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INDIAN PUGWASH SOCIETY

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India

Nisarga swirls towards Maharashtra, concerns at nuclear, chemical units

Outlook, June 2, 2020

As the Cyclone Nisarga whirls towards Maharashtra at a steady pace, concerns have been expressed, here on Tuesday, about the nuclear and chemical plants that would come in its direct path. The cyclone is expected to make landfall late Tuesday night or early Wednesday. "Care is being taken to prevent power outages. Precautions are being taken at chemical units and nuclear power plants in Palghar and Raigad," Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray said in an update on the cyclone.

While Palghar has the country's oldest Tarapur Atomic Power Plant complex and other power units, Mumbai has the BARC setup and Raigad houses power, petroleum, chemicals and other major industries, besides the Mumbai Port Trust, the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust and vital installations of the Navy. As a precautionary measure, people living in non-pucca houses are being shifted to safer locations and slum-dwellers in low-lying areas been asked to evacuate. As many as 50 patients were relocated from the Bandra Kurla Complex Covid-19 hospital to the Goregaon NESCO hospital during the day. Ten National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) units have been deployed for rescue operations and six more kept in reserve. A 24x7 control room has been operationalised and the army, navy and air force and IMD have been instructed to ensure coordination.

<https://www.outlookindia.com/newscroll/nisarga-swirls-towards-maharashtra-concerns-at-nuclear-chemical-units/1853523>

Atomenergomash completes components for Bangladesh, India projects

World Nuclear News, June 2, 2020

The Petrozavodsk branch of AEM Technologies - part of the machine-building division of Atomenergomash - manufactured eight swing check valves for the Bangladesh's Rooppur nuclear power plant. In total, it will manufacture 184 units of pipeline valves for the plant including high and low-pressure wedge gate valves and swing check valves. Swing check valves belong to safety class 4 items and are intended for operation at temperatures up to 300 degrees Celsius and pressures of up to 11 MPa, the company said. Valves are subjected to visual and dimensional inspections during the manufacturing process, AEM said, while weld joints are checked by means of penetrant test. The assembled items passed hydraulic tests for valve closure tightness and strength.

Two Russian-designed VVER-1200 reactors are being built at Rooppur which is 160 km from Dhaka. Construction of Rooppur 1 began in November 2017 and unit 2 in July 2018. The first unit is

expected to enter commercial operation in 2023 or 2024 and the second in 2024 or 2025. Separately, Atomenergomash subsidiary OKB Gidropress has shipped a 135-piece set of step electromagnet drives of the reactor control and protection system (CPS) to India for Kudankulam unit 4. Such systems control the insertion and removal of control rods into a reactor's core during reactor start-up, power regulation and shut-down operations. The CPS Drive SHEM-3 system was designed by OKB Gidropress for use in VVER reactors.

<https://www.world-nuclear-news.org/Articles/Atomenergomash-completes-components-for-overseas-p>

Private sector will be allowed to use ISRO facilities and other relevant assets to improve their capacities: DrJitendra Singh

PIB Delhi, June 9, 2020

Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr Jitendra Singh said here today that private sector will be allowed to use Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) facilities and other relevant assets to improve their capacities. Briefing about India's achievement in the field of Space Technology during the first year of the 2nd term of the Modi Government, Dr Jitendra Singh stated that the Modi Government's 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' roadmap towards self-relied India, as spelt out by Finance Minister, envisages the initiative to boost private participation in Space activities. Indian private sector will be a co-traveller in India's Space sector journey.

Private companies to be provided level playing field in satellites, launches and Space based services. Future projects for planetary exploration, outer space travel will be open for private sector. Updating about India's first ever Human Space Mission 'Gaganyaan' to be undertaken by ISRO, Dr Jitendra Singh said the selection of the astronauts was accomplished and their training in Russia had also started but got interrupted because of the Corona pandemic. He said the project would be followed up soon.

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleseDetailm.aspx?PRID=1630524>

High quality, cost-effective face mask developed at BARC: Dr Jitendra Singh

PIB Delhi, June 13, 2020

High quality Face mask has been developed at the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) Mumbai which is affiliated to Department of Atomic Energy. The mask was developed using HEPA filter and is expected to be cost-effective also. This was stated by Union Minister of State (Independent

Charge) of the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr Jitendra Singh while citing some major achievements of the department during last one year.

Pertinent to mention that Department of Atomic Energy has about 30 units which include R&D, academic institutions, aided hospitals, PSUs etc. Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, Mumbai founded by the legendary Scientist Dr Homi J. Bhabha also functions under the aegis of Department of Atomic Energy. Referring to some of the major activities and initiatives of the Department of Atomic Energy during the last one year, Dr Jitendra Singh complimented the scientific fraternity for coming to the support of society in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to the high quality face mask, he informed that the Atomic/Nuclear scientists have also developed the protocol for re-use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) subsequent to radiation sterilization. The SOP for the same is under consideration by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, he added. Identification of new regions to develop RTPCR testing kits has also been accomplished, said Dr Jitendra Singh. The kit is relatively more economic and expected to analyse relatively faster, he added.

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetailm.aspx?PRID=1631440>

India, China expanded nuclear stockpile in last one year: report

Dinakar Peri

The Hindu, June 15, 2020

All nations that have nuclear weapons continue to modernise their nuclear arsenals, while India and China increased their nuclear warheads in the last one year, according to a latest report by Swedish think tank Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). “China is in the middle of a significant modernisation of its nuclear arsenal. It is developing a so-called nuclear triad for the first time, made up of new land and sea-based missiles and nuclear-capable aircraft. India and Pakistan are slowly increasing the size and diversity of their nuclear forces...,” according to the findings of SIPRI Yearbook 2020, released on Monday.

The report said China’s nuclear arsenal had gone up from 290 warheads in 2019 to 320 in 2020, while India’s went up from 130-140 in 2019 to 150 in 2020. Pakistan’s arsenal was estimated to be between 150-160 in 2019 and has reached 160 in 2020. Both China and Pakistan continue to have larger nuclear arsenals than India, according to the Swedish think tank. The nuclear arsenals of the nuclear-armed states other than the United States and Russia were considerably smaller but all these states were either developing or deploying new weapon systems or had announced their intention to do so, it noted.

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-china-expanded-nuclear-stockpile-in-last-one-year-report/article31833890.ece>

China

Mission in July to place rover on Mars' surface

Zhao Lei

China Daily, June 3, 2020

China plans to launch a Long March 5 carrier rocket in July to send a spacecraft toward Mars that will land a rover on the red planet, according to the program's major contractor. China Aerospace Science and Technology Corp, a State-owned space conglomerate, said in a statement sent to China Daily on Tuesday that the Tianwen 1, or Quest for Heavenly Truth 1, mission will fulfill three scientific objectives-orbiting the red planet for comprehensive observation, landing on the Martian surface and sending a rover to roam the landing site. It will conduct scientific investigations on Martian soil, geological structure, environment, atmosphere and water.

If Tianwen 1 succeeds, the mission will become the world's first Mars expedition accomplishing all three goals with one probe, the company said. Tianwen is a long poem by famous ancient poet Qu Yuan of the Kingdom of Chu during the Warring States Period (475-221 BC). He is known for his patriotism and contributions to classical poetry and verses, especially through the poems of the Chu Ci anthology, also known as Songs of Chu. In the mission's first step, a Long March 5, the nation's biggest and most powerful rocket, will blast off at the Wenchang Space Launch Center in Hainan province to transport the robotic probe to the Earth-Mars transfer trajectory before the spacecraft begins its self-propelled flight toward Mars' gravity field. The farthest distance between the Earth and Mars is about 400 million kilometers while the nearest is 55 million km, depending on their position in orbit. A probe will travel about seven months before reaching Mars' atmosphere.

<https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202006/03/WS5ed6df10a310a8b24115a60c.html>

China, Serbia sign memorandum on space technology

Xinhua, June 6, 2020

China and Serbia on Friday signed a memorandum on space technology which aims, among other things, to put the Serbian national flag on co-designed spacecraft in the future. The memorandum was signed by Zhang Kejian, director of the China National Space Administration, and Nenad Popovic, Serbian minister in charge of innovation and technological development, via a video conference. Zhang said the memorandum is in the common interests of both countries, adding that as many scientists as possible will engage in joint space projects. "Our goal is to put the flag of Serbia on the spacecraft that we will jointly design," he announced.

Popovic noted that the space partnership will have an immense value for Serbia, saying it will help realize the country's strategic national projects. Popovic said Chinese partners are willing to share their knowledge and experience in space technology with Serbia. "We deeply respect the friendship between our two countries, and we wish for the document signed today to bond China and Serbia

http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-06/06/c_139117562.htm

Pakistan

'Pakistan could have 200 nuclear weapons by 2020'

DW, June 10, 2020

While many states are downsizing their nuclear stockpiles, Asia is witnessing a buildup. Pakistan, located in a region "most at risk of a breakdown," has the fastest-growing nuclear program, as Gregory Koblentz tells DW. In report released by the US-based Council on Foreign Relations titled Strategic Stability in the Second Nuclear Age, author Gregory D. Koblentz, an expert on arms control and non-proliferation, identifies South Asia as the region "most at risk of a breakdown in strategic stability due to an explosive mixture of unresolved territorial disputes, cross-border terrorism, and growing nuclear arsenals."

In this context, Pakistan has the fastest-growing nuclear program in the world. And as Koblentz says in a DW interview, by 2020, the Islamic Republic could have a stockpile of fissile material that, if weaponized, could produce as many as two hundred nuclear devices, roughly equivalent to the size of the United Kingdom's nuclear arsenal. Pakistan has deployed or is developing eleven different nuclear delivery systems including ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and aircraft. India is also fielding an increasingly capable array of ballistic and cruise missiles to complement its nuclear-capable aircraft. Both states are also expanding their capacity for producing highly enriched uranium and plutonium, the two key materials needed to produce nuclear weapons.

<https://www.dw.com/en/pakistan-could-have-200-nuclear-weapons-by-2020/a-18105706>

USA

EU and others 'regret' US decision on Iran sanctions

World Nuclear News, June 1, 2020

US Secretary of State Michael Pompeo on 27 May announced the end of the US sanctions waiver covering all remaining JCPOA projects in Iran: the conversion of the Arak research reactor; the provision of enriched uranium fuel for the Tehran Research Reactor; and the export of Iran's "scrap and spent" research reactor fuel. A final, 60-day wind-down period will allow companies and entities involved in those activities to cease their operations. The USA is however providing a 90-day extension for the waiver covering ongoing international support to ensure safety of operations at the Bushehr nuclear power plant, he said. "We deeply regret the US decision to end the three waivers covering key JCPOA nuclear projects in Iran, including the Arak Modernisation Project," the spokespersons of the High Representatives of the EU and the Foreign Ministries of France, Germany and the UK said in a joint statement issued on 30 May. "These projects, endorsed by UN Security

Council resolution 2231, serve the non-proliferation interests of all and provide the international community with assurances of the exclusively peaceful and safe nature of Iranian nuclear activities.

"We are consulting with our partners to assess the consequences of this decision by the United States. "The JCPOA is a key achievement of the global non-proliferation architecture and currently the best and only way to ensure the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme. That is why we have worked continuously with the aim of ensuring the full and effective implementation of commitments under the JCPOA, in particular the return of Iran to full compliance with its nuclear commitments without delay."

