

UPDATE

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## MOSCOW ARMS FOR ARMS CONTROL

(Updating *Backgrounder* No. 725, "A U.S. Agenda for the Conventional Forces Reduction Talks," September 1, 1989, and *Backgrounder* No. 684, "In Nuclear Arms Talks, Go Slow on START," January 11, 1989.)

East-West arms control momentum seems to be building inexorably. Yet this is not stopping Moscow from modernizing, building, and reshuffling its military forces in a way that, even with coming agreements, will leave the Kremlin in an even more advantageous position than today. Highlights:

◆◆ Private industry sources say that a large number of Soviet tanks removed from Eastern Europe under Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's unilateral withdrawals have not been destroyed or converted to civilian use as he promised, but relocated behind the Ural Mountains, 1,500 miles deep into Soviet territory. There they will be exempt from the provisions of the coming East-West Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) agreement.

◆◆ Moscow is replacing its SS-18 *Satan*, already the world's most powerful intercontinental missile, with a new, more accurate and more powerful missile, officially identified by the Pentagon as a "modification" of the SS-18. Regardless of how it is defined, this development means that Moscow's missile force will pose an even more deadly threat to America's own strategic nuclear forces after a Strategic Arms Reduction (START) Treaty than it poses today.

The message is clear. While Moscow arms to parlay, NATO military budgets and force plans already are being scaled back in anticipation of a CFE agreement and, as START approaches, every single American strategic modernization plan is under attack in Congress. Unless George Bush convinces allies and Congress to reverse these trends, coming arms control agreements will leave the West more vulnerable to Soviet military power than it has been.

**Protecting Soviet Tanks.** This conventional arms control accord, likely to be concluded within the next year, will put strict limits on the military forces deployed by NATO and the Warsaw Pact in Europe, including tanks, armored troop carriers, and aircraft. The restrictions will apply to all forces stationed between Europe's Atlantic shores and the Ural Mountains. Tanks and other equipment deployed in this area in excess of limits established by a CFE treaty would have to be destroyed.

It seems, however, that Moscow already may have moved large numbers of tanks out of this Atlantic-to-the-Urals region to bases and into storage behind the Ural Mountains. This effectively would exempt these tanks from the destruction that would be mandated by the CFE accord. The tanks being moved behind the Urals were pulled back as part of a unilateral withdrawal of 5,000 tanks from Eastern Europe announced by Gorbachev last December 7 at the

United Nations. Then in a January 18 speech, he said that these tanks would be destroyed or converted to civilian use. It has not happened. Instead, the effect of the withdrawals will be to protect many of these tanks from destruction under a CFE accord.

**Greater Threat to U.S.** Moscow also is adding military muscle to its strategic arsenal. According to Pentagon sources, Moscow has increased the power and accuracy of the ten warheads on its SS-18 *Satan* intercontinental missile and improved the booster to increase its lift ability, or "throwweight," by as much as half. Though this is called a "modification" of the SS-18, it more precisely is a new missile. These developments will make the SS-18 even more of a threat to its main targets: U.S. missiles buried in their underground silos.

According to Heritage Foundation calculations, based on unclassified estimates of the new missile's characteristics, each one of the new SS-18 warheads has roughly the same chance of destroying a U.S. missile in its silo as two of the older SS-18 warheads.<sup>1</sup>

Half the number of SS-18 warheads, therefore, still will be able to destroy the same number of American targets. This is important because START likely will require Moscow to cut its SS-18 force in half, from 308 missiles to 154. Moscow now will be able to do so without sacrificing any capability to destroy U.S. military targets, including missiles and command posts. Further, these new SS-18s will be deployed against fewer targets, since the U.S. land-based missile force also will be cut by half or more to comply with START requirements. As a result, Moscow will have an even greater capability after START than it does today to destroy U.S. land-based missiles, unless the U.S. deploys a new mobile missile or, better yet, strategic defenses, to defend its own missiles from attack.

In response to these Soviet developments George Bush should:

◆ ◆ Publicly warn Moscow that such actions as moving large numbers of tanks behind the Ural Mountains and deployment of a new heavy missile violate the spirit of ongoing arms negotiations and jeopardize chances for reaching new accords.

◆ ◆ Veto a 1990 Defense Budget that does not include the funding needed for timely deployment of American strategic defenses (as part of the Strategic Defense Initiative) and the mobile MX missile, both of which will be crucial to fielding a survivable U.S. land-based missile force, particularly in light of recent lethal improvements to the Soviet SS-18.

◆ ◆ Publicly alert NATO allies and the Congress of the need to maintain modern and effective conventional and nuclear forces before and after the expected arms control agreements are signed. Moscow is structuring its military forces to increase their threat to the U.S. and its allies after arms control. If the U.S. and its allies do not respond by maintaining their own modernized forces, the West will find itself more vulnerable to Soviet military power after arms control than it is today.

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1 Based on standard calculations for determining missile lethality available in open literature. Estimates of old and new SS-18 missile characteristics based on International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 1988-89*, adjusted on the basis of recent Pentagon statements.