

ARMS CONTROL DIGEST



New Reductions in Nuclear Weapons

■ In his State of the Union Message on 29 January, President Bush revealed that he had told President Yeltsin that if the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) accepted the earlier American proposal for a total ban on land-based, multiple-warhead (MIRVed) ballistic missiles, the US would reduce the number of its submarine-launched ballistic missile warheads "by about one-third," and would also convert a "substantial portion" of its strategic bombers to "primarily conventional use."

The earlier American proposal had been rejected on the grounds that it would eliminate the strongest element of the (former) Soviet missile force while leaving untouched the submarine-launched and bomber-carried weapons in which the US remains superior.

Under the new Bush proposal, the US would totally eliminate its force of 50 MX missiles with 500 warheads (the most modern element of its ICBM force), 1,000 of its Minuteman III ICBM warheads, and 1,156 of its submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) warheads, as well as a "substantial" but unspecified number of bomber-delivered weapons. Each side would reduce its total of strategic nuclear warheads to between 4,400 and 5,000, in the US case approximately half the number permitted under the START Treaty (and almost 7,000 fewer than at present).

Despite Bush's characterization of Yeltsin's "early response" as "very positive," the Russian President, in a wide-ranging speech on Russian television the following day, did not directly address the American offer. Yeltsin proposed the creation of an international agency for nuclear arms reduc-

tion, eventually to control the entire "nuclear cycle" from the production of fissionable materials to the dumping of nuclear waste.

Regarding strategic nuclear weapons, he announced a series of unilateral cuts and pledged to reduce overall strategic weapons totals to START-mandated levels within three years, instead of the planned seven (or even more quickly, "if there is mutual understanding with the United States"). He also proposed the mutual renunciation of the development of new types of long-range, air-launched cruise missiles; the scrapping of all existing long-range, nuclear-armed, sea-launched cruise missiles; and ending the "combat patrols" of ballistic missile submarines. Finally, Yeltsin announced that proposals for deeper reductions, to the level of 2,000 to 2,500 strategic nuclear warheads on each side, had been prepared. Yeltsin reiterated Russia's allegiance to the ABM Treaty as "an important factor of maintaining strategic stability in the world," but also declared: "We are ready to develop, then create and jointly operate a global defence system, instead of the SDI system."

On other arms control matters, he announced that Russia intended to join the Missile Technology Control Regime; would abandon its reservation to the 1925 Geneva Protocol concerning the right of retaliation with biological weapons; and would adopt domestic legislation to regulate the export of materials, equipment, and technologies that could be used to make nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons or "combat missiles." He indicated there would be a delay in the timetable for the destruction of chemical weapons under a 1990 agreement with the US.

After meeting at Camp David on 1 February, Bush and Yeltsin announced that two summit meetings would be held later in the year. They were unable to reach agreement on any specific arms control proposals, but announced that detailed negotiations would

begin with a visit by US Secretary of State Baker to Moscow in mid-February. The following day, US Defence Secretary Dick Cheney reportedly rejected Yeltsin's proposal for deeper cuts in strategic offensive arms, stressing the importance of preserving adequate numbers of ballistic missile submarines for stability. While calling the Russian proposal for joint missile defence "a major breakthrough," he nevertheless declined to alter the US position against sharing such technology with Moscow.

North Korea and the Bomb

■ Concern escalated during the fall about North Korea's suspected nuclear weapons programme. The North signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1985, but had since failed to meet the requirement to conclude a safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

On 11 December, at a meeting of the two Korean prime ministers, South Korea disclosed that all US nuclear weapons had been removed from its soil and proposed simultaneous "pilot" inspections of the Kunsan Air Base in the South (where the last American nuclear weapons were believed to have been stored) and Yongbyon in the North (where a reprocessing facility was believed to be under construction). Two days later, the two Koreas signed an Agreement on Reconciliation and Non-aggression. Among other things, it called for the creation within three months of its entry into force of a "Joint Military Committee" to "discuss and carry out" various confidence-building measures and phased arms reductions.

After a series of expert meetings at the end of December, North and South declared agreement in principle not to "test, manufacture, produce, accept, possess, store, deploy or use nuclear weapons" or "possess nuclear reprocessing and uranium enrichment facilities," and to "implement inspections of installations selected by the other

side and agreed upon by both sides," following procedures to be specified by a Joint Committee for Nuclear Control to be set up one month after the Declaration's entry into force. North Korea also reportedly promised to sign and ratify the IAEA safeguards accord before the next prime ministerial meeting in February if the US and South Korea cancelled their annual "Team Spirit" military exercises (which they announced a week later they would do).

The Non-Nuclearization Declaration was signed by the two prime ministers on 20 January, and expected to enter into force (along with the Reconciliation and Non-aggression Agreement) a month later. On 30 January, the North signed its IAEA safeguards agreement, but a senior official reportedly suggested that the ratification process could take as long as six months. In direct talks with the North, the US was said to have given it a deadline (possibly April) to allow inspection of its nuclear sites or face international sanctions. Many analysts feared that a delay, especially given the Iraqi experience in successfully hiding its nuclear weapons program from IAEA inspectors, would allow North Korea to do likewise.

UN Arms Register Created

■ The UN General Assembly on 9 December voted 150-0, with two abstentions, to establish a Register of Conventional Arms. The proposal grew out of an old idea, revived by Canadian Prime Minister Mulroney in February 1991, to discourage excessive arms transfers by publicizing them. The voluntary register, opened on 1 January 1992, initially applies only to transfers of battle tanks, armoured combat vehicles, large calibre artillery systems, combat aircraft, attack helicopters, warships, missiles, and missile systems. An expert group is to report next year on ways of extending it to include lighter arms, production sites, and national weapon stocks. □

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