<https://www.world-nuclear-news.org/Articles/EU-and-others-regret-US-decision-on-Iran-sanctions>

As Virus Toll Preoccupies U.S., Rivals Test Limits of American Power

David E. Sanger, Eric Schmitt and Edward Wong

The New York Times, June 1, 2020

With the United States preoccupied by the sobering reality of more than 100,000 Americans dead from the coronavirus, China has pushed in recent weeks to move troops into disputed territory with India, continue aggressive actions in the South China Sea and rewrite the rules of how it will control Hong Kong. At roughly the same time, Russian fighter jets roared dangerously close to American Navy planes over the Mediterranean Sea, while the country's space forces conducted an antisatellite missile test clearly aimed at sending the message that Moscow could blind U.S. spy satellites and take down GPS and other communications systems. Russia's military cyber units were busy, too, the National Security Agency reported, with an innovative attack that may portend accelerated planning for a strike on email systems this election year.

The North Koreans said they were accelerating their "nuclear deterrent," moving beyond two years of vague promises of disarmament and Kim Jong-un's warm exchanges of letters with President Trump. Iran, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said, is re-establishing the infrastructure needed to make a bomb — all a reaction, the Iranians insist, to Mr. Trump's decision two years ago to reimpose sanctions, reaffirmed in recent weeks as the State Department dismantled the last elements of the Obama-era nuclear deal. Various powers are testing American cybersecurity.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/01/us/politics/coronavirus-global-competition-russia-china-iran-north-korea.html>

ANS calls for US regulatory action on reprocessing

World Nuclear News, June 4, 2020

In a letter to the NRC, ANS Executive Director and CEO Craig Piercy has urged the regulator to resume a proposed rulemaking for reprocessing. "Completing the reprocessing rulemaking would support future options for, and potential innovations toward, used fuel management as well as clean energy generation using advanced reactors," Piercy told the NRC. "While no new reprocessing facilities are planned in the United States at this time, this in itself should not be the rationale for suspending rulemaking."

The ANS recognises that a once-through fuel cycle may be the most cost-effective path for the USA's light water reactor fleet in the near term, Piercy said. "However, in the long term, with nuclear energy providing a significant fraction of US electricity production, waste minimisation via recycling will likely be warranted. Also, many advanced reactor systems currently under development are specifically designed to take advantage of the energy value that exists in our current reserves of used nuclear fuel." The letter is in line with ANS Position Statement #45, which supports the recycling of used nuclear fuel and recognises that recycling, or the combination of reprocessing and fuel fabrication, has the potential to significantly enhance uranium resource utilisation and to minimise the volume and toxicity of radioactive waste requiring disposal in a geologic repository.

<https://www.world-nuclear-news.org/Articles/ANS-calls-for-US-regulatory-action-on-reprocessing>

IAEA launches tool for enhancing safety culture

World Nuclear News, June 4, 2020

Safety culture is shaped by the shared attitudes, norms, beliefs and values of all employees, and weaknesses in safety culture can contribute significantly to incidents and accidents across different industries, including the nuclear industry. "Culture is so powerful because it often affects our behaviour unconsciously," said Caroline Pike, who advises national experts on safety culture in the nuclear industry at the IAEA. "This is why it is important that people understand the characteristics of an effective safety culture, and organisations have in place a set of behavioural indicators to help gauge its strength and quality."

Nuclear and nuclear-related organisations had been experiencing challenges in complying with different sets of safety culture guidelines that were similar in intent but different in structure, Pike said. "This can create unnecessary complexity and uncertainty in understanding expectations and implementing programmes to enhance safety culture. It can also make measurement and assessment of safety culture more difficult." The IAEA initiated a process in 2016 to harmonise those different sets of guidelines. Participants from different countries and facilities discussed existing safety culture frameworks from institutions including the IAEA, the World Association of Nuclear Operators and the Institute of Nuclear Power Operations, as well as government institutions from Finland, Japan and the USA. They paid special attention to the gaps between existing frameworks, Pike said. This work resulted in the new Harmonised Safety Culture Model, which will make it easier for national experts and operators to understand and enhance their culture for safety, protecting workers, communities and the environment.

<https://www.world-nuclear-news.org/Articles/IAEA-launches-tool-for-enhancing-safety-culture>

Urging Iran to ‘Make the Big Deal,’ Trump Ties Nuclear Negotiations to Election

David E. Sanger, Farnaz Fassihi and Rick Gladstone

The New York Times, June 5, 2020

President Trump on Friday celebrated the return of an American imprisoned in Iran by urging Tehran to “make the Big deal” on its nuclear program, and dangled the possibility that they would get better terms if they negotiated before the presidential election, seeming to invite Tehran to help return him to office. Mr. Trump’s offer was immediately rejected by the Iranian leadership, which now seems to harbor doubts that he will remain president, and is hunkering down to survive American-led sanctions until they see the results of the November election.

At the same time, hints from inside the International Atomic Energy Agency suggested that a forthcoming report on Iran’s nuclear progress could say that Tehran has boosted its stockpile of low-enriched uranium by about 50 percent in the past three months, and now possesses about eight times as much nuclear fuel as was permitted under the nuclear accord that Mr. Trump abandoned two years ago. Ever since Mr. Trump chose to leave what he called a “terrible” and “failed” deal, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and others have said that the combination of escalating sanctions, diplomatic isolation and the threat of possible military force would prompt the Iranian government to come to the negotiating table. So far that has failed, and Mr. Trump’s offer on Friday was a remarkably transparent invitation to an adversary to give him a diplomatic win before what could be a close American election.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/05/world/middleeast/trump-iran-nuclear.html>

US Department of Energy backs proposed SMR regulation

World Nuclear News, June 5, 2020

The NRC's emergency preparedness programme for nuclear power plants has up to now focused on large, light-water reactors (LWRs). The proposed rule, together with a draft regulatory guide, considers advances in facility design and safety research, and their application to future operation of SMRs and other future technologies, including non-light water reactors and certain non-power production facilities, the regulator said.

The new rule would only apply to SMRs and so-called ONT (other nuclear technology) applications, not currently operating reactors or fuel cycle facilities. For existing plants, the plume exposure pathway emergency planning zone (EPZ) covers a radius of about 10 miles (16 km), with an

ingestion pathway EPZ covering an area about 50 miles in radius. Future SMR and ONT applications are likely to reflect a "wide range of potential designs" that have smaller source terms and also incorporate emergency planning considerations as part of the design, with enhanced safety margins "and/or the use of simplified, inherent, passive, or other innovative means to accomplish their safety and security functions," the rule notes. Following the publication of the proposed rule in the Federal Register in December 2019, the public and other interested parties were invited to comment on emergency preparedness issues, including the performance-based approach and the scalable EPZ approach. In a 22 May letter to NRC Chairman Kristine Svinicki, Assistant Secretary for Nuclear Energy Rita Baranwal highlighted the DOE's strong support for the proposed rule.

<https://www.world-nuclear-news.org/Articles/DOE-expresses-support-for-proposed-SMR-regulation>

U.S. says door remains open for diplomacy with Iran

Reuters, June 6, 2020

The door remains open for a wider negotiation with Iran about its nuclear program and other issues, but so far talks have been limited to prisoner releases, U.S. Special Representative for Iran Brian Hook said on Friday. "(President Donald Trump) has had the door open to diplomacy for many years and in the same time frame, he has met (North Korean leader) Kim Jong Un three times. So, we would like to see the (Iranian) regime meet our diplomacy with diplomacy," he told reporters a day after Iran freed U.S. citizen Michael White.

Hook also said Washington plans to stick to its policy of harsh economic sanctions on Tehran in an effort to bring it to the negotiating table on issues such as the nuclear program, saying "timidity and weakness invites more Iranian aggression." "We refuse to play by that rule book. When you play under house rules, the house always wins," Hook said. "So we are going to continue with our policy."

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-usa-iran-hook/u-s-says-door-remains-open-for-diplomacy-with-iran-idUKKBN23C2Y5>

Holtec launches new heavy load transporter

World Nuclear News, June 8, 2020

The transporter is a vertical heavy load hauler designed by Holtec's Nuclear Power Division (NPD) to serve as the single-failure-proof workhorse for hauling loaded Holtec dry used fuel storage system components and for executing inter-cask canister transfers. The HI-TRAN 300 is also envisioned to transport heavy loads at Holtec's SMR-160 plant currently undergoing regulatory review in Canada and the HI-STORE Consolidated Interim Storage Facility being developed by Holtec in New

Mexico. Holtec said it developed HI-TRAN "to solve the transporter reliability problems procured from third parties that occasionally have plagued some dry store campaigns in the industry". It noted that HI-TRAN is built as a "safety-significant machine and has certain unique reliability features that differentiate it from other machines sold in the industry".

HI-TRAN 300 - weighing 121 tonnes - moves on two parallel caterpillars to minimise ground pressure and has zero turn radius. It features four hydraulic lifters and has a rated lift capacity of 300 tonnes, which is sufficient to haul the heaviest loaded cask supplied by Holtec. Holtec said the successful development and deployment of HI-TRAN 300 completes its programme of redesign of key ancillary devices to improve their operational reliability. The transporter, it said, also eliminates reliance on subcontractors during cask loading campaigns.

<https://www.world-nuclear-news.org/Articles/Holtec-launches-new-heavy-load-transporter>

DOE amends UF6 sale agreement, outlines disposal plans

World Nuclear News, June 8, 2020

The amendment to the 2016 sales agreement brings it into alignment with current market conditions and is a key condition for an agreement between Australian company Silex Systems, Canadian company Cameco Corporation and GE-Hitachi Nuclear Energy for the restructure of GLE. Final US government approval for the restructure, which will result in Silex acquiring 51% of GLE and Cameco increasing its 24% share to 49%, is now expected by the end of this year.

GLE is the exclusive licensee of the SILEX (Separation of Isotopes by Laser EXcitation) uranium enrichment process and is working towards its commercialisation through a project that would involve construction of the Paducah Laser Enrichment Facility (PLEF) to re-enrich depleted UF6. The availability of DOE's depleted UF6 inventories is critical to this, Silex said on 5 June. This material - also known as depleted uranium tails - is left over from previous enrichment operations and contains a lower proportion of fissile uranium-235 than naturally occurring uranium, but can potentially be re-enriched for use in nuclear fuel.

<https://www.world-nuclear-news.org/Articles/DOE-amends-agreement-for-UF6-sale,-outlines-dispos>

U.S., Russia agree on June nuclear arms talks, invite China: U.S. envoy

Reuters, June 8, 2020

The United States and Russia have agreed on a time and place for nuclear arms negotiations in June and invited China, U.S. Special Envoy for Arms Control Marshall Billingslea wrote on Twitter on Monday. "Today agreed with the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Ryabkov on time and place for

nuclear arms negotiations in June. China also invited. Will China show and negotiate in good faith?" Billingslea wrote.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-russia-nuclear/us-russia-agree-on-june-nuclear-arms-talks-invite-china-us-envoy-idUSKBN23F2IJ>

US development bank proposes end to nuclear finance ban

World Nuclear News, June 11, 2020

The DFC is the USA's development bank. In partnership with the private sector, it finances solutions to challenges facing developing countries, and invests across a range of sectors including energy, healthcare, critical infrastructure and technology projects. The DFC's existing Environmental and Social Policies and Procedures categorically prohibits it from investing in the production of, or trade in, radioactive materials, including nuclear reactors and their components. DFC is now proposing the removal of that prohibition, which does not apply to medical equipment, quality control equipment or other equipment containing a "trivial" and adequately shielded radioactive source. It has now launched a 30-day public notice and comment period on the proposal.

