Feature Report

“Project on Nuclear Issues: A Collection of Papers from the 2017 Conference Series and Nuclear Scholars Initiative”. Written by Mark F. Cancian, published by the Center for Strategic & International Studies; February 21, 2018

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The role that nuclear weapons play in international security has changed since the end of the Cold War, but the need to maintain and replenish the human infrastructure for supporting nuclear capabilities and dealing with the multitude of nuclear challenges remains essential. Recognizing this challenge, CSIS launched the Project on Nuclear Issues (PONI) in 2003 to develop the next generation of policy, technical, and operational nuclear professionals through outreach, mentorship, research, and debate. PONI runs two signature programs—the Nuclear Scholars Initiative and the Annual Conference Series—to engage emerging nuclear experts in debate and research over how to best address the nuclear community’s most pressing problems. The papers in this volume include research from participants in the 2017 Nuclear Scholars Initiative and PONI Conference Series. PONI sponsors this research to provide a forum for facilitating new and innovative thinking and a platform for emerging thought leaders across the nuclear enterprise. Spanning a wide range of technical and policy issues, these selected papers further discussion in their respective areas.
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US NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Space News (Alexandria, Va.)

Northrop Grumman Moves Ahead with New ICBM Design, Impact of Orbital Merger Still Unclear

By Sandra Erwin

February 27, 2018

WASHINGTON — If all goes as planned, the U.S. Air Force next year will start evaluating design concepts for a new intercontinental ballistic missile that will replace the aging Minuteman III.

Northrop Grumman and Boeing are developing competing designs of the “ground based strategic deterrent.” They expect the Air Force to settle on a concept by 2020. The GBSD is one of the pillars of the Pentagon’s effort to modernize U.S. nuclear forces. The development and procurement of the next-generation ICBM is projected to cost nearly $100 billion over the next decade.

A backstory in this program is that one of two manufacturers that would make the solid rocket motors for the GBSD, Orbital ATK, is about to merge with Northrop Grumman. For the current “technology maturation and risk reduction” phase of the program, Orbital ATK is supporting both prime contractors, Boeing and Northrop Grumman.

Orbital ATK’s competitor for the GBSD propulsion system, Aerojet Rocketdyne, also is aligned with both teams.

Northrop Grumman and Orbital ATK reported their intent to merge just weeks after the Air Force announced the selection of the two GBSD primes. Boeing and Northrop Grumman initially had been expected to compete the rocket motor work between Orbital and Aerojet. With Orbital under Northrop Grumman ownership, that type of competition would not be possible.

The Pentagon is not concerned, however. “There will still be two providers,” said Jerry McGinn, principal deputy director of Defense Department’s office of manufacturing and industrial base policy. McGinn did not elaborate on what potential arrangement could be made to ensure there is competition for propulsion systems even though one of the providers will be owned by a GBSD prime.

When the Pentagon had a chance to review the merger of both firms, it did not believe the GBSD program was a deal breaker. “It’s a balance” that had to be struck between market forces and the Pentagon’s desire to have multiple competitors in major programs, McGinn said Monday at a New America event in Washington.

“As a department you don’t want to get in the middle of business,” he said.

Carol Erikson, GBSD vice president at Northrop Grumman Aerospace Systems, told SpaceNews that the company is confident in its GBSD design as the competition moves forward. She declined to comment on the Orbital merger or on any other potential alliances with other suppliers. “Northrop Grumman previously announced that both Orbital ATK and Aerojet Rocketdyne are members of our GBSD team,” she said. “Other teammates are not being divulged at this time due to competitive reasons.”

In the current stage of the GBSD program, the technical maturation and risk reduction phase, she said, “We’re focused on bringing forward our systems engineering expertise,” she said. “We are supporting the Air Force by performing trades to identify the right balance between performance, cost and risk.”
The GBSD program is not just a missile replacement, Erikson said. "It's looking at the entire system. It's a new missile, new command, control and communications all wrapped in a cyber-resilient and nuclear surety environment."

A Boeing spokeswoman said the company would not comment on potential supplier roles.

Northrop Grumman President and Chief Operating Officer Kathy Warden told analysts during a Jan. 25 earnings call that the Orbital ATK transaction should close in the first half of this year. "We believe our combination represents a powerful opportunity to better serve customers," she said.


Defense News (Washington, D.C.)

**Nonstrategic Nukes: What are They Good For?**

By Daniel Cebul

February 26, 2018

WASHINGTON — The announcement of two new low-yield nuclear weapons programs in the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review has led to a discussion about the utility of so-called nonstrategic, or tactical, nuclear weapons.

The importance of nonstrategic assets for the U.S. and Russia was examined in detail in a Congressional Research Service report published Feb. 13.

The distinction between a strategic and nonstrategic weapon used to be defined by mission set, observable capabilities and whether the system is covered by existing strategic arms control agreements. Emerging systems, however, strain traditional identification practices, making the distinction somewhat obsolete.

While some ambiguity remains around the concept of nonstrategic weapons, in the contemporary debate, weapons tend to be classified by warhead yield rather than delivery system.

So, what is the strategic utility of nonstrategic assets?

For the U.S. and NATO, these weapons primarily serve to extend America's overall nuclear deterrent to allies and augment alliance cohesion — despite disagreement within NATO regarding stationing U.S. nuclear weapons on European soil.

According to CRS, the U.S. currently has about 500 nonstrategic weapons in its arsenal, of which 200 are deployed to allied air bases in Turkey, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany and Italy.

Russia’s estimated 1,000 to 6,000 nonstrategic weapons are meant to deter NATO aggression and, in the opinion of some analysts, underscore the country’s “escalate to de-escalate” strategy.

Although several experts on Russian nuclear strategy have challenged the United States' interpretation and veracity of a Russian “escalate to de-escalate” strategy, the 2018 NPR justifies the need for further low-yield options as a tailored response to Russian nonstrategic assets.

Without having a low-yield option to respond to Russian first-use of a nonstrategic weapon, the argument goes, the U.S. would be forced to respond with a larger yield weapon, likely escalating conflict. Otherwise, the U.S. would have to respond with overwhelming conventional force.
In the words of Gen. John Hyten, head of U.S. Strategic Command: “If an adversary employs low-yield nuclear weapons on the battlefield, the only option that we have should not be just to go big. If they believe they can achieve their objectives through the limited use of nuclear weapons, then we risk a deterrence failure.”

As Hyten acknowledged, the U.S. already has low-yield options. These assets, however, are exclusively delivered by air. The B61 gravity bomb and air-launched cruise missile — soon to be replaced by the Long Range Standoff missile — as well as the bombers that carry them, “cannot be everywhere, always at the same time,” Hyten said.

Because of this limitation, the NPR proposes additional sea-based capabilities to extend the range of U.S. power projection.

Yet, some experts argue the addition of low-yield submarine-launched ballistic missiles and a nuclear-tipped sea-launched cruise missile may not be the right solution for U.S. deterrence.

James Acton, a physicist by training and director of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace’s Nuclear Policy Program, believes a more reliable and credible U.S. deterrent can be created by investing more heavily in nuclear command, control and communications.

“There is a real trade-off in the real world in what we spend on command and control and what we spend on offensive forces,” Acton said. “As a nation, we are much better served by investing much more significantly in command and control than, for example, planning on spending for a third and particularly a fourth low-yield option.”

According to Acton, the main problem the U.S. faces regarding Russian deterrence is not technical, but political. In his mind, Russia is challenging U.S. nuclear posture “because they do not believe President Trump will use nuclear weapons against Russia. If Russia questions the U.S. willingness to defend NATO, it is more because of Donald Trump, not because the U.S. does not have the technical options.”


Military.com (San Francisco, Calif.)

**New Nuke Cruise Missile Could Go on Zumwalt-Class Destroyers: StratCom**

By Richard Sisk

February 26, 2018

The Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) includes a long-term plan that could put nuclear cruise missiles aboard the new Zumwalt class (DDG 1000) of stealthy Navy destroyers, according to the commander of U.S. Strategic Command.

Air Force Gen. John Hyten, StratCom chief, said the plan to develop a new, low-yield nuclear Sea-Launched Cruise Missile (SLCM, or "Slick-em") would not be limited to using ballistic submarines as the sole launch platform, as many assumed when the NPR was endorsed by Defense Secretary Jim Mattis earlier this month.

"It’s important to know that the NPR, when it talks about the Sea-Launched Cruise Missile, does not say 'Submarine-Launched Cruise Missile,' " Hyten said in a Feb. 16 keynote address in Washington, D.C., at the National Defense University’s Center for the Study of Weapons of Mass Destruction.
In response to questions, he said, "We want to look at a number of options -- everything from surface DDG 1000s into submarines, different types of submarines" for the SLCMs. "That’s what the president’s budget has requested of us -- to go look at those platforms, and we’re going to walk down that path," Hyten said.

The USS Zumwalt, the first of three new stealthy destroyers billed by the Navy as the world’s largest and most technologically advanced surface combatants, experienced numerous cost overruns in construction and problems in sea trials. It also broke down while transiting the Panama Canal in 2016.

The second ship in the Zumwalt class, the Michael Monsoor, had to cut short sea trials in December because of equipment failures.

The NPR called for the development of two new, low-yield nuclear weapons -- the SCLM and a new submarine-launched ballistic missile.

Hyten said the U.S. will be modifying "a small number of existing submarine-launched ballistic missile warheads to provide a prompt, low-yield capability, as well as pursuing a modern nuclear-armed sea-launched cruise missile in the longer term."

He added, with some regret, that both are necessary to enhance U.S. deterrence against growing tactical and strategic nuclear threats from Russia and China.

"I don’t have the luxury of dealing with the world the way I wish it was," he said. "We, as a nation, have long desired a world with no or at least fewer nuclear weapons. That is my desire as well. The world, however, has not followed that path."

New developments with the Xian H6K strategic bomber, a version of the Russian Tupolev Tu-16 twin-engine bomber, has given China a nuclear triad of bombers, land-based missiles and submarines "for the first time," Hyten said.

He also cited repeated statements from Russian President Vladimir Putin about modernizing his own nuclear force and developing a new generation of low-yield weapons. "Russia has been clear about their intent all along," he said.

In the question-and-answer period at National Defense University, an official from the Russian Embassy in Washington challenged the general’s assessment of the threat posed by his country. Hyten responded, "We listen very closely to what your president says, and then watch closely" through a variety of means to see Putin’s thoughts put into action. "We have to consider those a threat."

Earlier, he said, "Our adversaries are building and operating these strategic weapons, not as a science experiment, but as a direct threat to the United States of America."

In an address preceding Hyten’s, Pentagon policy chief David Trachtenberg said that the new NPR developed for the Trump administration should not be seen as a divergence from the 2010 NPR adopted by the Obama administration.

"Contrary to some commentary, the Nuclear Posture Review does not go beyond the 2010 NPR in expanding the traditional role of nuclear weapons," said Trachtenberg, deputy undersecretary of defense for policy.

"The goal of our recommendations is to deter war, not to fight one," he said. "If nuclear weapons are employed in conflict, it is because deterrence failed, and the goal of the 2018 NPR is to make sure that deterrence will not fail."
However, "it is clear that our attempts to lead by example in reducing the numbers and salience of nuclear weapons in the world have not been reciprocated," Trachtenberg said.

Russia and China have made clear their intentions to "expand the numbers and capabilities" of their nuclear arsenals, he said.


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Albuquerque Journal (Albuquerque, N.M.)

NNSA Wants More Plutonium in Los Alamos Facility

By Mark Oswald

February 22, 2018

SANTA FE – The federal government has put out for public comment plans for a 10-fold increase in the amount of “at risk” radioactive material that can be handled for plutonium work in one of Los Alamos National Laboratory’s buildings.

The National Nuclear Security Administration released a “draft environmental assessment” for operational changes at the Radiological Laboratory/Utility/Office Building, known as RLUOB or the Rad Lab.

The building’s allowable radioactive “material-at-risk” inventory would go from the current 38.6 grams of “plutonium equivalent material” to 400 grams. The change would recategorize the facility from a “radiological facility” to a “hazard category 3 nuclear facility.”

The release of the document drew immediate fire from watchdogs and critics of the lab. Jay Coghlan of Nuclear Watch New Mexico said recategorizing RLUOB was approved by former Department of Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz in 2015 and more than $2 million has been spent since then. Coghlan said conducting an environmental assessment “after the fact” may violate federal law that requires public comment before commitment of “irretrievable resources.”

