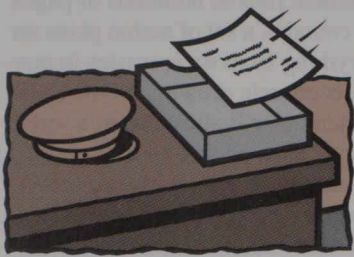


DEFENCE NOTES



Soviet Nuclear Arsenal

■ Amidst continued political upheaval in the former Soviet Union, the command and control of the Soviet nuclear arsenal dominated defence issues through the winter months. The specific location of strategic nuclear weapons in the former Soviet Union is well understood because the data exchanges required by the recently completed agreement between the US and USSR to reduce strategic nuclear weapons (START) provide detailed information on their deployments. Russia aside, the Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Belarus are home to 352 ICBMs, 70 strategic bombers and 3,138 associated nuclear warheads. The largest concentration is in the Ukraine, which has 176 ICBMs and two heavy bomber bases. Kazakhstan has one bomber base and 104 of the formidable SS-18 ten-warhead ICBMs. Belarus is the base for 72 mobile SS-25 ICBMs.

In contrast to the geographically limited deployment of the strategic nuclear forces, approximately fifteen thousand tactical nuclear weapons are distributed throughout the CIS republics. Of these, more than 9,000 are in Russia, 2,700 in Ukraine, 650 in Kazakhstan, and in excess of 1,000 in Belarus. In contrast also to the strategic weapons, the tactical weapons may be subject to less strict control, including the possibility that older systems might be fired mechanically without the use of an electronic key.

Meeting in Brest on 8 December 1991, the leaders of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus signed a declaration creating the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). In Article 6 of the declaration the parties agreed to "common control over nuclear armaments which will be regulated by special agreement."

Two weeks later, at Alma Ata

Two weeks later, at Alma Ata on 21 December, Kazakhstan, the fourth of the republics home to Soviet strategic nuclear forces, joined the others in the nuclear weapons agreement. The four republics also designated Marshall Yevgeny Shaposhnikov as commander of the armed forces. Since the larger republics later made plans to establish their own armed forces, it seemed likely that Shaposhnikov's most important task would be to command the strategic forces under the joint control of the four republics.

Following his resignation on 25 December, Mikhail Gorbachev handed Shaposhnikov a black briefcase containing the nuclear command codes for Soviet strategic forces. In early January, Shaposhnikov was reported to have said that only two such briefcases existed: "One is in the possession of the President of Russia, and the other is in my hands." At about the same time, however, Ukraine President Leonid Kravchuk was quoted as saying: "In a few days a device will be installed in my office that will be able to, when necessary, block the nuclear button."

Meeting in Minsk on 30 December, the eleven CIS republics formally recognized "the need for joint command of strategic forces and for maintaining unified control of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction" of the former Soviet Union. The power of decision on the use of nuclear weapons was conferred on the president of the Russian Federation "in agreement with" the heads of the three other nuclear republics.

The Minsk agreement also described plans for the elimination of all nuclear weapons outside the Russian Federation. The Ukraine will dismantle its strategic nuclear weapons by the end of 1994, and its tactical weapons by July 1992. No schedule is set out for Belarus, but in both cases the elimination will involve the "participation" of Russia. Some ambiguities remained about the republic commit-

ments to denuclearization. Belarus officials, for example, have since indicated that their desire to become non-nuclear will necessarily be affected by political considerations, especially diplomatic recognition by the West.

The elimination of the strategic forces in Kazakhstan is not mentioned in the Minsk agreement. At the Alma Ata meeting Kazakhstan declined to join the other republics in promising to join the Non-Proliferation Treaty, giving rise to fears that Kazakhstan might seek to obtain sole possession of the nuclear weapons on its territory.

Finally, although the Ukraine has reiterated its intention to eliminate the strategic nuclear forces on its territory, military and political tensions between the Ukraine and Russia have raised further questions about the disposition of tactical nuclear weapons. In particular, the two republics have been at odds over the disposition of the Black Sea fleet. In early February it was still unclear how the balance of the Black Sea fleet – 2 helicopter carriers, 54 submarines and 43 surface combatants – would be divided. Elements of the fleet are known to be equipped with tactical nuclear weapons.

US Nuclear Arsenal and Defence Budget

■ In his State of the Union message on 29 January, President Bush announced cuts in the US strategic arsenal which, as subsequently elaborated in the administration's 1993 budget request, bring the existing plans for force modernization to a halt. Bush announced that B-2 bomber production would end after completion of the twenty planes already procured. The small, mobile ICBM programme (Midgetman) is cancelled, as is the SSN-21 Seawolf attack submarine. All new production of the MX ten-warhead missile will be stopped, the production of the advanced cruise missile will be ended at 640 missiles, and production of the advanced W-88 warhead for the Trident II missile

will be halted. With the end of the W-88, all new warhead production in the US has ended.

Combined with a number of other changes in US military force development, the thrust of the administration's 1993 defence budget request is to change the emphasis of US military posture from the previous concern with war in Europe, to flexible forces able to respond to regional conflicts. The budget request is for US\$277.9 billion, which constitutes a 7 percent reduction from 1992.

Star Wars

■ In the midst of cuts in the strategic forces, the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) appears to be prospering. The SDI budget will increase approximately 30 percent in FY 1993 to US\$4.36 billion. The programme is now intended to provide Global Protection Against Limited Strikes (GPALS), defined as the capability to repel an attack consisting of 200 warheads. It is focused on early deployment of a ground-based ballistic missile defence, followed by the addition of a space-based system. Brilliant Pebbles is now defined as system that would place 1,000 small, non-explosive missiles in orbit. Brilliant Eyes is a space-based surveillance and tracking system.

While both Brilliant Eyes and Brilliant Pebbles would require amendment or abrogation of the Anti-ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM) signed by the US and USSR in 1972, the ground-based system proposed for deployment in 1996 would, in its first phase, be compatible with the treaty. Boris Yeltsin is apparently less concerned than his predecessor about the preservation of the ABM Treaty. In addressing the January summit of the Security Council, he called for a joint SDI programme, arguing that it would engage Soviet scientists who might otherwise "drift abroad and spread nuclear technology into other countries." □

– DAVID COX