"Modernising DFC's policy to offer financing for nuclear projects supports the agency's development mandate, bolsters US foreign policy, and recognises advances in technology which could make nuclear energy particularly impactful in emerging markets," DFC said. Advanced nuclear technologies which are now being developed and deployed in the USA, including SMRs and microreactors, will have significantly lower costs than traditional nuclear power plants, and may be well suited for developing countries, it said. "The proposed change could help deliver a zero-emission, reliable, and secure power source to developing countries, promoting economic growth and affordable energy access in underserved communities," DFC said. It could also offer "an alternative to the financing of authoritarian regimes" while advancing US non-proliferation safeguards and supporting US nuclear competitiveness.

<https://www.world-nuclear-news.org/Articles/US-bank-proposes-end-to-nuclear-finance-ban>

Nuclear power system delivered for Mars rover launch

World Nuclear News, June 12, 2020

Radioisotope power systems (RPS) convert heat generated by the natural decay of plutonium-238 (Pu-238) into electrical power. The MMRTG will provide electricity for the basic operations of the rover and to keep its tools and systems at optimal temperatures. It has an operational lifespan of 14 years.

The DOE in 2015 restarted US production of Pu-238 for the first time since 1988. It now maintains the essential infrastructure to help fuel, build and test RPSs for NASA. Perseverance will be the first rover to use plutonium created by DOE's Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL), which along with Idaho and Los Alamos national laboratories is working to increase US production of Pu-238 for deep space exploration. ORNL in February automated part of the production process allowing it to produce up to 400 g of Pu-238 per year, moving closer to NASA's goal of 1.5 kilograms per year by 2025.

<https://www.world-nuclear-news.org/Articles/Nuclear-power-system-delivered-for-Mars-rover-launch>

Arms seized by U.S., missiles used to attack Saudi Arabia 'of Iranian origin': U.N.

Michelle Nichols

Reuters, June 12, 2020

Cruise missiles used in several attacks on oil facilities and an international airport in Saudi Arabia last year were of “Iranian origin,” U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told the Security Council in a report seen by Reuters on Thursday. Guterres also said several items in U.S. seizures of weapons and related materiel in November 2019 and February 2020 were “of Iranian origin.”

Some have design characteristics similar to those also produced by a commercial entity in Iran, or bear Farsi markings, Guterres said, and some were delivered to the country between February 2016 and April 2018. He said that “these items may have been transferred in a manner inconsistent” with a 2015 Security Council resolution that enshrines Tehran’s deal with world powers to prevent it from developing nuclear weapons.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-usa-un/arms-seized-by-u-s-missiles-used-to-attack-saudi-arabia-of-iranian-origin-u-n-idUSKBN23J08C>

Holtec deploys robotic welder

World Nuclear News, June 15, 2020

Named after its principal inventor, the HI-BRIAN robotic welder hardens the closure weld against vulnerabilities such as stress corrosion cracking by precisely controlling critical parameters, including heat input and travel speed, and providing flexibility to deal with groove geometry variations, Holtec said. The robot makes machine-precision repeatable welds of high integrity while greatly reducing the radiation dose sustained by the loading crew, it added.

Holtec launched its robotics programme to develop special-purpose robots to minimise human factors in high risk tasks in the company's manufacturing and site services activities. The programme is especially important to dry storage and decommissioning projects where minimising radiation dose, reducing heavy load handling operations, the safety of workers, and the protection of public health and safety and the environment are primary objectives, the company said. Multi-purpose canisters can be used for on-site storage, transport, and permanent disposal of used fuel in a future repository. To date, HI-BRIAN has been used to weld three Holtec MPC-89s canisters at a client site.

<https://www.world-nuclear-news.org/Articles/Holtec-deploys-robotic-welder>

Europe

EDF hits Hinkley Point milestone despite coronavirus restrictions

Reuters, June 1, 2020

EDF has reached a key milestone in its British Hinkley Point C nuclear plant project, as engineers completed the second reactor base on schedule in spite of coronavirus restrictions, the French power giant and Chinese partner CGN said on Monday. Completion of the 49,000-tonne base, a reinforced concrete platform supporting the reactor's central "nuclear island", is an encouraging signal for the 19.6 billion pound (\$24.2 billion) project, which has suffered from delays and cost overruns.

Techniques refined during construction of the first reactor base at the site in western England helped it to stay on schedule despite reduced staffing and lockdowns in Britain and France. Those processes would also benefit a proposed follow-on reactor project at Sizewell C on England's east coast, the companies said on Monday. Hinkley Point C will have a capacity of 3.2 gigawatts, covering about 7% of British power demand, or 6 million households, when it is due to come on line in late 2025.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-edf-hinkley-point/edf-hits-hinkley-point-milestone-despite-coronavirus-restrictions-idUSKBN2370SD>

EDF says its French nuclear output tumbled by 22% in May

Reuters, June 5, 2020

EDF says its french nuclear output tumbled 22% to 24.7 twh in may due to fall in demand, prolonged reactor outages due to coronavirus outbreak. It says its nuclear generation in britain fell 18.7% to 3.9 twh in may, output down 5.3% at 19.5 twh since start of the year.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/brief-edf-says-its-french-nuclear-output/brief-edf-says-its-french-nuclear-output-tumble-by-22-in-may-idUSL8N2DI4LE>

EDF Energy investigating damage to part of UK Hinkley Point C nuclear plant

Reuters, June 10, 2020

EDF Energy, part of EDF, said it is investigating the cause of structural damage to a concrete plant at its Hinkley Point C nuclear site which is under construction in Somerset, Britain. A dust cloud was released early this morning after a silo in the concrete batching plant at the site suffered damage. “Nobody has been injured and the emergency services were not required. An investigation is underway to understand the cause of the event,” a company spokesman said. The 3.2 gigawatt plant, which EDF is building with China General Nuclear Power Corp, is expected to begin generation at the end of 2025.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/edf-hinkleypointc/edf-energy-investigating-damage-to-part-of-uk-hinkley-point-c-nuclear-plant-idUSL8N2DN5AR>

France sees no winter power blackouts despite nuclear outages

Reuters, June 11, 2020

France is unlikely to experience electricity blackouts this winter despite an expected tight supply situation with several of its nuclear reactors expected to be offline, French energy minister and the head of the power grid said on Thursday. French winter electricity consumption is expected to be at around the same level as the previous year, Francois Brotttes, head of electricity grid operator RTE, told a news conference. He added that France may have to import power during the winter to guarantee supplies, while electricity supply for the summer was secured. At the height of the pandemic, there was a 15 gigawatt (GW) supply deficit, which should drop to around 6 GW in November and December 2020, Brotttes said.

The head of RTE stressed it was his goal to secure France’s electricity supply during the upcoming winter and the production of several reactors could be suspended during the summer and autumn months to save fuel. The new coronavirus outbreak has disrupted utility EDF’s nuclear reactor maintenance plans, delaying the start of several reactors. Energy Minister Elisabeth Borne said measures have been put in place to avoid any blackouts. “This unprecedented crisis has led to unprecedented measures,” she told the news conference. France will start to closely monitor its electricity supply at the end of October to ensure that there will be sufficient production over the following months. Borne added that the plan to close the Fessenheim plant near the German border will be maintained despite the potential production shortfall. French state-controlled utility EDF

warned in mid-April it expected a sharp drop in its domestic nuclear power output to a record low in 2020 as a result of the fall in business activity caused by the coronavirus crisis.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/france-electricity-nuclearpower/update-1-france-sees-no-winter-power-blackouts-despite-nuclear-outages-idUSL8N2DO4G7>

Fire on French nuclear submarine at Toulon extinguished

Reuters, June 13, 2020

A fire on a nuclear submarine docked at the French Mediterranean port of Toulon was extinguished early on Saturday morning, the Defence Ministry said. Some 100 firefighters had been called in to tackle the blaze on the Perle, which lasted 14 hours and ended at around 00:50 a.m. (2250 GMT), the ministry said. It confirmed an earlier statement that no nuclear material was aboard when the fire broke out on Friday. Nobody was hurt and no nuclear materials or weapons were on board the vessel, which was in dry dock for repairs, authorities said on Friday. Toulon is France's biggest naval base and is home to most of its fleet, including the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle and the nuclear submarines and other warships that escort it on its missions.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/france-submarine-fire/fire-on-french-nuclear-submarine-at-toulon-extinguished-idUSL8N2DQ088>

Russia

Russian strategic document names strike weapons deployed in space as key military threat: RIA

Reuters, June 2, 2020

President Vladimir Putin approved a strategic document on Tuesday naming the creation and deployment of anti-missile and strike weapons in space as one of the main military threats to Russia, the RIA news agency reported. The document outlining Russia's policy on its nuclear deterrent was published online amid arms control tensions between Russia and the United States over the future of New START, the last major pact regulating their nuclear arsenals.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-space-nuclear/russian-strategic-document-names-strike-weapons-deployed-in-space-as-key-military-threat-ria-idUSKBN2391S1>

U.S., Russia agree on June nuclear arms talks, invite China: U.S. envoy

Reuters, June 8, 2020

The United States and Russia have agreed on a time and place for nuclear arms negotiations in June and invited China, U.S. Special Envoy for Arms Control Marshall Billingslea wrote on Twitter on Monday. “Today agreed with the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Ryabkov on time and place for nuclear arms negotiations in June. China also invited. Will China show and negotiate in good faith?” Billingslea wrote.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-russia-nuclear/u-s-russia-agree-on-june-nuclear-arms-talks-invite-china-u-s-envoy-idUSKBN23F2IJ>

Russia, China build case at U.N. to protect Iran from U.S. sanctions threat

Michelle Nichols

Reuters, June 9, 2020

Russia and China have started making the case at the United Nations against Washington’s claim that it can trigger a return of all sanctions on Iran at the Security Council, with Moscow invoking a 50-year-old international legal opinion to argue against the move. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and the Chinese government’s top diplomat, Wang Yi, both wrote to the 15-member council and U.N. chief Antonio Guterres as the United States threatens to spark a so-called sanctions snapback under the Iran nuclear deal, even though Washington quit the accord in 2018. Lavrov wrote in the May 27 letter, made public this week, that the United States was being “ridiculous and irresponsible.” “This is absolutely unacceptable and serves only to recall the famous English proverb about having one’s cake and eating it,” Lavrov wrote.

Washington has threatened to trigger a return of U.N. sanctions on Iran if the Security Council does not extend an arms embargo due to expire in October under Tehran’s deal with world powers to prevent it from developing nuclear weapons. U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Kelly Craft said last week that a draft resolution on the embargo would be circulated soon. Council veto-powers Russia and China have already signaled they are against reimposing an arms embargo on Iran. If they block the U.S.-drafted resolution, then Washington will have to follow through on its sanctions snapback threat. “The United States, no longer a participant to the JCPOA (nuclear deal) after walking away from it, has no right to demand the Security Council invoke a snapback,” Wang wrote in his June 7 letter.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-iran-russia-china/russia-china-build-case-at-u-n-to-protect-iran-from-u-s-sanctions-threat-idUSKBN23G2YR>

U.S. aircraft intercept Russian nuclear-capable bombers near Alaska: RIA

Reuters, June 9, 2020

U.S. fighter jets intercepted and escorted four Russian nuclear-capable bombers during a routine flight over neutral waters near the United States, the RIA news agency reported on Wednesday, citing the Russian Defence Ministry. Russia said the 11-hour flight, carried out by its Tupolev Tu-95MS bombers, complied with international law and that U.S. F-22 Raptor tactical fighters had accompanied its planes during some stages of their flight.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-usa-bombers/u-s-aircraft-intercept-russian-nuclear-capable-bombers-near-alaska-ria-idUSKBN23H178>

Russian nuclear-powered sub enters service amid arms control fears

Reuters, June 12, 2020

Russia's most-advanced new nuclear-powered submarine entered service on Friday, the defence ministry said, at a time of growing arms control tensions between Moscow and the West. The Knyaz Vladimir (Prince Vladimir) - designed to carry Bulava intercontinental nuclear missiles - was enrolled into the navy during Friday's Russia Day celebrations. The announcement comes against the background of a rift with Western powers over Ukraine and fears of a burgeoning arms race following the demise of a landmark Cold War-era nuclear pact. The Borei-A (Boreas) class submarine is named after a ruler of the medieval Kievan Rus, the territory in modern-day Ukraine from which the Russian state would later emerge.

