



Nuclear, Missile & Space Digest

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India

Historic reforms initiated in the Space sector, Private sector participation in Space activities approved

PIB Delhi, June 24, 2020

Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi today approved far reaching reforms in the Space sector aimed at boosting private sector participation in the entire range of space activities. The decision taken is in line with the long-term vision of the Prime Minister of transforming India and making the country self-reliant and technologically advanced. India is among a handful of countries with advanced capabilities in the space sector. With these reforms, the sector will receive new energy and dynamism, to help the country leapfrog to the next stages of space activities.

This will not only result in an accelerated growth of this sector but will enable Indian Industry to be an important player in global space economy. With this, there is an opportunity for large-scale employment in the technology sector and India becoming a Global technology powerhouse.

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetailm.aspx?PRID=1633901>

India's first human space mission "Gaganyaan" will not be affected by COVID pandemic: Dr.Jitendra Singh

PIB Delhi, June 29, 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 the launch of India's first human space mission "Gaganyaan" will not be affected by COVID pandemic and preparation are carrying on in the right direction. Briefing about the important achievements of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the Department of Space over the last one year and some of the important missions planned for the future, Dr Jitendra Singh said that even though because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the training of four Indian astronauts in Russia had to be halted, yet the opinion of Chairman ISRO and the scientific team is that there had been kept a "cushion" both in the training programme and launch deadline. The training of astronauts has now been resumed and the launch is scheduled to take place as planned, before the 75th anniversary of India's independence in 2022, he said.

Elaborating on the cabinet decision to encourage private participation in ISRO activities, Dr Jitendra Singh said, a regulatory body called "Indian National Space Promotion & Authorization Centre (IN-SPACe)" is to be established. This will help provide a level playing field to private players and

encourage their participation, he said. Dr Jitendra Singh said, besides enhancing the capacity and resources of our space missions, increased participation of private players will also discourage the brain drain of talented space scientists and experts who were otherwise moving out of India in search of a break. About Chandrayaan-3 Lunar mission, Dr Jitendra Singh said, as of today, it is planned for launch next year. This mission will involve a lander, rover and a propulsion system to carry the modules to move but it would not have orbiter as the previous orbiter is fully operational, he added.

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetailm.aspx?PRID=1635154>

China

China's nuclear power capacity to jump by 60% to 100 million kW by 2025

Global Times, June 18, 2020

China's nuclear power generating capacity will jump by 60 percent to 100 million kW by 2025 from the 2019 level, the nation's top nuclear industry body said. China's nuclear power industry is expected to maintain steady growth in the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-25), and the nation is expected to add six to eight reactor units each year during the period, media reports said on Wednesday, citing a blue paper by China Nuclear Energy Association. As of the end of 2019, China has a total of 47 power-generating reactor units in operation, with a total installed capacity of 48.75 million kW, making China the third largest country in nuclear power generation trailing the US and France.

China led the world in nuclear power capacity building, with 13 reactors under construction as of 2019. Nuclear power accounts for 4.88 percent of China's primary energy source. The nuclear industry body predicts by 2025 China will have a total of 100 million kW of reactors in operation and under construction, a 60 percent rise from 2019 level. By 2035, the figure may double to 200 million kW. The association also expects China's homegrown Hualong One third-generation nuclear power plant's first overseas project in Pakistan to enter production in 2020.

<http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1191981.shtml>

China announces name of its deep-sea manned submersible

Xinhuanet, June 22, 2020

China has named its new deep-sea manned submersible "Fendouzhe," which means "striver" in Chinese. An expert panel chose the name from a shortlist of 10 nominees, which were voted by nearly 100,000 web users during an online campaign launched by state broadcaster China Media Group. The manned submersible for 10,000-meter deep-sea exploration recently completed tank experiments in a Wuxi-based research institute under the China State Shipbuilding Corporation Limited. This 10,000-meter manned submersible project was launched in 2016 by scientists who previously developed manned submersibles Jiaolong and Shenhai Yongshi (Deep Sea Warrior).

According to media reports, the new submersible is expected to dive in the Mariana Trench after the final experiments in Wuxi.

http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2020-06/22/content_9839169.htm

Chinese bomber approaches Taiwan in latest fly-by near island

Reuters, June 22, 2020

Chinese air force jets, including at least one bomber, briefly entered Taiwan's air defence identification zone on Monday, before being warned off by its air force, the island's military said, the eighth such encounter. The encounter came on the day President Tsai Ing-wen oversaw a test flight of a new locally-developed advanced trainer jet as she pushes to boost democratic Taiwan's defences, particularly as China ramps up its own military modernisation. Taiwan's air force named the Chinese aircraft involved as the H-6 bomber and J-10 fighter jet, but did not say how many planes in total flew into the identification zone to the island's southwest.

The Chinese air force received verbal warnings to leave via radio, and patrolling Taiwanese fighters also "proactively drove off" the aircraft, Taiwan's air force said in a short statement, without giving details. The H-6 is a nuclear-capable bomber based on an old Soviet design that has participated in several such drills near Taiwan, including what China calls "island encirclement" exercises around the Chinese claimed-island. China claims Taiwan as its own territory, and has previously said its drills near the island are routine and designed to show Beijing's determination to protect its sovereignty. Taiwan has shown no interest in being run by autocratic China.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-taiwan-china-defence/chinese-bomber-approaches-taiwan-in-latest-fly-by-near-island-idUSKBN23T19Z>

China's answer to GPS complete as final BeiDou satellite launches

Kristin Huang

South China Morning Post, June 23, 2020

China launched the final satellite of its BeiDou navigation system into orbit on Tuesday, in what the system's designer said was a milestone in the country's quest to become a major space power. Completing the global navigation network that China has spent over two decades building, the satellite reached its designated orbit about 30 minutes after launch, according to the Chinese space agency. It was launched from the Xichang Satellite Launch Centre, in the southwestern Sichuan province, and was carried by a Long March 3B rocket, China's main rocket for putting communications satellites into orbit. Yang Changfeng, chief designer of the BeiDou System (BDS), told China's state broadcaster CCTV that the successful launch meant that China was "moving from being a major nation in the field of space to becoming a true space power".

The launch was originally planned to take place a week earlier, only for technical problems to be found during a routine check before lift-off, forcing it to be rescheduled to Tuesday morning. According to People's Daily, the Communist Party's mouthpiece, the completion of the satellite

system came six months ahead of schedule. Observers said that the fully fledged system could put China in a competitive position against the world's three other satellite navigation networks – the US-owned Global Positioning System (GPS), the European Union's Galileo and Russia's Glonass. It could also expand China's international engagement and offer an alternative to other countries that had been reliant on US technology, they said.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/science/article/3090186/chinas-global-aspirations-lift-beidou-satellite-launches-orbit>

China firmly opposes US deploying intermediate-range missiles in Asia Pacific region: Defense spokesperson

China Military Online, June 24, 2020

China is firmly opposed to the US deploying intermediate-range missiles in the Asian-Pacific region, said Senior Colonel Wu Qian, a spokesperson for China's Ministry of National Defense, at the regular press conference on the afternoon of June 24. "If the US insists on the deployment, it will be a provocation at China's doorstep. China will never sit idle and will take all necessary countermeasures," said Snr. Col. Wu. China hopes that Japan and other countries concerned can act cautiously with the big picture of regional peace and stability in mind, and don't allow the US to deploy medium-range missiles on their territories, so as not to fall victim to Washington's geopolitical ploys, Wu noted.

http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2020-06/24/content_9840873.htm

China urges Japan to just say no to hosting American missiles

Kristin Huang

South China Morning Post, June 25, 2020

China has urged Japan to resist striking a deal with the United States to host American intermediate-range missiles on its soil and instead maintain its defence-oriented policy. Beijing said on Wednesday it would not sit idly by if the US sought to deploy such missiles on its doorstep, but rather would take "all necessary countermeasures". "In the meantime, China hopes Japan and other countries can take regional peace and stability into consideration, act prudently and say no to the US – which wants to deploy intermediate-range missiles on their land – so they don't fall victim to a US geopolitical plot in the region," defence ministry spokesman Wu Qian told a press conference.

In a separate press briefing, China's foreign ministry urged Japan to maintain its "exclusively defence-oriented" policy as laid out in its constitution. "Because of historical reasons, Japan's military security trends have always received the attention of the international community and its Asian neighbours. We urge Japan to earnestly learn the lessons of history," ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said. Tokyo should "continue to follow the path of peaceful development with concrete actions", he said. Relations between China and Japan would collapse if such missiles were deployed on Japanese soil. Lian Degui, Shanghai International Studies University. Beijing's comments came in

response to reports the US is considering deploying intermediate-range missiles in Asia after withdrawing from the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty in August.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3090469/china-urges-japan-just-say-no-hosting-american-missiles>

USA

NRC to begin first-of-a-kind licence review

World Nuclear News, June 16, 2020

Jacob DeWitte, CEO of California-based Oklo, said the NRC's acceptance is a "great indicator" that the US regulator is prepared to license such technologies. "Advanced reactors are an important tool for climate change, and we are proud to be the first to submit a full licence application and the first to have it accepted," he said. "We are setting a different paradigm by challenging the current system, while getting feedback, iterating, and ultimately getting approval on things that traditionally have not been done before," he added. The proposed Aurora design is a fast neutron reactor that uses heat pipes to transport heat from the reactor core to a supercritical carbon dioxide power conversion system to generate electricity. Using metallic high-assay low-enriched uranium (HALEU) fuel, the Aurora "powerhouse" produces about 1.5 MW of electric power, and can also produce usable heat. INL earlier this year agreed to provide Oklo with access to HALEU fuel recovered from a now-decommissioned experimental reactor for use in the development and demonstration of Aurora.

The Aurora COL application, which was submitted in March, is the first-of-a-kind submission involving a novel reactor design for which there is limited precedent to establish consistent standards for acceptance, the NRC said. In its acceptance of the application for review, the regulator said it is "in the national interest to allow innovation and the commercialisation of safe and secure advanced nuclear reactors" as called for in the Nuclear Energy Innovation and Modernization Act, which became law in 2019. The NRC plans to complete the review of the Aurora design in a two-step process. In the first step, it plans to engage Oklo in public meetings, conduct regulatory audits and issue requests for additional information to efficiently align on four key safety and design aspects of the licensing basis. This will enable NRC staff to define the scope of the full, detailed technical review which will form the second step, and to develop a schedule to carry it out.

<https://www.world-nuclear-news.org/Articles/NRC-to-begin-first-of-a-kind-licence-review>

Holtec now able to progress Pilgrim decommissioning

World Nuclear News, June 18, 2020

The agreement, signed on 16 June, resolves a petition filed with the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) in February 2019 in which Massachusetts challenged an application to transfer

the plant's licence from its former operator, Entergy Nuclear Operations, to Holtec. It also resolves two other lawsuits filed by the state challenging the NRC's subsequent approval of the licence transfer and several administrative challenges filed by Holtec relating to conditions in the state water permit for the plant. "This agreement provides critical protections, includes compliance measures stricter than federal requirements, and secures the funds necessary to safely and properly clean up this site," Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healy said. Under the terms of the agreement, Holtec must keep at least USD193 million in funds until it completes most of the cleanup and site restoration work, after which it will be required to maintain at least USD38.4 million of funds until all used nuclear fuel has been removed from the site. The first amount will ensure funds are available to cover future cost increases and "unforeseen contingencies", while the other will ensure funds are available for the transport of used fuel out of the state and the clean-up of land where it has been stored, the state said.

