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# Defense Report

AUSA



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## **The "Moral High Ground" of Chemical Weapons Has Been A Loser**

In the continuing controversy taking place in Congress over the establishment of a credible chemical warfare deterrent for our Army, one of the most often repeated arguments is that we should abandon the effort to replace our aging stockpile in favor of getting an anti-chemical treaty with the USSR. The proponents of this argument are seemingly oblivious to the history of failed negotiations for just that purpose.

For nearly two decades, our government has relied primarily on negotiations to offset the growing imbalance between the U.S. and the USSR in chemical weaponry. We have sought to stimulate corresponding actions by the Soviets and have backed our search for a workable treaty that would ban the manufacture, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons by adopting a policy of "no first use" of chemicals and by imposing a unilateral freeze on the production of chemical weapons in 1969. Both efforts have failed.

Bilateral negotiations between 1977 and 1980 and talks in the 40-nation Geneva Conference on Disarmament since 1980 have repeatedly foundered on Soviet unwillingness to discuss seriously such critical issues as verification and compliance, nor has there been any serious response to the most recent U.S. chemical treaty proposal tabled by Vice President Bush in April 1984.

Not only have the Soviets declined to renounce the first use of chemical weapons, they also continue to manufacture and stockpile massive quantities of these abhorrent weapons. As a result, the greatest imbalance between U.S. and Soviet capabilities today is in the area of chemical warfare and that imbalance is continuing to grow.

Unless the United States reestablishes a credible chemical warfare deterrent—the goal of our binary munitions program—there is little incentive for and less likelihood that the Soviets will agree to give up their enormous superiority over the U.S. and its allies in this area.

In short, it has been our experience that our 17-year moratorium on production of chemical weapons has been counterproductive in achieving a verifiable ban on chemical weapons. Only the restoration of a credible U.S. deterrent stockpile offers promise of stimulating the arms control process.

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