

ICBM EAR week of January 3, 2025 Happy New Year from the ICBM EAR, prepared by Peter Huessy, President of Geostrategic Analysis of Potomac, Maryland and Senior Fellow, The National Institute of Deterrent Studies.

Quotes and Comments of the Week

Chinese President Xi Jinping: “No one can stop the historical trend” of China’s “reunification” with Taiwan.

Taiwan’s defense ministry: Chinese military aircraft and warships conducted the first combat patrol around the island of the new year.

U.S. Ambassador to South Korea Philip Goldberg: “[On Friday, USFK Commander Gen. Xavier Brunson] and I met with Acting President Choi Sang-mok. During the meeting, we reaffirmed the enduring strength of the U.S.-South Korean Alliance and our commitment to advancing mutual interests and shared values.”

“**Pakistan and India** exchanged lists of their nuclear assets on Wednesday, as part of a long-standing bilateral agreement designed to prevent attacks on each other’s nuclear facilities.”

The South Korean military North Korea fired a suspected intermediate-range ballistic missile that flew for about 1,100 kilometers before splashing into the East Sea,

Secretary of State Antony Blinken Russia intends to share advance space and satellite technology with North Korea.

U.S. Navy Strategic Systems Programs: Strategic Weapons Systems Ashore facility at Cape Canaveral Space Force Station achieved full operational capability last month, a major milestone in support of the Navy’s nuclear modernization efforts. **Congrats SSP and Admiral Johnny Wolfe!**

DPRK Kim Jong Un: Vowed to implement the “toughest” anti-American policy; the U.S.-South Korea-Japan security partnership is expanding into nuclear military bloc for aggression.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov: Moscow will scrap its moratorium on the deployment of intermediate and shorter range nuclear-capable missiles (Editor’s Note: A moratorium under the INF Treaty they already serially violated.)

The War Zone: “U.S. Army’s first combat use of THAAD missile defense system just occurred in Israel[. Officials confirmed that the interceptor was fired at a Houthi ballistic missile Thursday night over Israel.”

NATO Official Sky News: “There is a ‘real prospect’ an unconventional attack by Russia against NATO - such as an act of sabotage or arson - will cause ‘substantial’ casualties, a top alliance official has told Sky News.”

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Huessy Commentary: Missile Defense for America Will Be a Key Strategic Battle for 2025-6

The Huessy Congressional Breakfast Seminar Series continues this month and begins its 43rd year. The first series of 11 seminar speakers **are now scheduled**. The series seeks to go back regularly to the Capitol Hill Club and will do so for a number of events in 2025.

The series begins as the NIDS Nuclear Seminar series and will feature January 10th at 10-11am the two authors of a NEW report on national missile defense, what the President-elect Trump refers to as America's Iron Dome. Robert Soofer and Mark Massa from the Atlantic Council will thus be our first two speakers for this year's series.

For Congress at the top of missile defense issues is completion of the work on the NGI or next generation interceptor, which would be deployed circa 2028 to complement or replace the 44 interceptors the USA now has deployed in California and Alaska. They will be augmented by an additional 20 interceptors. A new essay in Newsweek covers this issue and does a fairly good job in covering the issues. [It is linked here.](#)

The issues that need to be addressed and overcome to proceed with the deployment of such defense are myriad but include: (1) seeing missile defense as an adjunct to deterrence; (2) demonstrating the system is affordable; (3) convincing Congress the defense is workable; and (4) explaining it doesn't undermine the security of China or Russia, for example, but stops them from successfully engaging in aggression.

The Soofer report explains Beijing and Moscow could also opt to attack the U.S. with a limited strike to "coerce" Washington. This kind of operation would be designed to make the U.S. pull away from a fight or refuse to back an ally, but not provoke Washington into using its nuclear weapons or mount a large-scale, retaliatory attack. Effective missile defense as Soofer recommends could deter such Chinese or Russian coercion.

The U.K.-based defense think tank, the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), echoes this concern, arguing in a 2023 report that U.S.'s enemies could use limited nuclear or conventional strikes, which the U.S. is ill-prepared to fend off.

Critics of Soofer's recommended action argue no defensive technology makes much sense as the offensive side will simply build a counter. A Stimson Center fellow William Alberque, and a former director of [NATO's](#) Arms Control, Disarmament and WMD Non-Proliferation Center, argues that to build a defense technology makes no sense as the other guy will build a response, and thus initiate an "arms race" which "nobody wins."