Holtec said the newly signed accord will allow it to focus on meeting its decommissioning timeline for the plant. "I'm pleased we were able to work with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to find common ground that provides Holtec the certainty needed to safely complete decommissioning on the projected timeline," Holtec Decommissioning International (HDI) Chief Operating Officer Pam Cowan said. "Our commitment to be a good neighbour, and our shared goal of protecting the health and safety of our workers, the community and the environment were clear drivers for both parties that led to this agreement."

<https://www.world-nuclear-news.org/Articles/Agreement-enables-Holtec-to-progress-Pilgrim-decom>

Polish and U.S. presidents to discuss nuclear energy

Reuters, June 18, 2020

Polish President Andrzej Duda said on Thursday that he would discuss cooperation with the United States on nuclear energy in talks with President Donald Trump in Washington next week. The visit, unexpectedly announced by the White House on Wednesday, takes place four days before Poland's presidential election on June 28.

Duda, an ally of Poland's ruling nationalist Law and Justice (PiS) party, has been leading in opinion polls, although some surveys show he may not win the second round of the vote. "We will definitely talk about cooperation between Polish companies and Polish authorities, and companies and authorities from the United States over conventional nuclear energy and its use," Duda told a news conference.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-poland-usa-energy/polish-and-u-s-presidents-to-discuss-cooperation-over-nuclear-energy-idUSKBN23P2D2>

North Korea continues to present 'extraordinary' threat to region: Pentagon official

Reuters, June 18, 2020

North Korea's activities in recent days have shown that Pyongyang continues to pose an "extraordinary" threat to the Asia-Pacific region, a senior Pentagon official said on Thursday. "As we've been starkly reminded in recent days, North Korea continues to present an extraordinary threat to the region and which demands our continued vigilance," David Helvey, the acting assistant secretary of defense for Indo-Pacific security affairs, told reporters.

Helvey said that it was difficult to tell what North Korea would do in the coming days and weeks. North Korea on Tuesday blew up a joint liaison office set up in a border town in 2018 to foster better ties with South Korea after threatening action if defectors continued with a campaign of sending propaganda leaflets into the reclusive North. Destruction of the building, closed since January due to coronavirus fears, represented a major setback to South Korean President Moon Jae-in's efforts to coax North Korea into cooperation. It also appeared to be a further blow to U.S. President Donald Trump's hopes of persuading North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons and open up to the world. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's sister, Kim Yo Jong, on Wednesday criticized Moon for failing to implement a 2018 peace accord, saying Moon "put his neck into the noose of pro-U.S. flunkeyism." North Korea last week warned Washington to refrain from commenting on inter-Korean affairs if it wanted the Nov. 3 U.S. presidential election to go smoothly, raising concerns it could be contemplating a return to nuclear and long-range missile testing.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-southkorea-usa-pentagon/north-korea-continues-to-present-extraordinary-threat-to-region-pentagon-official-idUSKBN23P2FK>

Massachusetts, Entergy sub settle lawsuit over nuclear plant decommissioning

Sebastien Malo

Reuters, June 19, 2020

A subsidiary of Entergy Corp that decommissions nuclear power plants has settled with the state of Massachusetts regarding two lawsuits the state filed in federal appeals court challenging a 2018 application to transfer a license to retire a nuclear power plant in Massachusetts. The deal announced on Wednesday between Holtec Decommissioning International (HDI), Holtec Pilgrim LLC and the state secures more than \$200 million in funds to ensure Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station's retirement.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/usa-energy-lawsuit/in-brief-massachusetts-entergy-sub-settle-lawsuit-over-nuclear-plant-decommissioning-idUSL1N2DV2T9>

Judge rules in MEAG Power's favour on Vogtle PPA

World Nuclear News, June 19, 2020

Vogtle units 3 and 4, scheduled to enter service in November 2021 and November 2022 respectively, are co-owned by Georgia Power (45.7%), Oglethorpe Power (30%), MEAG Power (22.7%) and Dalton city (1.6%). Following reactor vendor Westinghouse's March 2017 bankruptcy filing, the owners decided to continue with the project, and work has gone ahead under the project management of Southern Nuclear. Under the terms of the PPA between MEAG Power and JEA, which was amended and restated in 2014, JEA committed to purchase all of the electricity generated by the new Vogtle units during their first 20 years of operation, as well as to pay for approximately 41% of MEAG Power's share of the construction cost for the new units during those 20 years.

The project was originally expected to cost USD9.5 billion in direct costs (USD14.8 billion total, including indirect and financing costs). The total cost of the portion attributable to JEA was USD1.4 billion. The project cost was capped under the 2008 agreement. However, by 2018, the project's total cost-to-completion estimates had increased to more than USD30 billion. JEA claimed a new unlimited cost-plus reimbursement agreement was implemented without its approval in June 2017 after Westinghouse declared bankruptcy. The amended agreement increased JEA's liability to more than USD2.9 billion. On 11 September 2018, JEA - the eighth-largest community-owned electric utility in the USA - and the City of Jacksonville launched a series of legal and regulatory challenges against the validity of the amended PPA in an attempt to have the agreement invalidated. On the same day, MEAG Power filed counterclaims against JEA accusing it of a breach of contract that threatened the future of the Vogtle plant expansion project.

<https://www.world-nuclear-news.org/Articles/Judge-rules-in-MEAG-Powers-favour-on-Vogtle-PPA>

U.S., Russian envoys to discuss arms control in Austria next week: State Department

Reuters, June 20, 2020

U.S. Special Presidential Envoy Marshall Billingslea will travel to Austria on Monday and Tuesday to discuss “mutually agreed topics related to the future of arms control” with Russian Deputy Foreign Sergei Ryabkov, the U.S. State Department said on Friday. “The United States has extended an open invitation to the People’s Republic of China to join these discussions, and has made clear the need for all three countries to pursue arms control negotiations in good faith,” the State Department said. U.S. President Donald Trump has repeatedly called for China to join the United States and Russia in talks on a nuclear arms control agreement to replace the 2010 New START accord.

New START, which imposes the last remaining limits on U.S. and Russian deployments of strategic nuclear arms to no more than 1,550 each, expires in February. China, estimated to have about 300

nuclear weapons, has repeatedly rejected Trump's proposal. Billingslea had said last week that he had agreed with Ryabkov on a time and place for the negotiations in June.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-armscontrol-russia/u-s-russian-envoys-to-discuss-arms-control-in-austria-next-week-state-department-idUSKBN23R00G>

'Horrible' Ad Suggesting Nuclear Attack From 'Islam' Appears In Nashville Newspaper, Paper Apologies

Nicholas Reimann

Forbes, June 21, 2020

The Tennessean issued an apology Sunday after "a bizarre, pseudo-religious" full-page ad appeared in the newspaper's Sunday edition claiming that "Islam" was planning a nuclear strike on the city of Nashville, Tennessee, on July 18, saying that the ad violated the paper's standards forbidding hate speech and that it is investigating how the ad from a "fringe religious group" was able to be published in the Sunday paper.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/nicholasreimann/2020/06/21/horrific-ad-suggesting-nuclear-attack-from-islam-appears-in-nashville-newspaper-paper-apologies/#77b8f46a5c03>

Isotek, DOE sign legacy waste contract modification

World Nuclear News, June 22, 2020

The uranium-233 was created as an alternative fuel source for nuclear reactors but was found not to be viable. The material is now stored in secure vaults in Building 3019, which was built in the 1940s at ORNL. Removing the waste could allow ORNL to relax its overall security posture, which will reduce costs, eliminate nuclear safety issues and make the campus more conducive to collaborative science, according to a US Senate Appropriations Committee report published in July 2017. Since 2003, Isotek - a wholly owned subsidiary of Atkins Nuclear Secured - has been contracted by the DOE to safely and securely oversee the inventory of uranium-233 and prepare its removal from ORNL's Building 3019, the USA's oldest operating nuclear facility. SNC-Lavalin acquired WS Atkins in July 2017.

Isotek in October 2019 began processing canisters of uranium-233 in Building 2026 and shipping the processed material for safe permanent disposal. During the processing of uranium-233, Isotek is extracting thorium-229. This rare man-made isotope is being used to support cancer treatment research. Isotek is using the proceeds from the sale of the thorium-229 to privately fund portions of the Uranium-233 Disposition Project. The contract modification continues the partnership between

Isotek and the DOE and authorises USD254 million to fund and continue Isotek's mission to safely dispose of more than 80% of the remaining uranium-233 inventory. To date, about half of the inventory has been removed from Building 3019 and directly disposed of.

<https://www.world-nuclear-news.org/Articles/Isotek-DOE-sign-legacy-waste-contract-modification>

Viewpoint: Nuclear's stand-out resilience in an energy crisis

World Nuclear News, June 22, 2020

The current oil crisis, which erupted against the backdrop of COVID-19, has, according to Scott Lauerman, a spokesman for the American Petroleum Institute, reduced global oil demand from around 100 million barrels per day (prior to the pandemic) to about 30 million barrels a day. It is no wonder then, that such a stark and sudden loss of demand would reduce oil tankers to simple storage containers. Dozens of oil tankers lie-in-wait off the coast of California, as do many others in Asian and European ports. With 160 million barrels of oil stored in "supergiant" oil tankers, Goldman Sachs analysts, as of last month, forecast that global oil storage could already have hit its limit. Oil prices plunged to historic lows briefly turning negative. Natural gas is set to follow the same path as gas storage even before the pandemic was full because of the mild winter. Gas flows via pipelines have ground to a halt.

'Self-isolation' across the world turned swathes of the global economy idle and with little need for power. Take Germany. While the country's electricity grid coped well these past 'lockdown months', with an unusually high share of renewable power (mainly due to strong winds in April), low demand in neighbouring countries meant that Germany found itself in record negative power prices, as it could not export as much excess electricity from its renewable energy sources as it used to. Which, according to Dave Jones from Ember (a British climate think tank), could ultimately, translate into high costs for households and small businesses, as well as the instability of the whole electricity system. According to Hanna Koenig from the Aurora Energy Research consultancy, this outcome emphasises the need to make both conventional and renewable power generation more flexible to cope with the share of renewable energy that is set to rise in the coming years.

<https://www.world-nuclear-news.org/Articles/Viewpoint-Nuclears-stand-out-resilience-in-an-ener>

U.S. seeks to widen nuclear arms deal with Russia

Francois Murphy

Reuters, June 23, 2020

The United States wants to broaden its main nuclear arms control agreement with Russia to include all their atomic weapons, a U.S. envoy said on Tuesday after talks with Moscow on a new accord.

U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Arms Control Marshall Billingslea also said Washington would keep pressing China to join the talks on replacing the 2010 New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) which expires in February.

The two sides, who were rivals in the Cold War, agreed to set up technical working groups and to hold further talks, possibly in late July or early August, he said, but gave no details of the working groups. Washington wants Beijing involved because it says China is secretly racing to increase the size and reach of its nuclear arsenal, but Moscow favours a multilateral accord, possibly including France and Britain, Billingslea said.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-russia-nuclear/us-seeks-to-widen-nuclear-arms-deal-with-russia-idUSKBN23U18X>

Iran says it's ready for talks if U.S. apologises over nuclear pact

Reuters, June 24, 2020

Iran would be open to talks with the United States if Washington apologises for exiting a 2015 nuclear deal and compensates Tehran, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday, cautioning that U.S. calls for discussions were insincere. The confrontation between arch foes Tehran and Washington has worsened since 2018, when U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew from Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with major powers and reimposed sanctions that have crippled Iran's economy.

