

COMMENTARIES

The Moscow Treaty Will Not Eliminate Weapons or Reduce Arsenals

Joseph Cirincione

When even the *New York Times* gets it wrong, you know there is deep confusion about the arms control treaty Presidents Bush and Putin will sign this week—inspired in part by the administration’s hyperbole. Contrary to the *Times* reporting, the new treaty will *not* “winnow their nuclear arsenals by two-thirds in the next decade” or “eliminate thousands of nuclear weapons,” as an oped mistakenly said. Ten years from now, when the treaty concludes and expires, the United States and Russia will each have over ten thousand nuclear weapons—exactly what they have today.

How can this be? You have to pay attention to the fine print in this agreement. The new treaty reduces only the number of “operationally deployed strategic” warheads. These are the nuclear weapon on missiles and bombers that fly over 5,500 kilometer and have been the subject of all previous strategic reduction treaties. But strategic weapons are just the tip of the nuclear iceberg. The U.S. and Russia both have thousands of tactical nuclear weapons—with warhead just as large but which are designed for battlefield or shorter-range use—that are not included in the treaty.

Both nations also have thousands of warheads in storage in various state of readiness, from ready-to-go, to “some assembly required,” to thousands of plutonium cores stored outside weapon assemblies. Compared to these bombs atop missile ready to fire in 2-3 minutes, these may seem less of a threat. But if Iraq had even one of the thousands of weapons in U.S. and Russian storage, it would be an international crisis.

The treaty eliminates no weapons. Both nations will slightly reduce the number of missiles and bombers, but this is from previous plans, not from treaty requirements. The treaty will limit the number of nuclear weapons on these missile and bombers. But the actual weapons will be moved from one spot to another, not eliminated—and they could be moved back. *Time* magazine and the *Washington Post Outlook* section are among several publications that have looked deeper into the agreement and the larger, nuclear arsenals untouched by the talks.

These stories and others help explain what the treaty will not “liquidate the legacy of the Cold War” as President Bush has claimed. Ten years from now the U.S. will still field a large, dispersed force of strategic weapons whose only justification is to target and destroy Russian military, industrial and political sites.

The warheads will be deployed on:

- 14 *Trident* SSBNs,
- 500 *Minuteman III* ICBMs,
- 76 B-52H bombers, and
- 21 B-2 bombers.

Some warheads removed from delivery vehicles will be dismantled, but the majority will be maintained in a “responsive force” or stockpile for potential return to delivery systems on short notice (weeks or months). They will be stored apart from delivery vehicles but maintained in a ready-for-use configuration with tritium and other limited life components installed. There is also and will remain an inactive stockpile of warheads that do not have limited life components

installed, and may not have the latest warhead modifications. These warheads are kept as possible replacements for active warheads and as a “hedge” against the discovery of a problem.

The large question is why are we keeping this large a force? Does it really reflect the new relationship with Russia? In fact, there is no strategic justification for maintaining thousands of weapons on high alert and a reserve force of thousands more weapons ready for re-deployment other than to target Russia. Other target sets detailed in the recent Nuclear Posture Review are added on to, not substituted for, the Russian targets.

The real mark of a new relationship with Russia will not be when we no longer sign arms control agreements, but when we no longer maintain elaborate plans to target and destroy Russian cities—and when Russia no longer does the same for U.S. cities.

United States Nuclear Weapons, from 2012

Category	Number of warheads
Operationally deployed force	1,700-2,200
Missile warheads on 2 Trident Submarines in overhaul	~240
Strategic missile and bomber warheads in responsive force	~1,350
Nonstrategic bombs assigned to US/NATO conventional/nuclear capable aircraft	~800
Nonstrategic sea-launched cruise missile warheads retained in the responsive force	~320
Spare strategic and non-strategic warheads	~160
Intact warheads in the inactive reserve force	~4,900
S u b - T o t a l I n t a c t W a r h e a d s	9,470-9,970
Stored plutonium and HEU components that could be reassembled into weapons	5,000
Total of All Warheads and Components	14,470-14,970

Source: Natural Resources Defense Council “Faking Nuclear Restraint” 13 February 2002, analysis of the Nuclear Posture Review

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ENERGY BILL BASICS

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For the first time since 1992, the House and Senate have both passed comprehensive energy legislation. As of this writing the Senate had already named its conferees², but the House, which has more committees of jurisdiction, had yet to name theirs. Since the House and Senate energy bills are so different, the conferees could produce a document that bears little resemblance to either bill. In those areas where the bills are similar, however, the legislation is likely to emerge from conference largely unchanged. For example, both bills include provisions relating to the management of R&D at the Department of Energy and general support for increased energy efficiency in buildings, consumer goods and industry.

As I read through the two bills, I was stuck by the difference between the simplistic press coverage of the bills (yes/no on ANWR³ and CAFÉ⁴) and the depth and breadths of the actual bills. The House legislation, H.R. 4, which was passed on August 2, 2001, is 530 pages long. Its official title is a bill to "To enhance energy conservation, research and development and to provide for security and diversity in the energy supply for the American people, and for other purposes." The Senate bill (the original S. 517 replaced the House H.R. 4 as an amendment) which passed on April 25, 2002, is 976 pages long and is entitled "*the Energy Policy Act of 2002*." The Senate bill, which was passed after the California electricity crises and Enron scandal, include major electric industry restructuring provisions including a repeal of PUHCA⁵ and amendments to the Federal Power Act and to PURPA⁶. No such provisions are in H.R. 4. The post- September 11th Senate bill also has an entire title devoted to "critical infrastructure protection." The House bill has many more detailed provisions relating to energy technologies. But don't take my word for it—both bills are on the Web. The House bill is at: <http://thomas.loc.gov/> once you get to this site, enter "H.R. 4" in the bill number search block, hit search, and the version of H.R. 4 for the House is the "SAFE Act of 2001 (Engrossed in House)" version and the Senate bill is at

http://energy.senate.gov/legislation&docs/pdf/107-2/energy_bill/hr4_esa.pdf

1146 words

¹ As of June 3rd, 2002, Dr. Kaarsberg, who had been at the U.S. Department of Energy, will be joining the Majority staff of the House Science Committee, Energy Subcommittee.

² Senate Conferees are Bingaman; Hollings; Baucus; Kerry; Rockefeller; Breaux; Reid; Jeffords; Lieberman; Murkowski; Domenici; Grassley; Nickles; Lott; Craig; Campbell; and Thomas.

³ ANWR stands for Artic National Wildlife Refuge. The Bush Administration and most Republicans support opening ANWR to oil drilling. The environmentalist community opposes this drilling.

⁴ CAFÉ stands for Corporate Average Fuel Economy. Environmentalists want to increase the required fleet efficiency—Auto industry supporters oppose this approach as too costly.

⁵ PUHCA stands for the Public Utility Holding Company Act of 1935.

⁶ PURPA stands for Public Utility Regulatory Policies Act of 1978,