Coghlan added, “This environmental assessment to raise the plutonium limit in the Rad Lab should not be a standalone document, but instead be part of a far broader programmatic environmental impact statement on expanded plutonium pit production.”

NNSA is under orders from Congress to ramp up production of plutonium “pits” – the cores of nuclear weapons – to 30 annually over the next several years, at Los Alamos, and to 80 pits a year by about 2030, part of a huge modernization of the country’s nuclear arsenal. The production of 80 pits per year might be moved to the Savannah River Site in South Carolina. No new pits have been made since 2011.

Greg Mello of the Los Alamos Study group noted the $1.4 billion RLOUB is only part of the plans for expensive new plutonium facilities at Los Alamos, which also include underground “modules” for the riskiest work. “NNSA is segmenting its analysis and rigging its comparisons to make its plans seem much smaller and more benign than they are,” he said.

Critics like Coghlan and Mello say no new pits are needed with thousands produced in the past still around and the Navy’s distaste for a new kind of warhead for which new pits have been proposed.

US COUNTER-WMD

Military.com (San Francisco, Calif.)

'Drop It on Their Heads': StratCom's Launch-Phase Missile Defense Plan

By Richard Sisk

February 28, 2018

The nation needs directed-energy weapons -- lasers, particle beams, microwaves -- to take out enemy ballistic missiles on launch, Air Force Gen. John Hyten said Wednesday.

"Drop it back on their heads" right after it leaves the pad, Hyten, commander of U.S. Strategic Command, said at an all-day forum on Army missile defense sponsored by the Association of the U.S. Army.

"The day you can actually shoot a missile down over somebody's head and have that thing drop back on their heads -- that'll be a good day, because as soon as you drop it back on their head, that's the last one they're going to launch, especially if there's something nasty on top of it," he said.

"I think directed energy brings that to bear," Hyten said, although such weapons do not yet exist in the U.S. arsenal.

"Directed energy is an interesting challenge," he said, but "I think directed energy has a huge potential on the missile defense side.

"We're getting close" on directed energy weapons development, Hyten said. "We're getting close to where that technology is going to be and where it's going to work, and I think it's going to change the defensive structure a lot. It's going to move the opportunity to intercept further to the left."

Currently, the THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense) and Patriot missile defense systems provide intercept capabilities in the terminal phase of a missile attack, but directed energy would enhance deterrence by threatening intercept at launch, he said.

Hyten's comments on directed energy weapons came in a question-and-answer session following his keynote address to the conference in which he said that U.S. strategic deterrence and missile defense had to be tailored to the adversary.

"It's not one size fits all" in responding to the varying threats from Russia, China and North Korea, he said, "and we keep, as a nation, trying to make it one size fits all and it doesn't work that way." Hyten said.

"We have to look at each adversary differently and separately and then look at the impact of what we do as a whole," Hyten said.

He said that Russia posed the only current existential threat while China was advancing to that point, but North Korea posed the most immediate threat.

"I think Korea is the most uncertain threat and the most dangerous, near-term threat because we are not certain how that is going to play out this year," Hyten said. "There seems to be good things going on on the peninsula right now, but we will have to wait and see now that the Olympics are over how that goes."
The U.S. and South Korea agreed to postpone scheduled joint military exercises opposed by North Korea during the Winter Olympics and during the following Paralympics that will end in mid-March but Defense Secretary Jim Mattis has said that the exercises will go ahead once the Paralympics are concluded.

"The Korean problem is different than the China problem is different than the Russia problem. Everything we do with respect to Korea impacts China. Everything we do with China impacts Russia. Everything we do with Russia impacts everybody else," Hyten said.

"I wish I could look at them as friends and partners, but when you have weapons that are clearly built for you, as a military officer and as a combatant commander, I don't get a choice," he said. "I have to figure out how to counter those threats and I look at them as threats."

The mounting threats strain existing missile defenses and highlight deficiencies, Hyten said. "We still have exploitable holes" in the current missile defense systems whose backbone is the ground-based, hit-to-kill interceptors in California and at Fort Greely, Alaska, he said.

Hyten said his highest priority was to develop space-based sensors to augment the ground-based and ship-based radars in the current system. "There's not enough ships, there's not enough islands in the Pacific" to provide the missile defense early warning system that are necessary, Hyten said.


Pentagon Nears Decision on Fort Drum as East Coast Missile Defense Site

By Mark Weiner
February 28, 2018

WASHINGTON -- Members of Upstate New York's congressional delegation are making a last-minute pitch to the Pentagon, asking military leaders to consider building a $3.6 billion missile interceptor site at Fort Drum.

The lobbying blitz comes as the Pentagon nears a decision in early March on whether the U.S. needs to build a new base to defend the East Coast from an intercontinental ballistic missile attack.

U.S. Rep. Elise Stefanik, R-Willsboro, who represents Fort Drum and Northern New York, led a group of nine New York House members this week who asked military brass to consider Fort Drum for the interceptor site.

Among those signing a letter to Samuel A. Greaves, director of the U.S. Missile Defense Agency, were Reps. John Katko, R-Camillus, and Brian Higgins, a Democrat from Buffalo.

The New York House members touted "the economic advantage of building the site at Fort Drum," saying the home of the Army's 10th Mountain Division already has the infrastructure and community support needed for the project.

The Pentagon is also considering military installations in Ohio and Michigan for a project expected to bring 1,450 jobs and $220 million per year in economic value to the community that hosts the interceptor base.
The military has been studying its options for strengthening U.S. missile defenses since May 2017, when Defense Secretary Jim Mattis ordered a Ballistic Missile Defense Review.

That review will recommend whether the U.S. should beef up its existing ground-based missile interceptor sites -- at Fort Greely in Alaska and Vandenberg Air Force Base in California - and whether a third site is necessary to defend the East Coast.

If a third site is recommended, the Pentagon would likely decide within 60 days whether the new missile interceptor site should be built at Fort Drum, about 80 miles north of Syracuse.

The other sites under consideration are at Camp Ravenna Joint Training Center in Ohio, which is used by the Ohio Army National Guard, and Fort Custer Training Center in Michigan.

The Missile Defense Agency selected the three sites as finalists in 2016 after a two-year, nearly $6 million study that fulfilled a mandate from members of Congress who have been pushing for a third interceptor site to defend the East Coast.

But a final decision was put on hold in early 2017 after the election of President Donald Trump, who will ultimately decide with Mattis whether an East Coast missile defense site is worth the expense.

The nation's top generals in charge of missile defense have previously said a third site is not necessary to defend the East Coast, and that money would be better spent upgrading the existing interceptor sites in Alaska and California.

The ground-based interceptors have an inconsistent track record, successfully destroying only about half of incoming missiles in test firings.

U.S. Sens. Charles Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., said they would support building a missile interceptor site at Fort Drum if the community wants the project and the Pentagon demonstrates a need.

Schumer, the Senate Democratic leader, said his backing would require that "military experts determine that a new system on the East Coast is necessary, workable and cost effective."


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Dayton Daily News (Dayton, Ohio)

**East Coast Nuclear Defense Site Could Be in Ohio**

By Jessica Wehrman

February 26, 2018

WASHINGTON — Nuclear missiles headed for the United States could be shot down from Ohio if the state’s congressional delegation has its way.

Ohio’s members of Congress are in the midst of what one congressman calls a “full court press” to land an East Coast Missile Defense site in Ravenna, Ohio — a site that would, along with bases in California and Alaska, be capable of fending off long- and intermediate-range missiles, presumably from Iran or North Korea.

Last week, Youngstown-area Rep. Tim Ryan, D-Niles, sent a letter to President Donald Trump urging him to pick Ravenna.
Ravenna is about 40 miles southeast of Cleveland.

After meetings, letters and lobbying, Ravenna may be just weeks from getting their answer.

Last week, a Pentagon spokesman confirmed that the Secretary of Defense and President Trump are expected to make a decision in the Ballistic Missile Defense Review, which could be released as soon as early March. That review may provide a window into whether the Trump Administration is willing to invest $3.6 billion into a third continental U.S. site that could strike down intermediate and long-range ballistic missiles. If the Trump administration decides to move forward, a decision on the site would likely occur within two months.

For his part, Trump seems more bullish on the idea than his predecessor in the White House, requesting nearly $10 billion for missile defense in his fiscal 2019 budget North Korea, too, has helped bolster his case: In November, it tested a missile with a range believed to be sufficient to hit the East Coast.

Until Trump and Defense Secretary James Mattis release their Ballistic Missile Defense Review, those who want to land the East Coast Missile Defense System are in limbo: They’re not sure yet if Trump will even decide an East Coast site is necessary.

Still, said James McKeon of the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, a critic of the East Coast Missile Defense site, “President Trump has shown a bit more enthusiasm for this program than we’ve seen in the past.”

Camp Ravenna Joint Military Training Center is one of three finalists for the site, competing with Fort Custer Training Center near Battle Creek, Michigan and in Fort Drum, New York, which is north of Syracuse.

Landing the defense system would be a boon for whomever is picked: The Ohio delegation, in a 2016 letter to the Missile Defense Agency, said it would bring 2,300 construction jobs and up to 850 full time employees once the system is operational.

The site, they argued in that letter, is “well-suited” to help fend off the possibility of incoming missiles to the East Coast.

“Ohioans stand ready to support the defense of our nation,” the delegation wrote.

“We’ve got the space, we’ve got the acreage, we can handle the construction,” said Ryan. “We’ve got the railway and the river as far as what’s needed with the buildout and we’ve got the workforce to be able to do it.”

In a fact sheet promoting Ravenna’s bid, northeast Ohio economic development agencies tout its size — more than 21,000 acres — as well as its proximity to NASA–Glenn and Wright–Patterson Air Force Base to argue that it has technology expertise readily available.

At Wright-Patterson, the National Air and Space Intelligence Center has the job of assessing ballistic missile threats to the United States from nations such as China, Russia, North Korea and Iran.

Sen. Sherrod Brown, D–Ohio, said selecting Ravenna “would give the Missile Defense Agency access to Ohio’s world-class workforce, and its proximity to Akron and Youngstown would help ensure timely construction by Ohio workers.”

“This is an opportunity to build on this site’s contributions to our national defense,” he said.

If selected, Ravenna would join Alaska and California as the third site to host the Ground-based Midcourse Defense System — a missile system aimed at intercepting long- and mid-range missiles.
Currently, there are 40 interceptors in Fort Greely, Alaska as well as four at Vandenberg Air Force Base in California. A budget bill passed last year by Congress would pay for the development of 20 more interceptors in Alaska.

McKeon said the East Coast site would primarily protect the U.S. from missiles incoming from Iran—not North Korea. Missiles aren’t typically shot east–to–west; instead, they head north before coming south again, he said.

But the technology, he said, is far from fail-safe. Tests are typically highly scripted, done in the middle of the day, not considered operationally realistic, “and they still have a 50 percent success rate,” he said.

He cites a 2013 letter from the then-head of the Missile Defense Agency Vice Admiral James Syring to Sen. Carl Levin arguing “there is no validated military requirement to deploy an East Coast missile defense site.”

During the Obama administration, Defense officials repeatedly expressed concern about the plan, saying they’d rather devote resources to testing and improving what already exists instead of adding to a system that is not yet fully proven. They argue that batteries on the West Coast already have the potential to cover the continental United States.

“The problem is there is no evidence thus far that this system is very effective,” McKeon said. “In fact, all the evidence suggests it cannot be relied upon to protect the United States homeland.”

Rep. Mike Turner, R-Dayton, is among those who disagree. He was chairman of the subcommittee that put the language in over the Obama Administration’s objections.

“I led the charge to plan and develop an East Coast Missile Defense Site,” he said, calling the site “an important step to ensure our country is protected from belligerent actors bent on threatening Americans with long-range missiles.”

He’s no longer chair of that subcommittee, but still, he said, he is continuing to monitor Defense as it determines whether or not to build the site.

Riki Ellison, founder and chairman of the nonprofit Missile Defense Advocacy Alliance argues that a third site in the continental United States is overdue.

He questioned why the government recently agreed to put another 20 interceptors in Alaska rather than invest more in the lower 48 continental states. “You want your full capacity,” he said. “You want all your states defended.”

He said Ohio has advantages in the selection process. “You’re more central from my perspective,” he said. “Ohio has more coverage for more states.”

He agrees that Trump has embraced the idea of missile defense in a way that President Barack Obama did not.

