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### **THE US – RUSSIA NUCLEAR ARMS CONTROL: GLOOMY PROSPECTS**

*A Policy Memo*

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Despite augmenting gloomy diagnoses of its relatively distant future Russia is and most probably will remain in the five-ten years a weighty factor in the international relations. In particular, Russia has the world's second largest nuclear arsenal after the US, including 'substrategic' nuclear weapons able to destroy the whole Europe in an hour.

In this light the West is interested in Russia as if not a friendly then at least not a hostile nation cooperating in strengthening international security; countering new threats and challenges; and, of course, in nuclear arms control. Yet 'it takes two to tango'. The basic question is whether Russia is ready and willing to be a constructive partner to the West or despite the end of the Cold war and crash of the Communist regime Russia is and will be a threat to Europe, especially to the former members of the Soviet-led Warsaw Treaty Organizations and the three newly independent Baltic States now members of NATO and the European Union. For show Moscow considers arms control and disarmament as of prior importance for 'enhancement of strategic and regional stability' and thus for security of the Russian Federation. Russian high-rank officials appraised highly the new START because it 'is important not only as such, yet also as a systemic factor laying a foundation of Russian-American relations equal in rights' and because 'the reset in Russian-American affairs create a favourable background for stable relations between Russia and Europe'<sup>1</sup>. Practically, however, Russian leaders see arms control as an instrument by use of which they hope to stop development, production and deployment of weapon systems (such as low-yield nuclear warheads; non-nuclear intercontinental ballistic missiles; strategic anti-missile systems; and space-based weapons) which Russia can not develop and produce because of technological deficiency.

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<sup>1</sup> Sergey Lavrov, Russia's foreign policy is a contribution to international security and stability. "Diplomaticheskii vestnik, 2010". [http://www.mid.ru/brp\\_4.nsf/2fee282eb6df40e643256999005e6e8c/23c893d21e07cc33c32578070022d376?OpenDocument](http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/2fee282eb6df40e643256999005e6e8c/23c893d21e07cc33c32578070022d376?OpenDocument)

### *The Prague Treaty*

In order to fit in with the ceilings on strategic nuclear force defined by the new START Russia should reduce the number of its strategic nuclear warheads by 191 units only. This can be done by decommissioning of 20-30 obsolete missiles SS-18, SS-19 and SS-25 (Topol), which will happen regardless of the new START. Moreover, since the number of deployed Russian strategic delivery vehicles today is less than the ceiling defined by the new START, Russia may significantly increase the number of deployed ICBMs, either Topol-M with a single warheads or RS-24 equipped with three warheads. In addition, instead of one decommissioned ICBM SS-18 Russian military may deploy ten ICBMs Topol-M or three ICBMs RS-24.

At last, factually Russia may have not 1550 strategic nuclear warheads but up to 2,323 warheads. Of them 838 weapons are air launched cruise missiles (ALCM) deployed on heavy bombers; they according to the accounting rules of the new START, would be counted as 75 warheads only, while other 1485 warheads can be deployed on ballistic missiles. In other words, under the new START, Russia may have more operationally deployed warheads than it was allowed by the Treaty on Strategic Offensive Reductions signed in 2002. Factual number of Russia's strategic nuclear armaments by 2020 most probably will be less than allowed by the new that START. Experts believe that nine years later Russia will have between 300 and 400 strategic delivery vehicles and between 1500 – 2000 strategic nuclear warheads. In order to fit in with ceilings defined by the new START the USA may transfer 98 strategic delivery vehicles from the category of deployed weapons into the category of non-deployed weapons, which automatically reduces the number of strategic warheads to the ceiling defined by the new START. In this case, the USA may have about 1800 deployed strategic warheads, which less than it had in the early 2010 by approximately 150 weapons.

In other words, the implementation of the new START will not result in reduction of Russian strategic nuclear arsenal and will require only marginal reductions of the US strategic nuclear weapons.

The point that the new START reduces the risk of unauthorized or accidental use of nuclear weapons is also invalid. Such risk does exist, of course; yet it depends not on size of nuclear arsenals but on reliability of early warning systems and mechanisms of making decision regarding a retaliatory strike or launch-on-warning. The most effective way to reduce radically a prospect of unauthorized use of nuclear weapons is de-alerting, for example, the removal of warheads from ballistic missiles. Yet the Russian military strongly object any measures of de-alerting, which poses the question about actual, not declaratory, goals of the Russia's approach to strategic armaments control. The other question is whether the new START opens the way towards further reductions of nuclear weapons, including tactical as many of its advocates hope?

