



INSTITUTE FOR ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH

6935 Laurel Avenue, Suite 201
Takoma Park, MD 20912

Phone: (301) 270-5500
FAX: (301) 270-3029
e-mail: ieer@ieer.org
<http://www.ieer.org>

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Nuclear Weapons and Non-Proliferation: The Russian Perspective

Alla Yaroshinskaya, Ph.D.
President, Ecological Center, Moscow

During the last decade, the world was shaken twice: the first time when the USSR was dissolved very quickly and the second time when terrorists attacked the United States in front of the eyes of millions of people. Both times, the consequences of these actions led us to change the whole international order and geopolitical situation. And both times, this related to the main problem of "to be or not to be." I mean the discussion on nuclear weapons. Today, unfortunately, we may have to accept the very sad fact that humankind slowly, but surely, is moving toward the brink of nuclear war, or at least toward local nuclear war, under the still very popular military doctrine of so-called nuclear deterrence.

In order to prepare my presentation, I decided to find out the exact academic meaning of the words "nuclear deterrence." The *Encyclopedia Britannica* gives the following definition: "Deterrence" is the military strategy under which one power uses the threat of reprisal effectively to preclude an attack from an adversarial power.

With the advent of nuclear weapons, the term "deterrence" largely has been applied to the basic strategy of the nuclear powers and of the major alliance systems. The premise of the strategy is that each nuclear power maintains a high level of instant and overwhelming destructive capability against any aggression - i.e., the ability, visible and credible, to a would-be attacker to inflict unacceptable damage upon the attacker with forces that would survive a surprise attack.

An essential element in successful deterrence is a degree of uncertainty on the part of a would-be aggressor as to whether the target power, although attacked and badly damaged, will nonetheless retaliate - even at the risk of suffering further crippling damage in a second attack. Thus, the nuclear-deterrence strategy relies on two basic conditions: (1) the ability to retaliate after a surprise attack must be perceived as credible, and (2) the will to retaliate must be perceived as a possibility, though not necessarily as a certainty.

We can see that, although Soviet communism and the Warsaw Military Pact were dissolved and the United States was attacked by "non-nuclear" terrorists, the doctrine of nuclear deterrence still exists in the best encyclopedias and in people's minds. The leaders of many countries cannot overcome the old way of thinking and are still sure that peace is possible because their countries have nuclear weapons. Governments still want to preserve peace by maintaining the nuclear threat. It is a very strange psychology, is not it?

The doctrine of nuclear deterrence is very popular among militarists and military corporations and is a very convenient umbrella for those who want to design and produce new kinds of nuclear weapons. They like to talk about Pure Deterrence and a sustainable world.

Nuclear deterrence does play a role in preserving nuclear peace and the possibility of nuclear war. But nuclear peace is unreliable and unsustainable. Why? Because, speaking in military terms, what is gained through increases in Pure Deterrence is lost through Decision Error and Irrationality. What is gained through total Nuclear Deterrence is lost through Accident. No one military system can control Accidental Use at sufficiently reliable levels. According to military experts, the chance of an Accidental Use tends to be greater than twice the chance of a Willful Use when nuclear peace is extended beyond a median of 20 years among 9 nations. (One failure in 1,560 years is the typical accident component.)

What do we have now in the nuclear sphere?

Although the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) has existed for 30 years and gave us the possibility of reducing nuclear weapons, we have more weapons today than before the signing of the NPT. It is a fact that 40 countries have found ways to create nuclear weapons, and 20 of those already have them. India and Pakistan have announced themselves as "nuclear states." Also, the nuclear weapons of Israel are not a secret (nevertheless, Mordekhai Vanunu is still in prison). Finally, it is obvious that a deep stagnation still exists within the non-proliferation regime, even though the Russian Parliament (Duma) has ratified START-2 and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), and the Russian President offered to reduce nuclear weapons to 1,500.

It is obvious now that one of the main obstacles on the path to a non-nuclear world is the position of the new US administration on nuclear development.

