immediately clear whether the review Wilson spoke of is the same one.

"It's a good example of how to run a major acquisition program well and why delegation of authority back to the services ... works to get high quality and to do so quickly," Wilson told reporters after her panel discussion.

In recent budgets, the Air Force has received more acquisition authority from Congress to push decisions down to program officers so they can spend more time managing their designated projects "than managing the Pentagon," Wilson has said.

Wilson and Vice Chief of Staff Gen. Stephen "Seve" Wilson touted the service's progress in improving its recent procurement approach, pointing to the additional acquisition authorities and

rapid prototyping endeavors as examples of enhancing how it buys or tests new equipment or weapons.

It's about the "speed of relevance," the vice chief said Saturday of the B-21. "We empowered people with the right authorities and responsibility, and they produce great capability and that's why they're successful."

Last month, the service announced it had selected Edwards Air Force Base, California, and Tinker Air Force Base, Oklahoma, to be the lead facilities for test and evaluation and maintenance and sustainment, respectively, for the program.

The announcement was a new sliver of public information in the longstanding, highly classified program to create the Air Force's next long-range stealth bomber, known as the Raider.

Northrop's Melbourne, Florida, facility is the site of the Raider design and development headquarters.

Currently, the B-21 is in its engineering and manufacturing development phase. The bomber, the Pentagon's latest multibillion-dollar program, passed its preliminary design review last year.

The Air Force awarded Northrop the contract, initially worth \$21.4 billion, in 2015.

Total program costs are expected to exceed \$55 billion.

The first B-21 is expected to reach initial operating capability in the mid-2020s.

<https://www.military.com/dodbuzz/2018/12/03/air-force-secretary-b-21-bomber-completes-another-review-remains-schedule.html>

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National Defense (Arlington, Va.)

INF Treaty Pullout Could Be Boon for Missile Makers

By Jon Harper

Dec. 4, 2018

The United States' withdrawal from a landmark arms control agreement could open up major opportunities for the defense industry as the Pentagon seeks to counter Russia and China.

The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, which was brokered in 1987, prohibits the United States and Russia from deploying land-based nuclear or conventional missiles — both ballistic and cruise — with ranges of 500 to 5,500 km. However, Washington is accusing Moscow of cheating.

"Russia has violated the agreement, they've been violating it for many years," President Donald Trump told reporters after a political rally in October. "So we are going to terminate the agreement and we are going to develop the weapons."

U.S. withdrawal from the treaty could be a boon for missile manufacturers, said Todd Harrison, director of the aerospace security project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

"For decades, we've been operating within the design constraints imposed by the INF Treaty," he said. "It opens up a whole range of possible design options for missile forces that previously had not been available" in terms of range and flight trajectory.

The price tag for a new arsenal is difficult to estimate, Harrison said.

“The cost of the Pershing II — I think that’s as close an analogy as we have right now, but that was a long, long time ago,” he said, referring to intermediate range, nuclear-armed ballistic missiles that the United States deployed to Europe in the 1980s.

The Pershing II program cost \$692 million for research, development, test and evaluation, and \$1.76 billion to procure 247 missiles, according to the Government Accountability Office. A conventional ground-launched cruise missile, the GLCM, that was deployed at that time cost \$383 million for RDT&E, and \$2.72 billion to procure 442 missiles.

The Pentagon could potentially modify Tomahawk cruise missiles — sea-based weapons that cost about \$1.5 million each — to provide an interim intermediate range, ground-based capability, Harrison said.

Harrison said he is not aware of any existing ballistic missile systems that could be modified to have an intermediate range.

“Because you’re looking at some new-start programs, I think that there are opportunities for new companies to get into this market,” he said. “But we’re not talking about revolutionary technologies, ... so the big incumbents will have an inherent advantage because they will leverage missiles and propulsion systems they already have developed.”

Harrison noted that he doesn’t expect ground-launched, intermediate range nuclear weapons to be deployed by the U.S. military in the foreseeable future, partly due to political constraints.

The United States would likely have difficulty getting allied nations to agree to host them on their soil because it would be politically controversial, he said.

The arms control community is trying to generate opposition, arguing that developing such weapons would be costly, unnecessary and destabilizing.

“Trump’s move to blow up the INF Treaty ... could lead to an unconstrained and dangerous nuclear arms competition,” Arms Control Association analysts Daryl Kimball and Kingston Reif wrote in an issue brief, “Trump’s Counterproductive Decision to ‘Terminate’ the INF Treaty.”

Harrison said there would also be strong opposition among congressional Democrats to building new types of nuclear weapons platforms.

Acquiring new conventional missiles, on the other hand, wouldn’t be as tough a sell, he said. “I don’t really see that there would be a lot of opposition to that because it’s not that different than the types of missiles we’re already building. It’s just a different range,” he added.

Long-range precision fires is the Army’s top modernization priority. The service should seriously consider acquiring new systems that previously would have been prohibited by the INF Treaty, Harrison said.

“These types of missiles are attractive in terms of their capabilities, in terms of imposing costs on Russia and China,” he said. “I think in the long run we will end up developing and fielding large numbers of missiles that fall within this class.”

<http://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/articles/2018/12/4/inf-treaty-pullout-could--be-boon-for-missile-makers>

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US COUNTER-WMD

National Defense (Arlington, Va.)

