

ARMS CONTROL DIGEST



Malta Summit

■ At the Malta summit on 2 December, US President Bush proposed that the two sides attempt to resolve all the outstanding issues in the strategic arms reduction talks in time to sign a START Treaty at a summit meeting in the US in late June 1990. President Gorbachev, as well as senior American officials, later indicated that a more realistic timetable would be to seek to resolve all the major issues in time for the June summit, allowing for actual signature of the Treaty later in the year.

Reversing an earlier decision on chemical weapons (CW), Mr. Bush offered to end US production of binary CW after a global Chemical Weapons Convention enters into force, provided that Moscow accept the terms of the US proposal unveiled at the UN last September. It had called for the superpowers to destroy ninety-eight percent of their stockpiles in the first eight years of a CW Convention. Toward this end, Mr. Bush in Malta proposed signing an agreement at the June 1990 summit to destroy eighty percent of the stockpiles even before a global Convention is concluded. Without endorsing the American proposal, Mr. Gorbachev described it as "interesting," raising the possibility of "rapid movement."

An array of other arms control issues was also discussed in Malta. The two sides agreed to complete their work on verification protocols for the Threshold Test Ban and Peaceful Nuclear Explosions treaties in time for signature at the June summit. The US accepted an earlier Soviet proposal to hold a European summit meeting to sign a Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty before the

end of 1990. Bush invited the Soviets to join efforts to control the proliferation of ballistic missile technology by observing the regulations of the Missile Technology Control Regime developed by the seven major Western industrialized nations. For his part, Gorbachev emphasized the need for separate negotiations on naval arms, and proposed the complete elimination of tactical nuclear weapons at sea. In response, Bush was said to have reiterated the US opposition to any such negotiations at this time.

Open Skies

■ As this column was going to press, preparations were being made for the twenty-three nation Open Skies conference in Ottawa from 12 to 28 February. The Ottawa meeting is to be the first of two, aiming to produce a treaty allowing short-notice overflights of each other's territory by unarmed aircraft to ease the fear of surprise attack and aid in the verification of arms control agreements. In a speech in Berlin on 12 December, US Secretary of State Baker suggested that the NATO and Warsaw Pact foreign ministers also take advantage of their Ottawa meeting "to review the status and give a further push to the Vienna talks on conventional forces."

In mid-December NATO agreed on the "Basic Elements" of its own Open Skies proposal, to be presented in Ottawa. These included: national quotas of overflights based on the geographic size of the participants (several flights per month for larger countries, at least one per quarter for smaller countries); host-country inspection of the aircraft prior to, and on-board observation during, the flight; permission to use a wide variety of sensors, but not signals-intelligence devices; and sixteen hours' advance notice, followed by a "preflight period" of at least twenty-four hours. Although

the Warsaw Pact countries had not similarly presented their own position as of press time, the USSR had indicated that it wanted all foreign military bases of the two alliances open to the plan, as well as a common pool of aircraft, joint crews, "passive" sensors only (such as cameras, rather than "active" radars), and a complete sharing of data.

44th Session of UN General Assembly

■ Of forty resolutions on arms control and international security brought to a vote at the 44th Session of the UN General Assembly in December, Canada voted in favour of twenty, against five, and abstained on fifteen. Canada co-sponsored a total of ten resolutions: on two it was the lead sponsor (one on chemical and bacteriological weapons, with Poland; and the other on prohibiting the production of fissionable materials). The most dramatic issue of the session was the question of amending the Partial Test Ban Treaty into a comprehensive ban. Canada joined twenty-one other states in abstaining on this resolution, which called for an amendment conference to be held in New York in two sessions, one in June 1990 and the other in January 1991. It passed by a vote of 127-2-22, with only the US and UK opposed. Canadian Disarmament Ambassador Margaret Mason had told the First Committee earlier that, although Canada "did not view the initiative for an amending conference as likely to be either helpful or productive," it would nevertheless "participate constructively."

Short Notes

■ During Prime Minister Mulroney's Moscow visit in late November, External Affairs Minister Clark and Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze signed a bilateral "Agreement on Prevention of Incidents at Sea" governing the behaviour of the two states' warships and military air-

craft when in close proximity to each other. The USSR had signed similar agreements with the US, UK, West Germany, and France, and subsequently signed one with Italy just before the Malta summit.

■ Under the US-Soviet Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, the two superpowers by 22 December had eliminated all 1,126 of their shorter-range INF missiles, and 737 of 1,566 longer-range versions. The remainder of the latter are to be destroyed by 1 June 1991.

■ In his Berlin speech on 12 December, US Secretary of State Baker proposed that NATO consider establishing an arms control verification staff of its own, to assist in monitoring compliance with European arms control agreements, to coordinate the implementation of inspections, and to provide a clearinghouse for information.

■ NATO and the Warsaw Pact each tabled a draft Treaty text at the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) talks in Vienna on 14 December. Of significant import for these talks and for military force levels in Europe in general were two other political events:

The governments of both Hungary and Czechoslovakia have called for the complete withdrawal of Soviet forces from their territories, and talks with Moscow on this issue have begun. In addition, in his State of the Union address on 31 January, George Bush proposed sharp reductions in the number of US and Soviet forces deployed in Europe. The US proposal would see each side reduce the numbers of army and airforce personnel in Central Europe to 195,000 – with the US permitted to keep an additional 30,000 in Turkey, Italy and the UK. Before the speech, Bush made a phone call to Gorbachev who, it was reported, responded positively to the proposal. □

– RON PURVER