The first upgraded 955A model to be produced in the Borei class is one of the centrepieces in President Vladimir Putin's plans to upgrade the nuclear-powered fleet. The Borei submarine project, started shortly after the fall of the Soviet Union, had long been plagued by shortages of cash and failures during tests of the Bulava missile. The global arms control architecture erected during the Cold War to keep Washington and Moscow in check has come under strain since the demise of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. In August last year, the United States pulled out of the accord that banned the deployment of short and intermediate range missiles, accusing Moscow of flouting it, something Russia denies. The last major nuclear arms control treaty between Russia and the United States, the New START treaty, is due to expire in 2021. It limits the number of strategic nuclear warheads the world's two biggest nuclear powers can deploy.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-submarine/russian-nuclear-powered-sub-enters-service-amid-arms-control-fears-idUSKBN23J1KO>

Putin says Russia will be able to counter hypersonic weapons

Reuters, June 14, 2020

Russia will soon be in a position to counter hypersonic arms deployed by other countries, President Vladimir Putin said on Sunday, adding that Moscow was ahead of the United States in developing new types of weapons. Hypersonic glide vehicles can steer an unpredictable course and manoeuvre sharply as they approach impact. They also follow a much flatter and lower trajectory than ballistic missiles. Washington and Moscow have been expanding their defence capabilities as some Cold War-era arms control agreements collapsed during worsening of Russia's ties with the West. Last year Russia deployed its first hypersonic nuclear-capable missiles, while the Pentagon has a goal of fielding hypersonic capabilities in the early to mid-2020s.

"It's very likely that we will have means to combat hypersonic weapons by the time the world's leading countries have such weapons," Putin was quoted as saying by the RIA news agency. While Russia and the United States had broadly the same number of nuclear weapons, Putin said Moscow was ahead in advanced arms development.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-arms/putin-says-russia-will-be-able-to-counter-hypersonic-weapons-idUSKBN23L0CJ>

West Asia

Iran

Iran signs two-year contract with Iraq to export electricity: IRNA

Reuters, June 4, 2020

Iran has signed a two-year contract with Iraq to export electricity to the neighbouring country, Iranian state news agency IRNA on Thursday quoted the country's Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian as saying. The agreement comes amid sanctions reimposed on Iran since 2018 which forbid countries from purchasing Iranian energy. U.S. President Donald Trump in 2018 exited Iran's 2015 nuclear deal and reimposed the sanctions on Tehran that have battered its economy. "We signed a contract with Iraq for exporting electricity in 2020 and 2021," said Ardakanian, who travelled to Iraq. "With coordination of the Iranian embassy in Iraq, half of the disbursement worth \$400 million was received during the trip."

Ardakanian said Tehran and Baghdad have reviewed a three-year plan for reconstructing the Iraqi electricity industry by the Iranian private sector. "Iranian technical and expert delegations will visit

Iraq next week to sign two important contracts on reducing power grid losses and repairing electricity equipment,” Ardakanian said.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-eu/eu-considers-broadening-scrutiny-of-foreign-investments-idUSKBN23B27R>

Iranian foreign minister challenges Trump to return to nuclear deal

Reuters, June 5, 2020

Seizing on Donald Trump’s conciliatory tone after Tehran released an American Navy veteran, Iran’s foreign minister challenged the U.S. president on Friday to return to the nuclear deal that Washington abandoned two years ago. Iran freed Michael White on Thursday as part of a deal in which the United States allowed Iranian-American physician Majid Taheri to visit Iran. Trump tweeted on Thursday of White’s release: “Thank you to Iran, it shows a deal is possible!”

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, addressing Trump, said on Twitter, “We achieved humanitarian swap despite your subordinates’ efforts”. “We had a deal when you entered office. ... Your advisors -most fired by now - made a dumb bet. Up to you to decide when you want to fix it.”

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-usa-zarif/iranian-foreign-minister-challenges-trump-to-return-to-nuclear-deal-idUSKBN23C1V0>

IAEA voices serious concern at Iran's stonewalling on old sites

Francois Murphy

Reuters, June 5, 2020

The U.N. nuclear watchdog expressed serious concern on Friday that Iran has continued for months to deny it access to sites of interest to it, describing previous suspected activities there that could have been part of a nuclear weapons programme. The International Atomic Energy Agency issued a report in March admonishing Iran for failing to answer questions about past nuclear activities at three sites and for denying it access to two of them. Diplomats have said the IAEA is looking into activities there long before Iran’s 2015 nuclear deal with major powers. A report to IAEA member states issued on Friday detailed suspected activities and materials including “the possible presence...of natural uranium in the form of a metal disc” at a site that “underwent extensive sanitization and levelling in 2003 and 2004”, the report said, describing the third site. “Sanitization” is a general term used to suggest suspected activity to remove traces of nuclear material.

U.S. intelligence agencies and the IAEA believe Iran had a secret, coordinated nuclear weapons programme that it halted in 2003. Israel's obtaining of what it calls an "archive" of past Iranian nuclear work has, however, given the IAEA extra information on the Islamic Republic's previous activities. The report also described "the possible use and storage of nuclear material at another location specified by the agency where outdoor, conventional explosive testing may have taken place in 2003, including in relation to testing of shielding in preparation for the use of neutron detectors". One of the three sites was sanitized, another "underwent significant changes ... including the demolition of most buildings" - both in the early 2000s - and at the other the IAEA observed "activities consistent with efforts to sanitize part of the location" from July 2019 onwards. "The (IAEA) director general calls on Iran immediately to cooperate fully with the agency, including by providing prompt access to the locations specified," the report said. That report was in addition to a regular quarterly report that showed the Islamic Republic remains in breach of many of the restrictions imposed by its nuclear deal with major powers, and that its stockpile of low-enriched uranium has increased by roughly half to 1,571.6 kg, well above a 202.8 kg limit.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-nuclear-iaea/iaea-voices-serious-concern-at-irans-stonewalling-on-old-sites-idUSKBN23C2CH>

U.S. sanctions imposed on Iranian shipping network over proliferation take effect

Reuters, June 8, 2020

U.S. sanctions imposed on Iran's shipping network took effect, months after they were announced in December following accusations of supporting proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in a statement on Monday warned commercial and maritime industries, governments and others that they risked U.S. sanctions if they did business with the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL) and its Shanghai-based subsidiary, E-Sail Shipping Company. The State Department had announced the designations in December but allowed a delay for them to take effect, giving time for exporters of humanitarian goods to Iran to find different shipping methods, according to the statement.

"These designations serve as a clear warning that anyone doing business with or otherwise supporting IRISL or E-Sail are exposed to potential sanctions and risk contributing to Iran's proliferation-sensitive programs, including its nuclear and missile programs," Pompeo said in the statement. He also asked governments around the world to investigate activity by the shipping entities in their ports and seas, encouraging them to take appropriate action to stop the activity. The State Department accused IRISL of repeatedly transporting items related to Iran's ballistic missile and military programs, as well as other proliferation-sensitive items.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-iran-sanctions/u-s-sanctions-imposed-on-iranian-shipping-network-over-proliferation-take-effect-idUSKBN23F2PP>

Iran urges Russia, China to resist U.S. push to extend arms embargo

Reuters, June 10, 2020

Iran on Wednesday called on Russia and China to resist a push by Washington to extend a U.N.-imposed arms embargo due to expire in October under Tehran's 2015 nuclear deal with six powers. U.S. President Donald Trump's administration has been taking a harder line with the United Nations to extend and strengthen the embargo on Iran, warning that its lifting would let Tehran acquire weapons that could fuel conflicts in the Middle East. "Americans are already angry, upset, and wanting to take this issue to the Security Council. We want four permanent members of the (U.N. Security) Council to stand up to America," Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said in a televised speech. "Particularly, we expect Russia and China to resist this U.S. plot. America will not succeed ... and we will increase our defence capabilities as we have been doing so even under sanctions."

Tehran and its rival Saudi Arabia, a close U.S. ally, have been involved in proxy wars and political confrontations in the region for decades, from Iraq and Syria to Bahrain and Yemen. Council veto-powers Russia and China have already signalled they are against re-imposing an arms embargo on Iran. If the U.N. Security Council does not extend the embargo, Washington has threatened to trigger a so-called snapback of all U.N. sanctions on Iran, including the arms embargo, using a process outlined in the nuclear deal. However, Russia and China, both parties to the deal, have already started making the case at the United Nations against Washington's claim that it can trigger a return of all sanctions on Iran at the Security Council.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-usa-china-russia/iran-urges-russia-china-to-resist-u-s-push-to-extend-arms-embargo-idUSKBN23H1EP>

Iran rejects U.N. report that arms 'of Iranian origin' used in Saudi attacks

Reuters, June 12, 2020

Iran on Friday rejected a United Nations report that said cruise missiles used in attacks on oil facilities and an airport in Saudi Arabia last year were of "Iranian origin", saying it had been drawn up under U.S. and Saudi influence. In the report, seen by Reuters on Thursday, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres also told the Security Council that several items in U.S. seizures of weapons and related materiel in November 2019 and February 2020 were "of Iranian origin". Iran's Foreign Ministry said in a statement carried by state media that "Iran denies allegations by the U.N. Secretariat that appear to have been made under political pressure from the U.S. and Saudi regimes". "Interestingly, the ... report comes at a time when the United States is working to draft a dangerous resolution to extend an arms embargo against Iran," the statement said.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-usa-un-statement/iran-rejects-u-n-report-that-arms-of-iranian-origin-used-in-saudi-attacks-idUSKBN23J2P8>

Iran prepared to retaliate if U.S. stopped Venezuela-bound tankers: news agency

Reuters, June 13, 2020

An Iranian news agency close to the elite Revolutionary Guards said on Saturday Iran's naval forces were preparing to target U.S. commercial vessels in the Gulf last month in case U.S. forces interfered with Venezuela-bound Iranian oil tankers. Iran sent a flotilla of five tankers of fuel to gasoline-starved ally Venezuela in May, and Tehran has said it will continue the shipments if Caracas requests more, despite Washington's criticism of the trade between the two nations, which are both under U.S. sanctions.