Well folks do win, as all recorded history details. Imperial Japan builds a torpedo that became buoyant quickly and did not imbed itself into the shallow water of Pearl Harbor as the US Navy assumed would happen to all such torpedo's launch from aircraft.

Should the US simply stop trying to improve our arms? And can we assume the other guy stands down as well?? Well, how has that worked throughout history? Should we have not tried to replace the dirigible, or the biplane, or the prop plane, the jet, or the missile?

What Alberque gets wrong is understanding who the United States is facing. If Russia, Iran, North Korea and China were not the aggressive terror sponsoring states they are, the US would need a far smaller military. But as Hal Brand of Johns Hopkins explained last year, building a better military does work. He explained that Reagan deliberately engaged in an arms race with the USSR to win and use our technological prowess to defeat Moscow—they could not compete at the high end of technology.

In fact, Andropov decided in 1978 that Gorbachev had to be promoted to GS to provide a smiley face to the world to secure especially from the US and Europe, high tech especially for space and military. Reagan understood this and denied Moscow the \$ to buy/steal/ such technology. Bad guys secure better weapons to allow them to do bad things. Like invading Ukraine or the ROK or Kuwait of Poland. Without the weapons of the US and its allies, the bad guys take whatever they want.

According to retired General Trey Obering, space based systems such as Brilliant Pebbles or what Reagan originally envisioned, are affordable and technically available. Too many in Congress still think it will upset Russia and China who will claim their deterrent is being undermined. Well, Russia and China would be upset but not because their deterrent will be harmed. Strong missile defense will take away their strategy of escalate to win—the very coercive nature of nuclear weapons about which the Posture Commission in October 2023 warned.

DoD China Threat Report: Better but not Good---Important Defense Industry Factors

The recent China threat report from the US Department of Defense actually understates the growth of the Chinese military force and when the buildup is going to be achieved by the PRC. However, experts declare that the report is better than previous such publications. But a January 3, 2025 presentation by the Committee on the Present Danger-China concluded that the US defense manufacturing and industrial base must be supported to greatly expand, including and especially shipyards. One Chinese Naval shipping vessel can bring more military equipment to a theater than the entirety of the current USAF airlift capability. Also supported by the CPD-C was to have a US government and private industry joint effort to have government owned but industry operated ship-yards and other facilities. Col John Mills advocated for both legacy and new asymmetrical force development. Some of these issues will be discussed at our June 24th Triad Symposium at the LSUS Campus as part of our industry panels.

ROK Political Chaos and Deterrent Needs

The last two ROK Presidents have been removed from office through impeachment by the nation's legislature. The Supreme Court can rule on the legitimacy of such orders but the court only has 6 members with 3 vacancies—and at least 6 members of the court are required for passage of any court decision. The current President is the Treasury Minister. In addition, some US analysts are calling for the ROK to develop its own nuclear weapons capability, an effort that some polls in ROK show having 70% support. Although that number drops to around 40% when it is further explained the problems with the NPT and US-ROK relations should Seoul move toward such a capability.

However, two experts on Korea write in Foreign Affairs that the ROK should deploy its own nuclear forces as America will be less willing to defend ROK given that the North Koreans have the capability of hitting the US mainland with nuclear armed ballistic missiles. And when coupled with the assumption that President Trump will be less likely to defend the ROK in the event of a DPRK attack, it is time that the ROK take its defense into its own hands. The length essay is attached.

Congressional Developments—Committee Assignments in US Senate

The House chose as Speaker of the House Representative Mike Johnson, by a vote of 218-215. Across the Capitol, **Senator Slotkin, (D-MI) who holds a background in the CIA and served as an acting assistant secretary of defense, garnered a spot on the powerful Armed Services Committee**, making her the only Democrat added to the panel this election cycle. Sen. Jon Ossoff (D-GA), who first assumed office in 2021, garnered a position on the influential Senate Appropriations Committee.