Iran has refused to hold any talks with the United States, which is trying to force Tehran to negotiate a new deal, unless Washington lifts sanctions on Tehran and returns to the original agreement. In a tweet in early June, Trump repeated Washington's call for a new deal with Tehran aimed at putting stricter limits on Tehran's nuclear work, curbs its ballistic missile program and ends its decades of regional proxy wars.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-usa-nuclear/iran-says-its-ready-for-talks-if-us-apologises-over-nuclear-pact-idUSKBN23V0WC>

U.S. seeks to widen nuclear arms deal with Russia

Francois Murphy

Reuters, June 23, 2020

The United States wants to broaden its main nuclear arms control agreement with Russia to include all their atomic weapons, a U.S. envoy said on Tuesday after talks with Moscow on a new accord. U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Arms Control Marshall Billingslea also said Washington would

keep pressing China to join the talks on replacing the 2010 New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) which expires in February. The two sides, who were rivals in the Cold War, agreed to set up technical working groups and to hold further talks, possibly in late July or early August, he said, but gave no details of the working groups.

Washington wants Beijing involved because it says China is secretly racing to increase the size and reach of its nuclear arsenal, but Moscow favours a multilateral accord, possibly including France and Britain, Billingslea said. “We, the United States, intend and believe ... that the next arms control agreement must cover all nuclear weapons, not just so-called strategic nuclear weapons,” he told a news conference in Vienna that followed the talks there on Monday. New START caps the countries’ deployed strategic nuclear weapons warheads at 1,550 each, far fewer than the thousands of atomic weapons they possess. Last year Washington withdrew from the 1987 Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF), with senior officials saying Moscow had deployed “multiple battalions” of a cruise missile throughout Russia in violation of the pact and that some had “the ability to strike critical European targets”. Russia denied that, saying the missile’s range puts it outside the treaty. A more comprehensive agreement would be intended to overcome such disputes and avoid further erosion of the global arms control architecture.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-russia-nuclear/u-s-seeks-to-widen-nuclear-arms-deal-with-russia-idUSKBN23U18X>

U.S. plans more nuclear arms talks with Russia, maybe in July or August

Reuters, June 23, 2020

Russia and the United States hope to meet for a second round of nuclear arms control talks in Vienna as soon as practicable, possibly in late July or early August, the U.S. envoy to those talks said on Tuesday, the day after the first round took place. U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Arms Control Marshall Billingslea told a news conference he and his Russian counterpart agreed to set up “multiple” technical working groups and a second meeting would depend on their progress.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/usa-russia-nuclear/u-s-plans-more-nuclear-arms-talks-with-russia-maybe-in-july-or-august-idUSV9N2BU00P>

U.S. warns Russia, China of U.N. isolation if Iran arms ban extension blocked

Michelle Nichols, Humeyra Pamuk

Reuters, June 24, 2020

Russia and China will be isolated at the United Nations if they continue down the “road to dystopia” by blocking a U.S. bid to extend a weapons ban on Iran, U.S. Iran envoy Brian Hook told Reuters ahead of his formal pitch of the embargo to the U.N. Security Council on Wednesday. The 13-year-old arms restrictions on Iran are due to expire in October under the terms of Tehran’s 2015 nuclear deal with world powers. Russia and China have signaled they oppose extending the embargo. While Washington has long argued that the embargo should not be lifted, the international community has been waiting for it to formally push the measure. Hook and U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Kelly Craft made the case for why the 15-member council should support a draft resolution extending the embargo behind closed doors on Wednesday. “We see a widening gap between Russia and China and the international community,” Hook said in an interview with Reuters on Tuesday evening. “Russia and China were isolated at the (International Atomic Energy Agency) last week and they will be isolated in the Security Council if they continue down this road to dystopia,” Hook said.

The IAEA’s 35-nation board of governors on Friday called on Iran to allow the U.N. nuclear watchdog access to two sites suspected of nuclear weapons activities, and to cooperate fully. Iranian allies Russia and China opposed that move but could not block it, whereas at the Security Council they have veto powers. A council resolution needs nine votes in favor and no vetoes by the United States, China, Russia, Britain or France to pass. “There is no possibility for its adoption,” said a Chinese diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity, after Hook and Craft briefed council envoys. “The U.S. draft resolution is in essence a continuation of the U.S. maximum pressure policy [on Iran] and it has no value or basis for discussion.”

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-usa-un-exclusive/exclusive-u-s-warns-russia-china-of-u-n-isolation-if-iran-arms-ban-extension-blocked-idUSKBN23V2HF>

US NRC to review application by Centrus for HALEU production

Nuclear Engineering, June 26, 2020

US-based Centrus Energy Corp announced that its application to produce High-Assay Low-Enriched Uranium (HALEU) at its Piketon, Ohio, facility had been accepted by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) for formal review. HALEU-based fuels will be required for most advanced reactor designs currently under development. They may also be utilised in next-generation fuels for existing reactors in the USA and globally.

“With support from the US Department of Energy (DOE), Centrus is proud to be leading the way in the development of a domestic source of HALEU that can meet a wide range of commercial, nonproliferation and other national security requirements,” said Centrus president and CEO Daniel B Poneman. “Providing an assured, domestic supply of HALEU will help restore US nuclear leadership internationally and is a prerequisite for the United States to play a major role in building and fuelling the world’s nuclear reactors and setting global standards for nuclear safety and nonproliferation.”

<https://www.neimagazine.com/news/newsus-nrc-to-review-application-by-centrus-for-haleu-production-7999209>

Amid Border Conflict with India; US Invites China to Arms Control Talks with Russia

Eurasia Times, June 27, 2020

Amid India-China border conflict, U.S. Special Presidential Envoy Marshall Billingslea will travel to Austria to discuss “mutually agreed topics related to the future of arms control” with Russian Deputy Foreign Sergei Ryabkov, the U.S. State Department said on Friday. “The United States has extended an open invitation to the People’s Republic of China to join these discussions, and has made clear the need for all three countries to pursue arms control negotiations in good faith,” the State Department said.

U.S. President Donald Trump has frequently called for China to join the US and Russia in talks on a nuclear arms control agreement to replace the 2010 New START accord. New START, which imposes the last remaining limits on U.S. and Russian deployments of strategic nuclear arms to no more than 1,550 each, expires in February. China, estimated to have about 300 nuclear weapons, has repeatedly rejected Trump’s proposal. Billingslea had said last week that he had agreed with Ryabkov on a time and place for the negotiations in June. Earlier, the US has said it would like to hear more from China about its border dispute with India. For the first time in recent years, China’s tensions with India are figuring in US calculus for the region.

<https://eurasiatimes.com/amid-border-conflict-with-india-us-invites-china-to-arms-control-talks-with-russia/>

Saudi, U.S. officials call for extending UN arms embargo on Iran

Marwa Rashad

Reuters, June 29, 2020

Saudi and U.S. officials on Monday urged the international community to extend a U.N. arms embargo on Iran, saying that letting the ban expire would allow Tehran to further arm its proxies and destabilise the region. The 13-year-old arms curbs on Iran are due to expire in October under the terms of Tehran’s 2015 nuclear deal with world powers. Russia and China have signalled they oppose extending the embargo. Both wield vetoes on the U.N. Security Council, which will decide the matter. “Despite the embargo, Iran seeks to provide weapons to terrorist groups, so what will happen if the embargo is lifted? Iran will become more ferocious and aggressive,” Saudi minister of state for foreign affairs Adel al-Jubeir told a joint news conference with U.S. Iran envoy Brian Hook in Riyadh. Jubeir said a shipment of Iranian weapons bound for Yemen’s Iran-aligned Houthi mo

vement was seized as recently as Sunday. A Saudi-led coalition has been battling the Houthis in Yemen for five years.

The conference venue displayed weapons, including drones and missiles, that Saudi authorities said were used in cross-border Houthi attacks on Saudi cities and that were supplied to the group by Tehran. “We urge the international community to extend the embargo on selling arms to Iran and on Iran’s ability to sell arms to the world,” Jubeir said. Iran denies arming groups in the Middle East, including the Houthis, and blames regional tensions on the United States and its allies in the region. Hook said lifting the ban would “only embolden” Tehran, drive greater instability and trigger a regional arms race. “This is not an outcome that the U.N. Security Council can accept. The council’s mandate is clear: to maintain international peace and security,” Hook added.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-saudi-usa/saudi-u-s-officials-call-for-extending-un-arms-embargo-on-iran-idUSKBN2401QS>

U.S.'s Pompeo to address U.N. Security Council on Tuesday on Iran arms embargo

Reuters, June 30, 2020

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo will address the United Nations Security Council on Tuesday on the expiration of a U.N. arms embargo on Iran, the U.S. State Department said. The United States is pushing the 15-member U.N. Security Council to indefinitely extend an arms embargo on Iran, which is currently set to end in October under Tehran’s 2015 nuclear deal with world powers. The U.N. Security Council will decide on the matter and veto-powers Russia and China have signaled they oppose reimposing the ban.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-usa-un/u-s-s-pompeo-to-address-u-n-security-council-on-tuesday-on-iran-arms-embargo-idUSKBN2402YZ>

Pompeo pushes Iran arms embargo at U.N., Russia says U.S. knee on Iran's neck

Michelle Nichols

Reuters, June 30, 2020

The United States has circulated a draft resolution to the 15-member council that would indefinitely extend the arms embargo on Tehran, but council veto-powers Russia and China have already signaled their opposition to the move. “Don’t just take it from the United States, listen to countries in the region. From Israel to the Gulf, countries in the Middle East – who are most exposed to Iran’s predations – are speaking with one voice: Extend the arms embargo,” Pompeo told a virtual Security Council meeting.

U.S. President Donald Trump's administration has long argued that the arms embargo on Iran should not be lifted. The arms embargo is set to end in mid-October under Tehran's 2015 nuclear deal with Britain, Germany, France, China, Russia and the administration of Trump's predecessor, Barack Obama. Since Trump took office in 2017, his administration has quit the nuclear deal and steadily ramped up sanctions on Iran in what Washington describes as a maximum-pressure approach.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-usa-un/pompeo-pushes-u-n-security-council-to-extend-arms-embargo-on-iran-idUSKBN2412TW>

Europe

Europeans push for Iran rebuke at nuclear watchdog over inspections

Reuters, June 16, 2020

Major European powers want to admonish Iran at the U.N. nuclear watchdog over its ongoing refusal to give access to inspectors at sites suspected of activities that may have been part of a nuclear weapons programme, a draft resolution showed. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has issued two reports this year rebuking Iran for failing to answer questions about nuclear activities almost two decades ago before its 2015 nuclear deal at three sites and for denying it access to two of them.

A draft resolution, seen by Reuters and dated June 10, put forward by Britain, France and Germany calls on Iran to cooperate fully and promptly with the IAEA. It asks Tehran to provide access to the locations specified and implement obligations under the Additional Protocol, referring to texts governing the IAEA's mission and activities. "The Europeans couldn't sit back and not do anything," a Western diplomat said. 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 Iran's previous activities. "If the three countries take such steps, Iran will have no other choice but to react accordingly," Iran's IAEA representative Kazem Gharibabadi was quoted as saying by the semi-official Fars news agency.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-nuclear-iaea/europeans-push-for-iran-rebuke-at-nuclear-watchdog-over-inspections-idUSKBN23N1DG>

France says working with partners to pressure Iran at IAEA on inspector access

Reuters, June 16, 2020

France said it was working with Britain and Germany to see the U.N.'s nuclear watchdog board of governors push Iran this week to cooperate fully and immediately to grant its inspectors access to sites Tehran has so far refused them to visit.