“This administration looks like it’s going to put U.S. homeland defense first,” he said.


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Trump Boosts Missile Defense Spending Plans

By Jon Harper

February 22, 2018

President Donald Trump’s fiscal year 2019 budget request calls for major increases in missile defense spending relative to his last budget blueprint.

His 2018 submission anticipated $8 billion in funding for the Missile Defense Agency in 2019. His most recent budget outline, submitted Feb. 12, requested $9.9 billion. That would be a $1.9 billion, or 24 percent, increase over last year’s plan.

“This has been a significant year with respect to potential adversaries testing and advancing their ballistic missile capabilities,” Gary Pennett, MDA’s director of operations, said during a briefing at the Pentagon. The new budget request is “consistent with the president’s commitment to expand and improve our missile defense capabilities.”

Approximately $850 million of the additional money proposed for 2019 would go toward procurement. The budget calls for a total of $2.4 billion in procurement spending by the agency in the next fiscal year, more than double what the administration initially requested for 2018, according to budget documents.

“The primary plus-up is in the area of procurement,” said Tom Karako, a missile defense expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. “It is spread around among the different families of capabilities. The ground-based midcourse defense system, which is designed to protect the homeland, made out particularly well in the 2019 request, he said.

In fiscal years 2019 to 2022, the Missile Defense Agency would receive $4.8 billion more than the previous budget submission called for, including about $1.2 billion more for procurement.

The Trump administration might end up asking for even more money after the Pentagon’s ballistic missile defense review is released, Karako noted. That study was expected to be unveiled by the end of February.

“There is the potential for other capabilities and muscle movements yet to come ... should that review recommend some additional capabilities,” he said.

Funding for additional technology could be added in the 2020 budget proposal, or the administration could submit a supplemental request or reprogramming request in the coming months like it did last fall, he noted.

Lawmakers could also take the initiative and appropriate more money for missile defense than Trump is requesting, he added.

“Congress is fully seized on the missile threat problem that we face as a country right now,” he said.

The Senate Appropriations Committee’s defense subcommittee called for more missile defense funding in 2018 than Trump did, even after accounting for the administration’s supplemental request, Karako noted. "If anything, they may go up a little bit" more in 2019, he said.


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US ARMS CONTROL

The New York Times (New York, N.Y.)

Rewrite Iran Deal? Europeans Offer a Different Solution: A New Chapter

By Mark Landler, David E. Sanger and Gardiner Harris

February 26, 2018

WASHINGTON — President Trump’s threat to rip up the Iran nuclear deal has touched off an urgent scramble in European capitals to preserve the agreement — not by rewriting it, but by creating a successor deal intended to halt Iran’s ballistic missile program and make permanent the restrictions on its ability to produce nuclear fuel.

As the two sides prepare to meet for trans-Atlantic talks next month in Berlin, the Europeans are demanding a guarantee that Mr. Trump will abide by the add-on deal after it is negotiated and not jettison it on some other pretext. Mr. Trump has called the 2015 agreement that was negotiated by President Barack Obama “the worst deal” ever and has told Britain, France and Germany to fix it by May 12 or he will pull the United States out.

The Iranians have so far dismissed efforts by the State Department to impose strict new terms on Tehran — or face threats of renewed sanctions if it fails to comply — as a backdoor effort to reopen the original agreement that limits Iran’s nuclear program.

The European demand comes under duress. Talking points that Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson recently circulated to American diplomats in Europe warned that “in the absence of a clear commitment from your side to address these issues, the United States will not again waive sanctions in order to stay in the Iran nuclear deal.”

The instructions, which were shown to The New York Times, stipulate that the Europeans agree to three key fixes: a commitment to renegotiate limits on missile testing by Iran; an assurance that inspectors have unfettered access to Iranian military bases; and an extension of the deal’s expiration dates to prevent Iran from resuming the production of nuclear fuel long after the current restrictions expire in 2030.

European diplomats said there was scope for an agreement on missiles and inspections, but not yet on the length of the deal. They argue that rewriting those terms would break the bargain they struck, not only with Iran but also with Russia and China, two other signatories. And breaching the deal, they say, would free Iran to pursue nuclear weapons again.

The upcoming talks are being led by Brian H. Hook, a low-key Republican lawyer who is the State Department’s director of policy planning, who has said he would bring the European request for a guarantee back to Washington. European diplomats said they worry that Mr. Trump’s scorn for the accord “is under continuous review, and our participation can be canceled by me as president at any time.”

Even if Mr. Trump did pledge to abide by the deal, it is far from clear that a successor deal would be endorsed by Russia or China, let alone the Iranians, who signaled in recent weeks that they are planning a new project — a fleet of nuclear-powered ships, fueled by Iranian-made reactors — that they say would justify resuming the production of nuclear fuel as the limits imposed by the deal expire over the next dozen years.
Still, the mere fact that the United States and Europe are trying to work out a compromise attests to the desire, on both sides, to find a solution that would satisfy Mr. Trump while not unraveling the deal.

The president’s national security team — Mr. Tillerson, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, and the national security adviser, Lt. Gen. H. R. McMaster — has on three occasions talked him out of ripping up the deal. With each deadline to reimpose sanctions on Iran, that task gets harder.

There is an element of diplomatic legerdemain to the exercise, European diplomats acknowledge: How do you convince Mr. Trump that you have changed the deal without actually changing it?

“The supplemental deal is a diplomatic device that is being used to allow the Europeans to declare victory,” said Mark Dubowitz, a leading critic of the Iran deal who is nevertheless open to the idea.

“They can say they were able to keep the deal, remain steadfast to their commitment not to renegotiate it, but also to satisfy the U.S. and their own concerns that the length of the deal was too short,” said Mr. Dubowitz, the chief executive of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

By law, Mr. Trump must decide every 120 days whether to continue suspending longstanding American economic sanctions against Tehran, which the United States committed to lift as part of the deal. If he were to reimpose them, as he has threatened, that would effectively scuttle the deal.

Iran complains that Mr. Trump’s threats have already kept European banks from investing in major projects in Iran, denying it the benefits that were promised for giving up its enrichment program.

“If the same policy of confusion and uncertainties over the future of the deal continue,” Iran’s deputy foreign minister, Abbas Araqchi, who was a member of the negotiating team, said last week, “if companies and banks are not working with Iran, we cannot remain in a deal that has no benefit for us.”

The International Atomic Energy Agency said last week that it had received formal notice from Tehran about a “decision that has been taken to construct naval nuclear propulsion in future.”

Nothing in the 2015 agreement prohibits the construction of nuclear reactors to power ships and submarines, and those reactors would almost certainly not use nuclear-weapons-grade fuel. But they could provide a pretext for Iran to resume uranium enrichment.

The Europeans are most comfortable with enforcing new limits on Iran’s intercontinental ballistic missile development and testing. Missiles are not covered by the nuclear accord, but rather by a United Nations resolution, whose wording was negotiated by then-Secretary of State John Kerry just as the nuclear accord was coming together in Vienna in July 2015.

The State Department’s talking points said the United States viewed the nuclear and missile programs as “inseparable,” and said that “Iran’s development and testing of missiles should be subject to severe sanctions.” The Europeans have not gone that far, at least yet.

Inspections are potentially more problematic, given the administration’s rejection of arguments by the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps that all military-related sites are off limits to international inspectors.

But this has not been an issue yet: The inspections have been limited to declared nuclear sites, and the United Nations nuclear agency affirmed last week that it had been given all the access it sought. Inspectors have said they would try to inspect military sites only if they had intelligence suggesting that surreptitious nuclear activity was underway.

Once a deal is struck with the Europeans, administration officials intend to seek approval from Russia, China and Iran. But concerns that such a deal could not possibly pass muster with Iran will
not deter them, a senior official said. Russia and China’s lack of participation would also matter little, given the stark consequences for Iran’s economy if Europe and the United States reimpose sanctions, this person said.

While American and European negotiators are working feverishly on a deal to preserve the 2015 accord, there are also preliminary discussions about what will happen if they fall short.

Reimposing sanctions, such as blacklisting the Central Bank of Iran, would cause serious problems for European companies, potentially precipitating a split in the trans-Atlantic alliance. But the president, Mr. Dubowitz noted, has the authority to phase in sanctions, which he could use as leverage to give negotiators more time to work out an agreement.

He could, for example, impose sanctions on the central bank for its support of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, which is accused of supporting terrorism, but waive the imposition of so-called secondary sanctions on foreign companies that do business with the bank until the next deadline in July.

For the Europeans, who are mostly satisfied with the deal and face no domestic political pressure to pull out, there is little joy in this exercise. But they feel they have no choice but to go along with it. One diplomat compared it to humoring an angry relative who controlled a family vacation estate, and periodically threatened to burn it down.


Exclusive: Chemical Weapons Watchdog Investigates Ghouta Attacks - Sources

By Anthony Deutsch

February 27, 2018

AMSTERDAM (Reuters) - The world’s chemical weapons watchdog opened an investigation on Sunday into attacks in the besieged, rebel-held Syrian region of eastern Ghouta to determine whether banned munitions had been used, diplomatic sources told Reuters.

The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) will examine attacks including one on Sunday which health authorities said killed a child and caused symptoms consistent with exposure to chlorine gas, the sources said.

Political leaders in France, the United States and United Kingdom said this month they would back targeted military action against Damascus if there were proof chemical weapons had been used by forces under President Bashar al-Assad.

The investigation by the OPCW fact-finding team comes as Syrian warplanes continued to strike eastern Ghouta on Tuesday, despite a Russian call for a five-hour daily truce to allow the 400,000 people living there under siege to leave.

The sources spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not permitted to discuss the operation in public.

Use of chlorine as a chemical weapons is prohibited under the 1997 Chemical Weapons Convention. If inhaled, chlorine gas turns into hydrochloric acid in the lungs and the build-up of fluids can drown victims.
The latest OPCW mission is seeking to determine whether chemical weapons were used in violation of the international weapons convention, which Syria signed in 2013 after hundreds died in a massive sarin gas attack in Ghouta.

The OPCW will not assign blame.

“OPCW’s technical secretariat continues to examine all credible allegations of chemical weapons use, reported by media or other sources, including the most recent allegations,” it said when asked about the investigation into the Ghouta attacks.

The OPCW team does not plan to travel to Ghouta because of safety concerns - two visits by inspectors in 2013 and 2014 were ambushed - but will gather witness testimony, photographic and video evidence, and interview medical experts, the sources said.

A U.N.-OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism, established by the United Nations to identify those behind chemical weapons attacks, concluded in 2016 that Syrian government forces had used chlorine on three occasions.

It also concluded last year that Syrian government forces were behind a sarin nerve agent attack on the town of Khan Sheikhoun that killed more than 80 people, many of them women and children.

The United States fired 59 cruise missiles at Syria’s Shayrat airbase in April, saying it had been used by Assad’s forces to carry out the sarin attack.

Syria and its close ally Russia, which provides military support to Assad’s forces, deny using chemical weapons and blame insurgents.

The use of chemical weapons has become systematic in Syria’s seven-year war, but political rifts between Western powers and Russia have hamstrung the United Nations and the OPCW, leaving them unable to act against violations of international law.

A renewal of the joint U.N.-OPCW mission’s mandate was vetoed by Moscow at the U.N. Security Council.


TASS Russian News Agency (Moscow, Russia)

**Russia Urges US to Ensure that Contested Points on New START Treaty are Ironed Out**

Author Not Attributed

February 27, 2018

*Moscow expects to continue a constructive search with the United States for mutually acceptable solutions to common problems*

Moscow urges Washington to ensure that disputed issues arising from the Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (the New START Treaty) be adequately settled, Russia’s Foreign Ministry said in a statement released on Tuesday.

Russia’s Foreign Ministry drew attention to the data published by the US Department of State on the number of US strategic offensive armaments, which prove that the United States has achieved the levels set by Article II of the New START Treaty.
"The result announced by the US has been achieved not only thanks to real cuts in armaments but also by way of unilaterally excluding 56 Trident-II submarine-launched ballistic missile launchers and 41 B-52H heavy bombers from being counted under the Treaty that were re-equipped in a way that the Russian side cannot confirm that these strategic offensive armaments were made unfit for SLBMs and the nuclear armament of heavy bombers as is stipulated by clause 3, section 1 of Part 3 of the Protocol to the Treaty, and also by way of unilaterally re-qualifying four 'silo training launchers’ into the category of ‘training siloes,’ which is not stipulated by the New START Treaty," the ministry said.