Upcoming 2025 Seminar Events: National Institute for Deterrence Studies (NIDS) & Peter Huessy Congressional Nuclear Deterrent Seminars for 2025

January

- Robert Soofer and Mark Massa
 - Title: The Case for Homeland Missile Defense
 - Date: January 10, 2025, 10:00 AM

- Shoshana Bryen and Ilan Berman
 - Title: Middle East Update and the Iranian Nuclear Threat
 - Date: January 31, 2025, 10:00 AM

February

- Stephen Blank and Mark Schneider
 - Title: Russian Intentions with Its Growing Nuclear Forces
 - Date: February 14, 2028, 10:00 AM

- Hon. Madelyn Creedon and Hon. Frank Miller
 - Title: Assessment and Update of the Posture Commission
 - Date: February 28, 2025, 10:00 AM

March

- Gordon Chang and Rick Fisher
 - Title: The Chinese Nuclear Threat & Implications for US Security
 - Date: March 14, 2024, 10:00 AM
- Brad Roberts
 - Title: Major Power Rivalry and Nuclear Stability
 - Date: March 28, 2025, 10:00 AM

NEW: oMaj Gen Stacy Jo Huser, oReview of 20th USAF Minuteman III ICBM Force, oApril 18th, 9-10AM

38 Speakers Were Heard in the 2024 National Institute for Deterrence Studies (NIDS) & Peter Huessy Events Plus Two Nuclear Triad events June 20th and September 24th, 2024.

January

- **Gordon Chang and Rick Fisher**
 - **Title:** The Chinese Nuclear Threat & Implications for US Security
 - **Date:** January 19, 2024, 10:00 AM
- **Lt. Gen. (ret.) Chun Inbum & Bruce Klingner**
 - **Title:** Nuclear Balance - DPRK
 - **Date:** January 26, 2024, 6:00 PM

February

- **Stephen Blank and Mark Schneider**
 - **Title:** The Russian Nuclear Threat & Implications for US Security
 - **Date:** February 9, 2024, 2:00 PM
- **Shoshana Bryen and Ilan Berman**
 - **Title:** The Iranian Nuclear Threat & Implications for US Security
 - **Date:** February 23, 2024, 10:00 AM

March

- **Mathew Kroenig and Greg Weaver**
 - **Title:** The Strategic Posture Commission: Commentary
 - **Date:** March 1, 2024, 10:00 AM
- **Rob Soofer and Matthew Costlow**
 - **Title:** The Effect of Air and Missile Defense on Strategic Deterrence
 - **Date:** March 22, 2024, 10:00 AM
- **Maximilian Hoell, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory**
 - **Title:** Adapting extended deterrence to a two-peer world, implications for Europe

- **Date:** March 22, 2024, 2:00 PM
- **Dr. Rob Spalding, Brig Gen, USAF (Ret)**
 - **Event:** Breakfast Talk at the Capitol Hill Club
 - **Date:** March 25, 2024, 8:00-9:00 AM

April

- **Bob Peters**
 - **Title:** The Top Priorities of Congress in Implementing the Posture Commission's Recommendations
 - **Date:** April 12, 2024, 10:00 AM
- **Henry Sokolski**
 - **Title:** China Developing Nonnuclear Intercontinental Missiles
 - **Date:** April 19, 2024, 2:00 PM
- **Madelyn Creedon**
 - **Title:** Posture Commission Commentary
 - **Date:** April 26, 2024, 2:00 PM

May

- **Frank Miller, Principal, The Scowcroft Group**
 - **Title:** Sustaining and Improving Deterrence: Strategy and Policy Priorities for the United States
 - **Date:** May 3, 2024, 10:00 AM
- **Rose Gottemoeller**
 - **Title:** Commentary on the Strategic Posture Commission Report
 - **Date:** May 17, 2024, 2:00 PM
- **Dr. Rob Spalding, Brig Gen, USAF (Ret)**
 - **Title:** Strategic Deterrence in the Age of Tik Tok
 - **Date:** May 24, 2024, 2:00 PM

June

- **Amb. Hank Cooper and Mike Albertson**
 - **Title:** Fit for Purpose? US Extended Nuclear Deterrence in an Eroding Security Environment
 - **Date:** June 7, 2024, 10:00 AM
- **Lt Gen Michael Lutton, Deputy Commander, Air Force Global Strike Command**
 - **Title:** Think Deterrence

- **Date:** June 28, 2024, 10:00 AM
- **Maj Gen Stacy Jo Huser, USAF Commander, 20th Air Force Global Strike Command**
 - **Title:** Think Deterrence
 - **Date:** June 28, 2024, 2:00 PM

