

RUSH!

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THE ARMS CONTROL SPREE AT THE HELSINKI SUMMIT

According to Webster's dictionary, a spree is an "unrestrained indulgence in or outburst of an activity." By all measures, President Bill Clinton and his foreign policy team embarked on a veritable spree at the Helsinki summit when the agenda turned to arms control. Joint statements issued during the summit placed no fewer than five agreements on the arms control agenda, far too many for a two-day conference, particularly when the issue is as complex and serious as arms control. Worse still, in their haste to appease Yeltsin on enlarging the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Clinton team made concessions that will endanger U.S. national security by making overseas U.S. troops more vulnerable to missile attack, eliminating the prospect of an effective space-based defense system for U.S. territory, and allowing Russia to regain the strategic advantage in the most destructive of nuclear weapons—land-based ballistic missiles.

The 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. One of the Helsinki summit joint statements instructs U.S. and Russian negotiators to conclude a "demarcation" agreement establishing a dividing line between defenses against long-range missiles, which are subject to ABM Treaty restrictions, and defenses against shorter-range missiles (commonly known as theater defenses), which are not. A future agreement therefore would extend the reach of the ABM Treaty to theater defenses and force the United States to deploy theater defense systems that are less capable than technology would allow. For example, the agreement would limit the number and location of theater defense deployments, thereby restricting the ability of the United States to protect its troops overseas from missile attack. It would impose restrictions on the speed of missile defense interceptors and bar space-based theater defense interceptors. Moreover, the Clinton Administration appears unwilling to submit to the Senate for review either this agreement or one that would replace the Soviet Union with four states as partners in the ABM Treaty.

The 1993 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty II (START II). START II would reduce deployed U.S. and Russian strategic nuclear forces to between 3,000 and 3,500 warheads each. Although the U.S. Senate approved START II, Russia's State Duma has yet to ratify it. The Helsinki summit agreement committed both sides to altering START II by extending its implementation deadline from 2003 to 2007. This concession was designed to encourage the Duma to approve the treaty, but it is difficult to imagine how the strategy will work. By agreeing to change the terms of START II, the Clinton Administration only confirmed the suspicions of critics in the Duma who argue that START II is flawed and not in Russia's interest. These critics are likely to seize on this concession to prevent ratification.

A Future START III Treaty. Helsinki sets the stage for a START III treaty that would reduce strategic nuclear arsenals below levels stipulated in START II. Specifically, it would propose 2,000 to 2,500 deliverable warheads on each side. If implemented, it would bargain away the achievement

gained in START II, in which the focus is on reducing warheads in the overall Russian strategic force mounted on destabilizing first-strike, land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles. To obtain this focus in START II, the United States agreed to lessen the number of warheads in the U.S. arsenal mounted on bombers. START III would let the Russians return to an arsenal heavy in land-based missiles while retaining the U.S. concession on warheads mounted on bombers.

The 1990 Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty. In a joint statement regarding European security, the Clinton Administration committed to concluding an agreement to alter the CFE Treaty, which limits the size of conventional forces that may be deployed in certain areas of Europe. Russia is violating the CFE Treaty by maintaining excessive forces in flank areas (designated by the treaty) near the Baltic states and the Caucasus. These deployments are being used to intimidate the now-independent Baltic republics and could be used to restart the war in Chechnya and intimidate NATO ally Turkey. It is unclear why the Administration is not demanding that Russia comply with this treaty before any changes are made. This Clinton policy legitimizes Russia's ongoing violation of the CFE Treaty.

The 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). The final joint statement concerning arms control commits the leaders to seek ratification of the CWC, which seeks to abolish chemical weapons arsenals worldwide. The joint statement hails U.S.–Russian cooperation on chemical disarmament, but Russian cooperation in this area is grudging at best. Russia has refused to honor a 1990 agreement with the United States to reduce chemical stockpiles to 5,000 tons each. More ominously, evidence suggests that Russia plans to violate the CWC by producing a family of chemical weapons derived from chemicals that are not to be monitored under the CWC's inspection and verification regime. If the Clinton Administration counts this a form of cooperation, arms control has become an exercise in self-delusion.

The main purpose of the Helsinki summit was to obtain Russian acquiescence to the expansion of NATO. In the end, the Clinton Administration did not get the Russians to agree to NATO enlargement. It only achieved Russia's commitment to participate in future negotiations on a charter between NATO and Russia that would limit the political impact of the disagreement over NATO expansion. For this minimal cooperation, the Clinton Administration seemed prepared to offer Russia a seemingly endless list of concessions on arms control. As a result, the focus of the Helsinki summit was changed from NATO expansion to arms control expansion. This resulted in the Administration's making concrete sacrifices in terms of U.S. security in exchange for Russia's promise not to disrupt U.S.–Russian relations over NATO enlargement.

The Helsinki summit marked a shift in the focus of U.S.–Russian relations toward an ambitious arms control agenda. The Clinton Administration has gone on an arms control spree, pursuing an out-of-control arms control agenda with enormous implications for national security. It is time for Congress to step in and impose some wisdom. Congress should impose a moratorium on the entire arms control process and undertake a comprehensive review of both the potential agreements and the future of arms control. The moratorium should continue for as long as necessary for Congress to determine how the arms control process should affect the country's security.

In the meantime, Congress should take two steps to enforce the moratorium. First, the Senate leadership should deny all Administration requests for ratification of arms control treaties that are before the Senate now or yet to be submitted. Second, Congress should deny the Clinton Administration the funds to conduct arms control negotiations at any forum. Such steps will ensure that the arms control process remains in suspended animation until Congress completes a comprehensive assessment.

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