"We expect to continue a constructive search with the United States for mutually acceptable solutions to the problems related to the re-equipping and exclusion from being counted as strategic offensive armaments," the ministry said.

"We deem it necessary to ensure an adequate settlement of this issue, which is of principal importance from the standpoint of the parties’ approaches to fulfilling this treaty," the statement reads.

http://tass.com/politics/991749

ASIA/PACIFIC

Los Angeles Times (Los Angeles, Calif.)

Upset over a U.S. Missile Defense System, China Hits South Korea Where it Hurts — in the Wallet

By Matt Stiles

February 28, 2018

The bustling Myeongdong neighborhood has long been this city's most-visited tourist spot, a place where foreign shoppers fill rolling suitcases with South Korea’s coveted cosmetics, clothing and electronics.

But over the last year even the street vendors have noticed a steep decline in sales. “There aren't as many tourists to attract in the streets," said 38-year-old Park Jeong-soo, who sells chicken skewers from a cart. "It was the worst at the end of last year."

The reason: South Korea’s new missile defense system, known as THAAD. China objects to it and has been flexing its economic muscle in protest, carrying out an aggressive campaign of economic retaliation that includes sending fewer tourists. In 2017, just over 4 million Chinese visited South Korea, down from roughly 8 million a year earlier after several years of steady growth.

"I don't know why we have to be the ones that suffer because of politics," said Park. "I watch the news more closely now, especially about THAAD. In a sense, my livelihood depends on it."

The Terminal High Altitude Area Defense was installed last spring on a former golf course in the country's south by South Korea’s most important ally, the United States. The system is designed to shoot down medium-range missiles from North Korea over parts of South Korea.

China says the system’s radar encroaches on its sovereignty and threatens its national security.
South Korean President Moon Jae-in has tried to patch things up, visiting Beijing in December and agreeing to not install any new missile systems or link the current one with the United States’ overall defense network in Asia.

The meeting seemed to help, but merchants say the effects of the retaliation linger.

“They say THAAD retaliation is over, but I think it will take awhile for us to recover,” said Han Soo-young, 42, a clothing store manager in Myeongdong. “I’ve lost a lot of customers since our relationship with China became worse. I have even had to get rid of employees, and now I run the store alone.”

In addition to sending fewer tourists to South Korea, China also limited domestic distribution of South Korean entertainment, such as streaming of popular television shows and movies, according to a report by the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission.

The retaliation also reduced sales of South Korean cosmetics, which are enormously popular in China, and South Korean automobiles, with Hyundai and Kia seeing big drops in their exports to China.

South Korea’s leading retail conglomerate, Lotte, which gave Seoul the land for the missile-defense system in a real-estate swap, has also been targeted, suffering cyberattacks and losing hundreds of millions of dollars in the closure of more than 70 of its stores in China because they failed to pass fire-safety inspections.

But South Korea’s tourism industry perhaps suffered most, both economically and psychologically.

The decline began in March 2017, when the China National Tourism Administration ordered domestic travel agencies to stop selling package deals to South Korea.

It was obvious and immediate across the country, especially as the peak summer season opened in places such as Myeongdong, which was visited by 81% of all foreign tourists in 2016, according to a survey by the government’s Tourism Ministry.

Given that Chinese tourists spend about $1,900 on average during a visit, the cost of China’s travel restrictions could be as high as $15 billion, according the Hyundai Research Institute. The figure is a small fraction of South Korea’s $1.4-trillion economy — the 11th largest in the world — but it hurt nonetheless.

Restaurant owners and hoteliers on South Korea’s Jeju Island, once a popular beach destination for Chinese, saw their revenue decline precipitously. The island attracted about 1,200 visitors from China last year during the popular fall holiday known as Chuseok — down from roughly 8,800 visitors during the 2016 holiday.

Nationwide, Chinese visits during the holiday fell 87%, according to the island’s tourism association.

The Korea Tourism Organization has tried to make up for the losses by focusing its marketing on countries in Southeast Asia as well as Chinese who are willing to travel independently and not as part of an organized tour group. But that has barely helped.

Business owners across the country, and particularly in Seoul, have been left to wonder why their companies were caught up in a geopolitical row.

Kim Ji-seon, who manages a cosmetics store, used to see so many Chinese customers — up to 40 a day — that she hired Chinese-speaking clerks to serve them. Now those workers might help 10 of them a day.
“Unfortunately we don’t use Chinese that much anymore,” said Kim, 34. “There were very few Chinese tourists in Myeongdong this winter. Not a lot of people come into the stores. As you can see, it’s empty right now.”

[Link to article]

Xinhua (Beijing, China)

**U.S. Must First Dismantle Nuclear Arsenal: DPRK Official Daily**

Author Not Attributed

February 27, 2018

PYONGYANG, Feb. 27 (Xinhua) -- The official media of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) said on Tuesday that the United States should dismantle its nuclear arsenal first if it truly desires a nuclear weapons-free world.

The official Rodong Sinmun said in a commentary that the United States was the first country in the world to make a nuclear weapon and the only one to ever to use it.

It called the United States a "nuclear criminal."

U.S. President Donald Trump recently said that his country needed to expand nuclear arsenal and modernize nuclear weapons because other countries were doing so.

"It is the United States that must abandon its nuclear ambitions before others,” said the official daily of the ruling Workers’ Party of Korea.

During a meeting with American governors and mayors at the White House recently, Trump said if other countries abandon their nuclear development, the United States would do so "in two minutes," according to media reports.

Accusing Washington of cherishing a "wild ambition to dominate the world with an absolute nuclear upper-hand," the daily said that "if the United States opts for nuclear dismantlement, the denuclearization issue of the world will be easily settled."

[Link to article]

The New York Times (New York, N.Y.)

**U.N. Links North Korea to Syria’s Chemical Weapon Program**

By Michael Schwirtz

February 27, 2018

UNITED NATIONS — North Korea has been shipping supplies to the Syrian government that could be used in the production of chemical weapons, United Nations experts contend.

The evidence of a North Korean connection comes as the United States and other countries have accused the Syrian government of using chemical weapons on civilians, including recent attacks on civilians in the Damascus suburb of eastern Ghouta using what appears to have been chlorine gas.
The supplies from North Korea include acid-resistant tiles, valves and thermometers, according to a report by United Nations investigators. North Korean missile technicians have also been spotted working at known chemical weapons and missile facilities inside Syria, according to the report, which was written by a panel of experts who looked at North Korea’s compliance with United Nations sanctions.

The report highlights the potential danger posed by any such trade between Syria and North Korea, which could allow Syria to maintain its chemical weapons while also providing North Korea with cash for its nuclear and missile programs.

The possible chemical weapons components were part of at least 40 previously unreported shipments by North Korea to Syria between 2012 and 2017 of prohibited ballistic missile parts and materials that could be used for both military and civilian purposes, according to the report, which has not been publicly released but which was reviewed by The New York Times.

Neither the report’s authors nor members of the United Nations Security Council who have seen it would comment, and neither would the United States’ mission to the international agency.

The eight experts who make up the panel all come from different countries and possess specific expertise in areas like weapons of mass destruction, maritime transport and customs controls. Since 2010 the panel has had a mandate from the Security Council to investigate possible sanctions violations by North Korea and present its findings in an annual report.

Though experts who viewed the report said the evidence it cited did not prove definitively that there was current, continuing collaboration between North Korea and Syria on chemical weapons, they said it did provide the most detailed account to date of efforts to circumvent sanctions intended to curtail the military advancement of both countries.

William Newcomb, who was chairman of the United Nations panel of experts on North Korea from 2011 to 2014, called the report “an important breakthrough.”

Since the start of the Syrian civil war in 2011, there have been suspicions that North Korea was providing equipment and expertise to maintain the chemical weapons program of Syria’s president, Bashar al-Assad. Those suspicions were not assuaged when in 2013 Syria signed onto the Chemical Weapons Convention and claimed to give up its chemical weapons stocks.

“We knew stuff was going on,” Mr. Newcomb said. “We really wanted to up the game on chemical weapons programs, and we just weren’t able to get what we needed to do so.”

The report, which is more than 200 pages long, includes copies of contracts between North Korean and Syrian companies as well as bills of lading indicating the types of materials shipped. Much information was provided by unidentified United Nations member states.

The military-related cooperation, if confirmed, indicates major shortcomings in the international effort to isolate both countries. The shipments would have eluded detection even though both nations are subject to highly restrictive sanctions, and are under the intense scrutiny of American and other spy services.

North Korea’s relationship with Syria takes up one section of the report, which also documents the many ways the government of North Korea’s leader, Kim Jong-un, has tried to circumvent sanctions. It describes how North Korea uses a complex web of shell companies and sympathetic foreign citizens to gain access to international financing, employs sophisticated cyber operations to steal military secrets and enlists its own diplomats in smuggling operations.

It also criticizes Russia and China for failing to do enough to enforce sanctions on items like oil, coal and luxury goods.
The sanctions, it says, have yet to be matched “by the requisite political will, international coordination, prioritization and resource allocation necessary to drive effective implementation.”

The report gives fresh details of a military relationship between North Korea and Syria that goes back decades. During the Arab-Israeli wars in the 1960s and 1970s, North Korean pilots flew missions with the Syrian Air Force. Later, North Korean technicians helped to develop Syria’s arsenal of ballistic missiles and to build a nuclear power plant capable of producing plutonium, which can be used to make nuclear weapons. Israel destroyed the plant in 2007.

In 2015, Syria honored that assistance by opening a monument and park in Damascus dedicated to North Korea’s founder, Kim Il-sung, grandfather of the current leader. The unveiling ceremony, held as Syria’s civil war raged, featured North Korean and Syrian dignitaries, military officials and a marching band.

North Korea has provided training and support for Syria’s chemical weapons program since at least the 1990s, according to a forthcoming book by Bruce Bechtol, a former Korea analyst at the United States Defense Intelligence Agency who is now a professor at Angelo State University in Texas. The book also describes an accident in 2007 in which several Syrian technicians, along with North Korean and Iranian advisers, were killed in the explosion of a warhead filled with sarin gas and the extremely toxic nerve agent VX.

The relationship with Syria “has been a boon for the North Korean military-industrial complex,” Mr. Bechtol said in an interview.

The United Nations report says the cooperation continued during Syria’s civil war, despite international sanctions. Crucial evidence of that was found in January 2017, when two ships carrying acid-resistant tiles, commonly used in the construction of chemical weapons factories, were interdicted at sea en route to Damascus, the report said.

Those shipments were among five deliveries agreed to in a contract between a government-owned company in Syria and the Korea Mining Development Trading Corp., a North Korean company involved in arms exports, according to the report. It based those findings at least in part on copies of contracts provided by the shipping company, identified as Cheng Tong Trading Co. Ltd., based in China.

The report said the three other shipments had been sent between Nov. 3 and Dec. 12, 2016.

The report did not say which country interdicted the two January tile shipments or whether the other three shipments were delivered to Damascus. The contract stipulated that the materials were to be delivered to the Metallic Manufacturing Factory, a company run by the Syrian government that was penalized by the United States Treasury Department last year for its involvement in Syria’s weapons industry.

Several months earlier, in August 2016, a delegation of North Korean missile technicians visited Syria, at which point there was a transfer of “special resistance valves and thermometers known for use in chemical weapons,” the report said, without elaborating. An unidentified United Nations member country told the report’s authors that North Korean missile technicians worked at Syrian chemical weapons and missile facilities in Barzeh, Adra and Hama.

In 2013, after the Obama administration threatened military action in response to a sarin gas attack on the rebel enclave of Ghouta that some experts estimated killed 1,400 people, Mr. Assad agreed to destroy his stockpile and join the Chemical Weapons Convention, which comprises 192 countries that are to have dismantled their chemical weapons programs.

But Western officials and nonproliferation experts have long suspected that Mr. Assad retains some chemical weapons.
So far this year, according to diplomats and witnesses, several chlorine gas attacks have occurred in rebel-held areas in Ghouta, Idlib and Afrin. A separate United Nations panel also said Mr. Assad’s forces were responsible for a sarin gas attack on the rebel-held village of Khan Sheikhoun last April that killed at least 83 people and sickened roughly 300.

Mallory Stewart, a former State Department official who was involved in the Obama administration’s efforts to dismantle Syria’s chemical weapons program, said that there were always concerns that the Assad government had not listed all of its chemical weapons stockpile on its declared inventory of what it gave up. The report, she says, “confirms everything we’ve been saying.”