There are two main problems for Russia concerning nuclear disarmament: (1) NATO expansion to the Russian border, and (2) the proposed US National Missile Defense and its new nuclear initiatives, which appeared in the January 2002 Nuclear Posture Review. I wish to direct your attention to these problems from the Russian perspective.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, a new geo-political situation was established for Russia and the whole world. The balance of power between the USSR and United States was destroyed. With one of the superpowers dissolved and the international scales left unbalanced very sharply to one side - the United States - there are many consequences. I will not discuss all these consequences: political, ideological, economic, military, sociological. Rather, I will limit

myself to the nuclear consequences in order that we can better understand the situation with nuclear disarmament and so-called nuclear deterrence from the Russian perspective.

In September 1992, the American President George H. Bush spoke about reducing tactical nuclear weapons. In October 1992, Soviet President Gorbachev shook the world with a statement that Russia would withdraw its tactical nuclear weapons from the territories of non-nuclear states. Russia withdrew its weapons from the former socialist Eastern Block countries and also from Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan. The world greeted that action very positively, but did not notice that hundreds of nuclear bombs remained in the territories of the seven NATO countries (perhaps for a more sustainable world in Western Europe).

The second step to "sustain" the world after the Soviet Union dissolved was the expansion of the nuclear and political block of NATO to the East. Actually, many people and experts in Russia described the NATO expansion as a treacherous expansion. Why treacherous? Because when Gorbachev broke down the communist empire (specifically, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the deletion of the Warsaw Military and Political Treaty, the quick withdrawal of the Soviet Army from Eastern European countries, etc.), Western leaders and President George H. Bush not only promised that NATO would not expand, but also that NATO would change its military and political color.

Unfortunately, it seems that many former Western politicians have poor memories. As soon as the Soviet Union broke up, they "forgot" about their promises and refused to make such changes. However, some time ago an article by former US Ambassador Jack Metlock was published in the *Washington Post* in which he confirmed these "forgotten" promises of American and Western leaders. I feel that Gorbachev's mistake was that he trusted them too much and did not think that a written treaty or guarantee was necessary. He wrote about his disappointment with that position in his most recent book, *How It Happened*.

Of course, Russians are afraid that, together with the expansion of NATO territories, nuclear weapons will be placed in the territories of the new NATO states. Russia does not associate this military block with peace and justice, I think understandably. Just recall the reaction of the western world and the United States when Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev sent Soviet nuclear weapons to the US coast, the so-called Cuban missile crisis of 1962. There was mass hysteria! Why do people today think that Russians are happy to have NATO nuclear deterrence near their border?

Following such logic, would Russia also have to send its nuclear weapons, for example, to Belarus or Tajikistan or...maybe better, to Cuba in order to establish Russian nuclear deterrence?

It is said that NATO will not expand nuclear weapons into the territories of the new NATO countries. Is this so? First, we remember that it was promised once that NATO would not expand at all. Second, there exist dozens of documented examples that NATO is not going to abstain from nuclear weapons in Europe. I will give only a few examples.

- In September 1994, a review was published, "The USA Nuclear Program", which concluded that US nuclear weapons will remain in Europe as an expression of the US commitment to NATO.
- In February 1995, Secretary of Defense William Perry said in a report to the President: "A very progressive aspect of American nuclear weapons consists of a kind of international nuclear course."
- In the beginning of 1995, the Head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Jon Shalikashvili, gave a statement in Congress that bombs will remain in Europe for the defense of the Allies.
- In summer 1995, looking over the new "candidate" countries for NATO, Secretary of Defense Perry and General Shalikashvili asked their leaders to make clear their positions on the possibility of placing nuclear weapons on their territories.

At the end of September 1995, General Secretary of NATO, Willy Claes, announced that nuclear weapons will not be obligated to be placed in the countries of Eastern Europe, but the creation of a new nuclear infrastructure there can be discussed. But why create a nuclear infrastructure if no one plans to expand nuclear weapons?