"According to reports received by Noor News, after increasing military threats against Iranian vessels headed for Venezuela, an order was issued to Iran's armed forces to identify and track several U.S. merchant vessels in the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman," Noor News said on its website. "Options for reciprocal action were immediately identified and monitored for possible operations," the agency added. Iran complained to the United Nations last month and summoned the Swiss ambassador in Tehran, who represents U.S. interests in the Islamic Republic, over possible measures Washington could take against the Iranian tankers. The United States, which did not hinder Iran's tanker cargoes, is considering imposing sanctions on dozens of additional foreign oil tankers for trading with Venezuela, a U.S. official told Reuters earlier this month.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-usa-gulf/iran-prepared-to-retaliate-if-u-s-stopped-venezuela-bound-tankers-news-agency-idUSKBN23K0MB>

East Asia

Japan

Japan details some spending in controversial \$92 billion budget reserves

Tetsushi Kajimoto

Reuters, June 8, 2020

Japan has set aside \$92 billion in emergency budget reserves to prepare for a "protracted war" against the novel coronavirus, Finance Minister Taro Aso said on Monday, detailing some spending from the massive pool of money seen by some as opaque. Aso made the remarks as the government presented parliament with the second extra budget for approval to fund a \$1.1 trillion stimulus package to combat the pandemic, which featured the 10-trillion-yen (\$92 billion) reserves set aside for

contingencies. “While setting eyes on a protracted war, we must take all possible measures and top up emergency reserves in order to flexibly respond to changes in the situation,” Aso said. “At least 5 trillion yen is needed in case the second and third wave of infections turn the situation very severe ... Another 5 trillion yen must be secured so that we can swiftly respond to any situation,” Aso said in a speech in parliament.

Half the 10-trillion-yen reserves would be spent to help firms keep employment and pay rents, and to boost medical care, he added. It was unprecedented for the government to detail spending from emergency budget reserves. The rare move followed criticism from the opposition that the government could tap the massive pool of money at their own discretion without parliament checking, which would undermine fiscal discipline and public finances. The government used to set aside 350 billion yen for emergency reserves in an initial budget. It then topped up the amount as needed when disasters struck such as the 2009 global financial crisis and the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster. Emergency reserves have totalled 12 trillion yen for the current fiscal year, when taken together with what was earmarked in the initial budget and the first stimulus adopted in April. Decades of heavy spending to stimulate a stagnant economy has left Japan with the industrial world’s heaviest public debt burden at more than twice the size of its economy.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-japan-stimulus/japan-details-some-spending-in-controversial-92-billion-budget-reserves-idUSKBN23F0CL>

TEPCO Renewable to spend \$9-18 billion by 2035 on green power

Yuka Obayashi, Ritsuko Shimizu

Reuters, June 8, 2020

TEPCO Renewable Power, a unit of Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings (9501.T), plans to spend about 1-2 trillion yen (\$9-18 billion) to develop 6-7 gigawatts (GW) of offshore wind and hydroelectric power projects by 2035, its president said. “We aim to boost our profit to 100 billion yen in 2030 from 40 billion yen now” through the investments, Seiichi Fubasami, president of TEPCO Renewable Power, told Reuters last week in an interview.

Its parent TEPCO, which has been struggling to restart nuclear power stations after the Fukushima disaster of 2011, said in 2018 that it will develop 2-3 GW of offshore wind power each at home and abroad, and 2-3 GW of hydroelectric power overseas to help renewable energy become a core power source. “We are sticking to the goal despite the COVID-19 pandemic,” Fubasami said, adding his company plans to take around a 50% stake in the projects. TEPCO Renewable owns 9.9 GW of power generation capacity, mainly hydroelectric in Japan. The additional assets would boost its renewable energy capacity to 25% of the group’s total capacity, from 20% now. “Southeast Asia and North America are our key targets for offshore wind, while Southeast Asia is our focus for hydroelectric,” he said. Japan’s offshore wind power market is expected to take off after the government brought in a law last year to encourage the development of wind farms.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-tep-hldg-windpower/tepco-renewable-to-spend-9-18-billion-by-2035-on-green-power-idUSKBN23F1YG>

North Korea

U.N. expert says some are 'starving' in North Korea

Stephanie Nebehay

Reuters, June 9, 2020

A United Nations human rights expert voiced alarm on Tuesday at “widespread food shortages and malnutrition” in North Korea, made worse by a nearly five-month border closure with China and strict quarantine measures against COVID-19. Tomas Ojea Quintana, U.N. special rapporteur on human rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, urged the U.N. Security Council to reconsider sanctions imposed on the isolated country over its nuclear and missile programmes, so as to ensure food supplies.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-un/u-n-expert-says-some-are-starving-in-north-korea-idUSKBN23G17D>

U.N. chief regrets North Korea decision to cut hotlines with South

Reuters, June 10, 2020

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres regrets that North Korea has severed hotlines with South Korea, warning that such channels “are necessary to avoid misunderstandings or miscalculations,” a U.N. spokesman said on Wednesday. Pyongyang’s decision, announced by the KCNA state news agency on Tuesday, marks a new setback to stalled efforts to persuade North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons. U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric noted that June was a symbolic month representing the second anniversary of the first meeting between U.S. President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and the 20th anniversary of the first meeting between the leaders of the two Koreas.

“The Secretary-General hopes that all parties use the June anniversaries to redouble efforts to resume talks to achieve sustainable peace and the complete and verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula,” Dujarric said. North Korea has been subjected to U.N. sanctions since 2006. They have been strengthened by the 15-member Security Council over the years in a bid to cut off funding for Pyongyang’s nuclear and ballistic missile programs.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-southkorea-un/u-n-chief-regrets-north-korea-decision-to-cut-hotlines-with-south-idUSKBN23H33C>

North Korea suggests U.N. chief pretending to act like a drunk

Michelle Nichols

Reuters, June 12, 2020

North Korea suggested on Thursday that United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres might be pretending to act like a drunk as the country slammed comments by his spokesman on Pyongyang's decision to sever hotlines with South Korea. Guterres regretted North Korea's announcement on the hotlines, warning that such channels "are necessary to avoid misunderstandings or miscalculations," U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric told reporters on Wednesday. "We cannot but express our astonishment over such reckless remarks - devoid of the common sense of judgment, let alone the basic knowledge of inter-Korean relations - coming out from the center of the United Nations," a spokesperson for North Korea's Foreign Affairs Ministry told KCNA state news agency.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-southkorea-un/north-korea-suggests-u-n-chief-pretending-to-act-like-a-drunk-idUSKBN23I372>

North Korea says little reason to maintain Kim-Trump ties: KCNA

Sangmi Cha, Josh Smith

Reuters, June 12, 2020

North Korea sees little use maintaining a personal relationship between leader Kim Jong Un and U.S. President Donald Trump if Washington sticks to hostile policies, state media reported on Friday - the two-year anniversary of the leaders' first summit. U.S. policies prove Washington remains a long-term threat to the North Korean state and its people and North Korea will develop more reliable military forces to counter that threat, Foreign Minister Ri Son Gwon said in a statement carried by state news agency KCNA. Trump and Kim exchanged insults and threats during 2017 as North Korea made large advances in its nuclear and missile programme and the United States responded by leading an international effort to tighten sanctions.

Relations improved significantly around the Singapore summit in June 2018, the first time a sitting American president met with a North Korean leader, but the statement that came out of the meeting was light on specifics. A second summit in February 2019 in Vietnam failed to reach a deal because of conflicts over U.S. calls for North Korea to completely give up its nuclear weapons, and North Korean demands for swift sanctions relief. Ri said in retrospect the Trump administration appears to

have been focusing on only scoring political points while seeking to isolate and suffocate North Korea, and threatening it with preemptive nuclear strikes and regime change. “Never again will we provide the U.S. chief executive with another package to be used for achievements without receiving any returns,” he said. “Nothing is more hypocritical than an empty promise.” The U.S. State Department and the White House did not immediately respond to requests for comment. A State Department spokesperson told South Korea’s Yonhap news agency the United States remains committed to dialogue with North Korea, and is open to a “flexible approach to reach a balanced agreement.”

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-northkorea/north-korea-says-little-reason-to-maintain-kim-trump-ties-kcna-idUSKBN23I3BW>

North Korea warns of retaliatory actions over defectors in South

Josh Smith, Heekyong Yang

Reuters, June 13, 2020

The sister of North Korea’s leader has warned of retaliatory measures against South Korea that could involve the military, in the latest escalation of tensions over defectors from the North who have been sending back propaganda and food. Kim Yo Jong, who serves unofficially as one of Kim Jong Un’s top aides, issued the warning in a statement carried by state news agency KCNA on Saturday.

“By exercising my power authorized by the Supreme Leader, our Party and the state, I gave an instruction to the ... department in charge of the affairs with (the) enemy to decisively carry out the next action,” Kim said.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-southkorea/north-korea-warns-of-retaliatory-actions-over-defectors-in-south-idUSKBN23K0K2>

South Korea

South Korea's Moon urges North to keep peace deals, return to talks

Hyonhee Shin

Reuters, June 15, 2020

South Korea’s President Moon Jae-in urged North Korea on Monday to refrain from raising tension and return to dialogue, after threats trumpeted by state media in Pyongyang to cut ties and take military action. The recent flaring of tension between the neighbours stoked fear of a military

provocation by the North, and posed another setback amid stalled talks to rein in its nuclear and missile programmes. Besides the threat to sever ties, state media over the past few days have aired the possibility of closing a joint liaison office in the North and retaliatory measures for a campaign by defectors to fly anti-Pyongyang leaflets across the border.

“The promises of peace on the Korean peninsula that Chairman Kim Jong Un made before our 80 million people cannot be turned back,” Moon told a meeting with senior aides, referring to pacts struck at summit of the two leaders in 2018. “North Korea should not cut communications, raise tension and try to go back to the past era of confrontation,” he added. “I hope it will resolve uncomfortable, difficult problems through communications and cooperation.” Moon’s remarks came as South Korea marked the 20th anniversary on Monday of the first summit between the two nations, which had pledged to step up dialogue and cooperation. At their own first summit in 2018, Moon and Kim signed a declaration to work for a “complete denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula” and cease “all hostile acts”. But the North cut hotlines with its neighbour last week and vowed to suspend all contact if Seoul did not halt defectors from sending in leaflets and other material. “I also regret that North Korea-U.S. and inter-Korean relations have not made progress as expected,” Moon said in a separate anniversary message “But what’s most important is trust, which the South and North should build through constant dialogue.”

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-southkorea/south-koreas-moon-urges-north-to-keep-peace-deals-return-to-talks-idUSKBN23M0QO>

Misc/World

Watchdog petitions D.C. Circuit for a voice in nuclear waste battle

Sebastien Malo

Reuters, June 5, 2020

A nuclear watchdog has petitioned a federal appeals court to review the Nuclear Regulatory Commission’s (NRC) refusal to hear its opposition to the licensing of a proposed Holtec International “interim” facility to store commercial nuclear reactor waste in southeastern New Mexico. Beyond Nuclear filed the petition on Thursday in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit, seeking the court’s review of the NRC’s denial in 2018 and 2020 of its request for a hearing over the storage plan on grounds it would violate the Nuclear Waste Policy Act (NWPA) and the Administrative Procedure Act.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/usa-energy-lawsuit/in-brief-watchdog-petitions-d-c-circuit-for-a-voice-in-nuclear-waste-battle-idUSL1N2DI1PH>

Joint venture created for Chalk River MMR project

World Nuclear News, June 10, 2020

Ottawa-headquartered Global First Power (GFP), which initiated the project last year, will act on behalf of the Limited Partnership to oversee the proposed MMR project. It will provide project development, licensing, construction and operation of the commercial demonstration reactor at Chalk River. GFP, USNC and OPG have been collaborating on the Chalk River project for several years, which has led to the joint-ownership arrangement and creation of the Limited Partnership.