### ***Russian tactical nuclear weapons***

Most experts believe that Russia has about 5000-6000 tactical (sub-strategic nuclear weapons) of which 2000 – 3800 are operationally deployed <sup>2</sup>. These weapons, especially air-based, endanger the very existence of the European states in case of hypothetical conflict between Russia and NATO, the prospect of which can not be ignored after Russia's aggression against Georgia.

The US Senate resolution of advice and consent to the ratification of the new START said in particular that it is subject to the following condition, which 'shall be binding upon the President':

'(A) Prior to the entry into force of the New START Treaty, the President shall certify to the Senate that (i) the United States will seek to initiate, following consultation with NATO allies but not later than one year after the entry into force of the New START Treaty, negotiations with the Russian Federation on an agreement to address the disparity between the non-strategic (tactical) nuclear weapons stockpiles of the Russian Federation and of the United States and to secure and reduce tactical nuclear weapons in a verifiable manner; and (ii) it is the policy of the United States that such negotiations shall not include defensive missile systems'.

'(B) Not later than one year after the entry into force of the New START Treaty, and annually thereafter for the duration of the New START Treaty or until the conclusion of an agreement pursuant to subparagraph (A), **the President shall submit to the Committees on Foreign Relations and Armed Services of the Senate a report (i) detailing the steps taken to conclude the agreement cited in subparagraph (A); and (ii) analyzing the reasons why such an agreement has not yet been concluded**'.

'(C) Recognizing the difficulty the United States has faced in ascertaining with confidence the number of tactical nuclear weapons maintained by the Russian Federation and the security of those weapons, the Senate urges the President to engage the Russian Federation with the objectives of (i) establishing cooperative measures to give each Party to the New START Treaty improved confidence regarding the accurate accounting and security of tactical nuclear weapons maintained by the other Party; and (ii) providing United States or other international assistance to help the Russian Federation ensure the accurate accounting and security of its tactical nuclear weapons.

In its turn Moscow stubbornly and provocatively refuses to discuss its weapons, which are of essential concern for Europeans, above all tactical nuclear weapons, which produce essential threat to security of all European states. Russian Foreign minister Lavrov announced more than once that 'further negotiations' on 'strengthening international security' are possible only 'after the new START is fulfilled'. He also insisted that future negotiations should embrace tactical nuclear weapons; 'imbalances

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<sup>2</sup> Hans Kristensen 'Russian tactical nuclear weapons', <http://www.fas.org/blog/ssp/2009/03/russia-2.php>; William J. Perry, Chairman and James R. Schlesinger, Vice Chairman, America's Strategic Posture, The Final Report of the Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States, Washington, D.C., April 2009, p. 111.

in the conventional arms'; non-nuclear strategic weapons; space-based weapons; and ABM systems <sup>3</sup>.

Strangely enough, Russians insisted that tactical nuclear weapons deter regional powers such as Iran and Turkey from expanding into the former Soviet Union. The then commander of the Russian Strategic Rocket Forces Colonel-General Vladimir Verkhovtsev said in 2007 that tactical nuclear weapons will remain in the arsenal of the Russian Armed Forces, "The situation that we have on our southern borders is quite complicated. We border on nuclear powers. That is why Russia's possession of tactical nuclear weapons restrains potential aggressors" <sup>4</sup>.

Yet Russia's high rank revealed that Moscow planned to use tactical nuclear weapons in case of armed conflict in Europe. Actually, if such conflict arises Moscow will be almost immediately challenged with the dilemma: either be defeated or to use tactical nuclear weapons.

In December 2008 Nikolai Makarov, Chief of General Staff, announced that He said that Russia would "keep nonstrategic nuclear forces as long as Europe is unstable and packed with armaments"; and that 'we consider tactical nuclear weapons as a factor deterring colossal (NATO – Yu.F.) armaments located in Europe' <sup>5</sup>.