'Star Wars' Redux: Experts Debate Reviving Strategic Defense Initiative

By Stew Magnuson

Dec. 3, 2018

It was 25 years ago when the Clinton administration announced the demise of the Strategic Defense Initiative, a Reagan-era program which sought to create a shield against the Soviet Union's intercontinental ballistic missiles.

The end of the Soviet Union was the primary reason for the program's 1993 cancellation. Then Defense Secretary Les Aspin stripped out the space portion of the initiative — better known to the public as "Star Wars." What remained were the ground-based missile defense programs being pursued today.

But a quarter century later, Russia is again seen as the United States most serious rival, with China and North Korea and its missile arsenals added to the mix. In addition, Russia and China both report advances in hypersonic technology, weapons that travel at speeds of Mach 5 plus.

It is time to add space-based solutions back in the missile defense mix, Sen. Jon Kyl, R-Ariz., said Dec. 1 at the Reagan National Defense Forum held at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley, California.

The National Defense Authorization Act of 2017 redefined and broadened the definition of missile defense to include emerging threats, Kyl said. "This language I believe launches us into another Strategic Defense Initiative 2.0 to deal with the peer competitors — Russia and China — not only theater-range defenses."

It would be seen by potential rivals — as it was conceived during the Reagan administration — as a deterrent. A layered missile defense, which would include space-based sensors and defensive weapons, would not necessarily defeat every missile launched toward the United States, but it would stop most of them, thus making the decision to attack the United States more complicated, Kyl said.

"We can kill an enemy missile, but the question is: can we deter an enemy attack?" he asked. That can only happen if the United States has the ability to defeat many missiles launched at the same time. Current missile defense systems may be able to shoot down an individual missile, but the system could not handle a "swarm," he noted. "My point is we don't have that capability deployed today."

Retired Air Force Gen. Hawk Carlisle, former Air Combat Command commander, said as it stands today, missile defense systems can't handle a swarm scenario. It would entail deploying \$10 million kill vehicles to take out \$10,000 missiles. But there are technologies in development such as directed energy weapons that can change that equation.

"We are at an inflection point today," Carlisle said.

A new system would have to have a space-based sensor suite as well as some deployed on land and sea, said Carlisle, who is now president and CEO of the National Defense Industrial Association, publisher of National Defense. "You have to have all that interconnected so it shares and talks and

learns from each other. You have to be able to characterize a launch as rapidly as you can and determine what the trajectory is and what the probable impact point is.”

Thomas Kennedy, chairman and CEO of Raytheon, said much of the technology to kick off a Strategic Defense Initiative 2.0 is mature. A lot of progress has been made in the past 25 years. Directed energy weapons such as high-energy lasers and high-powered microwaves have matured in the past few decades and are ready to be fielded, he said. Those, along with cyber effects and conventional kinetic weapons, could destroy missiles in the boost phase when they are most vulnerable. Underlying all these new technologies are improvements to artificial intelligence and machine learning, he said. They can be applied to missile defense, he added.

Kennedy said what has changed most since SDI was cancelled is that its infrastructure could be obtained at a “reasonable cost.” The commercialization of space has led to less expensive satellites and reduced launch fees, he noted. The question then becomes: what is reasonable?

The emergence of hypersonics and claims by Russia and China that they have made significant advances in the technology is another factor that has changed since SDI’s demise in 1993.

Carlisle said he believed those claims and that defeating Mach 5 plus weapons is a priority in the Defense Department. SDI had a three-star general in charge of the program, he noted. The Army, Navy and Air Force are all involved in hypersonics, but need to be more cohesive, he said.

“That is a strategic technology that we cannot allow ourselves to fall behind in anymore, because I think we already are,” Carlisle said.

A space-based sensor system could track hypersonic weapons “from birth to death,” Kennedy added.

However, the Defense Department has competing budget priorities. Missile defense is only one of them. Kyl acknowledged that the Budget Control Act and sequestration may return. If that happens, SDI 2.0 “won’t be properly resourced and we won’t be able to get to the things we are talking about here today.”

“The priority depends on the costs involved, the timeframes, the viability of the technology that we can employ, and other strategic factors. ... I would personally put it at a pretty high level in our [funding] planning,” Kyl said.

<http://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/articles/2018/12/3/star-wars-redux-experts-debate-reviving-strategic-defense-initiative>

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Homeland Preparedness News (Washington, D.C.)

NTI Holds Meeting to Identify, Address Biological Risks

By Dave Kovaleski

Dec. 4, 2018

Policy leaders and scientific experts met in November to assess the impact of advances in technology on biological risks and brainstorm new ideas to address them.

The meeting — sponsored by the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI), Oxford University, and Johns Hopkins University — included representatives from 13 countries with expertise in life sciences and bioengineering, biodefense and biosecurity, science policy, public health, infectious diseases, and catastrophic risks.

Advances in science and technology will make it easier to develop bioweapons capable of causing a high-consequence event, which could produce catastrophic epidemics. The international capacity to deal with these events requires careful consideration and planning.

“This is a serious challenge that the global community must continue to address,” NTI Bio Vice President Beth Cameron said. “The confluence of advances in technology, increasing global insecurity and disorder, and the potential for breakdown in established norms necessitates new ideas to reduce risk and prevent misuse.”