Iran, like any state to which the IAEA sends a request for access, must respond to it without delay and without conditions, to allow IAEA inspectors to establish the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities on its territory," Foreign ministry spokeswoman Agnes von der Muhll said in a daily online briefing. "This is essential for preserving the authority of the IAEA and the strength of its verification regime."

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-nuclear-iaea-france/france-says-working-with-partners-to-pressure-iran-at-iaea-on-inspector-access-idUSKBN23N30Q>

Polish and U.S. presidents to discuss nuclear energy

Reuters, June 18, 2020

Polish President Andrzej Duda said on Thursday that he would discuss cooperation with the United States on nuclear energy in talks with President Donald Trump in Washington next week. The visit, unexpectedly announced by the White House on Wednesday, takes place four days before Poland's presidential election on June 28. Duda, an ally of Poland's ruling nationalist Law and Justice (PiS) party, has been leading in opinion polls, although some surveys show he may not win the second round of the vote. "We will definitely talk about cooperation between Polish companies and Polish authorities, and companies and authorities from the United States over conventional nuclear energy and its use," Duda told a news conference.

Poland generates most of its electricity from coal, but aims to replace it with gas and nuclear energy in response to European Union calls to cut emissions. Warsaw has held talks with Washington on joint nuclear project for years, but no details have been agreed.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-poland-usa-energy/polish-and-u-s-presidents-to-discuss-nuclear-energy-idUSKBN23P2D2>

Britain, France, Germany would not back U.N. Iran sanctions snapback: statement

Reuters, June 19, 2020

Britain, France and Germany said on Friday they would not support U.S. efforts to trigger the reimposition of U.N. sanctions on Iran. "We firmly believe that any unilateral attempt to trigger U.N. sanctions snapback would have serious adverse consequences in the U.N. Security Council," the three foreign ministers said in a joint statement after meeting in Berlin to discuss Iran. "We would

not support such a decision, which would be incompatible with our current efforts to preserve the JCPOA (Iran nuclear deal).”

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-nuclear-europe/britain-france-germany-would-not-back-u-n-iran-sanctions-snapback-statement-idUSKBN23Q2OE>

France rules out further full nuclear plant closure after Fessenheim

Reuters, June 26, 2020

The French government ruled out any further full closure of nuclear power sites after the planned shutdown of two reactors at its Fessenheim plant in eastern France, the energy ministry sources said on Friday. French state-controlled utility EDF planned to close the second nuclear reactor of Fessenheim plant early next week as French government moves to reduce the share of atomic power in its electricity mix to 50% by 2035 from the more than 71% currently. The first reactor at Fessenheim halted production at the end of February.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/edf-fessenheim-shutdown/france-rules-out-further-full-nuclear-plant-closure-after-fessenheim-idUSL8N2E33QF>

Sensors detect rise in nuclear particles on Baltic Sea, global body says

Reuters, June 27, 2020

Radiation sensors in Stockholm have detected higher-than-usual but still harmless levels of isotopes produced by nuclear fission, probably from somewhere on or near the Baltic Sea, a body running a worldwide network of the sensors said on Friday. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) oversees a network of hundreds of monitoring stations that use seismic, hydroacoustic and other technology to check for a nuclear weapon test anywhere in the world. That technology can, however, be put to other uses as well.

One of its stations scanning the air for radionuclides - telltale radioactive particles that can be carried long distances by the wind - detected unusually high levels of three radionuclides earlier this week: caesium-134, caesium-137 and ruthenium-103. The Stockholm monitoring station "detected 3 isotopes; Cs-134, Cs-137 & Ru-103 associated w/Nuclear fission @ higher[] than usual levels (but not harmful for human health)", CTBTO chief Lassina Zerbo said on Twitter

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-nuclear-particles-baltic/sensors-detect-rise-in-nuclear-particles-on-baltic-sea-global-body-says-idUSKBN23X2TN>

Hungary to apply for nuclear plant expansion licence on Tuesday

Reuters, June 29, 2020

Hungary will on Tuesday submit licensing paperwork to the state atomic agency to expand its sole nuclear power plant and fast-track the first phase of its construction, the earth works at the reactor site, the government said. Hungary is planning to double the capacity of its 2-gigawatt Paks nuclear power plant with two Russian-made VVER reactors. The project, awarded in 2014 without a tender to Russian state nuclear giant Rosatom, is often cited as a sign of the exceptionally warm ties between Hungarian premier Viktor Orban and Russian President Vladimir Putin, a connection that has unnerved Western allies.

Budapest has requested and received European Union approval for the fast-track process which will allow it to start construction at the site in January 2021, Minister Janos Suli, who is in charge of the expansion, told parliament. In response to a question from an opposition lawmaker, he denied sweetening the process for Russia. "This is not in the Russian interest, it is (in our) mutual interest, because there is a significant interest in mitigating or correcting the delay we suffered by bringing forward the earth work," he said. Suli, who attributes delays at the project to the wait for EU approval, said the Hungarian Atomic Energy Agency (HAEA) will receive the documentation. Three months into its review of that paperwork, Hungary will submit a separate licensing package for the construction of the reactor hole and the surrounding walls.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-hungary-nuclearpower/hungary-to-apply-for-nuclear-plant-expansion-licence-on-tuesday-idUSKBN2401MY>

UK regulator receives application for new Sizewell nuclear reactors

Reuters, June 30, 2020

Britain's nuclear regulator said on Tuesday it had received an application for a licence to build two nuclear reactors at Sizewell in Suffolk county, north of London, from EDF Energy subsidiary NNB Generation Company. The Sizewell C plant will be an almost identical copy of Hinkley Point C, which is being built in Somerset, in Britain's southwest, and would generate enough power for 6 million homes.

Britain's planning inspectorate accepted a application last week for Sizewell C that will be examined over 15 to 18 months. EDF Energy, part of EDF, said a nuclear site licence examination, which would run concurrently to the planning application, would take a similar amount of time. Shane Turner at the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) said the regulator was satisfied that the planning application was complete but "there is still a lot of work to do, and we do not expect to reach a

decision until at least the end of 2021.” He said the site licence required separate regulatory permission from the ONR.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/britain-nuclear-sizewell/uk-regulator-receives-application-for-new-sizewell-nuclear-reactors-idUSL8N2E75VW>

Pro-nuclear energy protesters rally against Greenpeace in Paris

Reuters, June 30, 2020

A group of pro-nuclear protesters demonstrated against the closure of a major reactor in France on Monday - taking their rally to the Paris headquarters of Greenpeace, the activists known for their eye-catching campaigns in favour of shutdowns. The protest comes as state-controlled utility EDF plans to shut down the second and last ageing nuclear reactor of its Fessenheim plant near the German border overnight. The French government is working to reduce the share of atomic power in its electricity mix to 50% by 2035 from the more than 71% currently, as well as to promote more renewable energy, sparking an intense debate.

Advocates of nuclear power say it is essential to providing sufficient quantities of carbon-free energy to balance intermittent renewable sources, such as wind and solar. Opponents say it is not carbon-free over its entire life-cycle. Several dozen protesters - wearing face masks - carried banners in front of the Greenpeace headquarters in Paris, with slogans such as “Less nuclear means more coal”.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-nuclear-protest/pro-nuclear-energy-protesters-rally-against-greenpeace-in-paris-idUSKBN2402QNn>

EDF, other firms launch new nuclear plans for UK Cumbria site

Susanna Twidale

Reuters, June 30, 2020

Fifteen companies and trade unions, including French nuclear giant EDF and several engineering firms, on Tuesday launched proposals for a clean energy hub to be built at Cumbria in northwest England, including a new large nuclear plant. Japan’s Toshiba Corp was originally expected to build a nuclear plant at the Moorside site, but its plans collapsed in 2018 after the company’s nuclear unit Westinghouse filed for bankruptcy the year before. Britain last year set a target to reach net zero emissions by 2050, which will require a huge increase in low-carbon electricity such as wind, solar and nuclear.

The Moorside Clean Energy Hub group said the proposals include a 3.2 gigawatt EPR nuclear power plant, the same technology and size as the Hinkley Point C plant EDF is currently building with China's CGN, which is expected to provide around 7% of UK electricity supply. The hub is also looking at other nuclear technology such as small modular reactors, and said nuclear plants could be linked with renewables, storage and hydrogen production facilities to create a clean energy hub for the north west. "The Hub hopes to capitalize on the region's existing nuclear supply chain and could boost orders for hundreds of companies and create thousands of jobs," the group said in a statement. The hub is being promoted by its members and will eventually be majority owned by institutional investors, the statement said.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/britain-nuclear/edf-other-firms-launch-new-nuclear-plans-for-uk-cumbria-site-idUSL8N2E73KN>

Russia

U.S. scrambles jets to escort Russian nuclear-capable bombers near its border: RIA

Reuters, June 17, 2020

The United States scrambled fighter jets to escort four Russian nuclear-capable Tupolev Tu-95MS strategic bombers as they carried out a planned flight near the U.S. border, the RIA news agency cited the Russian Defence Ministry as saying. The Russian aircraft carried out an 11-hour flight over neutral waters of the Chukotsk, Bering and Okhotsk Seas as well as the northern part of the Pacific Ocean, the ministry was quoted.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-usa-bombers/u-s-scrambles-jets-to-escort-russian-nuclear-capable-bombers-near-its-border-ria-idUSKBN23O17N>

Rosatom, Framatome, GE team up for Bulgarian nuclear tender

Reuters, June 18, 2020

Russia's state nuclear company Rosatom said on Thursday it has teamed up with France's Framatome and GE Steam Power from the United States to bid in a tender to build Bulgaria's Belene nuclear power plant project. The Balkan country had to delay the tender process for the 10-billion-euros nuclear project because of coronavirus restrictions. Bulgarian Energy Minister Temenuzhka Petkova told the parliament on Thursday that the teaming up of the three companies was a clear sign that the tender would be very competitive and the project viable.

Sofia has revived the Belene project, in the north of the country, to make use of two nuclear reactors it bought for more than 620 million euros from Rosatom in compensation for scrapping an original project in 2012. The plan is for the project to be operational in 10 years.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/bulgaria-nuclear-rosatom/update-1-rosatom-framatome-ge-team-up-for-bulgarian-nuclear-tender-idUSL8N2DV1KJ>

Russia says it's unrealistic for China to join U.S.-Russo arms talks: Ifax

Reuters, June 23, 2020

Russia said on Tuesday it was unrealistic to expect China to join arms controls talks being held between Moscow and Washington, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov was reported as saying by the Interfax news agency. The United States has long called on Beijing to join such talks. Ryabkov was speaking a day after he met the U.S. special presidential envoy for arms control in Vienna. The two men discussed global security issues, and a possible extension of the START nuclear arms control treaty in particular, the Russian Foreign Ministry said.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-usa-missiles-treaty-china/russia-says-its-unrealistic-for-china-to-join-u-s-russo-arms-talks-ifax-idUSKBN23U1AA>

Russia denies nuclear incident after international body detects isotopes

Anastasia Teterevleva, Anna Ringstrom

Reuters, June 29, 2020

Russia said on Monday it had detected no sign of a radiation emergency, after an international body reported last week that sensors in Stockholm had picked up unusually high levels of radioactive isotopes produced by nuclear fission. The Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), which monitors the world for evidence of nuclear weapons tests, said last week one of its stations scanning the air for radioactive particles had found unusual, although harmless, levels of caesium-134, caesium-137 and ruthenium-103.

