



AUSA BACKGROUND BRIEF

ARMS CONTROL NEGOTIATIONS IN PROGRESS



No. 21

August 1990

The United States and the Soviet Union are engaged in arms reduction talks aimed at nuclear, conventional and chemical weapons. The recent Washington summit between Presidents Bush and Gorbachev signalled significant agreements which will directly impact the pace and substance of the arms control negotiations between the two superpowers. Below are brief summaries of the on-going negotiations. Readers should refer to AUSA Background Briefs 8 & 10 for more information regarding major arms control agreements and related U.S. defense policies.

NUCLEAR FORCES

At the recent Washington summit, agreements were reached on major issues which will help accelerate the pace of the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks—START.

Presidents Bush and Gorbachev agreed to limit the number of launchers to approximately 1,600 for each side. These launchers would include intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), submarine launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) and bombers. Heavy ICBMs, which the U.S. does not have, will be limited to 154. This will drastically affect the Soviet SS-18, a heavy ICBM, by cutting its numbers about 50%. However, the U.S. has conceded to permitting the Soviets to modernize the SS-18s.

As for heavy bombers, the United States may count no more than 150 bombers equipped with air-launched cruise missiles (ALCMs) against the 1,600 launcher total. The Soviet Union may count no more than 210 bombers equipped with ALCMs.

Originally, START was designed to reduce the number of nuclear warheads by 50 percent. In reality, however, the actual reduction in warheads will be somewhere in the vicinity of 30 percent. This large disparity is due to the counting procedures for air launched cruise missiles and gravity bombs. Also, some weapons are exempt from the treaty altogether, specifically sea-launched cruise missiles (SLCMs).

START would impose a limit of 6,000 deliverable warheads. However, for the reasons pointed out above, the total number of warheads deployed may be greater than 6,000. The parameters of the 6,000 warhead limit will allow no more than 4,900 warheads to be deployed on ICBMs and SLBMs combined. Within the ballistic missile limit, no more than 1,540 warheads could be placed on heavy ICBMs and mobile ICBMs could carry no more than 1,100 warheads.

Specifically banned would be development of new types of heavy ICBMs and SLBMs. There could be no development of ballistic missiles with more than 10 independent warheads. Furthermore, the treaty would prohibit the development of multiple warhead cruise missiles.

Along with the treaty, extensive verification measures have been agreed to in order to monitor nuclear force levels. Among these are on-site inspections coupled with short-notice inspections, use of national technical means (i.e., spy satellites) and the exchange of telemetric information.

In light of these agreements, a START treaty can probably be ready for signature by the end of the year. Bush and Gorbachev further agreed to begin START II talks soon after a START I agreement is reached.

CONVENTIONAL FORCES

Conventional Forces Europe (CFE) talks are underway between the NATO and Warsaw Pact countries. The goal of these talks is to reduce the number of conventional forces in Europe in all areas, including armored vehicles, field artillery and aircraft. As for manpower, the U.S. and U.S.S.R. have designated a Central Zone in Europe which includes Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, both Germanys, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland. It has been agreed in principle that within this "zone" the Soviet Union and the United States would have 195,000 troops each. In addition, the U.S. could maintain 30,000 troops elsewhere in Europe. Differences are still being worked out in the other areas, but a tentative agreement on the number of tanks, 20,000 per alliance, has helped move the negotiations forward.

A recent Soviet proposal which could damage the current talks stems from the question of German unification. The new Soviet proposal would place an overall ceiling on the number of troops deployed by NATO and the Warsaw Pact from the Atlantic to the Urals. This would result in a limit to the size of a combined German army.

No announced agreements on CFE were forthcoming from the recent Washington summit. This leaves a lot of work to be done, however, if a conventional arms pact is to be signed by the year's end.

CHEMICAL WEAPONS

The goal of these negotiations is simply to reduce the quantity of chemical weapons the United States and the Soviet Union possess. Bush and Gorbachev signed an agreement at the Washington summit which calls for the destruction of U.S. and U.S.S.R. chemical stockpiles. Destruction of existing stocks would begin in 1992 and would reduce current levels to 50 percent by 1999. A suggestion has been to limit stockpiles to 5,000 tons of lethal chemical agents until such time a global treaty is effected.

To insure verification of destruction, on-site inspections will be permitted. The details of the inspections are to be worked out by the end of the year. Under the provisions of the agreement, neither the U.S. or the U.S.S.R. would be permitted to produce chemical weapons once the agreement takes affect in 1992. Both nations agreed to make further cuts, even elimination, pending a global chemical weapons treaty.

In response to the understanding reached at the Washington summit, Defense Secretary Cheney ordered the inactivation of chemical weapons production facilities on July 12th. This ends production of the 155mm binary artillery shell and cancels testing of the Bigeye bomb. The production facilities will be kept as a reserve in case the need to produce more chemical weapons should arise.

NUCLEAR TESTING

With the just-concluded summit between Presidents Bush and Gorbachev, the United States and the Soviet Union agreed to testing verification procedures for two existing treaties which have not been ratified. (The 1974 Threshold Test Ban Treaty and the 1976 Peaceful Nuclear Explosions Treaty, which ban nuclear explosions with yields greater than 150 kilotons, have never been ratified by the U.S. Senate.) With agreement on verification procedures, both presidents committed to abide by the spirit of the two treaties pending ratification.

Agreement has been reached on three methods of verification to monitor nuclear testing. These are hydrodynamic yield measurement, which involves the measurement of shock wave impact at the test sites; on-site, which permits geological samples to be taken at test sites; and seismic monitoring.

(This Brief was prepared by Christopher Porrell, Intern to the Association of the United States Army's Institute of Land Warfare)