"The partnership demonstrates the companies' mutual commitment to making low-carbon, small nuclear reactors a reality for Canada, and a viable alternative to diesel and other fossil fuels," they said in a joint statement yesterday. The Chalk River project, the partners said, "will serve as a model for potential future GFP projects across Canada, to provide safe and sustainable low-carbon power and heat to industries, such as mining, and remote communities." "The backing of OPG combined with USNC's advanced reactor and fuel designs will allow us to continue to lead the way in delivering a small-reactor solution in Canada," said GFP CEO Joe Howieson. "This joint venture is a very important milestone, marking new levels of commitment by an innovator in nuclear power-generation technologies and a forward-thinking, major utility."

<https://www.world-nuclear-news.org/Articles/Joint-venture-established-for-Chalk-River-MMR-proj>

Brazil government approves plan to complete third nuclear plant

Reuters, June 10, 2020

Brazil on Wednesday approved a plan to complete its long-delayed third nuclear reactor Angra 3, with or without a partner joining Eletronuclear, the Eletrobras subsidiary that runs two existing two nuclear plants. State-owned Eletrobras needs a private partner to help it finish the 1,400 megawatt reactor started in 2010. Possible candidates include companies in China, Russia, France and South Korea. The private partner must be a minority stakeholder, said the Investment Partnership Program (PPI) council that gave the approval. So far, 9 billion reais (\$1.8 billion) have been spent on the project that stalled in 2015 due to cost overruns and a corruption scandal involving contractors.

Eletronuclear President Leonam Guimaraes told Reuters last month that another 14.5 billion reais of investment is needed to finish the job. The business model approved on Wednesday was devised by major lender, state development bank BNDES, and requires a private partner to share the financial burden. PPI Special Secretary Martha Seillier said it could be hard to attract a partner unable to have a controlling stake. Eletronuclear is seeking a partner not just in financing and building but also in operations. Seillier said after Wednesday's meeting, however, that investors were more interested in a building contract to complete the plant rather than a partnership. The planned privatization of Centrais Eletricas Brasileiras SA, Brazil's largest utility known as Eletrobras, excludes the sale of its nuclear subsidiary. It has been held up in Congress and further delayed by the coronavirus pandemic until mid-2021.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/brazil-eletrabras-nuclear/update-1-brazil-government-approves-plan-to-complete-third-nuclear-plant-idUSL1N2DN367>

South African activists threaten to sue over nuclear plan

Reuters, June 12, 2020

South African activists have written to the energy minister threatening to take legal action if he moves to build new nuclear power plants without proper consultation. The letter to Gwede Mantashe from Earthlife Africa Johannesburg and the Southern African Faith Communities' Environment Institute (SAFCEI) comes after energy officials said last month they planned to procure 2,500 megawatts (MW) of new nuclear capacity by 2024. The activists said they would go to court if Mantashe tried to procure nuclear power, or seek information about it from vendors, without following proper regulatory processes and seeking public input.

Three years ago, the same groups succeeded in persuading a court to block a nuclear power agreement with Russia, signed under then-president Jacob Zuma. An energy ministry spokesman said the government had adopted "a no-regret option of building nuclear at a pace, scale and cost affordable to the country". He said the ministry would follow the law in its nuclear plans. South Africa's long-term energy plan, released in October, listed nuclear power as an option in the longer term or in case a long-delayed hydropower project in the Democratic Republic of Congo does not materialise.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/safrica-nuclear/update-1-south-african-activists-threaten-to-sue-over-nuclear-plan-idUSL8N2DO5SN>

Arms seized by U.S., missiles used to attack Saudi Arabia 'of Iranian origin': U.N.

Michelle Nichols

Reuters, June 12, 2020

Cruise missiles used in several attacks on oil facilities and an international airport in Saudi Arabia last year were of "Iranian origin," U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told the Security Council in a report seen by Reuters. Guterres also said several items in U.S. seizures of weapons and related materiel in November 2019 and February 2020 were "of Iranian origin." Some have design characteristics similar to those also produced by a commercial entity in Iran, or bear Farsi markings, Guterres said, and some were delivered to the country between February 2016 and April 2018. He said that "these items may have been transferred in a manner inconsistent" with a 2015 Security

Council resolution that enshrines Tehran's deal with world powers to prevent it from developing nuclear weapons.

Iran's mission to the United Nations said there were "serious flaws, inaccuracies and discrepancies" in the report. "Iran categorically rejects the observations contained in the Report concerning the Iranian connection to the export of weapons or their components that are used in attacks on Saudi Arabia and the Iranian origin of alleged U.S. seizures of armaments," the mission in New York said in a statement. Washington is pushing the 15-member council to extend an arms embargo on Iran that is due to expire in October under the nuclear deal. Council veto-powers Russia and China have already signaled their opposition to the move. Guterres reports twice a year to the Security Council on the implementation of an arms embargo on Iran and other restrictions that remained in place after the deal. The U.N. chief said the United Nations examined debris of weapons used in attacks on a Saudi oil facility in Afif in May, on the Abha international airport in June and August and on the Saudi Aramco oil facilities in Khurais and Abqaiq in September. "The Secretariat assesses that the cruise missiles and/or parts thereof used in the four attacks are of Iranian origin," Guterres wrote. Guterres also said that drones used in the May and September attacks were "of Iranian origin." He also said the United Nations had observed that some items in the two U.S. seizures "were identical or similar" to those found in the debris of the cruise missiles and the drones used in the 2019 attacks on Saudi Arabia. The Security Council is due to discuss Guterres' report later this month.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-usa-un/arms-seized-by-u-s-missiles-used-to-attack-saudi-arabia-of-iranian-origin-u-n-idUSKBN23J08C>

Trump aims to sidestep another arms pact to sell more U.S. drones

Mike Stone

Reuters, June 12, 2020

The Trump administration plans to reinterpret a Cold War-era arms agreement between 34 nations with the goal of allowing U.S. defense contractors to sell more American-made drones to a wide array of nations, three defense industry executives and a U.S. official told Reuters. The policy change, which has not been previously reported, could open up sales of armed U.S. drones to less stable governments such as Jordan and the United Arab Emirates that in the past have been forbidden from buying them under the 33-year-old Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), said the U.S. official, a former U.S. official and one of the executives. It could also undermine longstanding MTCR compliance from countries such as Russia, said the U.S. official, who has direct knowledge of the policy shift.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-usa-un/arms-seized-by-u-s-missiles-used-to-attack-saudi-arabia-of-iranian-origin-u-n-idUSKBN23J08C>

South Africa consults with industry on nuclear power plans

Reuters, June 14, 2020

South Africa's energy ministry on Sunday began consultations with industry on preparations for a proposed 2,500 megawatt (MW) nuclear power plant building programme, which has faced opposition from environmental campaigners. South Africa wants to supplement its power capacity because of problems at state utility Eskom's fleet of coal-fired power plants, some of which will be decommissioned over the next two decades. The energy ministry aims to use the consultation process - known as a Request for Information - to get some idea of the cost, possible ownership structures, cost recovery, the end-user cost and sustainability of the nuclear programme, it said in a statement. "Given the long lead-time of building additional new nuclear capacity, upfront planning is necessary for security of energy supply to society into the future," the energy ministry said.

Earthlife Africa Johannesburg and the Southern African Faith Communities' Environment Institute earlier this month wrote to the energy minister threatening to take legal action if he moved to build new nuclear power plants without proper consultation. Three years ago, the same groups succeeded in persuading a court to block a nuclear power agreement with Russia, signed under then-president Jacob Zuma. South Africa, which operates the continent's only nuclear power plant near Cape Town, said last month that it planned to procure 2,500MW of new nuclear capacity by 2024. South Africa's long-term energy plan, released in October, listed nuclear power as an option in the longer term or in case a long-delayed hydropower project in the Democratic Republic of Congo does not materialise. South African officials have previously talked about nuclear power as being part of an "energy mix" that also includes renewable sources like wind and solar as well as coal, on which the country currently relies for more than 80% of its power generation.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/safrica-nuclear/south-africa-consults-with-industry-on-nuclear-power-plans-idUSL8N2DR0A5>

Op-Ed

China

China mobilises thousands of troops, armoured vehicles near border with India

Kinling Lo

South China Morning Post, June 8, 2020

China has mobilised thousands of paratroopers, armoured vehicles and equipment in a military drill, saying they could be deployed "within hours" to the border with India in the Himalayas, where tensions have again flared. The soldiers and armoured vehicles were transported from the central

province of Hubei to an unspecified location in China's northwest plateau, thousands of kilometres away, in "just a few hours", according to state media reports over the weekend. Footage of troops boarding civilian planes and trains in the "manoeuvre operation" was aired on state broadcaster CCTV on Saturday, the same day top generals from China and India held talks in Moldo, on the Chinese side of the unmarked boundary known as the Line of Actual Control. They were trying to defuse a stand-off that began in early May, with border troops engaging in fist fights and stone-throwing in the Galwan River valley between Ladakh, in Indian-administered Kashmir, and Chinese-administered Aksai China.

Major Colonel Mao Lei, head of a PLA Air Force brigade training department that led the operation in the northwest, said it had made "significant breakthroughs" in terms of the scale of mobilised troops and how they were transported. "[Using civilian transport] substantially expanded our means of transporting forces and increased efficiency in manoeuvring an entire organisation of troops," Mao told CCTV. The report did not give their location, but an article published in state tabloid Global Times on Sunday directly linked the People's Liberation Army drill with the border tensions.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3088093/china-mobilises-thousands-troops-armoured-vehicles-near-border>

China puts rising star in command of forces in border face-off against India

Minnie Chan

South China Morning Post, June 9, 2020

A rising star of the People's Liberation Army has been sent to oversee the ground forces of the Western Theatre Command, where tensions are rising between China and India over border disputes. New commander Xu Qiling is younger than his Western Theatre Command predecessor and has experience in four of the PLA's five theatre commands. As tensions rise over border disputes, both countries build up troops, weapons and training Xu Qiling, former ground force commander of the Eastern Theatre Command, swapped posts with his counterpart He Weidong in the west, overseeing border areas in the Xinjiang and Tibet autonomous regions since last month, according to a report posted on the Western Theatre Command's WeChat social media account. "As tensions with India are escalating over border disputes, the Western Theatre Command needs a younger commander to lead frontier soldiers and officers in this current sensitive period," a military insider, who requested anonymity, told the South China Morning Post.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3088099/china-puts-rising-star-command-Forces-border-face-against-india>

Militia's combat-led training fast-tracked to enhance support capability

Xu Xiaoping and Chen Jing

China Military Online, June 9, 2020

The Huaihua military sub-command in Central China's Hunan province recently organized a

combat-led training for a specialized militia detachment. The militia detachment, which is established for camouflage protection, mainly provides logistics support for troops of certain service. “The military sub-command and our detachment jointly explored a string of practical techniques and tactics such as camouflaged hiding, sending false signals, and deception and obstruction, to reduce the exposure of troops on the field,” said Xie Hong, a battalion commander responsible for the training.