“Certainly what we tried to do in the last administration is dismantle the entire chemical weapons program,” Ms. Stewart said, “which we know they never did.”

Establishing the origins of such weapons has been difficult. In November, Russia used its Security Council veto to end the work of an independent panel investigating chemical weapons used in the Syrian conflict. The Joint Investigative Mechanism, as it was known, had found that both the Syrian government and Islamic State militants had used chemical weapons in the war, though Russia’s ambassador to the United Nations labeled the panel’s reporting “a joke.”


NZ May Lobby Aust on Nuclear Weapons Ban

By Lisa Martin

February 26, 2018

Australia could be in for a lecture from New Zealand on nuclear weapons disarmament.

NZ Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern will visit Australia for talks with Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull at the end of the week.

She’ll be accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister Winston Peters, seven cabinet ministers and a business delegation.

Ms Ardern delivered a major foreign policy speech to the New Zealand Institute of Public Affairs on Tuesday and announced her government will reinstate the cabinet position of disarmament and arms control minister.

Last July, 122 countries voted in the United Nations to ban nuclear weapons.

Ms Ardern flagged in the speech her government was looking at an early ratification of the treaty.

"In a modern context, the greatest challenge comes from North Korea, situated right here in our region," she said.

"At a time when risks to global peace and security are growing and the rules-based system is under such pressure, we must recommit ourselves to the cause of non-proliferation and disarmament.” Australia has refused to sign up to the treaty ban and did not take part in the negotiations.

The country relies on the deterrent protection from the US’s nuclear weapons arsenal.
New Zealand has long adopted a firm line in opposing development of nuclear capabilities, which at times puts the small Pacific nation at odds with some allies.

In the mid-1980s, the NZ Labour government banned ships that were either nuclear-powered or nuclear-armed, prompting the United States to suspend security treaty obligations to New Zealand. Relations warmed a little in 2016 when New Zealand’s centre-right National government approved the first visit by a US warship in 30 years.

Asked if she’ll raise the issue with Mr Turnbull, Ms Ardern told reporters in Wellington: "I have no qualms having conversations about it."

The leaders are likely to find more common ground on trade and economic integration issues. "Australia is our only ally and closest friend. As in any relationship, we will have our differences," Ms Ardern said in the speech.

Ms Ardern is expected to take Mr Turnbull to task over the plight of Kiwi convicted criminals in immigration detention.

NZ also has an ongoing offer to resettle 150 refugees from Nauru and Manus Island, which has previously been rejected.

Mr Turnbull said he and wife Lucy were looking forward to welcoming Ms Ardern and her partner fishing show host Clarke Gayford.


EUROPE/ RUSSIA

CNBC (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.)

Russia’s Lavrov Says the US is Training Europe to Use Nuclear Weapons Against It

By Holly Ellyatt

February 28, 2018

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Wednesday that the U.S. was still deploying "strategic arms" in Europe and was training European countries to use nuclear weapons, violating a major nuclear arms agreement called the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Lavrov said that nuclear disarmament was impossible without taking into account factors which destabilize "strategic stability and international security today," including, he said, "the deployment of a global anti-missile system" and "the deployment of U.S. strategic arms in Europe and the continuing destabilizing practice of 'joint nuclear missions,' as they call them."

"As we all know, these nuclear missions violate the Non-Proliferation Treaty and non-nuclear states plan and take part in the U.S. exercises and learn how to use the nuclear weapons," he said.

The Russian Foreign Ministry tweeted a video in which Lavrov was speaking to other delegates at the conference.

For its part, he said Russia had reduced its nuclear arsenal by 85 percent compared to the Cold War era.
The Russian Foreign Ministry has complained about what it calls "joint nuclear missions" and says the U.S. has many nuclear weapons located in Europe. It also says the U.S. is training European countries to use these weapons.

Last April, the foreign ministry issued a statement in which it said that "Washington's approach to compliance with its obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is still of great concern. The U.S. and its non-nuclear NATO allies continue their nuclear skill training as part of the so-called "nuclear sharing"," it said.

"This is a serious violation of Articles I and II of the NPT," the ministry said.

Article I of the NPT prohibits nuclear states from transferring nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, or control over such weapons or explosive devices, to any recipient whatsoever, directly or indirectly. Article II prohibits non-nuclear states from receiving the transfer, directly or indirectly.

But Lavrov repeated Russia’s position on the matter on Wednesday.

"Everyone understands that this way, the U.S. military prepares the military of European countries for the use of nuclear weapons against Russia," he said.

Russia, he added, had not deployed any nuclear weapons and did not test them. On the contrary, the U.S. had taken an "aggressive position" he said.

"These initiatives we see on the part of the U.S. do not promote non-proliferation, they promote the deterioration of the full implementation of it (the treaty)."

Russia has also long-objected to the deployment of a U.S.-commanded NATO missile defense system in eastern Europe, saying it is not designed to prevent a possible ballistic missile attack from Iran but designed to undermine and neutralize Moscow's nuclear arsenal. NATO and the U.S. deny that accusation.


The Diplomat (Washington, D.C.)

**Russia Upgrades Long-Range Air Defenses in Pacific Region**

By Franz-Stefan Gady

February 23, 2018

*Russia has deployed two additional S-400 batteries to the Russian Far East, according to satellite imagery analysis.*

In an ongoing effort to boost its so called anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) capability, the Russian military has deployed two additional S-400 Triumph advanced Air Defense System (NATO reporting name: SA-21 Growler) batteries to the vicinity of Vladivostok, homeport of the Russian Pacific Fleet, in the country's Far East, according to satellite imagery analysis, published by IHS Jane’s Defense Weekly.

“Satellite imagery captured in 2017–18 shows that Russia has deployed two S-400 strategic surface-to-air missile (SAM) batteries near Vladivostok, replacing S-300PS batteries,” IHS Jane’s Defense Weekly writes. “DigitalGlobe imagery captured on 3 December 2017 showed that a former
S-300PS positioned east of Vladivostok was equipped with the S-400. Subsequent imagery captured on 24 January 2018 also showed a second S-400 battery deployed near Podnozhye on Ostrov Russkiy, south of Vladivostok."

The standard S-400 battery consists of four transporter erector launchers (TELs), four launch tubes per TEL, in addition to target acquisition and engagement (fire control) radar systems and a command post. (With an additional fire control radar system, a battery can consist of up to 12 TELs.) Two batteries make up a S-400 battalion (also known as a S-400 division), whereas a S-400 regiment consists of two battalions. The Russian military currently operates around 20 regiments (23 according to the Russian Ministry of Defense). By 2020, Russia hopes to have 28 S-400 regiments or 56 battalions.

The S-400 is one of the world’s most advanced interceptor-based missile defense systems, as I explained previously:

In comparison to its predecessor, the S-300, the S-400 air defense system features an improved radar system and updated software; it can purportedly fire four new types of surface-to-air (SAM) missiles in addition to the S-300’s 48N6E, a vertical tube launched, solid fuel, single stage SAM with an estimated range of 150 kilometers (93 miles), and the improved 48N6E2 missile with a reported range of 195 kilometers (121 miles).

One of the S-400’s new missiles is the so-called 40N6 SAM with an estimated operational range of 400 kilometers (248.5 miles) and an altitude of up to 185 kilometers (607,000 feet). The missile is reportedly capable of exo-atmospheric interception of intermediate-range ballistic missile warheads in their terminal phase. However, it is unclear whether the weapon is operational in Russia yet and no images of the 40N6 SAM have surfaced so far.

The S-400 is also armed with an improved variant of the 48N6E2 with an alleged range of 250 kilometers (160 miles). The air defense system can also fire two additional missiles, the 9M96E and 9M96E2 with respective ranges of 40 km (25 miles) and 120 km (75 miles). Improved S-300 air defense systems such as the S-300PMU-2 Favorite (..) can purportedly also fire the 9M96E and 9M96E2.

Overall, Russia currently has a total of seven S-400 batteries deployed in the Joint Strategic Command East also known as the Eastern Military District, one of four operational strategic commands of the Russian Armed Forces. The deployment of additional S-400 air defense systems correlates with the need to protect Russia’s slowly expanding naval presence in the Asia-Pacific region. In 2018, the Russian Navy’s second biggest fleet is expected to receive ten new warships including new nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines.


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Europeans Look for a Way to Preserve Nuclear Deal While Punishing Iran and Satisfying Trump

By Karen DeYoung
February 23, 2018

When French President Emmanuel Macron called last week for new international sanctions and “surveillance” over Iran’s ballistic missile program, there was one person in particular he hoped was listening.

France, Germany and Britain have been scrambling for months to convince President Trump that they want to join him in cracking down on bad Iranian behavior — missile tests, terrorism support and regional meddling. If they can sway him, they hope he will agree to preserve intact the 2015 Iran nuclear agreement he has argued is fatally flawed.

The administration, led by the State Department, has embarked on high-level talks with the Europeans to try to find a way to address Trump’s concerns before a May 12 deadline he has set for leaving the deal. Many involved in the effort believe success is both possible and desirable, and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson last week described discussions so far as “very fruitful.”

Trump has also tasked Congress with legislating changes in the agreement in the same time frame. He has demanded not only that non-nuclear issues be addressed but also that the deal itself be altered to eliminate sunset clauses for some of the restrictions it places on Iran, to harden the inspection rules and to limit development of long-range missiles the United States maintains could be used to deliver nuclear payloads.

The Obama-era deal came into being with few friends in Congress, and some Republican hawks have called for killing it outright. Until late last year, when the White House told the Europeans in no uncertain terms to stop interfering in U.S. internal affairs, the Europeans had directed much of their pro-agreement sales pitch to lawmakers.

Now, Congress is in limbo on the issue, waiting to see whether the administration can strike a deal with its partners in Europe.

“We’ve got to have the Europeans because of the Democrats,” Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Bob Corker (R-Tenn.) said last week. “They’re not going to vote for something the Europeans don’t support. … We’re in hold mode until [the administration] has a breakthrough with our European friends.”

Sen. Benjamin L. Cardin (Md.), the ranking Democrat on the committee until earlier this month, agreed that “the game plan right now is to see where they can go with the Europeans.”

But no one knows whether the all-important audience of one even wants to retain an international accord he has called an “embarrassment” to the United States and has threatened to rip up since early in his presidential campaign. Even if negotiators can agree, several foreign and U.S. officials close to the talks said, there is no guarantee that an agreement will placate the mercurial chief executive.

“It seems to me some of this can be done,” Cardin said of the negotiations. But “I can’t speak for the president, and I’m not so sure the people around him can speak for the president.”

For the three leading European allies, outright U.S. withdrawal or insistence on a rewrite that they — let alone Iran and fellow signatories Russia and China — have said they will never accept, could spark the most serious international rift with the administration to date.
“This will not blow over,” said one official, among a half-dozen who discussed the issue on the condition of anonymity, most out of fear of provoking a Trumpian tweetstorm or worse.

In a random Twitter post among many attacking the ongoing Russia investigation last weekend, Trump excoriated the FBI, Congress and the Justice Department for not investigating the return of $1.7 billion in frozen Iranian funds to Tehran as part of the nuclear deal.

Overall, Trump said when he set the May deadline last month, the deal “gave Iran far too much in exchange for far too little.” His objections, loudly seconded by Israel and other antagonists in the neighborhood such as Saudi Arabia, concern what is in the agreement as well as what was left out.

As they hammered out the Iran deal over several years, negotiators intentionally bypassed concerns such as ballistic missiles, terrorism and Iranian expansionism in the Middle East — all of which are addressed in separate sanctions and United Nations resolutions.

The rationale, European and Obama administration officials said at the time, was that Iran’s development of a nuclear weapon was a far more immediate and dangerous threat, with a breakout window of mere months at the time. Ultimately, existing sanctions designed to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons were lifted — and frozen Iranian funds were released — in exchange for strict limits and intense international monitoring of a program Iran insisted was designed only for research and nuclear power production.

Since the agreement went into effect, the International Atomic Energy Agency has regularly certified that Iran has abided by its terms.

“That’s part of the problem,” said a senior administration official involved in developing Trump’s Iran policy. “This was an agreement struck out of the context of the broader problem of Iran’s behavior.”

“The president laid out six major areas where he wanted the Europeans to work with the United States to put together a united front on demanding that the Iranians alter their behavior,” the official said, also including human rights violations, cyberthreats and the financial activities of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps.

