

ARMS CONTROL DIGEST



Strategic Arms Reductions Talks

■ At the Moscow summit on 31 July, Presidents Bush and Gorbachev signed a seven hundred-page START Treaty. The three major outstanding issues had been settled during four days of talks between their foreign ministers in Washington earlier in the month. On "downloading" (reducing the number of warheads per missile), the two sides agreed to a ceiling of 1,250 missile "spaces" on three different missile types (versus the Soviet preference for 2,150 on three types, and the American preference for just 1,000 on one type). On the telemetry issue, the Soviets agreed to provide tape-recorded data from every missile test, not just a limited number. Finally, the two sides settled on 21 percent as the change in throw-weight signifying a new type of missile. The definition of "throw-weight" for this purpose was not agreed until the Bush-Gorbachev meeting in London on 17 July.

START has been hailed as the first arms control agreement to actually reduce, rather than merely limit, the number of strategic nuclear weapons. It sets a ceiling of 6,000 on warheads and 1,600 on delivery vehicles for each side. A sub-ceiling of 4,900 on ballistic missile warheads mandates the elimination of over 7,000 such warheads. The USSR will cut the numbers of its most powerful missile, the SS-18, as well as its overall ballistic missile throw-weight, by 50 percent. The Treaty also includes an unprecedentedly elaborate system of verification, including twelve different types of on-site inspection. However, because it credits bombers with fewer

weapons than they may actually carry, while sea-launched cruise missiles are left out entirely (being limited to 880 by a separate accord), total reductions in the strategic arsenals will be about 15 percent for the US and 25 percent for the USSR, rather than 50 percent as originally intended, over seven years.

Conventional Forces in Europe

■ The dispute over the terms of the CFE Treaty, signed last November, was finally resolved by US Secretary of State Baker and Soviet Foreign Minister Bessmertnykh in Lisbon on 1 June. The compromise was formally approved by the other Treaty signatories in Vienna two weeks later. Without accepting the interpretation of its co-signatories that such forces are subject to the Treaty, the USSR agreed that equipment held by its naval infantry and coastal defence units will not exceed the Treaty's ceilings and sub-ceilings, and will not be increased.

The existing equipment will remain, but an equivalent number drawn from ground forces – amounting to 3,738 pieces – will have to be destroyed, modified, or converted to non-military use. Of this amount, 753 armoured combat vehicles (ACVs) will be modified and reclassified as combat support equipment, exempt from the Treaty limits. Of the remainder, half will be reduced under normal CFE provisions within Europe, while half will be withdrawn east of the Urals, where an equivalent number of older pieces will be destroyed or converted under less stringent procedures. The 1,701 ACVs assigned to the Strategic Rocket Forces will be exempted from the Treaty as internal security forces, although also subject to a no-increase commitment.

The USSR also undertook to destroy or convert 14,500 tanks, ACVs, and artillery pieces that it

had moved east of the Urals before the Treaty was signed (about 25 percent of the total transferred); agreed to provide advance notice of weapons destruction; and declared that "the equipment withdrawn will not be used to create a strategic reserve ... and will not be stored in a way which allows for rapid return to the [Treaty] area." Resolution of the dispute will permit formal ratification of the Treaty and the beginning of substantive "CFE-1A" negotiations focusing on personnel limits and aerial inspection.

The Middle East

■ On 29 May, President Bush announced a Middle East arms control proposal including the following elements: (1) an early meeting of the five major arms suppliers in Paris to discuss guidelines for restraining destabilizing transfers of conventional weapons, as well as weapons of mass destruction; (2) a mechanism for supplier consultations, including advance notification of certain sales; (3) a freeze on the acquisition or testing of surface-to-surface missiles, looking toward their ultimate elimination from the region; (4) a ban on the further production or acquisition of enriched uranium and separated plutonium, usable in nuclear weapons; and (5) commitments from all the regional states to sign the emerging Chemical Weapons Convention and to bolster the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention. Israel immediately objected to the plan on the grounds that it overemphasized weapons of mass destruction, while Arab states complained that it said nothing about Israel's presumed existing stock of nuclear weapons.

The five main suppliers (the Permanent Members of the UN Security Council) met in Paris as planned on 8 and 9 July. They endorsed the Bush proposals, called for the creation of a Middle East "weapons of mass destruction-free zone," and agreed to hold an experts meeting in September before

resuming talks on arms transfer restraints in London in October.

Short Notes

■ On 13 May, President Bush announced that the US would drop its previous insistence on retaining a small chemical weapons (CW) stock (2 percent of its current holdings, or about 500 tons) until all CW-capable states had joined a global CW ban, and would also withdraw its previous reservation of the right to use CW in retaliation against an attack in kind. He called on the Geneva-based Conference on Disarmament to settle all major issues by the end of this year in order to complete a CW Convention by May 1992.

■ During a visit by Soviet Chief of the General Staff General Moiseyev in early May, Canada and the USSR signed an agreement on "The Prevention of Dangerous Military Activities." It is designed to avoid incidents arising from one country's armed forces exercising or operating in close proximity to those of the other.

■ In accordance with the 1987 Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, the US and USSR destroyed the last of their 2,692 INF missiles in early May.

■ Zambia, Tanzania, and South Africa have all recently signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), while France announced plans to do so. The only remaining non-signatory nuclear-weapon state, China, also indicated that it was "seriously considering" signing.

■ A proposal long championed by Canada for a UN register of conventional arms transfers was endorsed by the European Council at the end of June, the Paris meeting of the five permanent Security Council members in early July, and the London Economic Summit later that month. Canada was also instrumental in persuading the Berlin meeting of CSCE foreign ministers in June to endorse the idea of greater transparency in arms transfers. □

– RON PURVER