

ARMS CONTROL DIGEST



Nuclear Arms Initiatives

■ On 27 September, President Bush announced a series of sweeping changes in the US nuclear posture. Calling on the USSR to reciprocate, he stated that the US would unilaterally withdraw and destroy all of its 2,150 ground-launched tactical nuclear weapons (nuclear artillery shells and short-range ballistic missile warheads) deployed in Europe, South Korea, and at home. The US would also withdraw all of its naval tactical nuclear weapons from sea, including nuclear-tipped, long-range, land-attack cruise missiles (SLCMs) and bombs aboard carrier- and land-based naval aircraft. Approximately half of these (estimated to number between 1,825 and 2,525) would be destroyed, while the others (including the more modern SLCMs) would be stored in central locations from which they could be re-deployed in a crisis.

As for strategic nuclear weapons, the US would remove from alert all of its strategic bombers, as well as those intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) scheduled for deactivation under START. Elimination of the latter would be accelerated (rather than extending over the seven-year period mandated by START). At the same time, the President terminated the programmes for making mobile the existing MX and planned Midgetman ICBMs; cancelled the replacement for the nuclear short-range attack missile (SRAM) for strategic bombers; and established a unified US Strategic Command to oversee all air-, land-, and sea-launched strategic nuclear weapons.

Turning to formal negotiations, he reiterated an earlier US proposal for a total ban on multiple-warhead (MIRVed) ICBMs, and called on the USSR to permit the limited deployment of non-nuclear defences

against limited ballistic missile attacks. Finally, in order to help prevent the inadvertent or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons, he proposed discussions with the USSR on improving safety procedures and command-and-control arrangements.

President Gorbachev more than matched the US moves in an announcement on 5 October, stating that all Soviet ground-launched tactical nuclear weapons, including mines, would be destroyed; and the nuclear warheads of anti-aircraft missiles, as well as all naval tactical nuclear weapons, would be removed, some being destroyed and others stored centrally. Further, the Soviet President proposed that, "on a reciprocal basis," all naval tactical nuclear weapons be destroyed, and all nuclear bombs and missiles from the tactical air forces be removed and stored.

Regarding strategic weapons, Gorbachev announced that all heavy bombers, as well as 503 ICBMs (including 134 MIRVed ones) would be taken off alert; work on modernizing Soviet SRAMs and small mobile ICBMs would be discontinued; MIRVed, rail-mobile ICBMs would be frozen at their current number and confined to their permanent bases; and three ballistic missile submarines with 48 launchers were now being "removed from our combat forces." The USSR would reduce its number of accountable strategic nuclear warheads by 1,000 more than required by START, to a total of 5,000 within seven years. Gorbachev called for further cuts of approximately 50 percent in the remaining number of strategic offensive weapons.

On other matters, Gorbachev announced a one-year moratorium on nuclear weapons tests; called for a negotiated end to the production of fissionable weapons materials; agreed to begin "detailed dialogue" with the US on nuclear weapons safety; announced the establishment of a single operational command for all Soviet strategic

nuclear weapons; and called on all the nuclear powers to jointly pledge the "non-first-use" of nuclear weapons.

On 17 and 18 October, the NATO defence ministers welcomed the US and Soviet announcements and decided to cut in half the number of air-delivered weapons in NATO's European stockpile as well, from about 1,400 to 700. Together with the elimination of 700 short-range ballistic missiles and 1,500 nuclear artillery shells, this will amount to an 80 percent cut in NATO's existing stockpile of "sub-strategic" nuclear weapons.

French tactical nuclear weapons are not included in the NATO cut-backs, but France announced in August that it would reduce production of its new Hades short-range ballistic missile from 120 to 30 units, and place them in storage.

Biological Weapons Review

■ The Third Review Conference of the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention met in Geneva from 9 to 27 September. Among other things, it agreed to expand data exchanges among the Treaty's 118 parties to cover biological defence research programmes, as well as vaccine production facilities; called on the parties to ensure that biological agents, toxins, weapons, equipment or means of delivery are not transferred to other states if there is a danger of their being used illegally (although it failed to agree on a "trigger list" of such items); and approved the establishment of an "ad hoc group of governmental experts" to identify possible future verification measures.

Just prior to the conference, on 5 September, the foreign ministers of Argentina, Brazil, and Chile signed a declaration banning the development, manufacture, and use of chemical and biological weapons by their countries.

Arms Transfers and the Five

■ As agreed at their Paris meeting last July, the five Permanent Members of the UN Security Coun-

cil met again in October in London to develop guidelines governing the transfer of conventional weapons, especially to the Middle East. The guidelines adopted for global use listed three criteria for proposed transfers, emphasizing recipients' legitimate self-defence needs; and pledged the parties to avoid transfers that would aggravate existing armed conflicts, increase tensions in an area, or "seriously undermine" a recipient's economy. Regarding the Middle East in particular, the Five (responsible for 85 percent of arms supplies to the area) agreed to inform each other about all transfers to the region of major weapons systems. They also reaffirmed the importance of maintaining strict controls on the export of equipment related to weapons of mass destruction, agreeing to study the further harmonization of national policies.

Defence and Space Talks

■ At the US-Soviet Defence and Space Talks in Geneva in October, the US for the first time agreed to discuss specific limits on the scope and timing of defensive deployments, to accommodate its planned Global Protection Against Limited Strikes (GPALS) system. The plan would require replacement or amendment of the 1972 ABM Treaty, which limits ballistic missile defences to 100 ground-based interceptors at a single site. GPALS is said to call for 750 ground-based and 1,000 space-based interceptors, capable of handling up to 200 incoming warheads at once. According to the US, however, it would not undermine the credibility of offensive retaliatory forces.

Since the failed coup in August, Soviet officials have expressed increasing interest in cooperating with the US to build such defences against inadvertent, unauthorized, or third-party nuclear attacks. However, the US has denied reports that it is willing to help build a Soviet system or plans to share its technology. □

— RON PURVER