Xie also noted that such joint training and exercise has significantly improved the militia’s support capability in battles and turned militia detachments into an important part in fortifying the troops’ combat force. According to the deployments of superior military unit, the Huaihua military sub-command has formed 13 specialized militia detachments in recent years, concentrating on different fields of anti- chemical rescue, medical aid, communications support, security alert, etc. Based on their operational characteristics , the military sub-command has carried out joint exercises and training to maximize their support capability for real combat.

http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2020-06/09/content_9830937.htm

USA

New York Times Employees Rebel Against Tom Cotton’s Send-In-The-Troops

Joe Pompeo

Vanity Fair, June 4, 2020

By now, people becoming furious over a New York Times op-ed is more dog bites man than man bites dog. But even by the überpolarizing standards of James Bennet’s Opinion page, Wednesday’s Tom Cotton screed—“Send in the Troops”—was a doozy.

“One thing above all else will restore order to our streets: an overwhelming show of force to disperse, detain, and ultimately deter lawbreakers,” wrote the Arkansas Republican senator. “But local law enforcement in some cities desperately needs backup, while delusional politicians in other cities refuse to do what’s necessary to uphold the rule of law. The pace of looting and disorder may fluctuate from night to night, but it’s past time to support local law enforcement with federal authority.... In these circumstances, the Insurrection Act authorizes the president to employ the military.”

<https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2020/06/new-york-times-employees-rebel-against-tom-cotton-send-in-the-troops-op-ed>

Time to Get Tactical: American F-15s are Now Certified to Drop B61 Nuclear Bombs

Caleb Larson

National Interest Blog, June 9, 2020

Earlier this week, an American F-15E Strike Eagle, a more advanced derivative of the venerable F-15 design, successfully dropped the latest modification to the B61 nuclear bomb design. The bomb in question was dropped over Sandia National Laboratories' Tonopah test range in Nevada.

A spokesman for Sandia National Laboratories said "The results speak for themselves, the tests met all requirements, both in performance and safety. It was delivered with precision accuracy; it worked, and it worked well." Sandia is responsible for maintenance of the United States' nuclear stockpile, and serviced the latest B61 variant, the Mod 12.

<https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/time-get-tactical-american-f-15s-are-now-certified-drop-b61-nuclear-bombs-162106>

If the Donald Trump Resumes U.S. Nuclear Weapons Testing, India Will Follow

Hasan Ehtisham

National Interest Blog, June 13, 2020

On May 15, according to media reports, the Trump administration conducted serious discussions on whether or not to break the informal ban to carry out a nuclear test explosion. Washington's intent to resume nuclear testing threatens to elevate already grown strategic tensions with China, Russia, and others. Some analysts comprehended that this is a proper course to influence Russia and China to support Washington's plan for trilateral talks related to nuclear arms controls and disarmament issues.

Throughout the Cold War, hundreds of nuclear tests were carried out by the United States and the Soviet Union. But when the Soviet Union in 1991 announced a unilateral moratorium, the United States under H.W. Bush administration reciprocated with a moratorium on nuclear weapons testing. The suspension of nuclear tests provided the diplomatic room for the world to begin negotiations regarding the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) to impose a blanket ban on test explosions of nuclear weapons. Russia and all NATO members except the United States have already ratified the CTBT. This latest move by the U.S. to resume nuclear testing can also contribute to the wider attempt to sabotage the agenda of CTBT.

<https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/if-donald-trump-resumes-us-nuclear-weapons-testing-india-will-follow-162736>

B83: This 1.5 Megaton U.S. Nuclear Bomb Could Kill Millions

Caleb Larson

National Interest Blog, June 13, 2020

The B83 is one of two so-called “dumb” or unguided nuclear bombs that the United States maintains as a part of its post-Cold War Enduring Stockpile arsenal. Along with intercontinental ballistic missiles and other smaller nuclear-capable bombs, stocks of the B83 are kept in case of emergency. It replaced a number of older American free-falling weapons, and is big.

At nearly one and a half tons, the B83 is the largest nuclear bomb that the United States currently keeps. Its nuclear yield is 1.2 megatons—significantly more powerful than either of the nuclear bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki during World War II. It’s big, it’s powerful, and it’s had a colorful history.

<https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/b83-15-megaton-us-nuclear-bomb-could-kill-millions-162739>

West Asia

Iran

Who are the secret puppet-masters behind Trump’s war on Iran?

Tehran Times, June 5, 2020

President Trump vetoed a war powers bill specifying that he must ask Congress for authorization to use military force against Iran. Trump’s “maximum pressure” campaign of deadly sanctions and threats of war against Iran has seen no let-up, even as the U.S., Iran and the whole world desperately need to set aside our conflicts to face down the common danger of the Covid-19 pandemic.

So what is it about Iran that makes it such a target of hostility for Trump and the neocons? There are many repressive regimes in the world, and many of them are close U.S. allies, so this policy is clearly not based on an objective assessment that Iran is more repressive than Egypt, Saudi Arabia or other monarchies in the Persian Gulf. The Trump administration claims that its “maximum pressure” sanctions and threats of war against Iran are based on the danger that Iran will develop nuclear weapons. But after decades of inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and despite the U.S.’s politicization of the IAEA, the Agency has repeatedly confirmed that Iran does not have a nuclear weapons program.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/448478/Who-are-the-secret-puppet-masters-behind-Trump-s-war-on-Iran>

The implications of declining U.S. leadership

Mahmood Monshipouri

Tehran Times, June 5, 2020

The Trump administration's ongoing policy of withdrawal from international institutions—including the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, the 2016 Paris Climate Change Accord, the Open Skies Treaty, and now the World Health Organization (WHO) in the middle of the greatest global health crisis—demonstrates the declining U.S. leadership ever since the post-World War II order was created. This latest move is made at a time when the world relies heavily on the WHO's leadership to steer the COVID-19 pandemic response.

While as recently as two months ago praising China in the hope of salvaging bilateral trade ties between the two countries, Trump has now turned against China and the WHO. The latter has been instrumental in managing and treating the worldwide spread of malaria, tuberculosis, SARS, HIV-AIDS, and other infectious and non-communicable diseases. Trump's recent announcement (May 29, 2020) to permanently end the U.S. contribution to the WHO, and even to withdraw U.S. membership, is yet another attempt to distract the public from his mishandling of the current coronavirus crisis—a move that will lead to further global U.S. isolation, ironically putting China in a much stronger position to influence that organization's policies.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/448515/The-implications-of-declining-U-S-leadership>

Biden would restore nuclear deal if he wins elections: George Washington University professor

Javad Heirannia

Tehran Times, June 7, 2020

Professor Hossein Askari, an expert on Saudi Arabia who also teaches international business at the George Washington University, is of the opinion that Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden would “restore, or rejoin, the nuclear agreement with Iran” if he wins the presidential election in the November elections. “Biden would restore, or rejoin, the nuclear agreement with Iran. But now he would want an extension of the time that Iran could resume for nuclear research and have breakout capabilities,” Professor Askari tells the Tehran Times. Professor Askari, who served as special advisor to Saudi finance minister, also says a Democratic president “would set about undoing Trump's foreign policy errors.”

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/448604/Biden-would-restore-nuclear-deal-if-he-wins-elections-George>

Washington's irresponsible conduct is a source of serious concern, Iran writes to IAEA chief

Tehran Times, June 10, 2020

Kazem Gharibabadi, Iran's ambassador to the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency, has warned that the United States' "irresponsible conduct" in hampering international cooperation for peaceful uses of nuclear technology "is a source of serious concern". "Upon instructions and on behalf of my government, I would like to bring to your attention the persistent United States' irresponsible conduct with respect to its multilateral obligations and international law, to hamper international nuclear cooperation for peaceful purposes, which is a source of serious concern," Gharibabadi wrote in a letter to Rafael Grossi, the IAEA director-general.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/448746/Washington-s-irresponsible-conduct-is-a-source-of-serious-concern>

Iranians have 'broken U.S. knee' through unity: Rouhani

Tehran Times, June 10, 2020

President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday that "kneeling on neck" is the policy of the United States but the Iranians have "broken the U.S. knee with hammer of unity". "During history, when they find an oppressed, they kneel on his neck until he dies. This method does not just belong to a police officer in one city, it is the policy of the United States," Rouhani said in an open reference to the brutal suffocation of George Floyd, an African-American, by a white policeman who pressed his knee on his neck and he later died. Speaking at a cabinet meeting, Rouhani said the great Iranian people have broken the U.S. knee. Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei also said on June 3 that a police officer put his knee on a black man's neck and pushed until he died, noting it shows the nature of the United States.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/448751/Iranians-have-broken-U-S-knee-through-unity-Rouhani>

IAEA to continue verification in Iran

Tehran Times, June 15, 2020

Rafael Grossi, the director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, said on Monday that the agency continues to verify the non-diversion of nuclear material declared by Iran under its Safeguards Agreement. "The IAEA continues to verify the non-diversion of nuclear material declared by Iran under its Safeguards Agreement, and evaluations regarding the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities for Iran have also continued," he said, addressing the first virtual meeting of the IAEA's Board of Governors.

He also claimed that Iran has denied the IAEA access to two locations and that, for almost a year, it has not engaged in substantive discussions to clarify “our questions related to possible undeclared nuclear material and nuclear-related activities.”

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/448934/IAEA-to-continue-verification-in-Iran>

Think Tanks

Small military nuclear reactors: In need of global safeguards

Victor Gilinsky, Henry Sokolski

Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, June 3, 2020

The US Defense Department recently awarded three contracts totaling \$40 million to kick off a design competition to build small mobile nuclear reactors that can “be forward deployed with forces outside the continental United States,” including at “remote operating bases.” The notion of small reactors accompanying troops in battle raises all sorts of military, logistical, and international legal issues. But one that has received little attention is that the program shines a light on a growing loophole in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). It goes without saying that, if the program ever comes to fruition, such reactors on US military bases would not be subject to inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)—the organization that helps implement the NPT. America’s special agreement with the agency takes account of the United States’ nuclear weapon status, and so excludes it from international inspection activities related to national security.

<https://thebulletin.org/2020/06/small-military-nuclear-reactors-in-need-of-global-safeguards/>

What the protests tell us: Invest in social equity, not nuclear weapons

Rachel Bronson

Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, June 3, 2020

To tackle emerging challenges the United States will need to make significant investments in new security arrangements and forge new types of global coordination, because no one country alone can deal with this wide and expanding array of global threats. Alas, the United States is neither investing nor coordinating. It is walking away from global arms control arrangements without even planning a next step, in a vicious international form of the “repeal and replace” that has so dramatically failed to work with the US health care system. Now, in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, the Trump administration has set its gaze on the global public health system, announcing plans to defund the World Health Organization without doing the hard work needed to create a better, more agile institution to support or replace it—something that many experts would agree is required.

Our increasing retreat to nationalism and nativism in the face of problems that are global in nature will be unnecessarily expensive, leaving less and less money to spend on newly emerging threats and on our own domestic society, where equity gaps of many sorts have been growing ever wider. It is no

coincidence that as the United States walks away from arms control agreements that have been put into place over the last 50 years to slow a nuclear arms race with Russia, the United States is also set to invest gobs of money in new nuclear weapons. In fact, such a result is predictable. Today, the United States is on the cusp of spending somewhere between \$1.2 and \$1.8 trillion over the next 30 years on new nuclear weapons, a large portion of which is unnecessary from a military security point of view and could be better invested elsewhere.

<https://thebulletin.org/2020/06/what-the-protests-tell-us-invest-in-social-equity-not-nuclear-weapons/>

Trump apparently wants a nuclear test. It could be bad for your health.