The isotopes were “certainly nuclear fission products, most likely from a civil source”, it said. It tweeted a map showing where the material was likely to have originated, which included parts of several Baltic and Scandinavian countries as well as a swathe of western Russia. Asked on Monday about reports that Russia could have been the source of a leak, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said: “We have an absolutely advanced radiation levels safety monitoring system and there are no any emergency alarms.” “We do not know the source of this information.” The International Atomic Energy Agency asked member states over the weekend whether they had detected the isotopes, and

“if any event may have been associated with this”. The IAEA said in a statement here that roughly 30 countries - including Finland, Sweden, Norway, the Baltic states, Britain, France and Germany - had informed it "that there were no events on their territories that may have caused the observed air concentrations". Russia was not one of them.

Finnish nuclear safety authority STUK said on Monday it had also found tiny amounts of nuclear particles in samples collected on its southern coast. But the concentrations were small enough that they could have been “derived from the normal operation or maintenance of nuclear reactors”, it said. Radiation protection expert Jan Johansson at the Swedish Radiation Safety Authority said the variations were extremely low and had no impact on radiation protection. “What stands out here is the combination of these substances. That’s not something we usually see,” he told Reuters. The TASS news agency, citing Rosenergoatom, a unit of the state nuclear company Rosatom, said over the weekend that Russia’s two northwest nuclear power plants, in Leningrad and Kola, were working normally and radiation levels were unchanged.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-nuclear-particles-baltic-russia/russia-denies-nuclear-incident-after-international-body-detects-isotopes-idUSKBN24015K>

Russia accuses U.S. of 'destructive' stance on nuclear-test ban treaty

Reuters, June 30, 2020

Russia’s foreign ministry accused the United States on Tuesday of taking a “destructive” stance over the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and of preparing for a possible resumption of nuclear testing. Moscow, which ratified the CTBT 20 years ago on Tuesday, said the non-proliferation and arms control regime was facing serious challenges and urged Washington to reconsider its position. It said the situation around the CTBT was “seriously deteriorating”. “Russia is calling on ... above all the United States to reconsider its position and ‘give the green light’ to transform this most important agreement from the point of view of global security into a fully functioning international legal instrument,” the foreign ministry said in a statement.

The United States has denied Russian accusations in the past that it intended to quit the CTBT on the pretext that Moscow was violating it first. Washington, which formally withdrew from the landmark Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty in August 2019, has signed but not ratified the CTBT, along with seven other countries. It complies with the treaty’s prohibition on nuclear explosions by observing a unilateral moratorium on testing, which U.S. President Donald Trump’s administration has said will continue.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-usa-nuclear/russia-accuses-u-s-of-destructive-stance-on-nuclear-test-ban-treaty-idUSKBN2411JD>

Russia tells IAEA it is incident-free after nuclear particle increase

Reuters, June 30, 2020

Russia has told the U.N. atomic watchdog there have been no nuclear incidents on its territory that could explain elevated but still harmless levels of radioactive particles detected on the Baltic Sea last week, the U.N. agency said on Tuesday. A separate body, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), which watches for nuclear weapon tests, said on Friday a monitoring station in Sweden had found higher-than-usual levels of caesium-134, caesium-137 and ruthenium-103. The CTBTO said they were produced by nuclear fission. CTBTO chief Lassina Zerbo posted a borderless map here online showing where the particles might have come from in the 72 hours before they were detected - an area covering the tips of Denmark and Norway as well as southern Sweden, much of Finland, Baltic countries and part of western Russia including St. Petersburg. All those countries except Denmark, which has no nuclear power plants here and Russia, which has a history of not fully explaining incidents that emitted radioactive particles, told the International Atomic Energy Agency by Monday that there were no events on their territory that could explain the increase.

However, the IAEA issued a statement here saying the list of countries that had declared themselves incident-free had grown to around 40 and now included Denmark and Russia. "Apart from Estonia, Finland and Sweden, none of the other countries which have so far provided information and data to the IAEA said they had detected elevated radioisotope levels," said the IAEA, which asked member states for information over the weekend after the CTBTO announcement. If Russia was the origin of the elevated particle levels, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Moscow had detected no sign of a radiation emergency.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-nuclear-particles-baltic-russia/russia-tells-iaea-it-is-incident-free-after-nuclear-particle-increase-idUSKBN2413L2>

West Asia

Iran

Iran says it successfully tests new naval cruise missile

Reuters, June 18, 2020

Iran said on Thursday its navy had successfully fired a new locally made cruise missile during war games in the northern Indian Ocean and near the entrance to the Gulf. The test-firing comes as the United States is seeking an extension of a U.N.-imposed arms embargo against Iran, which is due to expire in October under Tehran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers. Washington withdrew from that pact.

“During the exercises, short-range and long-range coast-to-sea and sea-to-sea missiles were successfully fired from the coast and from decks of ships, hitting their targets with great precision,” the semi-official Tasnim news agency reported. The new generation cruise missiles, with a range of 280 km (175 miles) were tested during exercises by the Iranian navy in the Gulf of Oman, which lies next to the Strait of Hormuz waterway at the mouth of the Gulf, and the northern Indian Ocean, Tasnim said. In April, Iran said it had increased the range of its naval missiles to 700 km. Western military analysts say Iran often exaggerates its weapons capabilities but concerns about its long-range ballistic missiles programme contributed to the U.S. decision to leave Iran’s 2015 deal to rein in its nuclear ambitions in exchange for an easing of economic sanctions.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-missiles-test/iran-says-it-successfully-tests-new-naval-cruise-missile-idUSKBN23P188>

Iran foreign minister: An 'agreeable solution' possible for IAEA inspection request

Reuters, June 19, 2020

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif tweeted on Thursday that “an agreeable solution is possible” for the U.N. nuclear watchdog’s request for access to two nuclear sites in the country. France, Britain and Germany, all parties to Iran’s nuclear deal with major powers, have submitted a draft resolution to the International Atomic Energy Agency’s Board of Governors calling on Iran to stop denying the agency access to two old sites and to cooperate fully with it, diplomats taking part in an IAEA virtual meeting said.

“BoG should not allow JCPOA enemies to jeopardize Iran’s supreme interests. E3 should not be an accessory, after failing own JCPOA duties,” Zarif tweeted. “We’ve nothing to hide. More inspections in Iran over last 5 yrs than in IAEA history. An agreeable solution is possible, but Res will ruin it.” The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA, is the official name of Iran’s multilateral nuclear deal. If the IAEA resolution is passed, it would raise pressure on Iran to let inspectors into the two sites where the IAEA suspects activities potentially related to developing nuclear weapons were carried out in the early 2000s, long before the deal.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-nuclear-zarif/iran-foreign-minister-an-agreeable-solution-possible-for-iaea-inspection-request-idUSKBN23P3HI>

U.N. nuclear watchdog's board raises pressure on Iran over suspect sites

Reuters, June 19, 2020

The U.N. nuclear watchdog's 35-nation Board of Governors called on Iran on Friday to stop denying the agency access to two suspected former sites and to cooperate fully with it, diplomats attending the meeting said. A resolution, adopted in a vote called after China expressed opposition to it, raised pressure on Iran to let inspectors into the sites mentioned in two International Atomic Energy Agency reports because they could still host undeclared nuclear material or traces of it.

The text of the resolution submitted by France, Britain and Germany and obtained by Reuters said the board "calls on Iran to fully cooperate with the Agency and satisfy the Agency's requests without any further delay, including by providing prompt access to the locations specified by the Agency."

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-nuclear-iaea/u-n-nuclear-watchdogs-board-raises-pressure-on-iran-over-suspect-sites-idUSKBN23Q1DQ>

Iran slams U.N. nuclear watchdog resolution, says it worked with body

Reuters, June 20, 2020

Iran's Foreign Ministry on Friday blasted a resolution by the U.N. nuclear watchdog IAEA, saying Tehran has cooperated with the body, in a statement by state media. "While Iran has the highest level of cooperation with the IAEA, the issuance of a resolution by the Board of Governors is a completely unconstructive and disappointing step," ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said in the statement. The U.N. nuclear watchdog's 35-nation Board of Governors called on Iran in the resolution earlier on Friday to stop denying the agency access to two suspected former sites and to cooperate fully with it, diplomats attending the meeting said.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-nuclear-iaea-statement/iran-slams-u-n-nuclear-watchdog-resolution-says-it-worked-with-body-idUSKBN23Q320>

France, Germany, UK 'accessories' to Trump, Netanyahu, Iran's Zarif says

Reuters, June 20, 2020

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Friday accused France, Germany and Britain of serving Iran's arch-foes the United States and Israel by drafting a nuclear resolution against Tehran. "Behind (the) facade, E3 are accessories to (U.S. President Donald) Trump & (Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin) Netanyahu—and in no position to counsel Iran," Zarif tweeted. The U.N. nuclear watchdog's 35-nation Board of Governors called on Iran in the resolution earlier on Friday to stop denying the agency access to two suspected former nuclear sites and to cooperate fully with it, diplomats attending the meeting said.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-nuclear-iaea-zarif/france-germany-uk-accessories-to-trump-netanyahu-irans-zarif-says-idUSKBN23Q34D>

America's demand for talks is a lie, says Iran president

Reuters, June 23, 2020

June America's demand for talks with Iran is a lie, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on Tuesday, in comments broadcast live on state TV. "They say 'we are ready to negotiate'. They're saying something strange. What does 'we're ready to negotiate' mean? Who left the negotiating table? Who broke the negotiating table? Who set the negotiating room on fire? It was them," Rouhani said. "So this is a lie on top of a lie every day."

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-usa-rouhani/americas-demand-for-talks-is-a-lie-says-iran-president-idUSKBN23U2CK>

Inside Iran's secret project to produce aluminium powder for missiles

Bozorgmehr Sharafedin, Pratima Desai

Reuters, June 24, 2020

At the edge of the desert in North Khorasan province in northeast Iran, near the country's largest deposit of bauxite, sits an aluminium production complex that the government has publicly hailed as a key part of its efforts to boost output of the metal. But the site near the city of Jajarm is also home to a secret facility set up by Iran's elite security force, the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, that has been producing aluminium powder for use in its missile programme, according to a former Iranian government official and documents relating to the facility he shared with Reuters. Aluminium powder, derived from bauxite, is a key ingredient in solid-fuel propellants used to launch missiles.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-missiles-programme-specialreport/special-report-inside-irans-secret-project-to-produce-aluminium-powder-for-missiles-idUSKBN23V1K1>

Iran says it's ready for talks if U.S. apologises over nuclear pact

Reuters, June 24, 2020

Iran would be open to talks with the United States if Washington apologises for exiting a 2015 nuclear deal and compensates Tehran, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday,

cautioning that U.S. calls for discussions were insincere. The confrontation between arch foes Tehran and Washington has worsened since 2018, when U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew from Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with major powers and reimposed sanctions that have crippled Iran's economy.

Iran has refused to hold any talks with the United States, which is trying to force Tehran to negotiate a new deal, unless Washington lifts sanctions on Tehran and returns to the original agreement. In a tweet in early June, Trump repeated Washington's call for a new deal with Tehran aimed at putting stricter limits on Tehran's nuclear work, curbs its ballistic missile program and ends its decades of regional proxy wars. "We have no problem with talks with the U.S., but only if Washington fulfils its obligations under the nuclear deal, apologies and compensates Tehran for its withdrawal from the 2015 deal," Rouhani said in a televised speech. "But we know these calls for talks with Tehran are just words and lies," he added.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-usa-nuclear/iran-says-its-ready-for-talks-if-u-s-apologises-over-nuclear-pact-idUSKBN23V0WC>

East Asia

Japan

Japan to consider strike capability to replace missile defence system

Tim Kelly

Reuters, June 25, 2020

Japan is to consider the acquisition of weapons able to strike enemy missile launchers to bolster defence against North Korea after a decision to cancel the Aegis Ashore missile defence system, the defence minister said. Any first-strike capability would represent a fundamental shift in Japan's military posture that could raise the concern of neighbours. The United States, Japan's main ally, has also had reservations about it gaining an independent strike capability. The minister, Taro Kono, reignited debate this month over whether Japan should get the capability to strike enemy bases to stop North Korean ballistic missiles attacks and counter a perceived growing threat from China when he suspended deployment of two Aegis Ashore installations.

