

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY

**Summary of Presentations by a
Senior Staff Member, Russian State Duma**

The Duma, START II, And The ABM Treaty

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On 20 July, 1999 the National Institute For Public Policy sponsored several Washington-area presentations by a senior staff member of the Russian State Duma. The speaker has primary responsibility for arms control issues. The following is a summary of these presentations.

- The chances of ratification of START II by the Duma this fall are minimal, perhaps “10 percent”. One reason for this is because as part of the Yeltsin Administration’s attempt to promote START II ratification, the “champions of the treaty” emphasized that there is an intrinsic linkage between START II ratification and maintaining the ABM Treaty intact. A Duma resolution specifying this linkage was presented this spring (1999). This draft law was the result of serious negotiations within the Duma and thus will be very difficult to change.
- Only about 20 members of the Duma know anything about START II, and only 5 know anything about the ABM Treaty beyond its name. However, all 450 members have been persuaded by the “champions of the treaty” of one point: START II ratification and preservation of the ABM Treaty are linked. Because familiarity with the treaties is so lacking in the Duma, thoughtful reconsideration of this point on its merits will not come quickly.
- The failed attempts, over two years, to ratify START II, and the remote prospect for near-term ratification are not simply the result of opposition by Communist hardliners. There are additional reasons related to the Russian political structure.
- At the most basic level, there is no consensus on Russian national security issues. On the contrary, there is a wide gulf separating those who cling to the traditions of superpower and those who see a different role for Russia in the

world. This lack of consensus works against the possibility for clear decision-making and instead tends to paralyze decision-making.

- Many in the Duma have not reconciled their aspirations for superpower status with Russia's internal economic weakness. It is widely believed that Russia's importance lies in its large number of weapons; this is what ensures Russia's "special place" in the post-Cold War global system. Washington, it is feared, seeks to deny Russia this special place and seeks its own advantage. Deputies who believe Washington's intention is to undermine Russia point to recent developments to prove their point: NATO enlargement, the Balkan situation, START II and NMD. All are viewed through this prism.
- A major contributor to the lack of consensus is an inexperienced cadre within the foreign policy decision-making bodies. A rupture of bureaucratic traditions took place in the early 1990s when Kozyrev brought into positions of authority individuals who were completely inexperienced. The new bureaucracy, mostly younger people, had new ideas about Russia's role but little bureaucratic experience. Older people were thrown out and weren't allowed to share their traditions of bureaucratic process with the younger people. The bureaucracy only now is coming to its senses as it learns to function more smoothly.
- Many in Washington seem to believe that those with greatest access to the media [the Yeltsin Administration] represent the dominant political position in Russia. This is not true. When Yeltsin (according to the media) declares his support of START II and the possibility for ABM Treaty revision, this is his own narrow view—no one else agrees with him. The executive branch is not working hard with the Duma on the issue—not lobbying it, for example. It will not be possible for Yeltsin to change the perceptions of the Duma in only a month and a half.
- Modification of the ABM Treaty is possible. This will, however, require much more open discussion. And, ultimately, because Russia has little leverage in this area, the United States will decide the future of the ABM Treaty; it is out of Russia's control. But ABM Treaty modifications would have to be presented to the Duma. After having been assured by the Yeltsin Administration that START II would serve to preserve the ABM Treaty, and after having been assured by the Clinton Administration that the ABM Treaty is the "cornerstone of stability," the Duma distrusts the rapid changes in positions that have occurred regarding these matters over the course of only a few days. Such rapid shifts only confirm the deputies' view that Yeltsin's foreign policy is in chaos, is "subservient" to Washington, and that Washington is not to be trusted. It will be impossible to overcome such

views and complete a negotiation/ ratification process in the next three to four months.