July

- **Gregory Moore, Professor, Department of Government at Patrick Henry College**
 - **Title:** Xi Jinping's Taiwan Dashboard
 - **Date:** July 12, 2024, 10:00 AM
- **Fei-Ling Wang, Professor, Sam Nunn School of International Affairs, Georgia Tech**
 - **Title:** China's 'Big Game' with the US
 - **Date:** July 26, 2024, 10:00 AM
- **Hon. Jill Hruby, Under Secretary of Energy for Nuclear Security Administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration**
 - **Event:** Breakfast Talk at the Capitol Hill Club
 - **Date:** July 29, 2024, 8:00-9:00 AM

August

- **Christopher Ford, Professor of International Relations and Strategic Studies, Missouri State University**
 - **Title:** Nuclear Posture and Nuclear Posturing: A Conceptual Framework for Analyzing China's Nuclear Weapons Policy
 - **Date:** August 9, 2024, 10:00 AM
- **Brad Roberts, Director, Center for Global Security Research at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory**
 - **Title:** Towards Deterrence Strategy 3.0
 - **Date:** August 16, 2024, 10:00 AM
- **Adam Lowther and Curtis McGiffin**
 - **Title:** Dynamic Parity: A Nuclear Strategy for the Next Generation
 - **Date:** August 23, 2024, 10:00 AM

September

- **James Holmes, J. C. Wylie Chair of Maritime Strategy Naval War College**
 - **Title:** Who's Deterring Whom in the Red Sea?
 - **Date:** September 13, 2024, 10:00 AM

- **BG (Ret) John Rose, PhD, Director of Missouri State University School of Defense and Strategic Studies**
 - **Title:** Nuclear Weapons and War: What Happens When Deterrence Fails?
 - **Date:** September 27, 2024, 10:00 AM
- **Mallory Stewart, DOS Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Arms Control, Verification and Compliance**
 - **Title:** The Future of Arms Control and Nuclear Deterrence
 - **Date:** September 27, 2024, 2:00 PM

October

- **Olli Heinonen, Distinguished Fellow, Stimson Center, Washington DC**
 - **Title:** The JCPOA Lessons Learned
 - **Date:** October 11, 2024, 10:00 AM
- **Frank Miller, Principal, The Scowcroft Group and Peter Huessy**
 - **Title:** Taking Stock
 - **Date:** October 25, 2024, 10:00 AM

November

- **Drew Walter, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear Matters**
 - **Event:** Breakfast Talk at the Capitol Hill Club
 - **Date:** November 18, 2024, 8:00-9:00 AM

December

- **Chris Yeaw, Associate Executive Director for Strategic Deterrence and Nuclear Programs**
 - **Title:** China's Nuclear Program
 - **Date:** December 6, 2024, 10:00 AM

Strategic Developments of Note

Russia doubled down on nuclear threats in Europe: 2024 in review

On the ground in Ukraine, another 12 months have passed, over 1,000 days in all since the war started, without either side able to strike a winning blow — though Russia continued with slow advances. Kyiv has shown renewed resilience and ingenuity, most notably making a surprise incursion in the border territory of Kursk that featured an estimated deployment of 10,000 troops.

BreakingDefense.com, Dec. 31 | Tim Martin

BELFAST -- This year Russian President Vladimir Putin ramped up threats to his enemies across the NATO alliance by lowering the threshold for a nuclear strike — a move that directly followed Moscow accusing the US of approving Ukraine to fire Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS) surface-to-surface artillery weapons inside Russia for the first time since the war began. Shortly after, Washington went on to publicly acknowledge the policy to loosen weapon restrictions was in place, after months of resisting calls to do so.

Russia's new nuclear doctrine, signed by Putin in November, laid out in clear terms that any non-nuclear power aligned with a nuclear state, or receiving support from a nuclear state — effectively all 32 members of NATO — will be considered targets if Russia thinks it is under threat.

William Alberque, former Director of NATO's Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Center, noted in an op-ed published on Breaking Defense, that "In all, the new doctrine says that Russia will use nuclear weapons whenever the president decides to do so."

He added, "But by expanding the role of nuclear weapons beyond ... deterrence, and by expanding the dangers that could become threats — to include military infrastructure or exercises near its borders — it risks sending ambiguous or non-credible deterrent signals that could, in turn, require Putin to act out further in order to credibly deter the West."