Sara Z. Kutchesfahani

Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, June 5, 2020

In recent weeks, the Trump administration reportedly discussed the possibility of doing something the United States has not done since 1992: resuming explosive testing of nuclear weapons. Since the creation of the nuclear bomb, at least eight nations have detonated 2,056 nuclear test explosions at test sites around the world. Ten years ago, Japanese artist Isao Hashimoto created an informative but scary time-lapse map depicting all of these explosions. In it, each nation gets a flashing dot on the map whenever it detonates a nuclear weapon, with a running tally kept on the top and bottom bars of the screen. While the story begins in 1945 with the first ever nuclear weapon test (code-named Trinity), the real action comes in 1962, when there were 178 tests globally, more than in any other year. Not only is the rapid rate alarming, but where they happened—mainly on the lands of indigenous people—is also shocking.

A US resumption of nuclear tests would send a bad signal to other countries and prompt them to test and create their own nuclear weapons. Moreover, innocent bystanders could be exposed to the radioactive fallout from a nuclear explosion. Tens of thousands of people have been afflicted by leukemia, thyroid cancer, miscarriages, and severe birth defects as a result of past nuclear testing in the United States alone. Half of the 2,056 nuclear tests were conducted by one country alone: the United States. Yes, that's right: the total number of US-conducted tests stands at 1,030, which is more than the number of tests done by the other seven nuclear testing countries combined. Most of the explosions took place at the height of the Cold War in a series of tit-for-tat exchanges between the United States and the Soviet Union.

<https://thebulletin.org/2020/06/trump-apparently-wants-a-nuclear-test-it-could-be-bad-for-your-health/>

IAEA Report Shows Iran's Stockpile of Uranium Grows

Kelsey Davenport

Arms Control, June 8, 2020

The International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) June 5 report assessing Iran's compliance with the 2015 nuclear deal noted that Tehran's stockpile of low enriched uranium continues to increase

beyond limits set by the accord, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). While the stockpile growth is concerning, the IAEA report states that Iran continues to comply with the JCPOA's monitoring and verification measures, which provide assurance that if Tehran were to take further steps to violate the deal or dash toward a bomb, its activities would be quickly detected.

In short, Iran continues to transparently breach the nuclear deal to create leverage in response to the U.S. sanctions campaign and the failure of the remaining P4+1 parties (China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the EU) to deliver meaningful economic relief. The breaches are troubling, but do not indicate a decision to pursue nuclear weapons and are quickly reversible should Iran decide to return to compliance with the JCPOA. Specifically, the June 5 report noted that Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium increased by about 551 kilograms since the March report, bringing the total stockpile to 1,571 kilograms of uranium enriched to less than 4.5 percent uranium-235, nearly all of which is in the form of uranium hexafluoride gas (UF₆). Of the 551 kilograms produced over the past three months, 214.6 kilograms consists of uranium enriched to less than 2 percent. That brings the total amount of uranium enriched to less than 2 percent to 483 kilograms.

<https://www.armscontrol.org/blog/2020-06-08/iaea-report-shows-iran-stockpile-uranium-grows>

Debating US nuclear spending in the age of the coronavirus

Kingston Reif

Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, June 10, 2020

As the novel coronavirus pandemic continues to exact a terrible human and economic toll on the United States, Americans are adjusting how they view national security. There also appears to be agreement, even within the senior leadership of the Defense Department, that the military budget, which has seen significant growth during the Trump administration, is likely to be pared back in the coming years as federal deficits soar.

So it should be no surprise that the havoc wrought by the virus has also fanned the flames of an ongoing debate about the Trump administration's aggressive and costly plans to sustain and upgrade the US nuclear arsenal. But some supporters of the status quo will not countenance any challenge to business as usual. In an April 17 conversation hosted by the Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Studies, Frank Miller, a distinguished former US government official, argued that it is illegitimate and irresponsible to cite the current public health and economic crisis as a rationale to rethink US nuclear weapons spending priorities. A close examination reveals, however, that his reasoning is deeply flawed.

<https://thebulletin.org/2020/06/debating-us-nuclear-spending-in-the-age-of-the-coronavirus/>

Why Germany's nuclear mission matters

Peter Rough and Frank A. Rose

Brookings, June 9, 2020

Earlier this month, the influential head of the Social Democratic Party's (SPD) parliamentary group, Rolf Mützenich, called for the withdrawal of US nuclear weapons from Germany and an end to Germany's participation in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) nuclear sharing arrangements, triggering a contentious debate within the SPD. But as Mützenich's party colleague, Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, noted, such consequential steps, if they were ever decided, should not be taken unilaterally. Instead, they demand the input of allies.

As American analysts of national security affairs, we agree. And as veterans of the last Republican and Democratic presidential administrations, respectively, we can say with certainty: Germany's participation in nuclear sharing is a bipartisan American objective of the highest order. We also believe it is in Germany's national interest, because without German participation in NATO's nuclear mission, the European continent will grow more dangerous and less stable. To see why, let us examine Mützenich's proposal, which he anchors in two arguments. First, he states that the American decision to modernize its nuclear arsenal is accelerating an arms race, thereby endangering European security. Instead of buying expensive American fighter jets to deliver nuclear weapons, he says, Germany should be an advocate for arms control and disarmament.

<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/06/09/why-germanys-nuclear-mission-matters/>

What explains the decline of Iran's moderates? It's not Trump

Ali Fathollah-Nejad and Amin Naeni

Brookings, June 15, 2020

Conventional wisdom claims that the main cause for the moderates' declining position was U.S. pressure on the Rouhani administration, with some analysts describing Trump's "maximum pressure" campaign as a gift for Iranian hardliners. In such a view, Washington's re-imposition of sanctions gave Iran's hardliners "what they wanted" and "by putting the hardliners in the driver's seat in Tehran, Trump made the current crisis inevitable." This argument also credits U.S. pressure with strengthening "the hand of hardline Iranian factions, in the clerical and judicial establishment as well as in the Revolutionary Guards." In the same vein, forecasts for Iran's 2021 presidential election insist that the White House's policies have created "impossible circumstances" for a reformist candidate to win. These facile explanations disregard Iran's internal politics and vastly overstate the importance of Washington to shaping outcomes within Iran.

<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/06/15/what-explains-the-decline-of-irans-moderates-its-not-trump/>

India and China increased their nuclear weapons stockpile over last year: Swedish think tank

Snehesh Alex Philip

SIPRI, June 15, 2020

According to Swedish think-tank SIPRI, China is in the middle of a significant expansion of its nuclear arsenal and is developing the ‘nuclear triad for the first time’. India and China have both increased their nuclear weapons stockpile over the last year but New Delhi’s overall numbers are less than half of Beijing’s and also slightly lower than what Pakistan possesses. In its Yearbook 2020, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), a Swedish think tank, has pegged the number of nuclear warheads in the Chinese arsenal at 320, while Pakistan and India are estimated to have 160 and 150 weapons, respectively.

In its 2019 report, SIPRI had calculated China’s nuclear arsenal at 290 and India’s at 130-140. Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal was calculated at 150-160, a number which remains constant in the latest assessment too. Decrease in global nuclear weapons numbers, The report states that there has been a decrease in the overall number of nuclear weapons in the world in 2019. This was largely due to Russia and the US — which together still possess over 90 per cent of global nuclear weapons — dismantling retired nuclear weapons. The nine nuclear-armed states — the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea) — together possessed an estimated 13,400 nuclear weapons at the start of 2020, the think-tank said. This marked a decrease from the 13,865 nuclear weapons that SIPRI estimated these states possessed at the beginning of 2019.

<https://theprint.in/defence/india-and-china-increased-their-nuclear-weapons-stockpile-over-last-year-swedish-think-tank/441728/>

Nuclear weapon modernization continues but the outlook for arms control is bleak: New SIPRI Yearbook out now

SIPRI, June 15, 2020

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) today launches the findings of SIPRI Yearbook 2020, which assesses the current state of armaments, disarmament and international security. A key finding is that despite an overall decrease in the number of nuclear warheads in 2019, all nuclear weapon-possessing states continue to modernize their nuclear arsenals. The nine nuclear-armed states—the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea)—together possessed an estimated 13 400 nuclear weapons at the start of 2020. This marked a decrease from the 13 865 nuclear weapons that SIPRI estimated these states possessed at the beginning of 2019 (see table below). Around 3720 of the nuclear weapons are currently deployed with operational forces and nearly 1800 of these are kept in a state of high operational alert.

The decrease in the overall number of nuclear weapons in the world in 2019 was largely due to the dismantlement of retired nuclear weapons by Russia and the USA—which together still possess over 90 per cent of global nuclear weapons. The reductions in US and Russian strategic nuclear forces required by the 2010 Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (New START) were completed in 2018, and in 2019 the forces of both countries remained below the limits specified by the treaty. New START will lapse in February 2021 unless both parties agree to prolong it. However, discussions to extend New START or to negotiate a new

treaty made no progress in 2019. This was due in part to the US administration's insistence that China must join any future nuclear arms reduction talks—something that China has categorically ruled out. 'The deadlock over New START and the collapse of the 1987 Soviet–US Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles (INF Treaty) in 2019 suggest that the era of bilateral nuclear arms control agreements between Russia and the USA might be coming to an end,' says Shannon Kile, Director of SIPRI's Nuclear Disarmament, Arms Control and Non-proliferation Programme. 'The loss of key channels of communication between Russia and the USA that were intended to promote transparency and prevent misperceptions about their respective nuclear force postures and capabilities could potentially lead to a new nuclear arms race.'

<https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2020/nuclear-weapon-modernization-continues-outlook-arms-control-bleak-new-sipri-yearbook-out-now>

Reopening the World: Reopening Iran

Suzanne Maloney

Brookings, June 16, 2020

Reopening America and the World The first major outbreak of the novel coronavirus outside of East Asia struck Iran. Already reeling from severe American sanctions, Iranian leaders initially failed to appreciate the magnitude of the threat posed by the pandemic and struggled to mount an effective response. For pragmatic as well as ideological reasons, Tehran sought to balance economic exigencies with the imperatives of containing the virus, opting for a relatively short-lived shutdown and a steady effort to reopen. But the Iranian experience underscores the inherent complexity of managing these trade-offs, as its limited closure and swift reopening generated new waves of infection in cities around the country and may only set back Iran's prospects for durable economic recovery.

From the start, Iran's handling of the novel coronavirus was marked by denial, opacity, and a scramble to catch up with the contagion. The government ignored early warnings. In late January, Health Minister Saeed Namaki requested a ban on travel with China and quarantine for Iranians returning from Wuhan. In fact, an Iranian airline continued flights to China for at least another six weeks. Namaki's concerns were not the first. His predecessor claims that he had alerted President Hassan Rouhani as early as December 2019 about the spread of the novel coronavirus.

<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/06/16/reopening-the-world-reopening-iran/>

Contribute Articles

Indian Pugwash Society welcomes research articles from students, researchers and faculties on Space, Missile, nuclear technology, WMD proliferation, arms control, disarmament, export controls and other related issues. Articles should be crisply written and should address contemporary debates in the policy arena. Manuscripts submitted for the consideration of the Indian Pugwash Society should be original contributions and should not have been submitted for consideration anywhere else. For further assistance, please contact us at: indianpugwashsociety@gmail.com

The Indian Pugwash Society aims to promote the study, discussion, and knowledge of and to stimulate general interest in, and to diffuse knowledge in regards to problems relating on WMD proliferation, arms control, disarmament, space security, export controls, nuclear technology and other related issues. This newsletter is part of the project "Emerging Nuclear Order in Asia: Implications for India" sanctioned to us by Department of Atomic Energy-Board of Research in Nuclear Sciences (DAE-BRNS).

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