

ARMS CONTROL DIGEST



Conventional Arms Control

■ Remarkable progress was made during the second round of the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) negotiations, from 5 May to 13 July. First, on 18 May, the Warsaw Pact responded to NATO complaints about the vagueness of its earlier proposals by suggesting precise ceilings on various kinds of equipment, to be achieved through reductions by 1997. The proposed limits included 20,000 tanks and 28,000 armoured troop carriers for each side (identical to the NATO proposal of 9 March), and 24,000 artillery pieces (compared to NATO's proposed 16,500). The East would thus have to withdraw from Europe or retire, by its own estimates, a total of about 40,000 tanks, 47,000 artillery pieces, and 42,000 armoured troop carriers over the next eight years. It also called for each side to be limited to 1,350,000 troops, 1,500 "strike aircraft," and 1,700 helicopters.

Late May saw additional Eastern moves toward the Western position, including acceptance of the principles of sublimits on the forces of any one nation, on forces stationed outside their own countries, and on forces within regional "subzones" (to prevent their concentration). Thus, for example, the USSR would be permitted a total of 14,000 tanks, 17,000 artillery pieces, and 18,000 armoured troop carriers, only slightly above the number that would be allowed them under NATO's proposal. This, in turn, would amount to reductions of 17,580 tanks, 24,775 artillery pieces, and 27,000 armoured troop carriers beyond those announced as unilateral cuts by President Gorbachev at the UN last December.

In response, NATO at its summit meeting on 29 and 30 May for

the first time accepted the idea of limits on aircraft and personnel numbers, as demanded by the Warsaw Pact. US President Bush called for reductions to 15 percent below the current NATO levels in both helicopters and land-based combat aircraft, and a ceiling on US and Soviet ground and air force personnel in Europe of approximately 275,000 each. The latter would require the withdrawal of some 325,000 Soviet troops, compared to 30,000 Americans. Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze welcomed the new proposals as "serious and constructive, and meeting our stand half-way in many respects." Bush also called for agreement to be reached within six months to a year, and the reductions to be completed by 1992 or 1993.

Further movement was recorded before the end of the round. On 29 June the Warsaw Pact proposed a new, larger "sub-zone," including the Baltic and other military districts of the western USSR, in an attempt to assuage Western concerns about the possible concentration of Soviet forces in areas close to central Europe. And on 13 July, two months ahead of schedule, NATO tabled details of its proposed limits on aircraft and helicopters, setting alliance ceilings of 5,700 and 1,900, and national ceilings of 3,420 and 1,140, respectively. Such limits would require NATO to destroy about 1,000 aircraft and the Warsaw Pact, 3,900 (by NATO's count). Major differences remained, however, over which types of aircraft would be subject to cuts, NATO wanting to include all combat aircraft and the Pact wishing to exclude fighter interceptors and medium bombers.

Other areas of continued disagreement included: the Pact's insistence on personnel limitations applying to the alliances as a whole, as well as to the forces of non-US NATO members stationed outside their own territory; whether or not stored equipment should be included in the limits on foreign-

stationed forces and on the forces within subzones (the Pact in favour, NATO opposed); the geographic parameters of the subzones, as well as the ceilings to take effect within them; the definition of certain types of equipment, such as tanks and artillery pieces; and each side's estimates of its own and the other side's current holdings. Finally, neither side had yet formulated comprehensive verification provisions. Although both sides pledged to attempt to reach an agreement within the time frame proposed by President Bush, most independent observers doubted that this would be possible.

Nuclear and Space Arms Talks

■ The Nuclear and Space Arms Talks (NST) resumed for their eleventh round on 19 June, after a seven-month recess during which the new Bush administration reviewed the US position. Many observers were disappointed with the results of Washington's review, which mainly reconfirmed old positions and made no headway on such outstanding issues as constraints on ballistic missile defences, mobile ICBMs, and sea-launched cruise missiles. However, the Soviets were evidently pleased that previous understandings embodied in the 400-page draft treaty had been preserved. The Bush administration rejected Congressional recommendations that a US-proposed ban on mobile ICBMs be made to apply only to missiles with multiple warheads. Many arms control advocates have been urging the US to drop its proposed ban entirely, contending that mobile missiles are less vulnerable to attack and hence more stabilizing. However, the administration has been reluctant to drop the ban until Congress agrees to fund its own two new mobile ICBM programmes, since the Soviets have already deployed such missiles.

One new US initiative, introduced at the beginning of the new round, was a proposal to put into

effect agreed verification measures even before a final treaty text is completed. Although some critics perceived the move as a delaying tactic, Soviet negotiators were reported to have responded favourably.

Brief Notes

■ The controversy within NATO over talks on short-range nuclear forces (SNF) was resolved at the 29 and 30 May summit by US agreement to begin negotiations on a "partial" reduction of such weapons once implementation of a conventional forces agreement was "underway." In support of his call for immediate negotiations to ban SNF, Soviet President Gorbachev on 11 May had announced that he would unilaterally reduce his arsenal of SNF warheads by 500. American officials retorted that this would have little impact on the estimated Warsaw Pact total of 10,000 such weapons, while noting that NATO had unilaterally reduced its own stocks by more than 2,400 since 1979.

■ The US and USSR on 12 June signed an "Agreement on the Prevention of Dangerous Military Activities," covering unintentional incursions of military aircraft into the territory of another country; the hazardous use of lasers; the disrupting of operations in "special caution areas" (such as the Persian Gulf); and interference with command-and-control networks. The agreement also establishes a Joint Commission to improve communications and handle disputes.

■ On 17 July it was reported that the US and USSR had reached agreement on key elements of a global Chemical Weapons Convention, including a timetable for the destruction of such weapons and detailed procedures for challenge inspections. The recommendations will be submitted to the 40-nation Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, where the Convention is being negotiated. □

— RON PURVER