"I don't think we are excluding any option before discussions," Taro Kono told a news conference when asked whether a strike capability would be on the agenda of the National Security Council when it considers options. Kono's surprise decision to cancel the Aegis Ashore system came after concern about its cost and the possibility of spent booster rockets falling into populated areas. But even before Japan picked the missile-defence system in 2018, ruling party lawmakers had agreed that attacking missile bases did not contravene Japan's war-renouncing constitution because doing so would be an act of defence. That conclusion prompted a decision to buy 1,000-km (621 mile) range air-launched cruise missiles that could hit North Korea from over the Sea of Japan. But it would be

difficult to use such missiles to hit mobile launchers without satellite targeting capability, which Japan does not have, experts say.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-japan-defence-kono/japan-to-consider-strike-capability-to-replace-missile-defence-system-idUSKBN23W10Y>

Hitachi says it has no plans to sell British nuclear project to China

Reuters, June 28, 2020

Japanese conglomerate Hitachi Ltd said on Sunday it has no plans to sell a stalled British nuclear power project to China. The group's statement followed a report in Britain's Sunday Times newspaper that U.S. President Donald Trump's administration has warned Hitachi not to sell its nuclear site in Anglesey, Wales, to China. "We are not aware of any plans to sell the project to China," Hitachi said.

China's General Nuclear Power Corporation (CGN) is keen to buy the site as part of plans to build a fleet of nuclear reactors, the report said. Hitachi last year froze the 3 trillion yen (\$28 billion) Anglesey project and booked a writedown of 300 billion yen on its British nuclear unit, as the project failed to find private investors. Sources at the time said Hitachi had called on the British government to boost financial support for the project to appease investor anxiety, but turmoil over the UK's exit from the European Union limited the government's capacity to compile plans.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/hitachi-nuclear/hitachi-says-it-has-no-plans-to-sell-british-nuclear-project-to-china-idUSL3N2E50A2>

North Korea

North Korea suspends military action plans against South Korea

Josh Smith

Reuters, June 24, 2020

North Korea is suspending military action plans against South Korea, the official KCNA news agency reported on Wednesday, as a report from Seoul suggested North Korean troops were taking down loudspeakers reinstalled at the fortified border. Political tensions between the rival Koreas had been rising over Pyongyang's objections to plans by defector-led groups in the South to send propaganda leaflets into the North. Stalled negotiations regarding economic sanctions imposed because of the North's nuclear weapons programme had also fuelled tensions.

It was not immediately clear why North Korea had softened its position, which came after it blew up a liaison office last week and cut off communication hotlines with the South. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un presided over a video conference meeting of the ruling party's Central Military Commission on Tuesday, where members "took stock of the prevailing situation" before deciding to suspend the military plans, KCNA said, without elaborating. The committee also discussed documents outlining measures for "further bolstering the war deterrent of the country," KCNA reported. KCNA issued another statement by Kim Yong Chol, a senior Pyongyang official, criticising the South Korean defence minister's remarks to parliament that the North's actions must be withdrawn, not suspended. Kim called the comment "foolish and inappropriate", warning Seoul should "think and behave wisely" not create a greater crisis. South Korea's Yonhap news agency, citing unnamed military sources, said North Korea's military was seen removing about 10 loudspeakers near the demilitarised zone (DMZ) on Wednesday, just days after they were seen reinstalling around 20 of the devices.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-southkorea-kim/north-korea-suspends-military-action-plans-against-south-korea-idUSKBN23U3CU>

Threats and stalemate one year after Trump last met North Korea's Kim

Reuters, June 26, 2020

Nearly one year after U.S. President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un last met, North Korea has returned to conducting short-range missile tests and issuing harsh rhetoric, while Washington shows little interest in easing sanctions. The two leaders' last meeting - at the Demilitarised Zone between the two Koreas - did little to break the deadlock in denuclearisation talks. This has led to bouts of increased tension, though Trump - who once derided Kim as "Little Rocket Man" - has largely downplayed Pyongyang's actions.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-usa-anniversary-dmz-fileti/timeline-threats-and-stalemate-one-year-after-trump-last-met-north-koreas-kim-idUSKBN23X06A>

South Korea

S.Korea's nuclear envoy visits U.S. amid flaring tension with North

Hyonhee Shin

Reuters, June 18, 2020

South Korea's chief nuclear negotiator will visit officials in Washington on Thursday amid flaring tensions with North Korea after Pyongyang blew up an inter-Korean liaison office and threatened military action. Lee Do-hoon's unannounced trip came days after North Korea blew up a joint liaison office in Kaesong, near the South Korean border, declared an end to dialogue with the South and said it would return troops to border areas, counter to a 2018 peace agreement between the two countries' leaders.

Lee is expected to hold consultations with U.S. officials, including Deputy Secretary of State Stephen Biegun who had led denuclearisation negotiations with North Korea, South Korean media reported. He is also expected to meet White House National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien. South Korea's Foreign Ministry declined to comment. South Korea's presidential press secretary said Lee's trip had been planned for a long time, dismissing media reports that he was visiting as a special envoy.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/northkorea-southkorea/s-koreas-nuclear-envoy-visits-u-s-amid-flaring-tension-with-north-idUSL4N2DV064>

Misc/World

Discord thwarts U.N. nuclear watchdog's plans for virtual Iran meeting

Reuters, June 18, 2020

Opposition led by China to a planned resolution rebuking Iran at the U.N. nuclear watchdog's 35-nation board has forced it to call an in-person session after four days of meeting online because of the coronavirus, diplomats said on Thursday. France, Britain and Germany, all parties to Iran's nuclear deal with major powers, have submitted a draft resolution to the International Atomic Energy Agency's Board of Governors calling on Iran to stop denying the agency access to two old sites and to cooperate fully with it, diplomats taking part in the virtual meeting said.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-nuclear-iaea/discord-thwarts-u-n-nuclear-watchdogs-plans-for-virtual-iran-meeting-idUSKBN23P3AF>

Canada, USA build critical minerals cooperation

World Nuclear Nuclear, May 23, 2020

Shawn Tupper, associate deputy minister for Natural Resources Canada, and Cynthia Kierscht, US deputy assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening the supply chain for materials deemed essential to both countries' security and economic growth at the Second Bi-lateral Critical Minerals Working Group meeting, which was held

by videoconference. The two countries discussed the effects of the COVID-19 global pandemic on the mining sector and explored opportunities to collaborate on securing access to the critical minerals needed for key manufacturing sectors such as communication technology, aerospace, defence and clean technology, Canadian Minister of Natural Resources Seamus O'Regan said after the meeting.

"Both of our economies are better off when we work together. By advancing this Joint Action Plan, we are joining forces to secure access to the critical minerals - including uranium, rare earth elements and those needed for next generation batteries - that can play a key role in our economic recovery post COVID-19," O'Regan said. "These efforts will not only boost our competitiveness in global markets and create jobs for Canadians; they will also help to develop cleaner technologies to reach our net-zero targets."

<https://www.world-nuclear-news.org/Articles/Canada-USA-build-critical-minerals-cooperation>

Lithuania spurns Baltic presidents' meeting amid nuclear power rift

Reuters, June 25, 2020

Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda refused to attend a planned meeting with his Estonian and Latvian counterparts on Thursday, saying he did so after the countries failed to agree to ban electricity purchases from a new nuclear power plant in Belarus. Lithuania sees the nuclear power plant, built by Russia's Atomstroyexport near its capital and financed by Moscow with a \$10 billion loan, as threat to its safety and national security, something Belarus disagrees with. "The President's opinion is that negotiations should be finished first," Nausėda's spokesman told Reuters in a statement. Lithuania has a law banning all Belarusian power sales after the power plant gets operational.

The Estonian president's office, which hosted the meeting, said that Nausėda, who is dealing with a reshuffle of his team, "decided to stay home at the last minute due to internal affairs". Lithuania wants all the three countries to sign up to banning sales of Belarusian electricity after the nuclear plant comes online, binning an earlier draft agreement that only pledged to help keep the energy from being sold in Lithuania. The presidents of Estonia and Latvia said they still backed the preliminary agreement. "We leave it to our governments to continue the discussions on exact wordings if it needs to be adjusted", Estonia's Kersti Kaljulaid told reporters. Belarus expects to have the first of two 1.2 gigawatt VVER 1200 reactors online in July and supply first power in the autumn, according to state news agency Belta.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-baltics-energy-belarus/lithuania-spurns-baltic-presidents-meeting-amid-nuclear-power-rift-idUSKBN23W27C>

Op-ed

India

Realignments in US-Russia nuclear agreements refocus attention on India's nuclear doctrine

Prashant Khurana

Scroll, June 25, 2020

Since taking office in 2017, US President Donald Trump's chaotic stint has heralded some of the most substantive changes in geopolitics since 9/11. From Israel to North Korea, his polarising decisions will shape global events long after his term concludes. However, when historians write about his presidency, special attention will be paid to nuclear arms control. On this front, Trump has presided over a return to the 1960s, as virtually all bilateral nuclear arms control agreements between Russia and the US have lapsed.

Unshackled from qualitative and quantitative caps on their nuclear programmes, the two countries are goading each other into an arms race that is likely to affect every major military power. The watershed came in February 2019 when the Regan-era Intermediate Nuclear Forces treaty signed in 1987 – which restricted the deployment of nuclear missiles with a maximum reach of 5,500 km by the two nations – was allowed to lapse. Beginning in 2014, as Russia developed intermediate range nuclear missiles, an ambivalent White House instead of holding Russia to account, demanded that a renewed Intermediate Nuclear Forces treaty should also include China – effectively sealing its fate.

<https://scroll.in/article/965602/realignments-in-us-russia-nuclear-agreements-refocus-attention-on-indias-nuclear-doctrine>

China

'Fake news': China dismisses Indian media reports it lost 40 soldiers in border fighting

Keegan Elmer and Liu Zhen

South China Morning Post, June 23, 2020

Beijing has dismissed Indian media reports that at least 40 Chinese soldiers were killed in last week's border conflict, even as the two countries work to defuse tensions after their worst fighting for decades. China's foreign ministry on Tuesday described the reports as "fake news". "I can tell you responsibly that it is false information," ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said.

Despite the rebuttal, Zhao said senior security officers from the two sides met in the border region on Monday for a "frank and in-depth" exchange of views and had agreed to take steps to improve the situation. "The meeting indicated that China and India are willing to appropriately handle the disputes through dialogue, manage the situations and lower tensions," he said. "We also agreed to continue the dialogue and work together to promote peace and stability in the border areas."