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At the time, the tactical gamble was looked upon by Matthew Savill, director of military sciences at the Royal United Services Institute, as Ukraine's way of cracking "open" debate in NATO over whether to allow long range weapon strikes in Russia, but it was only when North Korean soldiers were deployed to Kursk that Washington finally dropped long range weapons restrictions to strike inside Russia.

It is estimated that Pyongyang has sent around 11,000 troops to Kursk. Losses on the North Korean side, shared for the first time in December by Ukraine's main defense intelligence agency, are said to amount to at least 30 dead or wounded in action, reported ABC News.

Europe's efforts to increase weapons production on Ukraine's behalf and to restock equipment offered to Kyiv remains in the shadow of Russian industrial might. Morten Brandtzaeg, CEO of Norway's Nammo, suggested that competing with Russian artillery shell production output on a "one-to-one" basis is futile, and that European industry would be better served by concentrating on quality over quantity. He did share reasons for optimism however, explaining that European production took a "huge step forward" over the last year, off the back of "separate nations" supporting "local industry" through government subsidies.

Brandtzaeg added that Norway, Sweden, Finland and Germany had all followed such a path.

As the year draws to a close, top of mind for European leaders is the potential threat posed by President-elect Donald Trump; not just from the fallout that could occur from the US ending military aid to Ukraine — a move he has threatened — but a peace plan that might take Ukraine membership of NATO off the table. The sudden collapse of French and German governments in quick succession has not helped to allay fears that European unity on defense issues will suffer to boot.

Economic News of Note:

Tax News: Also of note, now 24 American states have no state income tax or capital gains tax as a number of new states joined this group starting in 2025. In addition, all the 12 states that have a minimum wages of \$15 or higher,

all are losing population with the exception of Washington state. And at the bottom of job growth compared to the rest of the United States.

Hamas, Hezbollah, ISIS, Al Qaeda, Houthis, Islamic Jihad, IRGC, Mao, Stalin, Pot, Kim, Hussein, Khomeini



X@Ramireztoons

michaelpmirez.com

The Nuclear Derangement Syndrome

There is a campaign to get the United States out of the Nuclear Business. The latest effort received the Reiser* Award from the Union of Concerned Scientists. The recipient is Collin Van Son, a writer of an essay describing his visit to Offutt USAF as a visit to “the [nuclear] petting zoo”, what he heard officers at the base refer to the nuclear bombers one was encouraged to touch. He then writes how shocked he was that “One of the most popular metaphors was that of the nuclear backstop.” He explains: “I first came across this turn of phrase in the 2022 [National Defense Strategy](#), in which nuclear weapons are presented as the ultimate backstop to deter attacks on the homeland.” He continues: “The metaphor of the nuclear backstop does something similar: By framing nuclear weapons as commonplace and commonsensical, [such as a baseball field], it allows them to fade into the backdrop of American life.”

This essay is another effort to destroy support for nuclear weapons as a deterrent for the US, to follow in the footsteps of Annie Jacobson’s book on the possibility of nuclear conflict and the recent movie about Oppenheimer. The author of the UCS essay however does an equally poor job in pushing for disarmament, not the least of which he has no idea how to get where he wants to go, nor does he have any idea what to substitute for nuclear deterrence.

Actually, the nuclear deterrent is indeed a “backup” or “backstop” to the US conventional deterrent as a nuclear conflict might very well arise out of a conventional and regional conflict. The nuclear deterrent is there to prevent the escalation of a conventional conflict not just the outbreak of a nuclear conflict. As every knowledgeable military

officer understands, “nothing stands” in the conventional military arena if nuclear weapons are used. Now we could go back to a world in which only conventional weapons are deployed. But in the absence of such a backstop, WWI and WWII killed some 90 million people or 3 million a year—compared to the 100,000 a year now dying in military conflict around the globe (average 1989-2023 from “Our World in Data.”).

The author is also deeply disturbed that a big supercomputer created by NNSA and Lawrence Livermore is termed El Capitan after the beautiful mountain edifice of Yosemite National Park. The writer thinks this must mean that the nuclear specialists at NNSA must think nuclear weapons are “natural.” Actually, the power of the computer is so awesome is that it can be compared to an awesome creation of nature or by the God that created the earth. And that we can thank its ability to help the United States better deter our adversaries and prevent any use of nuclear weapons for the past 70 years.

The writer then relates to us an [2024 article](#) “The Bomb as God,” by Hymans who examined “why nuclear-armed states are reluctant to reconsider their possession of nuclear weapons. He argues that one reason for this ‘nuclear embeddedness’ is that nuclear weapons have taken on a metaphorical (but nonetheless potent) kind of spiritual significance, one that places their continued possession beyond question.”