Russian Navy plans to use long-range cruise missiles against enemy's warships yet also against in depth of enemy's territory. Admiral Oleg Burtsev, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Russian Navy, was even more candid. 'Tactical nuclear weapons have a great future ahead of them. Their range and accuracy are increasing. Therefore there is no need to deliver powerful warheads, and we may use low-yield nuclear warheads, which can be installed on existing types of cruise missiles' <sup>6</sup>. This is albeit indirect but persuasive evidence that tactical nuclear weapons are perceived by the Russian military command not only as a deterrent to a hypothetical nuclear attack, but also as a battlefield weapon, which can be used in local conflicts. Otherwise, there is no need to worry about reducing their power. Not surprisingly, therefore, that Moscow rejects the very idea of negotiations on tactical nuclear weapons.

## Appendixes

### 1. Russian Strategic forces in early 2010 <sup>7</sup>

	Delivery vehicles	Warheads	
		Factual	According the new

<sup>3</sup> The transcripts of the State Duma sitting, January 14, 2011, <http://transcript.duma.gov.ru/node/3342/>

<sup>4</sup> *Russia determined to keep tactical nuclear arms for potential aggressors*, October 31, 2007 [http://english.pravda.ru/russia/kremlin/99911-nuclear\\_arms-0](http://english.pravda.ru/russia/kremlin/99911-nuclear_arms-0)

<sup>5</sup> *Russia's nuclear weapons counterbalance European weapons*. 'Oruzhie Rossii', <http://www.arms-expo.ru/site.xp/049051124053055052049.html>

<sup>6</sup> *Navy: Russia's futures are tactical nuclear weapons*. 'Rossiiskaya gazeta', March 23, 2009 <http://www.rg.ru/2009/03/23/orujie-anons.html>

<sup>7</sup> Robert S. Norris & Hans M. Kristensen, *Russian nuclear forces, 2010*, 'The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists', January/February 2010, P. 76

			START accounting rules
<b>ICBM</b>	<b>331</b>	<b>1090</b>	<b>1090</b>
<b>SLBM</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>576</b>	<b>576</b>
<b>Heavy bombers</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>838<sup>a)</sup></b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>566</b>	<b>2504</b>	<b>1741</b>
<b>The new START limit</b>	<b>700/800</b>		<b>1550</b>

a) air-based cruise missiles only

## 2. The US strategic nuclear force in early 2010<sup>8</sup>

	Delivery vehicles	Warheads	
		Factual	According to the new START accounting rules
<b>ICBM</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>500</b>
<b>SLBM</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>1152</b>	<b>1152</b>
<b>Heavy bombers</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>316<sup>a)</sup></b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>798</b>	<b>1968</b>	<b>1712</b>
<b>The new START limit</b>	<b>700/800</b>		<b>1550</b>

a) air-launched cruise missiles and gravity bombs

## 3. Potential structure of Russia's strategic force by 2020<sup>9</sup>

	Delivery vehicles	Warheads
<b>ICBM</b>		
<b>Topol M silo based</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Topol M mobile based</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>RS-24 Yars</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>255</b>
<b>SS-18</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>200</b>
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>542</b>
<b>SSBN/SLBM</b>		
<b>Delta IV/SS-N-23</b>	<b>4/64</b>	<b>256</b>
<b>Borey/Bulava</b>	<b>4/64</b>	<b>384</b>
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>640</b>
<b>Long-range bombers/Warheads</b>		
<b>Tu-160</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>TU-95</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>844</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>396</b>	<b>2026</b>

## 4. Russian tactical nuclear weapons<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Robert S. Norris & Hans M. Kristensen, 'The US nuclear forces, 2010' *The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, May/June 2010, P. 58

<sup>9</sup> [http://russianforces.org/blog/2010/03/new\\_start\\_treaty\\_in\\_numbers.shtml](http://russianforces.org/blog/2010/03/new_start_treaty_in_numbers.shtml)

	<b>Operationally deployed</b>	<b>In reserve</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Land-based</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	
<b>Air defence</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>1 200</b>
<b>Air force</b>	<b>650</b>	<b>1 350</b>	<b>2 000</b>
<b>Navy</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>1 570</b>	<b>2 270</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>2 050</b>	<b>3 420</b>	<b>5 470</b>

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<sup>10</sup> Hans Kristensen 'Russian tactical nuclear weapons, <http://www.fas.org/blog/ssp/2009/03/russia-2.php>