From the beginning of his administration, Trump has accused the Europeans of being soft on Iran and largely interested in making money there. National security adviser H.R. McMaster was said to have dismissed a position paper one of the allies delivered to the White House early last year as something that “the ayatollah” could have written.

Two statutory mandates have given Trump the opening to directly threaten the agreement. One, imposed by Congress when it allowed the agreement to move forward in 2015, requires the president to certify Iranian compliance every 90 days. After two rounds of certification, Trump said last October that he would issue no more certifications.

More ominous is that pre-deal sanctions related to Iran’s nuclear program, lifted when the agreement went into effect, must be waived by the president every 120 days. Trump issued the waivers in mid-January along with a warning that he was doing so “only in order to secure our European allies’ agreement to fix the terrible flaws of the Iran nuclear deal.”

“This is the last chance,” he said. “No one should doubt my word.” May 12 is the next waiver deadline.

Each of the European allies has chosen a somewhat different response to Trump’s threats and demands. Macron, the French president, has tried to embrace his U.S. counterpart, hosting him for Bastille Day — an occasion on which Trump so admired the military parade he now wants one at home — coming down hard on Iranian non-nuclear behavior, and choosing not to confront Trump
on false or uninformed statements about what the agreement says and whether Iran is complying with it.

Macron, whose foreign minister is to visit Tehran next month, has also indefinitely put off a planned trip there. He is to make a late-April state visit to the United States, the first for the Trump administration.

Germany has vacillated between thinly veiled public criticism, calls for European unity and doleful reflections on the state of affairs. At last week’s Munich Security Conference, German Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen denounced Trump’s military-heavy approach to the world, which she said was being pursued at the expense of diplomacy and international aid. At the same event, German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel remarked that “we no longer recognize our America.”

Britain, preoccupied with the economic and security problems of leaving the European Union, has echoed the concerns more forcefully expressed by the others and their eagerness to find a path to approval by Trump. British Prime Minister Theresa May said during a visit with German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Friday in Berlin that both remain “ready to take further appropriate measures” to address U.S. concerns about aspects of Iranian behavior.

Once the deal’s multiyear sunset provisions restricting Iran’s uranium enrichment levels and its use of centrifuges expire, they argue, Iran will be brought under international compacts with perpetual restrictions on weapons development and continued tight verification.

From their side of the negotiating table, they would like the White House and Congress to find a way to remove the regular Iran crisis triggers that are primed every 90 and 120 days.

But even if negotiations succeed, and even without the deadlines, they acknowledge, the U.S. president will retain the right to withdraw from the nuclear agreement any time he wants to do so.


Defense News (Washington, D.C.)

**Possible $3.2B Patriot Sale to Sweden Gets US State Department Approval**

By Jen Judson

February 22, 2018

WASHINGTON — The U.S. State Department has approved a possible foreign military sale of four Patriot air-and-missile defense systems to Sweden for an estimated total of $3.2 billion.

Sweden chose the Raytheon-manufactured Patriot for its new AMD system over the French consortium Eurosam’s SAMP/T late last year.

The Swedish government announced its decision on Nov. 7, 2017, via its website. Sweden planned to send a letter of request for a letter of offer and acceptance to the U.S. government that would trigger the process, according to the online post.

Sweden anticipated the value of the contract as roughly 10 billion krona (U.S. $1.2 billion). While $3.2 billion is far above that estimate, it’s possible, as negotiations continue, that the price could come down.
Sweden requested four Patriot Configuration 3+ modernized fire units that include four AN/MPQ-65 radars; four control stations; nine antenna masts; 12 M903 launching stations; 100 GEM-T missiles, or Patriot Guidance Enhanced Missile Tactical Ballistic Missiles; and 200 Patriot Advanced Capability-3 Missile Segment Enhancement, or MSE, missiles. Lockheed Martin is the missiles supplier.

Raytheon has seen a surge in Patriot sales in Europe, recently minting a deal with Romania to supply them with seven Patriot systems, 56 GEM-T missiles and 168 Patriot MSE missiles. The estimated cost, according to the State Department, is roughly $3.9 billion.

While Sweden is buying less systems, it is buying more firepower to go along with them than Romania.

Poland is also in negotiations to buy Patriot, but it wants a unique configuration of the system as well as offsets, which is slowing the process leading to a final deal.

Raytheon announced in an earnings call last month that it expected a letter of agreement for the Swedish deal in mid-2018 and was also working on another deal with an undisclosed European country.

There are 13 countries that currently operate the Patriot system, with Romania, Sweden and Poland bringing that number up to 16.

conference’s 2018 edition to restore its effective role in negotiating the international agreements and treaties on disarmament.

Shoukry expressed that Egypt welcomes the conference’s recent decision to establish five subsidiaries on the conference’s agenda as a very important step towards adopting a comprehensive and balanced work program in the future.

He remarked that although Egypt and many international parties have long called in many forums for complete elimination of nuclear weapons and parties’ commitment to the NPT, no actions have been taken in this regard as nuclear weapons still exist in the world, threatening the international security.

“Equally important, the inability of the international community to achieve the universality of the NPT until now has impacted the treaty negatively. The continued non adherence of a few states to the NPT has questioned whether the NPT will be able to achieve its objectives.”

He said that the instability in the Middle East is worsened by the existence of states non party to the treaty and the readiness of some parties to protect the interests of those states, reaffirming the importance of Israel joining the NPT and for its nuclear facilities to be placed under the comprehensive safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to achieve peace and stability across world.

In this regard, Shoukry called on all states to address the threats in the Middle East by establishing a zone free of weapons of mass destruction to preserve security in the region.

“Egypt has been at the forefront calling to achieve this objective, emanating from its deep conviction that the path to security in the Middle East must be based on collective security, rather than selective security in a manner that is beneficial to all states of the region.”

He concluded that the UN’s multilateral disarmament machinery can be effective only if states uphold the purposes of disarmament to address the global challenges and to achieve more peaceful and secure world; Egypt’s efforts will be continuously directed to achieving this vision.


Mehr News Agency (Tehran, Iran)

**JCPOA Strengthens Scientific Ties between Tehran, Berlin**

Author Not Attributed

February 27, 2018

TEHRAN, Feb. 27 (MNA) – Implementation of Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), title of Iran’s nuclear deal, has strengthened scientific relations between Tehran and Berlin to a great extent.

German Ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Iran Michael Klor-Berchtold made the above remark on Tuesday at the venue of School of Science and Technology of Iran and pointed to the significance of scientific cooperation between the two countries of Iran and Germany and added, “scientific cooperation between the two countries has been strengthened especially after the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action inked in mid-July 2015.”
Given the above issue, School of Science and Technology of Iran hosted organizing the 1st Conference of Iran and Germany Science Day today in the presence of German Ambassador to Tehran Michael Klor-Berchtold, deputy Ministry of Science, Research and Technology for Research, Technology and International Affairs and more than 100 Iranian and German researchers.

In the inaugural ceremony of this prestigious Conference, the ambassador pointed to the age-old history of scientific cooperation between Iran and Germany and added, “the relationship between the two countries in the scientific, technical and training fields dates back 100 years ago when Iran and Germany founded the first scientific and technical school in Iran.”

After a landmark nuclear deal inked between Iran and six world’s major powers (the five permanent members of UN Security Council plus Germany), rosy and bright future was opened between the two countries of Iran and Germany in scientific field particularly, the German ambassador maintained.

He referred to the trip of German Minister of Education and Research to Iran in Oct. 2017 and emphasized, “the two countries initiated several activities since 2015 for the establishment of joint cooperation and now, the time is ripe to take giant stride in scientific field.”

The two countries of Iran and Germany enjoy high potentials and capacities in various fields that should be addressed in expert-level session, the ambassador concluded.

Chancellor of Iran University of Science and Technology (IUST) Dr. Mohammad Ali Barkhordari was the next speaker in this prestigious Conference who expounded on the history of activities and performance of this academic center and added, “10 faculty members of the university are among one percent of world’s top scientists.”

IUST has been tasked with establishing fair cooperation and interaction with German research centers, he said, adding, “for this purpose, the first edition of Iran and Germany Science Day was held at this leading Iranian academic center.”

More than 100 top Iranian researchers and university lecturers attended the Conference, the chancellor concluded.


The Washington Post (Washington, D.C.)

**Rick Perry Going to London to Hold Nuclear Cooperation Talks with Saudi Officials**

By Steven Mufson

February 26, 2018

Energy Secretary Rick Perry will fly to London this week to discuss a nuclear cooperation agreement with senior officials from Saudi Arabia, which is planning to build two reactors along the Persian Gulf, according to an administration official.

Perry was originally scheduled to take part in meetings with Mexican officials, but Mexico’s president, Enrique Peña Nieto, canceled his visit to Washington.

The meeting in London comes shortly before a scheduled visit to the United States by the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.
United States has long pressed Saudi Arabia to agree to a nuclear cooperation agreement – known as a 123 agreement for the clause in the Atomic Energy Act – that would include strict bans on the enrichment of uranium and the reprocessing of spent fuel.

The United Arab Emirates agreed to such a deal in the final days of the George W. Bush administration. A South Korean consortium is currently building four reactors in the UAE.

But Saudi Arabia has insisted that it be allowed to enrich its own supplies of uranium as a matter of national sovereignty.

It remained unclear whether Perry was carrying a proposal to the London meeting. He traveled to Saudi Arabia last fall.

The kingdom has received delegations from five major nuclear reactor companies, including the bankrupt Westinghouse. The Canadian real estate and industrial conglomerate Brookfield has submitted a plan to buy Westinghouse.

The nuclear cooperation agreement has divided nonproliferation policymakers, some of whom see the sale of nuclear reactors to Saudi Arabia as too risky given the instability in the region. Others say that if U.S. firms are not allowed to compete because of a missing cooperation deal, then Russian or Chinese companies with fewer concerns about enrichment, reprocessing or proliferation might step in.


Deutsche Welle (Bonn, Germany)

Iran Signals Plan to Build Nuclear-Powered Ships

Author Not Attributed

February 22, 2018

Iran has disclosed plans to develop nuclear reactors for ships, despite a deal with world powers that curtails its atomic program. The project is likely to get a cool response in Washington.

Tehran has told United Nations nuclear inspectors of its plan to build nuclear reactors for ships, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said on Thursday.

In a quarterly report on Iran's conformity with the landmark 2015 nuclear deal that restricted Tehran's nuclear ambitions, the IAEA said the Islamic Republic remained compliant and had informed the agency of a "decision that has been taken to construct naval nuclear propulsion in future."

The Vienna-based UN body said it received a letter in January, but it contained no further details of the project. Tehran now has until mid-May to provide more comprehensive proposals.

Iran's disclosure is almost certain to reignite tensions with US President Donald Trump's administration, after the US leader threatened to revoke the nuclear deal, citing its limited duration and a lack of coverage of Tehran's ballistic missile program.
New nuclear deal demanded

Trump said the deal had allowed Iran to continue to fund terrorism and conflicts such as the war in Syria. He demanded the accord be reworked to include additional restrictions and wider UN inspection rights.

The original nuclear deal — signed by Trump’s predecessor, Barack Obama, along with Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China — saw international sanctions on Iran lifted in return for the curtailment of its enrichment program and other nuclear activities.

But it does not explicitly prohibit Tehran from developing nuclear-powered ships or submarines unless they use weapons-grade uranium.

Tehran had flagged such plans before but had not gone as far as formally notifying the IAEA. In December 2016, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani ordered planning to begin on the development of nuclear marine propulsion, after what he called US violations of the nuclear deal.

Rouhani’s statement followed a US Senate vote that extended the Iran Sanctions Act by a decade.


COMMENTARY

War on the Rocks (Washington, D.C.)

Addressing Fears about the Nuclear Posture Review and Limited Nuclear Use

By Frank Miller

February 28, 2018

Would the launch of a single Trident II missile cause the submarine that fired it to be detected and sunk, trigger a massive nuclear exchange, or both? If you believe the critics of the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review, that’s exactly what would happen. In addition, these critics charge that even the review’s proposal to modify some Trident II warheads to carry a lower yield will make nuclear war more likely. However, a solid array of facts undercuts each of the critics’ charges and sustains the Nuclear Posture Review’s (for which I served as a senior advisor) case that deploying modified Trident warheads actually strengthens deterrence.

Why Does the United States Need a Low-Yield Warhead on Submarine-Launched Missiles?

