

ARMS CONTROL DIGEST



Editor's Note: A major item on the arms control agenda this past quarter was the dispute between the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany over the German government's desire to see early superpower negotiations on short-range nuclear forces in Central Europe. As Peace&Security went to press, parties to the on-going discussions hoped to reach a compromise in time for the 29 and 30 May NATO summit meeting in Brussels.

Conventional Arms Control

The first round of two new sets of European arms control talks – the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) and the Confidence- and Security-Building Measures (CSBM) talks – took place in Vienna from 9 to 23 March. NATO's opening proposals were tabled officially by the chief Canadian delegate, David Peel, on 9 March.

They call for four types of limits:

- deep cuts in the overall numbers of certain weapons in Europe, to a level of 40,000 tanks, 33,000 artillery pieces, and 56,000 armoured troop-carriers, evenly divided between the two sides. Involving reductions of about fifty percent in tanks and artillery, this would leave each side with five to ten percent below the current NATO level;
- a national sub-limit of about thirty percent in each of these categories, meaning that no single country could hold more than 12,000 tanks, 10,000 artillery pieces, and 16,800 armoured troop-carriers. This would require reductions of two-thirds in Soviet tanks and artillery, and over half of their armoured troop-carriers, based in Europe;
- limits on forces stationed outside their own countries of 3,200 tanks, 1,700 artillery pieces, and 6,000 armoured troop-carriers, for each side; and

■ a series of geographical sub-limits, to “prevent undue concentration of forces.”

The Warsaw Pact's CFE proposal, introduced formally by the chief Soviet delegate, Oleg Grinevsky, on 9 March, calls for a three-stage reduction process. During the first stage, 1991–1994, “forces and armaments” on each side would be reduced to an equal level, ten to fifteen percent below the lowest level currently possessed by either side. Attention would be “focussed” on reducing attack combat aircraft, tanks, combat helicopters, combat armoured vehicles and armoured personnel carriers, and artillery including multiple-launch rocket systems and mortars. The first stage would also see the establishment of partially-demilitarized zones or “strips” along the East-West frontier.

During the second stage (1994–1997), each side would further reduce its forces by approximately twenty-five percent (or about 500,000 men, together with their weapons). Finally, during the third stage (1997–2000), further reductions would be made, armed forces would be “given a strictly defensive character,” and ceilings would be imposed on all other categories of arms. Verification measures would include mandatory on-site inspections, entry/exit checkpoints, and aerial monitoring.

As the talks got underway, independent observers differed about the prospects for agreement, although official representatives expressed considerable optimism. The two sides agreed on the desirability of equal limits, the approximate scale of first-stage reductions, and the need for intensive verification measures. However, they disagreed on which particular types of weapons should be singled out for reduction (especially on whether tactical aircraft should be included); their estimates of each other's holdings; the East's emphasis on personnel, as well as equipment, reductions; the Eastern proposal for demilitarized frontier

zones; and the NATO proposal for limits on “stationed forces” (outside their own countries).

In addition, the Soviets, while acknowledging that neither tactical nuclear weapons nor naval forces are included in the mandate of the talks, have called for separate negotiations (opposed by NATO) on each of these. Finally, NATO remains uneasy about reductions beyond the first stage, offering only to “contemplate” further reductions “in the longer term, and in the light of the implementation of” its current proposal.

Detailed proposals have also been made in the CSBM talks, although they have received much less publicity. NATO has called for improvements on the confidence- and security-building measures adopted in Stockholm in 1986, but without extending them to so-called “constraint” measures (i.e., actual limits on military activity). The Warsaw Pact, on the other hand, has proposed an ambitious array of new CSBMs, including constraints and other measures affecting independent naval and air exercises (successfully resisted by the West in the past).

Fissionable Materials Restrictions

In a speech in London on 7 April, Soviet President Gorbachev announced that the USSR would end its production of enriched, weapons-grade uranium this year, and close two of its weapons-grade plutonium-producing plants this year and next. He described the move as “yet another major step towards the complete cessation of the production of fissionable materials for use in weapons.”

The Bush Administration replied that the measures would have little military significance, since Moscow has stockpiled enriched uranium and possesses about ten military reactors producing plutonium and tritium for nuclear weapons. However, US Congressman Edward Markey welcomed the Soviet announcement as “a major new opportunity for the US to

begin a dialogue on ways to end fissile materials production.”

Over the past year, several American public interest groups have called for such limits, to take advantage of a lull in US production and to spur progress in strategic arms control. Canada has long sponsored a resolution in the UN General Assembly calling on the Conference on Disarmament to consider prohibiting the production of fissionable material for weapons purposes. Last year the resolution passed by a vote of 144 to 1 (France), with seven abstentions.

Brief Notes

■ By 28 March, a total of forty states had formally requested the convening of an amendment conference to convert the 1963 Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT) into a comprehensive test ban. Representing over one-third of the 116 parties to the PTBT, this ensures that the conference will take place. Any actual amendment, however, requires the agreement of all three original “depository” states. Two of these – the US and United Kingdom – have stated that they would not support any change in the existing Treaty whose prohibition on nuclear testing is limited to the atmosphere, outer space, and under water.

■ Thirty-one Soviet T-64 tanks left Hungary on 25 April, in the first of the unilateral withdrawals from Eastern Europe announced by President Gorbachev last December. A further 419 tanks and ten thousand men are to be withdrawn from Hungary over the next year. The Soviets had earlier announced that over 1,000 tanks and ten thousand personnel would be withdrawn from East Germany by 15 August of this year. According to the commander-in-chief of Soviet troops in Germany, all of the tanks will be sent beyond the Urals, where some will be mothballed and others converted to civilian uses. □

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