Actually, the effort by the US and Great Britain and France and every American President since Truman has been to eliminate nuclear weapons and reduce their presence as well as markedly limit the number of nations that have such weapons, by extending the US nuclear deterrent to our allies so proliferation is seriously limited. The US led the way to cut its own nuclear stockpile by around 90% since 1991 and START I.

On the other hand, China in October 1982 held a secret meeting of their Politburo and decided to actively share its nuclear weapons technology and proliferate such a capability to North Korea, Pakistan, Libya and Iran, and use what would become the Khan network, or what I have called the “Nukes ‘R Us” enterprise.

Former deputy national security adviser and Secretary of the Air Force Tom Reed in his book “The Nuclear Express” tells the story of China’s decision as well as a parallel decision to join the effort by Soviet General Secretary Antropov. It is these two nuclear powers that use nuclear weapons to terrorize their adversaries and even their own people. Whether the weapons hold any spiritual significance to China or Russia is not necessarily known. Although the West knows that as the Black Book of Communism tells us, these and other communist nations to gain and sustain power, murdered some 125+ millions of their own people, many of whom were spiritual Christians and Jews not connected to any nuclear enterprise.

*Leonard Reiser for who the award is named was a highly admired professor at Dartmouth College and eventually its President. He was a family friend from my hometown of Norwich, Vermont just across the river from Dartmouth. His son Tim Reiser was the chief clerk for the foreign operations subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee and long time and great staffer with Vermont Senator Patrick Leahy.

Update Security Assessment from the Hoover Institute

In [this essay](#) for the *Texas National Security Review*, diplomat, historian, and Hoover senior fellow [Philip Zelikow](#) argues that the United States is in an exceptionally dangerous period because of the current configuration of American power relative to that of China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea. Zelikow stresses that western leaders must take seriously their adversaries’ martial ambitions and work to rearm democracies quickly. If great-power war can be avoided in the short term—Zelikow identifies the next one to three years as the “period of maximum danger”—then the “task for this period of crisis is to weather it with America’s core strengths and advantages preserved, or even enhanced.”

Look Out: The Biden and Trump Arms Race

The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists published its year end tribute to previously published essays on nuclear issues. They highlighted Joe Cirincione’s July 2024 condemnation of both the Biden and the Trump nuclear modernization plans.

As usual, the former Ploughshares Fund head gets everything wrong.

For example, he says the Biden administration is planning a big nuclear arms race and that Mr. Trump's plans are even bigger.

His source? The Biden administration budget and the Heritage Foundation proposals in their Project 2025 publication.

What's real and what is pure conjecture?

In reality, every Biden and Heritage nuclear modernization plan for the 12 Columbia submarines, the 400 Sentinel ICBMs and the 20 B21 nuclear capable bombers is totally consistent with the 2010 New START nuclear arms treaty. And will be completed by 2042 under current plans. In short, in 17 years the US will have a modernized strategic nuclear force of around 2000 warheads if we complete the **current** modernization **and** hedge development plans. The US could deploy around 3000 warheads only if we **fully upload** all available modernized deployed forces including the 800 SNDVS.

Currently, the only new element in the budget beyond the New START level of warheads is for the development of a theater-range nuclear armed Navy cruise missile which the US last had in the inventory in 1991. The current funding is for the development of such a missile as the inventory we had of Tomahawk missiles was taken down and stored at the end of the Cold War by the Bush 41 Presidential Nuclear Initiative (PNI) in 1991 and subsequently destroyed during the Obama administration.

Should the US decide that the current Russian and Chinese nuclear buildups---both of which vastly exceed the New START limits---need for the US to add to its nuclear arsenal, only then will the US actually be adding to its New START era nuclear capability. To be clear, this would be the US responding to deployments already being undertaken by Russia and China, thus in response to a nuclear buildup already underway.