The meeting participants came up with several ideas to prevent, mitigate, and manage high-impact biothreats. One of the solutions is to promote global research coordination networks that share functional, technical, and policy norms and enhance transparency among researchers to promote collaborative global biodefense. Another idea is to pilot concepts for awarding a “seal of approval” among researchers and institutions to develop incentives for responsible science and disincentives for irresponsible behavior. Additionally, they said they need to mitigate risks of misuse associated with enabling technologies and services, such as DNA synthesis and cloud-based laboratories. Finally, they would like to see the development of an international response framework that maps gaps in the response architecture for biological weapons events.

“Almost all participants agreed that scientific researchers, their institutions, and non-governmental global networks have a responsibility to assess and reduce risks associated with advances in science and technology that can reduce the barriers to developing and using bioweapons,” NTI Senior Director Jake Jordan said, referring to the results of anonymous polling of participants. “One major goal coming out of this meeting is to gain commitments from technical leaders around the world to work within their countries and regions to make this view the norm.”

<https://homelandprepnews.com/stories/31567-nti-holds-meeting-to-identify-address-biological-risks/>

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US ARMS CONTROL

Defense News (Washington, D.C.)

Scrapping Nuclear Deal Hasn't Slowed Iran, Says Centcom Nominee

By Joe Gould

Dec. 4, 2018

WASHINGTON — America's withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal earlier this year has not slowed Tehran down, according to the incoming commander of U.S. Central Command.

“Iran's malign behavior hasn't abated since before during or after the nuclear deal in the domains in which I see—which is their development of ballistic missiles, their activities in Syria and Yemen, and in other [Mideastern] nations,” the nominee, Marine Lt. Gen. Kenneth McKenzie, Jr., told lawmakers Tuesday. McKenzie has served as the director of the Joint Staff since August, 2017, and is likely to be confirmed before year's end. He called Iran the region's “most significant long- and short-term threat.”

At McKenzie's Senate Armed Services Committee's confirmation hearing, Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., and a likely presidential contender in 2020, pushed back on President Donald Trump's decision to abandon the Iran nuclear deal negotiated under his predecessor.

"If Iran maintains itself in compliance, then I believe the president should reverse his reckless decision to withdraw from the nuclear deal and reimpose sanctions because the deal makes America safer and the world safer," Warren said.

During an exchange with Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, McKenzie said U.S. withdrawal from the pact and its reimposition of sanctions continues to pressure Tehran's economy, but acknowledged it may be able to circumvent sanctions by working with other nations.

As Tehran aspires to develop and intercontinental ballistic missile, he said, the U.S. is watching its tests of space launch technology that could be transferred to "an ICBM of significant range." If Iran were to become a nuclear power, not only would it threaten the U.S. but destabilize the region and "lead the worst of all possible outcomes for us, which would be proliferation across the theater," he said.

McKenzie acknowledged the National Defense Strategy's emphasis on China and Russia—which forecasts reduced CENTCOM force structure—has impacted the frequency of U.S. aircraft carriers in the region. "It's going require the command to adopt innovative techniques to deter Iran because that's the underpinning of everything else that will go on in the theater," he said.

If Iran were to challenge a U.S. naval vessel in the Strait of Hormuz, for example, it might take longer for the U.S. to respond, he said.

The testimony came after the Senate advanced a resolution to withdraw U.S. military support for the Saudi-led coalition fighting a proxy war in Yemen with Iranian-backed Houthis. Support for the resolution has been fueled by outrage over Riyadh's involvement in the death of journalist Jamal Khashoggi and the civilian death toll from the Saudi-led bombing campaign.

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo defended the U.S. relationship with Saudi Arabia at an all-Senate briefing last week on the war in Yemen and Khashoggi's murder. In a rebuke to the Trump administration, a procedural vote afterward advanced the resolution, 63 to 37.

America has a clear national interest fueling its involvement in Yemen, he said, and the humanitarian crisis there is "the child of Iranian ambitions" to make Yemen a client state. McKenzie also said he was confident ballistic missiles fired from Yemen at Riyadh are procured with Iranian assistance.

Asked by Sen. Mike Rounds, R-S.D., about "the need to maintain a steady course" McKenzie also pointed to the threat from Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, which aspires to attack the U.S., and the U.S. drive for a peace settlement.

"I believe our ability to drive those discussions requires that we remain in contact with both U.A.E. and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," he said.

In Warren's exchange with him, McKenzie confirmed the U.S. provides arms to the coalition, until Nov. 11 refueled its aircraft and provides intelligence, but not for targeting. Warren called for a reevaluation of U.S.-Saudi relations.

"I know that you think continuing the campaign is in our interests, but I respectfully disagree on this," she said, calling Yemen "the largest humanitarian crisis in the world." "Neither side is winning this proxy war and the Yemeni people are suffering."

Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va., suggested to McKenzie the administration's legalistic argument against the pending war powers resolution — that those activities don't constitute "hostilities" under the law — is undermining the military's credibility on Capitol Hill.

"We're proxies for the American public, and we don't like being told we're not involved in hostilities when bombs are falling that are made in the United States and U.S. jets are involved in refueling Saudi jets on bombing runs into Yemen," Kaine said. "We're insulted by that, and I just think we need to be candid about what we're doing and not doing."

<https://www.defensenews.com/congress/2018/12/04/scrapping-iran-nuclear-deal-hasnt-slowed-iran-says-centcom-nominee/>

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Arms Control Today (Washington, D.C.)

Iran Vows to Resist U.S. Sanctions

By Kelsey Davenport

Dec. 1, 2018

Iran vowed to resist U.S. sanctions and continue implementing the nuclear deal after U.S. measures targeting its oil and banking sectors went back into effect.