Further, US Secretary of State Madeline Albright made the announcement that "new members of NATO could have the same rights as old members." Does this mean that it is possible to place the same nuclear arsenals in new NATO states as the "old" NATO states have? Do officials understand that nuclear deterrence means that the weapons placed somewhere also become targets for additional nuclear weapons? And is it really someone's notion that such measures will strengthen the Central and Eastern European security and help the process of nuclear disarmament? I am very afraid that this kind of nuclear deterrence in Europe would allow the militaries to destroy each other - together with our beautiful world.

Next November, NATO will discuss the Baltic countries joining NATO. You know that Russia has been invited by leaders of the NATO countries to join somehow to NATO (instead of to dissolve NATO, as was done with the Warsaw Treaty, or at least to reform it to non-military allies).

I want you to also recall that the problem of nuclear disarmament stagnation became more severe after the beginning of the NATO-Yugoslavian war, along with the UN crisis. The last drop of cynicism was the declaration of a new concept of NATO on its 50th anniversary. A quintessence of the NATO concept was the establishment of the right to make decisions for any country in which NATO does not like something. Is it really a democracy that post-communist societies want to have?

It looks like we actually lost our way to change the world for the better under the Gorbachev era - at least we missed some wonderful possibilities to begin a process for deep reductions and to eliminate nuclear weapons once and for all.

The second problem for Russia in the nuclear field is the position of the United States on nuclear proliferation. I am not referring here to the many lost possibilities for progress to stop nuclear proliferation and to cut the nuclear arsenals of both countries, which would give impetus to other

nuclear countries to reduce their arsenals - i.e., the Senate's failure to ratify the Russian Duma's addenda to the START-2 treaty and to ratify the CTBT, even though these could be very important steps on non-proliferation and a very good example for other countries. Rather, I am talking about the cornerstone of contemporary nuclear non-proliferation efforts - the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty of 1972. The situation concerning the ABM Treaty is the main challenge to the world today.

What would Russia do to oppose the US authorities' passionate wish to come out with an ABM Treaty and build the so-called National Missile Defense system? Some time ago the Russian president described the "sanctions" clearly: if the US proceeds with deployment of a National Missile Defense, Russia will withdraw from the START-2 Treaty and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Russian officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs indicated at that time that there would be immediate steps from Russian side:

- The Russian Federation would stop work related to the START-1 Treaty. (It is conditioned by the preservation and compliance with the ABM Treaty.)
- The Russian Federation will cancel ratification of the START-2 Treaty. (The US still has not ratified it with Russian's Duma addenda.)
- Non-official negotiations on START-3 will stop.
- The ongoing implementation of unilateral initiatives of 1991-1992 would be stopped and reviewed.

The CTBT and other important international treaties on nuclear non-proliferation would have the same fate.

I am underlining that these "sanctions" were declared by Russian officials after the US administration announced their wishes to abrogate the ABM Treaty. That was approximately one and half years ago. But what now?

In a few months, the United States will officially abrogate the ABM Treaty according to the rules, and the treaty will no longer exist. Nevertheless, Russia still tries to resist this situation, understanding that this step will raise new nuclear proliferation and armament concerns around the world. It will mean that the world will take one more step toward the brink of nuclear war. Fortunately, Russia did not withdraw its signature from above mentioned treaties.

In order to make the destruction of the ABM Treaty less painful for Russia and for the world, the United States is trying to sweeten this bitter pill and agree on the Russian President's proposal to reduce some part of nuclear arsenals of both countries to 1,500 units of nuclear weapons. As you know, this will be the main subject for negotiation during the Putin-Bush Summit on May 23-26 in Russia. Russia was ready to reduce its arsenal to 1,500 warheads, but today Russia made statement in the morning session of the NPT PrepCom that under the current situation, Russia will only be able to reduce to 1,700-2,200 units.

The last meeting of Russian and US Ministers of Defense in March, 2002 confirmed that the United States is willing to sign a treaty on these reduction. You know that at the Crawford Summit, President Bush said that the United States is ready to reduce their nuclear weapons

without any written treaty. The difference in the positions of the United States and Russia is still the question about what will happen to the dismantled warheads. Russia was ready to destroy them, but the US proposal is to store the components.