Western governments believe that over the past 10 to 15 years the Russian military has placed increasing emphasis on the use of low-yield nuclear warheads to blunt NATO’s ability to defend its territory, particularly the Baltic states, against Russian military attack.

Ashton Carter, then secretary of defense under the Obama administration, similarly observed in 2016:

[I]t is a sobering fact that the most likely use of nuclear weapons is not the massive nuclear exchange of the classic Cold War type but rather the unwise resort to smaller but still unprecedentedly terrible attacks, for example by Russia ... to try to coerce a conventionally superior opponent to back off or abandon an ally during a crisis.

Carter’s concern was based on three factors. First, Russian military doctrine, since the 1990s, has included the use of lower-yield nuclear weapons to defeat enemy conventional forces (i.e.
US/NATO) on the battlefield. Second, to support this, Russia retained tactical nuclear systems it had pledged to destroy; in the last decade, it has also fielded new nuclear tactical ballistic missiles. Third, the Russians have exercised using nuclear weapons in this manner.

It is particularly worrisome that Russia pursued these developments in the face of the obvious capabilities of the U.S. strategic triad and of America’s Europe-based dual-capable aircraft. Because the Russian military is anything but frivolous, we must conclude that its leadership believes that despite the capabilities of America’s current nuclear deterrent, the United States lacks a credible option to respond to Russian use of tactical low-yield weapons on the battlefield to win a war.

Several decades ago, former Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger noted, “Deterrence is a dynamic effort, not a static one. In order to continue to deter successfully, our capabilities must change as the threat changes and as our knowledge of what is necessary to deter improves.” The 2018 Nuclear Posture Review echoes this verity: “Potential adversaries do not stand still. On the contrary, they seek to identify and exploit weaknesses in U.S. capabilities and strategy. Thus, US future force requirements for deterrence cannot be considered fixed.” This is a key point: The United States seeks to prevent attacks against ourselves and our allies. If political leaderships of potential adversary nations understand that initiating aggression will result not in victory, but rather in a situation that could threaten their national existence, war is prevented. On the other hand, if potential enemy military commanders can convince their political leaders that nuclear use can both be confined to the battlefield and result in victory, then peace is at risk.

Accordingly, after a full review of both Russian developments and existing U.S. capabilities, the Nuclear Posture Review concluded that a new capability was required to ensure the Russian leadership does not miscalculate regarding the consequences of limited nuclear first use … Russia must instead understand that nuclear first use, however limited, will fail to achieve its objectives, fundamentally alter the nature of a conflict, and trigger incalculable and intolerable costs for Moscow.

As a result, the review recommended modifying a small number of W-76 Trident II warheads to underscore the seriousness of this policy and strengthen Russian perceptions of U.S. credibility and will. These modifications can be accomplished relatively inexpensively, in a short amount of time, and without adding additional weapons to the stockpile.

The choice of modified Trident II warheads clearly indicates that the United States would not respond in the theater or on the battlefield, but rather strike back against targets of significance to the Russian leadership. Contrary to what critics have written, deploying these warheads will therefore raise, not lower, the nuclear threshold, making aggression and nuclear weapons employment less likely.

Some academics have written that they do not consider the Russian developments to be a real threat. However, policymakers and scholars must necessarily approach these questions in different ways. As Robert Jervis observed of an earlier divergence between policymakers and academics over nuclear strategy:

I think the reason is that people in positions of power feel a great sense of responsibility that academics cannot share. They need to face the question of what they would do in the event of a conflict ... Academics could argue that the Soviets were not strongly motivated to attack or that, even if they were, the bargaining advantage lay with the defender ... But those who had to think about what they would do if a terrible situation arose could not be satisfied by those responses.

In this case, the majority of Western intelligence agencies and governments disagree with the academics’ analysis, and believe that the Russian military has advanced a military doctrine that
features the use of nuclear weapons, deployed weapons systems to support that doctrine, and exercised the use of those weapons systems to drive the point home. If one occupies a position in the U.S. government and is responsible for national security, one cannot ignore these facts.

Would the Launch of One or Two Trident Missiles Risk the Submarine’s Survivability?

A point raised consistently by critics of a low-yield submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) warhead is that the launch of a single Trident missile will cause the submarine that fired it to be detected by an enemy and sunk. This assertion is wrong on two points: First, it misrepresents longstanding U.S. nuclear policy and, second, it downplays how difficult it is for adversaries to detect and attack American submarines.

To begin with, this line of criticism assumes that the launch of a single missile (or even a few missiles) is unthinkable, i.e., that U.S. missile submarines would only launch all of their missiles at once. For over 40 years, however, U.S. nuclear deterrent plans have included multiple so-called “small options,” that is, retaliatory options that only employ a handful of missiles, designed with the hope that they could be used to control escalation. It would be reasonable to assume that plans assigned to U.S. ballistic missile submarines, or SSBNs, include those small options. As a result, because the concept of “spasm war” — in which both sides launch all their weapons at the other — became incredible in the 1960s, it is also reasonable to assume that for decades the United States has envisioned the possibility of so-called “split launches,” in which the SSBNs fire only a small number of missiles if so ordered. This means that the Department of Defense has full confidence that the submarine will remain fully survivable even after launching only a portion of the missiles it carries.

With regard to the anti-submarine problem — which involves using existing technologies to find and sink the SSBN which fired the missile — we should stipulate up front that the U.S. submarine is not being “trailed” by an enemy submarine. If it were, the mission would have been compromised already. However, U.S. SSBNs are designed and operated in such a manner that enemy trail is virtually impossible. Second, we should stipulate that the oceans have not become transparent nor are they likely to do so in the foreseeable future. While some today claim advances in drone or other technology will in the not too distant future effectively make the oceans transparent, similar possible technological breakthroughs have been discussed since I was an ensign in the Navy in the early 1970s but have yet to come to fruition.

Now assume, unreasonably but for the sake of argument, that a potential adversary has space-based infrared sensors that can immediately geo-locate the exact position of the American SSBN launching one or several missiles; and that said sensors’ information can be instantly relayed to a command center which will re-program an ICBM to attack that point in the ocean. In the 20 minutes or so which will have elapsed before the ICBM brackets that point, the U.S. submarine, traveling at 20 knots, can move over 6 miles in any direction, yielding a circular field of uncertainty of over 137 square miles. That’s a tremendous amount of ocean for the adversary to attack. Note as well that the destructive power of nuclear weapons, even if they were able to survive water entry after a 20-minute ICBM flight, is attenuated severely by water; the physics of nuclear weapons exploding underwater was studied exhaustively during the Cold War. Dozens of reentry vehicles — and therefore, many ICBMs — would be needed to carry out an attack with any chance of success. If, however, multiple ICBMs had to be re-targeted, adding, say, another 10 minutes to the process, the area of uncertainty would expand to 314 square miles, requiring hundreds of reentry vehicles. This scenario is simply not credible. Even after launching a single missile carrying a low-yield warhead, the U.S. submarine is survivable.

Would Russia Interpret the Launch of One or Two Missiles as the Start of a Nuclear Attack?
Especially during a crisis or conflict, U.S. and Russian decision-makers take the entire threat environment into account — not simply one action. Just as U.S. officials would not automatically be expected to respond to limited Russian nuclear employment with a massive response, they should not expect Russia to do so either. The logic supporting this argument has been clear for decades: The costs of a massive response far outweigh the benefits. Moreover, Russian intelligence collection capabilities, as well as U.S. and allied messaging, would reinforce the limited nature of the nuclear employment.

To be sure, once a nuclear weapon has been used nothing is certain. That fact alone enhances deterrence, because the aggressor government cannot have total confidence that the war could be contained and halted short of mutual annihilation. But both U.S. and Russian nuclear plans have, for decades, discounted the notion that any nuclear use, including the launch of one or a handful of ballistic missiles, will lead immediately to a “spasm war.” Beginning with the Kennedy administration’s introduction of the “flexible response” strategy in the early 1960s, further refined by Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger in the mid-1970s and his successors, limited or small options have been a feature of the U.S. strategic deterrent for a long time. Those options have been designed and tailored to be as discernable as possible by Russian early warning systems. Those who believe that the only type of nuclear war is an all-out spasm war will caricature this. But the fact is that U.S. policymakers have for decades embraced small options as a means of providing credible response options to deter limited nuclear attacks — and thereby to halt any attempts to attack the United States or its allies in the first place.

To conclude, the Nuclear Posture Review’s call for modest but important adjustments to U.S. nuclear forces is not a major departure from more than 50 years of U.S. nuclear strategy. It is responding to a plausible threat of Russian low-yield use of nuclear weapons, which has developed in the last 15 years despite current U.S. capabilities. The introduction of a lower-yield W76 warhead does not change U.S. nuclear policy, which long ago incorporated limited nuclear options to deter and, if necessary, respond to aggression.

Instead, in an era of renewed competition with Russia, and potential for conflict that the Russian military believes could include limited nuclear use, a small number of modified W76 warheads will fill any gap in U.S. deterrent capabilities that the Russians might perceive in a rapid and affordable manner. Filling this gap will raise — not lower — the nuclear threshold and reduce the chances of aggression. Finally, the launch of a single or a few missiles will not make a U.S. SSBN vulnerable to attack, nor will it signal the initiation of a massive U.S. strike. The Nuclear Posture Review’s plans rely on a rational assessment of the threat environment and U.S. and Russian commanders’ awareness of the gravity of launching an all-out attack. In this way, the proposals are consistent with decades of U.S. nuclear plans and the logic of deterrence.

https://warontherocks.com/2018/02/addressing-fears-nuclear-posture-review-limited-nuclear-use/

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The Diplomat (Washington, D.C.)

Making Sense of Chinese Reactions to the US 2018 Nuclear Posture Review

By Raymond Wang

February 27, 2018

How is the Trump administration’s Nuclear Posture Review perceived in China?

The Trump administration’s Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) was a break from its predecessors in many ways. It envisions an expanded role of nuclear weapons in U.S. military doctrine, the development of low-yield weapons — specifically a low-yield SLBM — and the removal of 2010 NPR language that called for maintaining strategic stability with China.

Unsurprisingly, it has elicited vociferous responses from Chinese state media, government officials and netizens alike. There have already been sound analyses on the issue of low-yield SLBMs and the Trump administration’s justifications for it from both American and Russian perspectives.

From the Chinese perspective, I contend that the NPR has tried, and failed, to strike a balance between signaling to China that the low-yield option is primarily directed against a Russian “escalate to de-escalate” doctrine on one hand, while attributing “limited use” intentions to China in order to justify developing “graduated response options” on the other. Indeed, the accusation that Beijing might “mistakenly conclude that it could secure an advantage through the limited use of its theater nuclear capabilities or that any use of nuclear weapons, however limited, is acceptable” cannot be justified based on published Chinese doctrinal documents such as the 2013 Science of Military Strategy, nor statements of Chinese officials. On a technical level, China does not possess, and will probably require nuclear tests to develop, low-yield warheads.

In a nutshell, the new NPR conflates a theater-use scenario, for which China is capable of through missiles such as the dual-capable DF-26, with a low-yield, “limited use” scenario. There is nothing in either China’s declared posture, nor its deployed capability, that suggests the Chinese government would interpret a Chinese use of theater nuclear weapons — be it a strike on Guam or on a U.S. aircraft carrier in the Western Pacific — as anything other than the start of a total nuclear conflict, one in which gaining a warfighting advantage is meaningless.

However, the 2018 NPR does pose an interesting question: now that the U.S. has changed its declared strategy, how will China respond? More specifically, will the 2018 NPR create a self-fulfilling prophecy, in which PLA hardliners would use it as an opportunity to advocate for China to develop its own low-yield capability?

A recent episode between various Chinese state media outlets suggests that those who want to maintain China’s assured retaliation posture and reject developing a low-yield capability had the final word this time round.

Hard-line reactions were already floated in response to the leaked draft of the NPR – a Global Times editorial on 9 January suggested that the proposed U.S. modernization program would “render China’s ‘minimal reprisal’ strategy insufficient”. While harsh, such language is not entirely uncharacteristic of the Global Times, which has hawkish tendencies.

After the official release of the NPR, the Global Times ran two articles on February 5, both suggesting that China should “seriously consider developing low-yield capabilities.” One of the articles attributed this suggestion to an “anonymous military expert,” while the other was an editorial. Furthermore, the editor-in-chief of the Global Times published a widely-shared video on Weibo commenting on the NPR, in which he made a similar recommendation. As such, it seems that
this position was largely pushed by the Global Times editorial staff in the immediate wake of the NPR’s release.