- Unless there is immediate progress on ABM Treaty discussions, there will be no movement whatsoever toward START II ratification. In September, the 1999 Duma election campaigns begin and this will add complications. During the fall, deputies will not be concerned with arms control, a highly controversial and secondary issue. The early months of 2000 will probably be taken up by the acclimatization of the incoming deputies. Soon thereafter, the deputies will be preoccupied with the presidential campaign and may be unable to consider ratification for the rest of 1999 and 2000. The key question on treaty ratification is who will be the new president, and what his position will be on the treaties. Many deputies will want to reserve their own positions on START and ABM until the new government has expressed its view. But even after the Duma can refocus on ABM and START II, deputies will consider the two agreements linked.
- If START II is not ratified and the ABM Treaty goes unchanged, the arms control process as it has existed will collapse. Russian inaction on START II and U.S. pressure on the ABM Treaty is most likely to lead to this outcome. There is another possibility, however: the introduction of fundamental changes in the traditional arms control process. These changes must include methodical negotiations that are open to the respective legislative bodies.
- The policy of quick fixes in arms control has been completely discredited. The salient example of this is START II, where the majority of Russian opinion is that negotiations were concluded for the personal interest of those involved and in subservience to Washington. On the Russian side, little time was taken to conclude the treaties. Because Russian interests were not protected, ratification has been paralyzed. We may only hope any new changes to ABM or START II will not meet the same fate as previous treaties quickly negotiated and signed.

Questions

Q1) What are your views of the deficiencies of START II?

A: The limitation on MIRVed warheads should be listed first. Destruction of silos has financial implications; "it is a complete waste of resources". The asymmetry of US and Russian Federation requirements to eliminate silos is a problem, as is status of sea-based cruise missiles. At the expert level, there is no consensus about which of these should be corrected through START III. Some

would like to get more funding from the United States for D&D; others would like to control or eliminate sea-based cruise missiles; conservatives see MIRVs as most important.

Q2) Why was there no Russian Federation response to the U.S. request for discussions on START III?

A: The government is too disorganized to respond. There is a unique situation in the Russian Federation: officials are doing nothing. All they want to do is survive for the next few months. And, if they make a decision today it could get back to them in a few months in a very harmful way for their personal position.

Yeltsin is not pressing for ratification, despite the rhetoric. Unfortunately the United States usually mistakes pronouncements by those with access to the mass media (the Yeltsin government) as representing a consensus position; these are not consensus positions or START II would have been ratified years ago.

Q3) If the United States goes forward with a limited NMD would the Russian Federation respond with an arms race as has been suggested by Russian leaders?

A: The preferred way would be a long period of negotiations, but the whole issue is a stereotype of the past. People threatened in the past that if there were no START II ratification, then the Cold War and all kinds of bad things would happen—this was put forth to get START II ratified. The idea that the Russian Federation can conduct an arms race is obsolete. The new view is that Russia should look anew at its role in the world, and rethink parity, stability, etc., This latter view is a minority view but it is growing.

Q4) Are you describing START II as being rushed? Give an example of an arms control treaty that has been rushed, as the Duma has held off ratification of the treaty for awhile.

A: I was not describing the process of START II ratification, but rather the negotiations. They were rushed and as a result there are so many problems that it cannot be ratified. There are demands for transparency in any future negotiations to avoid any such future surprises. There is a joke in the Duma that during discussions on an international treaty a deputy said to one official “You are trying to sell us a car without letting us see the steering wheel and controls inside!”

Q5) The view in the United States is that lengthy negotiations do not necessarily provide a good process, in light of, for example, the ABM demarcation and succession agreements which took a long time to negotiate but for which the

prospects of ratification by the Senate are very poor. Given these poor prospects for agreements in the U.S., does this doom hope for START III?

A: Theoretic stipulations have been covered: points such as the need for a clear vision, internal disarray, etc. Arms control might collapse completely; this would be a bad eventuality. Another option is to prolong negotiations and to identify true interests, because with clarity these agreements can be pushed through.

Q6) Sergeev last year said that, because of the Russian economy, Russian strategic forces next decade would be down to 1500 (warheads). If that is a fact, then why is it in the interest of the United States to push for START III? What is in it for this country?

A: Does it make a difference how many missiles Russia has? The question is intent, not number.

Q7) An arms control agreement is a contract, and if the Russian force is going to shrink, why should the United States enter into other treaties when it will only benefit Russia?

A: I have piles of declarations by people like Sergeev, with claims of no money, but when troops were needed for Yugoslavia, they found the money. Even if internal problems do not straighten out, people like Sergeev will find resources for the military. Sergeev's statement was probably for internal consumption, directed to both conservatives, who would give them more money as well as liberals who would push to ratify START II. If money is necessary, it will be found.