Although the sanctions are already curtailing Iran's oil sales, the Trump administration did issue waivers Nov. 5 allowing seven countries (China, Greece, India, Italy, Japan, South Korea, and Turkey) and Taiwan to continue purchasing oil from Iran. In addition, the Trump administration agreed to allow certain nonproliferation projects outlined under the Iran nuclear deal to proceed.

Preserving the nuclear cooperation projects and some oil revenue will likely provide Iran with enough benefit to continue complying with the nuclear deal, at least in the short term, even though Trump pulled the United States out of the accord. The oil waivers, however, only last six months.

Under the reimposed sanctions, states importing oil from Iran must make a "significant reduction" in purchases every 180 days to be eligible for a waiver. Unlike the Obama administration, which defined "significant reduction" at about a 20 percent cut, the Trump administration evaluated each country on case-by-case basis.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani described the waivers as a victory for Iran because the United States initially said it would "reduce Iran's oil sale to zero." Rouhani also said on Nov. 5 that Iran will continue to sell oil and "break sanctions."

In a Nov. 5 news conference on the sanctions, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo described the oil waivers as "temporary allotments to a handful of countries" in order to address "specific circumstances and to ensure a well-supplied oil market." He noted that more than 20 states already eliminated oil imports from Iran, reducing the country's oil exports by more than 1 million barrels per day.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif admitted that the sanctions will impact Iran's economy, but said the sanctions "will not change policy" in Iran. He said the United States "has an addiction to sanctions" and that the country believes they are "the panacea that resolves" all problems.

The Trump administration has made clear that it intends to continue ratcheting up pressure. Pompeo said the "ultimate goal" remains to "convince the regime to abandon its current

revolutionary course” and the campaign of economic pressure is “at the center of this effort.” Pompeo also said that the United States will continue to push the remaining eight nations permitted to buy oil from Iran to zero out their imports.

Administration officials say the effort is to force behavior changes by the Iranian regime, not to drive for regime change. But officials such as Pompeo and John Bolton, Trump’s national security adviser, advocated for regime change in Iran before they joined the administration. Also, the administration has been working closely with Israel and Saudi Arabia, Iran’s chief regional rival, both of which seek a regime change in Tehran.

Details of the sanctions waivers were not made public, but Bloomberg News reported that India will be limited to 300,000 barrels of oil per day, down from 560,000 in the first half of 2018. China’s waiver permits 360,000 barrels per day, down from an average of 658,000 in early 2018. China and India are Iran’s largest oil purchasers and resisted the reimposition of U.S. sanctions.

Revenues from the oil sales will be held in accounts in the importing countries, and Iran can use the funds to purchase goods from those countries.

Although the revenue from oil sales is likely to be critical in influencing Iran’s decision whether to stay in the deal, the waivers issued for the nonproliferation projects were key for permitting the P4+1 countries (China, France, Germany, Russia, and the United Kingdom) to remain in compliance with the deal. The multilateral group committed to assist Iran in converting several nuclear facilities to reduce their proliferation threat, and failure to conclude these projects could allow Iran to argue that the P4+1 were violating the accord.

Additionally, after Trump repeatedly disparaged the value of the nuclear agreement and referred to it as the “worst deal ever,” Pompeo acknowledged on Nov. 5 that “allowing these activities to continue for the time being will improve ongoing oversight of Iran’s civil nuclear program and make these facilities less susceptible to illicit and illegal nuclear uses.”

Waivers for the projects were necessary because the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) was one of the 700 entities sanctioned Nov. 5 by the United States.

As part of the nuclear deal, the AEOI was removed from the sanctions list to meet U.S. commitments under the accord. With the AEOI now subject to sanctions, foreign entities would be penalized for working with the organization on the specified projects.

The projects in question concern an unfinished heavy-water reactor at Arak, the centrifuge facility at Fordow, and the Bushehr nuclear power plant.

China and the United States, which was succeeded by the UK under the agreement, had agreed to assist Iran in redesigning the unfinished Arak reactor to produce significantly less plutonium on an annual basis than is necessary for a nuclear weapon. If the reactor were completed as originally designed, it would have produced enough plutonium for about two nuclear weapons every year.

Iran removed and destroyed the original core of the Arak reactor in 2015. Work has commenced on designing the new core and on the contract for Chinese assistance on the project, but it does not appear that modifications at the Arak site have begun.

At Fordow, Iran agreed to forgo uranium enrichment at the facility for 15 years and convert it to an isotope research and production center. Russia is assisting in the facilities conversion.

The waivers also allow Russian work to continue at the Bushehr site. Russia provides nuclear fuel for the sole operating nuclear power plant at that site and is responsible for removing the spent fuel.

Russia has broken ground on two additional nuclear power reactors at Bushehr since the nuclear deal was implemented in 2016. Annex III of the accord, which deals with nuclear cooperation, raises the option of collaborating with Iran on light-water reactors, but does not require it.

It is unclear if additional Annex III projects, such as the Nuclear Safety Center that the European Union is interested in pursuing in Iran, will be permitted to go forward.

In addition to the reimposed sanctions, the Trump administration succeeded in pressuring SWIFT, the Brussels-based international financial messaging service, to cut off Iranian banks that were on the list of the 700 entities sanctioned Nov. 5 by the United States. SWIFT was not required to disconnect the Iranian banks, but made a “regrettable” decision to do so in order to maintain stability in the international banking system, the organization said.

