

ARMS CONTROL DIGEST



Nuclear and Space Arms Talks

■ After a relatively unproductive eleventh round of Nuclear and Space Arms Talks ended in Geneva on 7 August, the prospects for a Strategic Arms Reduction (START) Treaty improved significantly the following month. Just prior to a meeting with Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze in Wyoming on 22 and 23 September, US Secretary of State Baker announced that Washington would drop its proposed ban on mobile ICBMs, provided that Congress approved funding for US missiles of this type. Upon his arrival in the US, Shevardnadze transmitted a letter from President Gorbachev to President Bush outlining a number of significant new Soviet proposals intended to break the logjam in the negotiations. These included Soviet willingness to sign and implement a START Treaty even without an agreement on Defence and Space Arms (restricting the US Strategic Defence Initiative), and agreement to a long-standing US demand for the dismantling of a large radar at Krasnoyarsk (which Shevardnadze later admitted had been an "open violation" of the ABM Treaty).

All of these points were embodied in a joint statement issued at the end of the Wyoming meeting, which also included agreement on a number of other strategic arms issues. Perhaps the most important of the latter was a rather vague and little-noticed reference to a Soviet suggestion that sea-launched cruise missiles (SLCMs) "could be limited outside of the text of a START treaty on the basis of reciprocal obligations." Some observers took this to mean that the Soviets might be willing to defer final agreement on the troublesome SLCM issue until after a START Treaty had been signed. Other points of

agreement at Wyoming included Soviet acceptance in principle of US-proposed trial inspections prior to the Treaty's signature; an agreement to provide advance notice of strategic exercises; and some progress on definitional and verification issues.

Soviet and American officials in Wyoming refused to predict that a START agreement would be fully completed in time for the major Bush-Gorbachev summit planned for late spring or early summer 1990. However, a few days later President Bush told reporters that there was "a good likelihood" of a START Treaty being signed in 1990.

Conventional Arms Control

■ Progress continues to be made at the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) talks in Vienna, although President Bush's goal of an agreement by mid-1990 remains in some doubt. During the third round, lasting from 7 September to 19 October, both sides presented further details of their verification and "stabilization" proposals. NATO's "stabilization" package, tabled 21 September, would allow just one military activity involving more than 40,000 troops or 800 main battle tanks every two years (and then only with twelve months advance notice). The Warsaw Pact's package, presented 19 October, provides for the stationing of permanent monitors at European "entry and exit" points. NATO members have been unable to agree among themselves on this matter, with some West European states fearful of revealing sensitive information about their arms exports.

Some movement occurred on the key issue of aircraft limits. The Pact agreed for the first time to restrict aircraft other than ground-attack planes, including some types of fighter, reconnaissance, and electronic warfare aircraft. It proposed a ceiling for each alliance of 4,700 such aircraft (compared to NATO's proposed ceiling of 5,700), but would

exempt 1,800 interceptors that it insists are necessary to defend against US strategic bombers and air-launched cruise missiles, as well as planes based on aircraft carriers. The Pact would also not limit training aircraft, which NATO wants included as combat-capable. Its proposed ceiling of 1,900 helicopters is identical to NATO's proposal, however.

On other issues, the two sides are reported to have agreed on a definition of artillery (as including cannons, howitzers, mortars and rocket launchers of over 100 mm, but not anti-tank weapons). However, they had failed to achieve agreed definitions of tanks and armoured troop carriers. New proposals introduced by the Warsaw Pact included a ban on the construction of foreign bases in Europe, a restructuring of front-line units to reduce their offensive potential, and a summit meeting of the heads of state of the twenty-three participating states in the latter half of 1990, to finalize a treaty.

Open Skies

■ Among other agreements reached at the Baker-Shevardnadze meeting in Wyoming was endorsement "in principle" of President Bush's May 1989 proposal for "Open Skies." Prime Minister Mulroney subsequently offered to host a conference of NATO and Warsaw Pact foreign ministers to lay the groundwork for such an agreement, which would allow unarmed aircraft from participating states to fly over each other's territory to assure each that no surprise attack is being planned. As of the end of October, it was intended that an initial meeting be held in Ottawa early in 1990, to be followed shortly after by a second meeting in a Warsaw Pact capital, probably Budapest. At the UN in September, Foreign Minister Shevardnadze accepted the Canadian offer to hold the first meeting, and assured Secretary of State for External Affairs Clark that the USSR would "work actively for its success." It was reported a few days

later that Canada had notified Moscow informally of its willingness to provide logistical facilities for Soviet aircraft as part of an "Open Skies" arrangement.

Chemical Weapons

■ President Bush unveiled a much-heralded initiative on chemical weapons in a speech to the UN General Assembly on 25 September. He proposed that the US and USSR reduce their CW stocks to a level eighty percent below that currently held by the US, even before signature of a global Convention. American critics of the offer described it as an empty gesture, since Congressional legislation already required the US administration to destroy all of its old CW stocks by 1997. Bush also pledged to destroy ninety-eight percent of the US stockpile in the first eight years of a CW Convention, if the USSR did likewise, but indicated that a complete ban would require the signature of all states capable of building chemical weapons.

The next day, Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze welcomed Bush's announcement, but urged the US to go further. He proposed that the superpowers destroy all of their stocks prior to conclusion of the Convention, if Washington would join Moscow in ceasing its current production (in 1987 the US resumed CW production after an eighteen-year moratorium, while the USSR announced suspension of its production). The Soviet proposal was rejected the following day by President Bush, citing a US need for deterrence of, and leverage over, other chemical weapons-capable states. Finally, in mid-October, US officials confirmed reports that President Bush had decided to retain the option to continue producing CW even after a Convention takes effect, contrary to the current negotiating text in Geneva. The US had earlier agreed to prohibit such production. □

— RON PURVER