Q8) There is independent verification of Sergeev's statement and Russia's military-industrial condition, that Russia will have to reduce its force, while the United States is very strong internally, we are looking at an \$800 billion tax cut - the United States can stay at high levels. The United States is the only one who disarms due to START II ratification and the U.S. will end with strategic superiority if START II is not ratified. Do you see this advantage for Russia?

A: If you want superiority go ahead; we'll give you a banner and you can march forward. There is a growing consensus in Russia that if you want five, six, seven thousand more warheads, it is up to you. We do not need this many weapons. You can be deterred by much less. So for us, the necessary size of our force is no longer a matter of our doing what you do. An object of arms control is not simply limiting the number of weapons, but rather knowing how many and where these weapons are located, and their intent. The purpose of arms

control is more for the goal of knowing what the other side is doing and predicting what they'll do. North Korea is an example, where there is more fear from one missile (in their hands) than with 1,500 Russian missiles.

Q9) This might be because we have considered Russia to be rational. Now, however, Russia does not seem to be acting rationally by not ratifying these treaties.

A: There is something suspect about the U. S. attitude toward Russia regarding START II. Washington's push for ratification is seen as self-serving. The fact that the United States keeps saying START II ratification and ABM Treaty revision is in the best interest of Russia is suspect because you must approach these negotiations with your own interest in mind. Clearly, Russia doesn't yet understand its own interests, but the U.S. keeps telling us our interests.

Q10) Assuming arms control does not collapse, could negotiations proceed where a treaty could be passed by the Duma?

A: This is why Russia needs a prolonged process of negotiation. It would also be educational for the public and lawmakers. Deputies usually cannot obtain adequate information on these issues and the government does nothing to promote, lobby, or educate the deputies, which is detrimental to its passing—attitudes might change with a prolonged process and serious educational effort.

Q11) The 1991 CFE treaty was signed. Shortly afterward Russia went to the United States stating that strategic circumstances had changed and the treaty must change accordingly. So if we changed CFE for this reason, then shouldn't we also be able to change the ABM Treaty as the strategic situation has changed since 1972?

A: I think it is unfair to address this question to me as it should be given to a broader group where the potential is for this question to be considered. However, when working with General Makashov, he was convinced to change his perspective on chemical weapons, so I believe dramatic change is possible. No one is prepared psychologically for the need to change the ABM Treaty. It should happen, but it is difficult to approach this when feverish activity suddenly develops.

Q12) I'm sorry, I thought I could ask you for your personal views and understood you were not speaking for your government. Many here agree with you—the Clinton Administration has, by failing to be straightforward with the Russian government, caused an environment of increased mistrust.

A: I was trying to make a joke that was not good; and you are not to blame (chuckle) for the Clinton Administration.

Q13) I was involved in CFE flank issues and the initial U.S. reaction to the demand for change was negative. But over time we realized that Russia acted in its interest, with our only choices being to amend or destroy the treaty. This (amended version) is not better than the original, but it is better than no treaty at all. The same position is developing regarding the ABM Treaty—you must decide if Russia is better off with an amended treaty or none at all.

A: Even though the example of CFE can be compared to ABM Treaty, substantively, they are very different. In Russia, the role of conventional weapons has changed, but the role of nuclear weapons is still not defined. Today there is not a consistent policy on nuclear weapons in Russia. For example, today START II, tomorrow START III, today, protect silos and tomorrow, no; if there is a normal substantive negotiation and the United States does not resort to pressures, it is possible to change Russian opinion on the ABM Treaty. I think that it is myopic to follow a practice under the Soviet regime where the holidays coincide with the signing of a treaty for outgoing presidents.

Q14) Do you personally believe that it is in the Russian interest to let the arms control process collapse, as I believe it is in the U.S. interest? Why?

A: I do not believe it will be in anyone's interest if the arms control process collapses. Your saying the United States is not interested in arms control is stretching the truth. You should be interested because [without it] you do not know what or where Russia has weapons; you must then guess about intent. Arms control is vital for the world because that one goal for arms control is not just how many systems, but where, what they are doing, etc. When these bilateral agreements are gone, all knowledge on this level of deployment, etc. will be gone and any kind of trust, even with numeric asymmetry, will be gone. Such a condition is in no one's interest. Transparency is crucial.