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3090315/fake-news-china-dismisses-indianmedia-reports-it-lost-40>

Maintaining peace along China-India border requires common effort : Defense Spokesperson

China Military Online, June 24, 2020

For the recent China-India border tensions, India should severely punish those who are accountable for the clash on the evening of June 15, and work with China together to maintain the peace in border region, said Senior Colonel Wu Qian, a spokesperson for the Ministry of National Defense (MND) of the People's Republic of China (PRC), at a regular press conference on June 24. For the current situation in the border region between China and India, Wu stressed that China has sovereignty over the Galwan Valley region and the Chinese border troops have been patrolling and on duty in this region for many years. He introduced that since April this year, the Indian border troops have begun to unilaterally built facilities along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Galwan Valley region, regarding which China has lodged representations and oppositions for many Times.

http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2020-06/24/content_9840819.htm

Prepare for India border row to escalate, Chinese strategists warn Beijing

Catherine Wong

South China Morning Post, June 27, 2020

Hawkish Chinese military strategists have called on Beijing to be better prepared for an escalation in its border dispute with India, saying the potential for armed conflict between the two nuclear powers is on the rise. Tensions between Beijing and New Delhi have grown since deadly clashes two weeks ago in the Galwan Valley between Indian-controlled Ladakh and Chinese-controlled Aksai Chin. The Indian Army said 20 of its soldiers were killed in hand-to-hand combat with Chinese soldiers. Both countries have accused each other of causing the skirmish and of breaking promises. A number of retired members of the Chinese military are calling for Beijing to prepare for further escalation, including granting its frontline troops more power to respond to an “intrusion” by Indian forces and deploying non-lethal hi-tech weapons such as laser guns along the border. Qiao Liang, a retired air force major general and military theorist, said that while the possibility of an all-out war between the two countries remained low, China needed to prepare for an escalation into an armed conflict. “We should not overestimate India’s response, but we must also not let our guard down,” Qiao said in an article posted on his WeChat account.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3090855/prepare-india-border-row-escalate-Chinese-strategists-warn>

USA

Did Donald Trump Miss His Chance At a Better Iran Deal?

Matthew Petti

National Interest blog, June 23, 2020

Iran “has concluded that negotiation with [the] Trump administration, under the current circumstances, is totally 'unproductive,’” Iranian state media reported on Tuesday. President Donald Trump came so close to meeting with Iranian foreign minister Javad Zarif last year that former National Security Advisor John Bolton was going to resign, according to Bolton’s upcoming book.

Trump’s stated goal has been to get a “better deal” than the JCPOA, a 2015 agreement between Iran and six world powers signed by President Barack Obama. But after three years of missed opportunities, the United States and Iran are further from diplomacy than ever before.

<https://nationalinterest.org/blog/skeptics/did-donald-trump-miss-his-chance-better-iran-deal-163353>

West Asia

Iran

Tehran says won’t let nuclear inspections based on enemy’s claims

Tehran Times, June 19, 2020

Kazem Gharibabadi, Iran's ambassador to the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), says Iran would not open its territory to nuclear inspections induced by continuous allegations of its enemy. “No country opens its territory to the inspections only based on continuous allegations provided by its own enemy, even if it is evident that the result of which will prove those allegations to be false,” Gharibabadi said on Thursday during a speech before the IAEA Board of Governors on a recent report of the IAEA director-general.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/448964/Tehran-says-won-t-let-nuclear-inspections-based-on-enemy-s-claims>

Iran says to take proper action to IAEA resolution

Tehran Times, June 19, 2020

Kazem Gharibabadi, Iran’s ambassador to the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency, said on Friday that Iran will take appropriate action in response to a move taken by the International Atomic Energy Agency’s Board of Governors in adopting an anti-Iran resolution. Russia and China, who voted against the resolution, also issued separate statements reprimanding the move. Russia called it “counterproductive” and China said it has “huge implications on the prospect of the

JCPOA”. The 35-member IAEA board passed the resolution on Friday, demanding access to two old places they claim nuclear work may have been done.

France, Britain, and Germany, the three European parties to the 2015 nuclear deal, submitted the draft resolution to the IAEA board on Thursday. The board failed to approve the resolution on Thursday due to opposition by Iran and China. However, the resolution was ratified on Friday despite Russia and China’s opposition. Ambassador Gharibabadi said, “Iran categorically deplores this resolution and will take appropriate action in response, the repercussions of which would be upon the sponsors of this resolution.”

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/448988/Iran-says-to-take-proper-action-to-IAEA-resolution>

Reopening an open letter by Ayatollah Khamenei

M.A. saki

Tehran Times, June 21, 2020

Richard Falk, a professor emeritus of international law at Princeton University, says letters by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei to the youth in the West five years ago suggest “prophetic character” in view of daily protests in the West led by youth against racial injustice and state violence. In an exclusive interview with the Tehran Times, Richard Falk, who also served as UN Special Rapporteur on Palestinian human rights, says “the unusual focus on the role of youth” in Ayatollah Khamenei’s letters “is particularly striking and instructive”. The Leader’s addresses to the youth are known as “Letter 4 You” or “Letter for You”.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/449039/Reopening-an-open-letter-by-Ayatollah-Khamenei>

Tehran voices concern over French ballistic missile test

Tehran Times, June 21, 2020

Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi has voiced concern over France’s recent testing of a ballistic missile capable of carrying several nuclear warheads, saying it runs counter to France’s commitment to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). In a statement on Saturday, Mousavi said the French Navy’s launch of a new generation of intercontinental ballistic missiles capable of carrying several nuclear warheads (dubbed M51 missile) was totally in contravention of the spirit and the text of Article VI of the NPT and of France’s commitment to nuclear disarmament, the Foreign Ministry website reported.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran’s government expresses concern about such measure, believes that the French government must not ignore its international commitments under the Article VI of the NPT and declaration of the NPT Review Conferences, and calls on Paris to fully honor its international commitments to nuclear disarmament,” the spokesman said. He finally railed against development of nuclear weapons as a threat to international peace and security, noting that renovation and testing of

such weapons would undermine the NPT as the cornerstone of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/449047/Tehran-voices-concern-over-French-ballistic-missile-test>

Iran will not forget China's stance on IAEA resolution: diplomat

Tehran Times, June 23, 2020

Tehran's Ambassador to China, Mohammad Keshavarzzadeh, has said that Iran will not forget China's stance on a resolution by the International Atomic Energy Agency's Board of Governors. "China wants the United States to return to the JCPOA [the 2015 nuclear deal] and the UNSC resolution. The recent stance of China on resolution of the agency [the IAEA] was firm and memorable. We will not forget that," he tweeted on Monday. He also posted a tweet by a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman who said, "E3 Foreign Ministers released a joint statement on Iran and upholding JCPOA commitments. Having quit JCPOA, the US has no right to ask the UNSC to trigger sanctions snapback. We urge the US to return to JCPOA and the UNSC resolution."

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian has said that Beijing does not support a resolution by the IAEA which just increases tension. In a press conference, Zhao urged the IAEA to act unbiasedly, IRNA reported on Monday. The IAEA is expected to adopt a professional position and support Iran's peaceful nuclear activities, he noted. The 35-member IAEA board passed the resolution on Friday, demanding access to two old places they claim nuclear work may have been done there. Nine countries out of 35 members of the board did not vote for the resolution. China and Russia voted against the resolution and Thailand, Mongolia, Niger, South Africa, India, Pakistan and the Republic of Azerbaijan abstained to vote. Iran's new parliament has issued a statement strongly condemning the resolution, asking the government to stop implementing the Additional Protocol to the NPT.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/449171/Iran-will-not-forget-China-s-stance-on-IAEA-resolution-diplomat>

Iran, China agree to deepen strategic ties, Zarif says

Tehran Times, June 24, 2020

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif announced on Wednesday that he held talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi through a videoconference, saying they agreed to deepen their strategic ties. "We reached an agreement on deepening of comprehensive strategic cooperation between the two countries, promoting of bilateral 25-year cooperation plan and supporting each other in international issues," he said in a tweet in Chinese language. He added, "The two sides reiterated their support for Iran's nuclear deal, multilateralism and international law and opposed practicing unilateralism and weakening Iran's nuclear agreement." Government spokesman Ali Rabiei said on

Tuesday that Iran and China have drafted a 25-year plan for comprehensive cooperation which proves failure of the plots to isolate the Islamic Republic.

“This plan proves failure of the United States’ policies to isolate Iran, sever Iran’s relations with the international community and also to harm Iran’s will to expand relations with other countries,” Rabiei said during a press conference. He said that the 25-year plan is based on a win-win approach which “heralds long term cooperation”.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/449212/Iran-China-agree-to-deepen-strategic-ties-Zarif-says>

Iran says France is undermining NPT

Tehran Times, June 26, 2020

Kazem Gharibabadi, Iran’s ambassador to the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency, has urged the United States and France to comply with their commitments in safeguarding the purposes and objectives of the disarmament treaties, saying France is undermining the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Gharibabadi made the remarks in a statement read before the 54th Session of the Preparatory Commission (CTBTO) on Thursday.

The Islamic Republic of Iran wishes to reiterate its long standing and principled position on the need for the total elimination of all nuclear weapons. In this regard, we reaffirm our strong support for the objectives of the CTBT, the principal cause of which is to terminate the development and qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons and ending the development of advanced new types of nuclear weapons. Most regrettably, more than two decades after the Treaty’s adoption, achieving this objective has become ever more elusive. “In fact, modernization and testing nuclear weapons undermine the NPT as the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime as well as threaten the international peace and security.” Unfortunately the international community recently witnessed a destructive approach towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation Treaties by some of Nuclear States. In fact, modernization and testing nuclear weapons undermine the NPT as the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime as well as threaten the international peace and security. As the latest instance, launching a new generation of intercontinental ballistic missiles capable of carrying several nuclear warheads (M51) by a French submarine on 12 June 2020 is incompatible with France's international obligations.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/449257/Iran-says-France-is-undermining-NPT>

Envoy highlights U.S. failure in anti-Iran bid

Tehran Times, June 26, 2020

Majid Takht-Ravanchi, Iran’s ambassador to the United Nations, indicates that the U.S. has failed to garner support for its anti-Iran resolution at the UN Security Council. “Yesterday, US briefed #UNSC on the extension of arms embargo on Iran and called for Council's unity,” Takht-Ravanchi

tweeted on Thursday. It came a day after the U.S. briefed the UN Security Council on a resolution, which called for a 2015 arms embargo against Iran to be extended. The U.S. resolution claimed that lifting the arms embargo could have “major implications” for security and stability of the Middle East region, urging the UN body to “prohibit the supply, sale or transfer, direct or indirect ... of weapons and related materials” to Iran. The United States has stepped up calls for the extension of a UN arms embargo on Iran since April.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/449251/Envoy-highlights-U-S-failure-in-anti-Iran-bid>

E3 believes U.S. has no legal right to trigger UN sanctions snapback: Iran’s diplomat

Tehran Times, June 30, 2020

Iran’s Ambassador to London Hamid Baeidinejad has said that France, Germany and the United Kingdom, known as E3, believe that the United States has no legal right to trigger a so-called snapback of all UN sanctions on Iran. “[U.S. Secretary of State Mike] Pompeo has repeatedly threatened to trigger snapback mechanism if the [UN] Security Council does not support arms embargo on Iran. The three European countries believe that the United States has no legal right to take such action,” he tweeted on Monday. Britain, France and Germany, three countries party to the nuclear deal, said on June 19 they would not back U.S. efforts to unilaterally trigger the reimposition of United Nations sanctions on Iran, but said they wanted talks with Tehran over its decision to remove cap on its nuclear program.