A group of Republican senators said they would introduce legislation to sanction SWIFT if the body did not cut off the Iranian banks. Without SWIFT, it will be more difficult to facilitate financial transactions with Iran, even for permissible humanitarian trade such as medical supplies.

<https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2018-12/news/iran-vows-resist-us-sanctions>

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The Hill (Washington, D.C.)

Republicans Press Trump to Get Tough with Russia on Nuclear Talks amid Ukraine Crisis

By Alexander Bolton

Nov. 29, 2018

Nearly half of the Senate Republican conference is pressing President Trump to adopt a tough stance on nuclear arms control with Russian President Vladimir Putin in the wake of Russian aggression against Ukrainian naval forces on the Sea of Azov.

Trump announced Thursday that he would cancel a scheduled meeting with Putin at the Group of 20 (G-20) summit in Buenos Aires, Argentina, after Russian forces captured three Ukrainian naval ships during a territorial dispute.

“Based on the fact that the ships and sailors have not been returned to Ukraine from Russia, I have decided it would be best for all parties concerned to cancel my previously scheduled meeting in Argentina,” Trump said in a series of tweets.

The two leaders were expected to discuss nuclear arms control on the sidelines of the summit.

Putin has expressed interest in extending the Obama-era New START nuclear treaty, which Congress ratified in 2010, but Trump has panned as a bad deal for the United States.

The treaty expires in 2021.

Earlier on Thursday, 25 Republican senators sent a letter to Trump urging him to insist on modernization of the U.S. arsenal and better compliance by Russia with the arms control accord.

“The value of the Treaty depends on a sustained and vigorous U.S. nuclear weapons modernization program, strict compliance by Russia with its arms control obligations, and a true balance of nuclear capabilities between the parties to the Treaty,” they wrote.

Sen. Jon Kyl (R-Ariz.) led the letter, which was signed by 24 other Republicans, including Sens. Tom Cotton (Ark.), Ted Cruz (Texas), John Cornyn (Texas), Roy Blunt (Mo.) and Marco Rubio (Fla.).

The senators wrote that U.S. maintenance and modernization of its nuclear weapons stockpile has fallen behind what was promised to Congress when it ratified New START in a lame-duck session eight year ago.

They argue that continued funding for modernization programs such as the development of low-yield warhead options are necessary "in the face of dangerous international security developments since the New START was ratified."

The lawmakers assert that Russia is "in material breach of its arms control commitments" such as the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty because of its deployment of ground-launched cruise missiles.

They also faulted Russia for not addressing the disparity in tactical nuclear weapons stockpiles between the two countries and instead increasing "the role of nuclear forces and their types and variety since 2010."

Trump last month threatened to pull out of Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty after charging that Russia "violated the agreement."

"We'll have to develop those weapons," he told reporters at a campaign event in Nevada. "We're going to terminate the agreement and we're going to pull out."

Trump's tough stance on arms-control agreements with Russia has strong support in the Senate GOP conference.

"We know you agree that arms control is not an end to itself; it is but a single tool that may be used to advance U.S. national security when carefully considered," the 25 senators wrote. "We look forward to continuing to work with you throughout the review process."

<https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/418917-republicans-press-trump-to-get-tough-with-russia-on-nuclear-talks>

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VOA (Washington, D.C.)

Experts See Risks in Trump's Plan to Meet with North Korea's Kim

By Christy Lee

Dec. 4, 2018

North Korea experts have cautioned against another summit between U.S. President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, citing a lack of progress on denuclearization since the first summit in Singapore.

After meeting with the leaders of South Korea and China during the G-20 summit, Trump expressed a willingness to hold a second summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

On his way home from the weekend gathering in Buenos Aires, Trump said a second summit with Kim will likely take place in January or February and three sites were discussed as potential meeting locations.

"We're getting along very well," Trump said. "We have a good relationship with Kim."

The White House released a statement during the G-20 summit saying "great progress has been made" on Trump's discussions on North Korea.

"It was ... agreed that great progress has been made with respect to North Korea that President Trump, together with [Chinese] President Xi [Jinping], will strive, along with Chairman Kim Jong Un, to see a nuclear free Korean Peninsula," said the White House.

However, former U.S. officials who have dealt with North Korea extensively and analysts on North Korea have questioned the timing of a second summit.

They argue that working-level talks between Washington and Pyongyang should come before Trump meets with Kim, emphasizing working-level negotiations are where progress on denuclearization can be made.

Robert Gallucci, chief U.S. negotiator during the 1994 North Korean nuclear crisis, said, "What I care about is that there would be real progress."

He continued, "And that is going to take [place] in the working-group level discussions about what the North Koreans expect, and what we are prepared to give in order to make progress towards our goal."

Christopher Hill, a chief negotiator with North Korea during the George W. Bush administration, doubts Trump's second summit with Kim will yield much in terms of results, similar to the lack of progress made on denuclearization after Trump's first summit with Kim.

"I don't see what they are going to even discuss," Hill said. "But I think what [Trump's] just trying to tell the press and others is that we are continuing to make progress, although I think the rest of us do not really see what the progress is. So I wouldn't take too seriously what he says."

Hill believes pre-summit agreements on denuclearization made in working-level talks will determine the success of the next Trump-Kim meeting.

"The success of a summit is proportional to the amount of work that it's done before the summit," Hill said. "I think there's a lot of skepticism about the process right now."