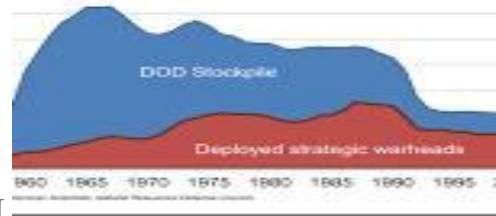
The US does have 200 gravity bombs aboard fighter airplanes now deployed as theater nuclear forces in Europe---but zero deployed in Asia or elsewhere. Such weapons are not included in the New START agreement. Should the US actually decide to deploy or put into the force similar regional weapons but on cruise missiles deployed on submarines, which is what Congress has overwhelmingly supported, that would probably add less than a few hundred such weapons compared to the multiple thousands of Russian and Chinese such weapons **ALREADY** deployed.

As part of the New START agreement the US kept a "hedge" of capabilities in case the country decided to build up from the New START levels. The US is allowed 100 "extra" platforms or SNDVS or Strategic Nuclear Delivery Vehicles, which include 50 Minuteman silos and 48 submarine launch tubes not currently containing missiles. That is the extent of our "hedge" which comes to roughly a potential growth of less than 400 warheads, compared to what Professor Chris Yeaw projects to be a joint Russia-China nuclear force of 7000-8000 by 2035-40.

As for the warheads being refurbished by the NNSA are for the very New START constrained force, and its required as the current stockpile of deployed warheads is seriously aging. The submarines are all approaching 42 years in service; the ICBMs some 55 years, and the B2 some 25 years.

The US nuclear deterrent is actually the oldest it has ever been and its size is smaller than at any time since the mid-Eisenhower administration. When both strategic and theater nuclear forces are taken into account, the deployed US nuclear force of around 2000 warheads is smaller than at any time since the late Eisenhower to early Kennedy administration.

J.S. Nuclear Weapons Stockpile 1945-2023



The Union of Concerned Scientists chose an Iran essay to highlight for one of the year's best. I nominate it for one of the year's worst!

I have excerpted one key paragraph from [the following](#) essay as it illustrates the strong tendency to blame the US and its allies for the nuclear proliferation in the Middle East. The editor's comments are in brackets.

Iran [views](#) its nuclear program as a deterrent against direct US strikes on or invasion of its territory, acting as an insurance policy of sorts against invasion following erroneous Western accusations over its nuclear program, ala Iraq in 2003. [Note the contradictions: Iran has a nuclear program which it really does not have. But it has this nuclear program to stop the US from invading which it did to Iraq which also did not have a nuclear program.] That's to say, during an attempted invasion, Iran could quickly produce nuclear weapons. [yes, quickly produce nuclear weapons we are sure they do not have because the US makes up the presence of such a program to justify its own invasion of Iran!].

This capability allows Iran's leadership to engage in destabilizing activities in the region with a (perceived) limited likelihood of retaliation against its own territory. [Here the UCS got it right actually. Indeed, Iran gets to commit terrorism, which it denies doing, and assumes it will not be attacked. They then can call their nuclear program a deterrent although it's the lever with which they engage in terrorism with impunity.] Concerns over escalation and a potential Iranian push toward weaponization of its nuclear program may have been one of multiple considerations that contributed to the US refusal to take part in Israeli retaliatory action following Iran's April 13 strikes on Israel.

[Yes, the idea is DO NOT retaliate against Iran that has committed terrorist attacks against the US and its allies because if you do you might propel Iran to really, really, develop, produce, and deploy nuclear warheads, which Iran can do very, very quickly but which Iran does not have in the first place because its nuclear activities are all peaceful. The authors admit Iran is a terror sponsoring state although they call such actions "destabilizing activities." Then they admit Iran hides behind a supposed fictional nuclear capability to avoid being challenged militarily, which allows Iran to be in a sanctuary while committing terror attacks. And if Israel or the US attacks the Iranian nuclear facilities, well then, all bets are off and Iran would really, really then deploy a nuclear capability, which of course it

does not now have!]So you have to leave Iran alone or you will drive it to produce nuclear weapons and we cannot have that!]

Notes of Interest

A proposal has been put forward to have all nuclear funding in a separate defense bill from the NDAA. This would it is assumed allow that portion of the DoD and the NNSA budget to go forward with full funding even if the rest of DoD and the DOE are funded at the CR level when Congress doesn't finish the appropriation bills on time, which has occurred some 36 of the past 40 years. However, it would also allow nuclear critics and disarmers to hold up or delay just the nuclear portion of the defense budget while claiming "the rest of defense" was supported. It would also allow disarmers to target the nuclear portions of the budget with myriad "popular" sounding amendments---but it might also be useful to beat back such amendments as "no first use" or a "nuclear freeze."