“We firmly believe that any unilateral attempt to trigger UN sanctions snapback would have serious adverse consequences in the UN Security Council,” the foreign ministers of the three European countries said in a statement. “We would not support such a decision, which would be incompatible with our current efforts to preserve the JCPOA (the Iran nuclear deal),” they said after discussing Iran in Berlin. “We remain committed to the JCPOA and, in order to preserve it, urge Iran to reverse all measures inconsistent with the agreement and return to full compliance without delay,” they said, according to Reuters.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/449441/E3-believes-U-S-has-no-legal-right-to-trigger-UN-sanctions-snapback>

East Asia

Coming together to save NPT right now

Tuya Nyamosor

Korea Times, June 16, 2020

These days the world is consumed by worry and concern related to the global COVID-19 outbreak. In due time, one would wish to see a more encouraging outcome than the one recorded with relation

to that other threat to human life and the security of nations which is nuclear weapons. As it stands, on the 75 years of their existence nuclear weapons continue to pose the ultimate threat to the world, and the treaty-based responses devised over the years to curb and eliminate that threat are falling victim to great power competition. If and when the pandemic is fully overcome, the world emerging from it will have witnessed a paradigm shift whereby the Sino-U.S. rivalry will be shaping the debate and structuring politics and economics.

This future fight shapes up to be more about achieving and expanding one's technological superiority including military modernization as an instrument of power and less about attaining ideological domination. Regardless of whether the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) gets to be extended or is allowed to expire, the grand Russo-U.S. arms control measures, a fixture of the past several decades of disarmament, will probably become a thing of the past — until a realization comes, amid or after a period of volatility, that to avert a terrible catastrophe new bargains involving and accommodating multiple actors and addressing a complexity of challenges need to be negotiated. As positions have clearly hardened over recent months, the immediate post-COVID-19 environment will likely be less amenable to strategic dialogue of whatever shape and form between and among nuclear-weapon states.

And it will remain such until a new generation of policymakers and thinkers enters the stage and, with their fresh minds, takes a long and hard look at the terms of the debate and comes up with novel ideas on strategy and peace. As of today, however, in the face of the fundamentally changed policy tenor in Washington, Moscow and now in Beijing, every effort should be made to preserve the global non-proliferation and disarmament regime enshrined in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). International cooperation and civil society engagement in these areas should not be overwhelmed by major power rivalry. Otherwise it will be an all-bets-are-off world with increased risks of a nuclear war. How such a war can be "limited employment" and what "winning" it involves is anyone's guess.

http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/opinion/2020/06/137_290534.html

North Korea 'has 30-40 nuclear warheads with 10 added last year

Park Si-soo

Korea Times, June 16, 2020

North Korea continues to expand its nuclear arsenal with 30-40 nuclear warheads in stock, says a Sweden-based research institute in its annual paper published. The North added 10 warheads to its nuclear weapon capacity in 2019 alone, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). It noted that the figures were "approximate" because the reclusive state didn't share details of its military power. Established in 1966, SIPRI is an independent institute dedicated to research into international security, armaments, arms control and disarmament. "North Korea continues to prioritize its military nuclear program as a central element of its national security strategy," SIPRI wrote in the paper.

Meanwhile, SIPRI said the nine nuclear-armed states — the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea — together possessed an estimated 13,400 nuclear weapons at the start of 2020. This marked a small decrease from 13,865 a year earlier, SIPRI estimated. Around 3,720 of the nuclear weapons were deployed with operational forces and nearly 1,800 were in a state of high operational alert, it said.

http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2020/06/103_291278.html

It's all about sanctions

John Burton

Korea Times, June 22, 2020

The theatrical destruction by North Korea of the inter-Korean liaison office in Gaeseong last week carries a clear message: Pyongyang is frustrated about its apparent inability to get the international sanctions regime against it eased. The crisis has been building for some time. To understand why, it is useful to briefly review the history of the sanctions policy. Although the U.S. has been applying unilateral sanctions against North Korea for decades, it was only in 2006 that the United Nations began applying international sanctions in response to North Korea's first nuclear test.

The U.N. sanctions initially applied to technology and materials that could be used to support the North's nuclear program. But as Pyongyang continued to pursue the development of nuclear weapons, new U.N. sanctions were added. By 2016, these expanded sanctions were aimed at not only the North's military sector, but also the civilian economy. A key turning point came in 2017 during the height of tensions caused by an accelerated series of nuclear and missile tests by the North. The U.N. approved measures proposed by the U.S. to severely limit imports by North Korea of crude oil and refined petroleum products as well as many types of machinery. The new sanctions threatened to devastate the North's already fragile agricultural sector since the banned energy products were needed to produce necessary products such as fertilizers. This increased the prospects of growing hunger when the North already could not feed about a third of its 25 million people. The pressure tactics, however, appeared to work. North Korean leader Kim Jong-un offered an olive branch at the start of 2018 that led to summits with President Moon Jae-in and U.S. President Donald Trump that year.

http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/opinion/2020/06/137_291618.html

Think Tank

Why, in nuclear weapons policy, sometimes fewer options are better

Erik Gartzke

Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, June 18, 2020

Size matters when it comes to nuclear weapons. Normally, big, powerful nations like big, powerful things, and few things are bigger or more powerful than nuclear weapons. But today the United States wants to go small. Is this a good thing? The Trump administration's 2018 Nuclear Posture Review calls for increasing the number of "low-yield" (what used to be called "tactical") nuclear weapons in the US arsenal. Such weapons have an explosive output that is roughly 200 times smaller than that of the largest US nuclear weapons, but still on par with the bombs that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Proponents claim that they offer increased flexibility and are necessary to address challenges from Russia.

Having more flexibility sounds like a good idea, but things are seldom as they appear when it comes to nuclear weapons. There are a number of arguments that critics have already raised that highlight possible drawbacks of the new low-yield weapon in the US nuclear arsenal. But there is another significant problem that has received scant attention in discussions among pundits and policy makers. Giving America's leaders a greater range of nuclear options through low-yield weapons actually signals a lack of resolve, weakening the nation's ability to stand toe-to-toe with adversaries, especially in light of US advantages in other domains. Simply copying Russia's nuclear force structure in this way ignores the contrasting interests and vulnerabilities each nation faces in attempting to wield influence in world affairs.

<https://thebulletin.org/2020/06/why-in-nuclear-weapons-policy-sometimes-fewer-options-are-better/>

The questionable future of amphibious assault

Michael E. O'Hanlon

Brookings, June 23, 2020

General Berger has been the nation's top Marine, and a member of the joint chiefs of staff, since 2019. Last summer, he issued planning guidance that suggested strongly that the Marine Corps should move away from building so many large amphibious ships, citing their vulnerability to precision-guided weapons. However, that proposal will not necessarily carry the day; Congress gets to write defense appropriations bills, and ultimately all President Trump can do is either sign or veto. But it was still probably the single most interesting new idea in last year's defense debate, building on the earlier overall national defense strategy of Secretary of Defense James Mattis to revitalize the nation's attention to deterrence of great-power conflict in this high-technology era — a strategy that Secretary Mark Esper has subsequently said he will continue to seek to implement.

<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/06/23/the-questionable-future-of-amphibious-assault/>

Iran's Illicit Arms Transfers Do Not Justify U.S. Snapback

Julia Masterson

Arms Control Association, June 26, 2020

A new report authored by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres details evidence of Iran's likely violation of the arms-related and ballistic missile transfer-related provisions of Security Council

resolution 2231 (2015). Resolution 2231 endorses and helps implement the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran, formally called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which the United States withdrew from in May 2018, and modifies UN sanctions on Iran.

As the Trump Administration bids to strengthen its maximum pressure campaign against Iran, it will likely use the Secretary-General's report as further justification for extending the resolution's arms-related provisions. To do so, the United States may attempt to exercise a clause of the resolution to unilaterally reimpose all Security Council sanctions, including the arms embargo, onto Iran indefinitely. While the possible violations described in the report are concerning, they are not grounds for the United States to act alone to prevent the embargo's expiration. Doing so without multilateral support could collapse the deal altogether and trigger a nuclear crisis that the region can ill afford.

<https://www.armscontrol.org/blog/2020-06-26/iran-illicit-arms-transfers-not-justify-us-snapback>

America should welcome a discussion about NATO's nuclear strategy

Jon B. Wolfsthal

Brookings, June 29, 2020

NATO members should not unilaterally reinterpret or adjust alliance obligations, and discussions about such policy changes are better had in private among member states. Being in an effective and enduring alliance means that all countries must be part of a decision-making process and sometimes make compromises in the interests of collective security. Russian actions continue to challenge the NATO alliance, and all allies must contribute to the defense of the alliance with the goal of deterring Russian destabilization efforts and preserving stability. It is critical that America's commitment to Europe be enhanced and that European and North American allies have a robust multi-spectrum approach to defend against and deter efforts by Russia to splinter or threaten the alliance.

It lacks explicit consideration about the real security and opportunity costs of maintaining the nuclear status quo in Europe, both overall and as it directly relates to the areas of agreement listed above. There is little confidence in any NATO capital that forward-deployed NATO nuclear capabilities can be depended upon in a military conflict with Russia. It is for this reason that NATO continually cites the strategic nuclear capabilities of member states as the ultimate guarantee of NATO's nuclear deterrent. Given the military realities, there is real reason for NATO members in general and the United States in particular to be open to a NATO discussion about the future of nuclear sharing and the possibility of withdrawing US nuclear assets from Europe.

Nuclear risks. The continued deployment of US nuclear weapons in Europe poses security risks. Over the past few years, protesters and even elements of state security have compromised the security of bases where US nuclear weapons are reportedly stationed in multiple NATO countries. While risks to forward deployed nuclear weapons can be mitigated, they cannot be eliminated unless the weapons themselves are eliminated. And perhaps when NATO faced what the alliance was convinced was massive conventional inferiority, these security risks outweighed by the benefits forward-based nuclear weapons provided. This is not the case today; the alliance has options for

countering Russian aggression—including nuclear options—that do not require forward-based nuclear weapons, and the nature of the threat to NATO is much different now. That’s to say, there is no overriding military requirement for US nuclear weapons in Europe—they are political symbols. They are important symbols, but not irreplaceable, and the risks of maintaining forward-deployed assets and nuclear sharing need to be considered in terms of their physical security and their role in providing or reducing stability in the region, and in regard to the signal those nuclear weapons send about our own confidence in NATO’s conventional capabilities.

<https://thebulletin.org/2020/06/america-should-welcome-a-discussion-about-natos-nuclear-strategy/>

Why Europe needs to push back to save the Iran nuclear deal

Azadeh Zamirad, Oliver Meier, Sascha Lohmann

Brookings, June 30, 2020

As Germany is assuming the double presidencies of the UN Security Council and the Council of the European Union in July, it is facing an uphill battle to ensure that the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, colloquially known as the Iran nuclear agreement, will have a life beyond its fifth anniversary on July 14. Two years ago, the Trump administration ceased its participation in the agreement and reimposed unilateral sanctions as part of a strategy of “maximum pressure.” As that policy has failed to yield the desired results, Washington now seems ready to dismantle the nuclear agreement once and for all by misusing a UN-designated procedure enshrined in the very same nuclear agreement that it left in 2018. Germany and its European partners should openly resist the Trump administration’s strong-arm tactics. This provides the best chance to keep the Iran deal alive, protect the legitimacy of the UN Security Council, and prevent another nuclear proliferation crisis.

In a remarkable political stunt, the US State Department announced in April that the United States is still a “participant state” of the nuclear agreement. Washington claims to have the same rights as the remaining parties—the permanent UN Security Council members plus Germany—without assuming any of the responsibilities the accord places upon them. By this twisted logic, the US would have the authority to unilaterally trigger a “snapback” mechanism, through which all previous nuclear-related UN resolutions and sanctions against Iran would be reinstated.

<https://thebulletin.org/2020/06/why-europe-needs-to-push-back-to-save-the-iran-nuclear-deal/>

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