Trump's openness to another meeting with Kim comes amid growing skepticism about North Korea's commitment to denuclearization.

North Korea called off planned talks with U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo at the last minute in early November. The cancellation came after Pyongyang refused to engage with Stephen Biegun, the U.S. point man on North Korea. Some experts believe Pyongyang is only interested in direct talks with Trump.

Bruce Klingner, former CIA division chief for the Korea and current senior research fellow at the Heritage Foundation, said Pyongyang sees Trump as "more likely to offer additional concessions, as he did in Singapore."

"It would be a mistake to convene a second summit without real progress toward a comprehensive agreement on North Korean denuclearization," Klingner said.

Robert Manning, a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council, also cautioned against holding another summit.

"The first summit outcome was so ambiguous that it has not provided any impetus for detailed negotiations or a framework for talks to resolve the whole set of issues," Manning said.

During a press briefing last week, Robert Palladino, deputy spokesperson for the State Department said, "Future dialogue will take place and it'll definitely be something that Special Representative Biegun will be leading."

While the U.S. remains open to talks with North Korea, it is maintaining that sanctions will stay in place until the North takes steps toward denuclearization.

In a statement released shortly after Trump's meeting with South Korean President Moon Jae-in during the G-20 summit, the White House said the two leaders "agreed on the importance of maintaining vigorous enforcement of existing sanctions" against North Korea.

Moon said Tuesday he hopes Kim's visit to South Korea occurs this year, although a specific date is yet to be determined.

"Although there is no timeframe set for that, still, it's very meaningful," said Moon from New Zealand about Kim's visit.

Ahn So-young of VOA's Korean Service contributed to this report.

<https://www.voanews.com/a/experts-see-risks-in-trump-plan-to-meet-with-north-korea-kim-jong-un/4687341.html>

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COMMENTARY

CSIS (Washington, D.C.)

What Comes after a U.S. Withdrawal from the INF Treaty? The Case for a NATO Strategy

By Rachel Ellehaus, Ricklef Beutin, and Quentin Lopinot

Dec. 4, 2018

In 1987, Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev signed the "Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Elimination of Their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles" or the INF Treaty. The treaty bans and provides for the destruction of all ground-launched missiles with ranges between 500 and 5500 kilometers. The INF Treaty was a welcome and decisive achievement for arms control and arms reduction at a time of heightened tension in Europe, and it has remained a key pillar for the European security architecture.

But that era could be coming to an end with today's announcement by the United States that it will begin the formal process to withdraw from the INF Treaty unless Russia returns to compliance with its treaty obligations within 60 days. If Russia does not return to compliance, the United States would formally initiate its withdrawal notification, and in six months, the United States would then withdraw from the treaty.

Over the last few years, the United States had increasingly voiced concerns over Russian non-compliance with the INF Treaty, both in diplomatic talks with Russia and Allies as well as publicly. The U.S. government made clear in October at the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Defense Ministerial that it would not let Russian non-compliance with treaty obligations go unanswered indefinitely. President Trump also foreshadowed today's announcement on October 20 by publicly suggesting that the United States would "terminate" and "pull out" of the agreement. But NATO Allies were not informed in advance about this announcement. Rather than keeping the public focus on Russia's treaty violations, the October "soft" announcement left many questioning another U.S. unilateral withdrawal from a treaty, the wisdom of the decision, the political and diplomatic objectives underlying the announcement, and the consequences for strategic stability.

While many Allies agreed with the U.S. assessment in private, few were willing to join the United States in publicly calling out Russia on the violations until recently. This was likely due to a desire for ironclad intelligence on the breach; reluctance to contribute to upending a treaty that many Europeans see as central to their own security; and potentially upsetting a deterrence and dialogue approach with Russia that NATO has worked hard to maintain.

Today's meeting of NATO foreign ministers marked an important evolution in this discussion. Allies have unambiguously stated that Russia is in material breach of the treaty and that it is Moscow's responsibility to preserve it by returning to compliance.

As it seems unlikely at this point that Russia will demonstrate any willingness to do so within the next 60 days, it is important, looking forward, to discuss what strategy the United States and NATO Allies could adopt in a post-INF Treaty world in terms of European security writ large and on military planning, posture, and arms control vis-à-vis Russia.

We argue that, while there is much uncertainty as to what comes next, the unity of NATO must remain the guiding principle for the United States and NATO allies.

The Importance of the INF Treaty to European Security Today

Although a bilateral accord between the United States and Russia (and formerly the Soviet Union), the INF Treaty directly impacts the security of non-signatory countries, particularly European NATO Allies and partners. Despite Russian violations, the treaty is viewed as an essential pillar of European security by European governments, and the historical importance of the treaty still shapes attitudes among European politicians' and citizens' attitudes and actions regarding the INF Treaty today. Past is indeed prologue.

In the late 1970s, the development of the SS-20 "Saber" intermediate-range missiles enabled the Soviet Union to target every part of the European continent without threatening U.S. territory. While the United States too feared that SS-20 could be enhanced for intercontinental range, NATO Allies feared that the Soviet Union could use these systems against them without triggering a response from the United States (so-called decoupling), as Washington might consider the risk of escalation into a major nuclear confrontation too high.