However, the pushback against this position was swift and forceful. Just two days later on February 7, Xinhua ran an article by Lu Yin, an Assistant Professor at National Defense University, which reaffirmed China’s assured retaliation posture, and rejected China adopting the logic of “making nuclear weapons more usable.”

Even more explicitly, an article published on February 14 in the China Youth Post — a state publication that is not known for being moderate — directly criticized one of the Global Times editorials. The author is Cui Mao dong(崔茂东), who is a researcher at the Strategic Research Centre at the Chinese Academy of Engineering. Citing the editorial, the author argued that China should “unequivocally” reject developing a low-yield capability, and reaffirmed China’s current posture. He even talks mockingly about the “anonymous military expert,” and claims that “the logic of a nuclear warfighting strategy ... does not have a leg to stand on.”

Ultimately, the Global Times itself ran an article on February 14 by Li Sheng, an “international relations observer,” that “explained” the NPR. In the article, he argued that China has the ability to “comfortably” respond to U.S. modernization, and reaffirmed China’s existing posture, cautioning against “entering into an arms race.”

It is hard to determine whether this was a coordinated effort by the establishment at pushing back against the more radical views of the Global Times editorial board. However, the institutional background of the moderate authors and the swift response suggests that the hard-liners remain a minority. Furthermore, the fact that the Global Times itself eventually published a more moderate article suggests that the moderates had the final word on this issue — at least for now.


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The National Interest (Washington, DC)

If Iran Decides to Go Nuclear It Will Become the New 'North Korea'

By James Jay Carafano

February 26, 2018

The 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was intended to forestall the Iranian regime’s development of nuclear weapons. Last October, President Trump decertified the deal, citing Iran’s failure to give international inspectors unfettered access to its nuclear and military facilities, its continued effort to acquired banned nuclear and missile technology, and other breaches of the agreement.

But Trump’s decision to decertify Iran’s compliance with the deal did not end U.S. participation in the framework. In the coming months, he will have to decide whether to continue American support of the deal or to withdraw from the framework altogether.

The better bet right now might be to stay within the JCPOA. But if the president decides to walk away, he shouldn’t be faulted. The important thing is that—stay or go—this administration is focused on the right policy: diminishing Tehran’s destabilizing influence in the region and leading the struggle against further proliferation by dangerous regimes.
Back to the Future

Those of us who criticized the deal had two fundamental concerns from the start. First, we did not believe it provided adequate guarantees that Iran would not become a breakout nuclear state anyway. Second, we doubted the Obama administration’s assertion that, through its participation in JCPOA, Iran would normalize and become a more responsible state.

The first objection remains unchanged. In particular, Iran’s ballistic-missile program continues to be a dangerous problem. What is the purpose of building a robust, long-range ballistic missile force other than to retain the option of one day arming them with nuclear weapons? Further, there are constant claims of Iranian cheating—buttressing the initial doubts that the agreement’s safeguards against cheating are inadequate.

Iran’s actions since signing the agreement have fully validated the correctness of the second objection. Tehran did not get better. The regime used the cash bonanza it received from the deal to enrich its corrupt elite, tighten its grip over the Iranian people, and conduct an aggressive, deadly and destabilizing foreign policy in the region.

It stoked the civil war in Syria, provided rebels in Yemen with the missiles they fired at the capital of Saudi Arabia and continued as the world’s largest state sponsor of terrorism. There is no greater evidence of the regime’s continued abhorrent behavior than the recent wave of protests throughout the country against Tehran’s corruption, oppression and bloody regional adventurism.

Opting Out

There has been a legitimate case for pulling out of the deal from Day One. Rewarding an abusive regime with billions of dollars was a self-evident bad idea. Removing obstacles to foreign investments in Iran was another. Common sense tells you that, once the Iranian economy integrated with the West, it would be much more difficult to restore sanctions as a response to bad behaviors. Tehran today has far less reason to fear it will lose access to wealth, materials and technology needed to support its foreign policy and potentially build a nuclear arsenal.

That said, the value of “just kill the deal” has diminished over time. Here is why.

For one, Tehran got the cash up front. Billions of dollars flowed in—and can’t be recalled.

For another, Iran has not reaped the benefit of massive Western foreign investment the regime anticipated after the lifting of sanctions. In part, the U.S. threat that it might withdraw has likely had a chilling effect. But there are other reasons why the West hasn’t jumped in with both feet hard to do business in Iran.

Odious officials and shadowy government organizations control many of the commercial ventures. The banking and financial system is arcane and corrupt. About the only ones investing in Iran are Russia and China—who care less about corruption and the rule of law.

While there was a burst of growth after JCPOA was signed, the Iranian economy is not rapidly becoming intertwined with the West as we feared. [Of course, this is bad news, not just for the regime, but for the long-suffering people of Iran. Prices have rise. Social support has shrunken. Almost 20 percent of the country still lives under the poverty line—a pathetic statistic for the second largest economy in the Middle East.]

Another reason not to panic about not immediately pulling out of the deal is that the new U.S. administration has already figured out that JCPOA solved nothing and that the Iranian regime—along with the likes of ISIS and Al Qaeda—is the top threat to regional stability. The Trump administration has already adopted a broad policy to counter Iran's destabilizing influence.
Art of the Deal

Ironically, the JCPOA may actually now have a role to play in improving America’s posture toward Iran. By threatening to pull out of the deal, Trump created an opportunity to strengthen his hand against Tehran.

I have never met a European official who, in private, did not acknowledge that JCPOA was not a great deal. Their defense was, “It was the deal Obama wanted,” followed by “at least it was something.”

Having vested themselves in the agreement, the Europeans remain committed to trying to salvage the framework. On the other hand, they recognize JCPOA has not calmed regional fears about the potential proliferation nor did the deal make Tehran less of a regional threat.

In response, the United States has argued that, if the European countries want to save the framework countries, they are going to have to do a better job helping Trump deal with Iran. Washington has asked for assurances in three areas.

First, the United States wants to broaden its sanctions on Iran. The White House wants the Europeans to support its position that these sanctions don’t violate JCPOA.

Second, the administration wants support in pressing the Iranians to extend the sunset clause for the deal.

Third, the Trump team wants a joint effort to curb Iran’s ballistic-missile programs.

Of the five other powers that negotiated the agreement, Russia and China are not likely be much help. That is as expected. It is also not crucial. What is most crucial is that the United States build a united Western front to confront Tehran.

France has been most forward leaning in looking for a compromise with the United States The British are accepting. Germany appears reluctant and distracted.

If Washington can get those three powers to support its agenda in the next few months, then it is worth staying with JCPOA for another year or two to see if the framework can be made more efficacious. It is worth investing time and effort in rebuilding a strong Western consensus for dealing with Iran. Meanwhile, the United States can prepare a more comprehensive response for dealing with Tehran if the framework can’t be made better and the United States has to withdraw.

If the White House cannot secure the European cooperation on the path forward, President Trump will likely pull the plug on JCPOA. Who could blame him? There is no use pretending the current framework deals with the problem. It is a Potemkin village of nonproliferation.

If the leaders of the transatlantic community are serious about assuring mutual security, they will work with the president to try to make the framework something worthwhile. And now is exactly the right time for the Europeans to show Iran their backbone. Tehran is not dealing from a position of strength. The regime has already squandered all the cash and goodwill it got out of JCPOA.

If Tehran is smart, the regime will start to make compromises—and live another day. The mullahs’ grip on the country is unsteady. Faced with renewed, determined competition from the United States working in concert with regional allies, Tehran knows it will lose ground in the greater Middle East. And if Iran decides to go nuclear, then it will wind up like a North Korea—an impoverished, isolated and rejected nation.

http://nationalinterest.org/feature/if-iran-decides-go-nuclear-it-will-become-the-new-north-24658

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Preventing a Nuclear Meltdown in the Middle East

By Kenneth N. Luongo

February 26, 2018

U.S. geopolitical and nuclear nonproliferation objectives are on a potential collision course as Saudi Arabia seeks to join the Middle East’s growing nuclear power club by soliciting bids for the construction of two reactors. An agreement between the two countries to allow U.S.-supplied nuclear technology to flow to the kingdom must limit nuclear weapons potential and serve geostrategic objectives.

With the nuclear supplier-recipient relationship lasting up to 100 years, it is important that the United States be a principal nuclear partner with Saudi Arabia. It can provide proven technology, strong regulatory capability, and has a long history of strengthening global nuclear governance and opposing proliferation, providing confidence in the Saudis’ nascent program.

But the pathway to achieving the balance between geopolitical and non-proliferation goals is fraught and the decision-making timeline short, presenting a significant challenge to the Trump administration that conducts the negotiations and the Congress that controls final approval.

If the United States insists that the Saudis renounce the possession of nuclear technologies that have dual civil and weapons uses the negotiations may fail, raising geopolitical and security concerns. If it relies on international norms and guidelines instead, they will need to be firmly enforced and strengthened or risk proliferation concerns.

A major worry about Saudi nuclear ambitions is that it will try to match Iran atom-for-atom by possessing uranium enrichment and plutonium reprocessing that can be used to manufacture nuclear weapons materials. While energy diversity is an underlying rationale for the shift from fossil to nuclear generation, a significant impetus is to respond to the nuclear advances by Iran, its regional competitor. Iran’s nuclear program is currently limited under a multilateral agreement because of its weapons implications, but important restrictions will expire in coming years.

The United States has several nuclear cooperation agreements with nations in the Middle East, including Egypt and Morocco, but the most recent one with the United Arab Emirates is significant. This agreement prohibits enrichment and reprocessing and is dubbed the “gold standard.” This restriction exists in only one other agreement, between Taiwan and the United States. But, post-9/11, it has been proposed as a new threshold for future U.S. nuclear collaboration in the Middle East and beyond.

The Saudis have indicated resistance to this restriction, although they have not stated an intention to enrich uranium and have not publicly expressed an interest in plutonium reprocessing.

A consequence of insistence on the “gold standard” is that it could push the Saudis away from American technology and into the embrace of Russia or China, whose reactors likely will come with fewer strings and a cheaper price. This would open the door to greater geopolitical influence by strategic competitors of the United States undermining its political, nonproliferation and security goals. The choice of South Korea to fill the Saudis’ order, as it did for UAE, could partly serve U.S. interests, but would still require a U.S.-Saudi agreement if controlled American componentry is involved.

An alternative to the “gold standard” requires that the United States focus on ensuring the effectiveness of other constraints. This includes enforcing the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) restrictions on the transfer of enrichment and reprocessing technology if it may aid a weapons
effort and closing loopholes that non-NSG nations could use to skirt the controls. The Saudis can enhance their nonproliferation credentials by accepting the Additional Protocol to its safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency. This would allow in-depth verification that its nuclear activities are peaceful.

Bilaterally, the United States maintains consent rights over the use and disposition of the nuclear fuel it provides. An additional step can be copied from the U.S.-South Korea nuclear pact, which faced similar pressures to provide access to weapons capable technologies. It allowed for a multi-year joint examination of a sensitive technology without pre-authorizing its use. A comparable approach would recognize the Saudis’ rights under the Nonproliferation Treaty but eliminate immediate concerns about weapon-grade materials in the kingdom.

Nuclear geopolitical and nonproliferation imperatives cannot be in conflict in the Middle East — both are critically important. There are serious concerns about the dangers posed by the production of weapon-grade materials in the region, including a potential Iran-Saudi nuclear arms race and the temptation for nuclear terrorism. There are equally real dangers that without a central U.S. role in the Saudi program nuclear and global security will suffer.

The balance between these goals can be found, but it will require creativity, compromise and a commitment to limit the inevitable imperfections.

http://thehill.com/opinion/international/375585-preventing-a-nuclear-meltdown-in-the-middle-east

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ABOUT THE USAF CUWS

The USAF Counterproliferation Center 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 Director for Nuclear and Counterproliferation (then AF/XON), now AF/A5XP) and Air War College Commandant established the initial manpower 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.

The Secretary of Defense’s Task Force on Nuclear Weapons Management released a report in 2008 that 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.” As a result, 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 continuing education through the careers of those Air Force personnel working in or supporting the nuclear enterprise. This mission was transferred to the Counterproliferation Center in 2012, broadening its mandate to providing education and research to not just countering WMD but also nuclear deterrence.

In February 2014, the Center’s name was changed to the Center for Unconventional Weapons Studies 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.

The CUWS’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.

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