After the Nuclear Posture Review was released, the Russian Minister of Defense announced that Russia may revise its position and also will not destroy at least some parts of the dismantled nuclear warheads. Nonetheless, Russia continues to restructure its strategic nuclear arsenal, and it seems that in the near future, Russia's nuclear arsenal will be reduced threefold.

This situation reminds me of another historic parallel. When President Reagan wanted to build a nuclear umbrella (so-called "Star Wars"), Gorbachev proposed instead to dismantle ALL of the nuclear weapons of both countries. But Reagan did not agree to that. At that time, we actually lost the first opportunity to release mankind forever from nuclear war. The second lost opportunity was when the USSR was dissolved and Bush-senior and Gorbachev could have made the great decision to eliminate the nuclear legacy.

Although the situation with nuclear non-proliferation is complicated, I think we have a third opportunity now. Will we lose it like the two previous opportunities? That is the question.

Replying to new challenges in the US Nuclear Posture Review, Russia is revising its own Military Building Plan to 2005, and Armament Program to 2010. It also relates to the new geopolitical situation after September 11. First of all, it concerns an expansion of NATO and the US military into territories of the former USSR Asian republics. For example, Uzbekistan and Georgia have already announced they are strategic US and NATO partners.

The US bases are already there and local military airports are transformed under NATO standards. For example, Turkey prepared an airport, according to NATO military standards, in Marneuli, Georgia. It can take many types of aircraft, including heavy bombers. As Russian military experts suppose, the restructure of an airport in Marneuli may be related to the US NMD system and it may be used as a place to deploy anti-missile laser weapons systems. Such kinds of laser weapons already exist.

Yes, this US defense plan is against so-called "rogue nations," but geopolitically it will also permit controlling the Russian territory and its strategic nuclear weapons. If the US deploys its Boeing-747 with laser weapons on the territories of Georgia, Kurgyzstan, Kazakhstan or Afghanistan, it will be able to control not only Iran, Pakistan and parts of India, but also parts of China and Russia.

Do the US and NATO leaders really think that these countries will agree to such a situation near their border? It is clear that such developments will give them a serious reason to take steps to defend themselves. Soon, it will inspire them to investigate and build new weapons, including nuclear research and nuclear weapons.

Reflecting on new nuclear developments relating to the US NMD system, we cannot forget about Russia's largest neighbor, China. The US NMD system gives China a new incentive to create and design its own nuclear weapons. Today, China has about 20 units of nuclear weapons that can

reach the United States. Who thinks that China will agree to the US NMD plans to cover Taiwan and Japan with a nuclear "umbrella"?

Russia wishes to build its civil economy, not its military industry. That is clear. But the deployment of the space-based US NMD and statements in the Nuclear Posture Review will provoke Russia to build new nuclear weapons. This is also clear.

According to Russian experts, Russia will double its defense spending over the next ten years if the United States begins to build the so-called "Son of Star Wars" missile defense system. Today Russia's defense budget is about 7 billion USD and the US defense budget is more than 300 billion USD. Russia's military experts are sure that Russia's latest TOPOL-M long-range missiles with multiple warheads would be able to penetrate any strong missile defense system. Also, Russia could build a new family of so-called Satana SS-18 intercontinental rockets to replace existing ones. Being surrounded by the US and NATO military ring and reading about new nuclear threats in the Nuclear Posture Review, Russia's military are seriously discussing the question about quick development of their own space defense system and producing new types of weapons that can be effectively used against any weapons.

Most Russian people do not wish to spend money for new weapons of mass destruction. Russian people wish to build a new peaceful life after years of the Communists' totalitarian regime and many years of transition period chaos.

Notice, I speak only about possible consequences of the new the US nuclear initiatives for the world and peace from the Russia side. But we have to remember that the US NMD and Nuclear Posture Review, along with NATO expansion, will break down the whole world order, and every nation will pay their own political and economic price for that nuclear apartheid.

I am sure that nuclear threats and nuclear weapons are the last argument of weak, stressed, and irresponsible politicians. People must act very quickly to stop the move toward nuclear war.