Germany and France were particularly concerned by the "decoupling" of U.S. and European security interests. In the 1980s, German chancellor Schmidt and French president Mitterrand actively made the case for NATO to deploy similar systems in response that led to NATO's dual-track approach, which comprised both the deployment of intermediate-range missiles in Europe (Pershing II and ground-launched cruise missiles) and an offer to negotiate an arms-control agreement with the Soviet Union over these systems. The INF Treaty eventually put an end to this crisis in a way that clearly benefitted the United States and its forces in Europe and European countries: the military threat from Soviet missiles was suppressed, and NATO demonstrated its unity and the indivisibility of its members' security interests.

Today, the utility of the treaty is called into question by Russian breach of the INF Treaty. New developments in weapon technologies and the fact that the treaty does not factor in China have also been identified as questioning its relevance. While all of this may be valid, one of the treaty's essential functions has not gone out of date, namely dispersing any doubt about a decoupling of U.S. and European security interests in Europe.

There are real fears about what could happen to European security if U.S. and NATO Allies' views no longer aligned. Again, history plays an important role as many Europeans vividly remember the excruciating discussions of the 1970s and 1980s over the stationing of nuclear weapons in Europe and would not welcome a re-enactment of the debate under the new circumstances. Some

politicians and parties may attempt, others fear, to use the INF withdrawal to challenge NATO's nuclear posture to their own political advantage even if to the detriment of NATO unity.

Europeans also value the INF Treaty because of its significance as a major arms control achievement. For the first time, an entire class of missiles was made illegal and eliminated—at least between the two major nuclear powers at the time. To Europeans, the treaty was not only important for its specific content but because it reinforces the logic of arms control, which seeks to reduce risks of escalation and contain great power competition by means of an international treaty and verifiable implementation. To Europeans, the INF Treaty is an essential and practical example of how a rules-based security architecture can reduce the risk of conflict and creates security and transparency, provided of course, that its mutual obligations are kept.

For many European countries, arms control is engrained in the political DNA of decisionmakers and the public alike. Indeed, there are also important voices in the U.S. Congress who expect NATO to continue to balance nuclear deterrence with arms control. In some European public opinions, this view is compounded with deep skepticism of nuclear weapons, and the ingrained memory of the Cold War arms race, which included massive public protests against the deployment of nuclear weapons on European soil. These highly emotive reactions signal the difficulty any discussion of a post-INF scenario may entail again today.

Possible Political and Military Implications of a U.S. Withdrawal

For Russia, an end to the INF Treaty will make it legally possible to openly develop and deploy significant numbers of intermediate-range missiles. Russia will likely continue to assign blame for the treaty's failure to the United States for its unilateral withdrawal.

On a global level, the military implications are more difficult to assess. Given Chinese advancements in weapons technology and build-up of its arsenals, freeing itself of INF Treaty obligations could prove advantageous for the United States vis-à-vis China. But whatever form of strategic balance the United States strives for vis-à-vis China, European Allies, and possibly even Russia, could be helpful to the United States, diplomatically and militarily, in compelling China to join in any sort of arms control negotiation. To be sure, how the United States and NATO navigate a post-INF scenario will send a signal to China on either the attractiveness and reliability of bilateral arms control agreements or their futility.

Although deploying ground-launched intermediate-range missiles in Europe could provide some military advantages for NATO, as these systems are more survivable and sustainable than air or sea-based missiles (and cheaper), there has been no indication that the United States will take this course, which would likely spark very divisive discussions among Allies. It is also unclear how much of a difference such missiles would make in the balance of forces in Europe, given the developments in air- and sea-based systems, which are available to NATO military planners today.

Alternatively, the United States and NATO could focus on ensuring the utmost credibility of the Alliance's nuclear posture, which, within the framework of U.S. modernization efforts, will cover modernization of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems currently deployed in Europe. It should also be reaffirmed that the independent nuclear forces of the United Kingdom and France also contribute to Alliance security. Such steps could become much more difficult post U.S. withdrawal from the INF and could impact NATO's nuclear policy and U.S. weapons deployment. Indeed, NATO will face important—and politically sensitive—decisions regarding the deployment of U.S. nuclear capabilities in Europe, as modernized B61 warheads are meant to replace the older version. This decision will also require complete NATO unity, and determination of all Allies concerned to support the credibility of NATO's nuclear posture.

What Allies Can and Should Do

NATO's strong statement at the December 4-5 NATO Foreign Ministerial, reiterating the indivisibility of Euro-Atlantic security, is a significant first step in asserting that Alliance unity will remain the center of gravity for NATO in any post-INF Treaty scenario.

Next, the United States and European Allies should set in motion a vigorous and detailed process for discussing a common strategy which should include:

A discussion in the NATO Defense Policy and Planning Committee on the impact of new Russian missiles for NATO's posture, and possible conventional options to address this;

A conversation among Allies on a roadmap for maintaining existing arms control agreements like New START and considering new arms control and arms reduction regimes, which would enhance common U.S. and European security, assuming that Russia is willing to be a reliable and trustworthy partner in this effort; and

Longer term, working with interested Allies to develop a shared assessment of capability requirements to uphold strategic stability in Asia.

These steps need to be accompanied by serious efforts to inform and educate U.S. and European publics about the issues at hand and the measures being considered. Losing or leaving behind citizens on nuclear issues and strategic security will prove detrimental to finding and implementing solutions and therefore to strengthening NATO unity and likely open new entry points for disinformation of all sorts.

Over the next few months, it is essential that Allies work together to reinforce cohesion to alleviate the danger of a widening political gap over NATO's nuclear policy and to demonstrate that unity is NATO's center of gravity. The NATO foreign ministers this week made a good start by unanimously denouncing the Russian violation and underlining Russia's responsibility to preserve the INF Treaty. But more difficult and just as important work lies ahead to prepare NATO for a possible post-INF era, while preserving Alliance unity.

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<https://www.csis.org/analysis/what-comes-after-us-withdrawal-inf-treaty-case-nato-strategy>

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The Hill (Washington, D.C.)

The United States Needs a Clear Strategy to Roll Back Iran

By Michael Makovsky

Dec. 3, 2018

National Security Advisor John Bolton stated recently about Iran, "it's our intention to squeeze them very hard." But to what end? The Trump administration has been admirably tough on Iran but vague about its objectives and has insufficiently acted upon its rhetoric. It needs a clear, concise, consistent and consequential Iran policy: "prevention and rollback."

The Iran threat has always had two main elements: nuclear and conventional. President Trump's policy on the former is clear: "prevention."

He declared in October 2017, “we are determined [Iran] will never obtain nuclear weapons.” He correctly left the Iran nuclear deal in May because “we cannot prevent an Iranian nuclear bomb under the decaying and rotten structure of the current agreement.” Secretary of State Mike Pompeo reaffirmed on Oct. 10 to the Jewish Institute of National Security of America (JINSA) the administration seeks a “permanent solution to ensure that Iran never has the capacity to have a nuclear weapon for all time, in any form.”

The administration has been less clear on Iran’s conventional threats.

In May, Pompeo made twelve demands of Iran that boil down to three noes – no nuclear program, no regional aggression, no domestic oppression – but stated no U.S. objectives. Pompeo offered in August that U.S. policy is “to change the Iranian regime’s behavior,” and in October, speaking to JINSA, for Iran to “behave like a normal nation.”

Equally vague has been how the U.S. would achieve this goal. In May, Trump planned to “block” Iran’s “menacing activity across the Middle East,” and Pompeo aimed “to deter Iranian aggression.” At the United Nations, in September, Trump asked world leaders to “isolate Iran’s regime.”

All these words – “block,” “deter,” “isolate” – accept the status quo of Iranian influence, but resist its further expansion. Obama administration officials used similar language to signal a policy of containment.

As conceived by George Kennan, containment sought to block Soviet expansion and contribute to the Soviet Union’s ultimate demise through the active use, over many years, of U.S. military, economic, diplomatic, psychological and other pressures.

The Trump administration’s apparent containment policy against Iran appears far more limited in conception and scope. It mostly involves economic sanctions – though not yet to the maximum— which, though vital, are insufficient.

Containment requires a credible deterrent, which is missing right now. The Trump administration has repeatedly—most recently Saturday—condemned Iranian test-firing of ballistic missiles but has done nothing beyond ineffective sanctions to stop them. It has twice retaliated against Iran-backed Assad’s use of chemical weapons in Syria, for example, but with little impact on Assad’s position. There are roughly 2,300 U.S. Special Forces in Syria, but they are focused on ISIS, not Iran. There is currently no U.S. aircraft carrier battle group in the Persian Gulf, and the Pentagon has withdrawn Patriot missile batteries from the region. Tehran doubts the sincerity of U.S. threats.

A better policy than containment would be, to borrow another Cold War term, “rollback.” Rather than accepting Iran’s destabilizing gains, the United States should actively reverse them. This would weaken Iran’s regional position, boost U.S. credibility and leverage, give the administration a stronger hand to negotiate a new, better nuclear deal, and it might just intensify pressures the Tehran regime is already feeling from its own citizens.

This approach need not involve additional American boots on the ground. One of Iran’s vulnerabilities is its over-extension and dependence upon regimes that rule failed artificial states from Lebanon to Yemen. The U.S. should provide political and military support to forces opposing these regimes, just as Ronald Reagan, whom Pompeo and other senior administration officials revere, did in the 1980s against the Soviet Union. And Iran isn’t as formidable as the Soviet Union was.

For example, the U.S. should not just, as Pompeo said on Oct. 10, ensure the Syrian Kurds, our most reliable anti-ISIS ally, “have a seat at the table,” but also expand assistance for their forces, offer them protection, and make clear America supports at least their autonomy. This would block

Assad's and Iran's expansion in Syria, interfere with Iran's land-bridge for supplying weapons and forces, and stymie the increasingly unfriendly Turks.

The staunchly pro-Israel Trump administration should also assist Jerusalem's active campaign against Iranian entrenchment in Syria and its preparation for a significant defensive war against Iran and Hezbollah. It would advance America's interests to: bolster Israel's military capabilities, including frontloading the 10-year military aid package agreed under President Obama; raise the level of our supply of weapons, military technology and intelligence to Israel; and make clear we will stand by Israel in any major confrontation with Iran.

Secretary Pompeo recently wrote about the need for "new diplomatic paradigms," a "new framework," and "disruptive boldness." Administration policy should back such rhetoric, beginning with not seeking, as Obama did, to contain Iran or accept its regional dominance. To prevent a nuclear Iran, an aggressive Iran, an oppressive Iran, we need a comprehensive approach to roll Iranian forces and its proxies back to their borders.

Michael Makovsky is President and CEO of the Jewish Institute for National Security of America (JINSA) and a former Pentagon official.

<https://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/foreign-policy/419503-to-prevent-nuclear-iran-roll-iranian-forces-and-proxies>

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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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