

# VERIFIED REDUCTION OF NON-STRATEGIC NUCLEAR WEAPONS

**Anatoly S. Diakov<sup>1</sup>**

U.S. Senate ratification of the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty gave new impetus to discussions on the inclusion of non-strategic nuclear weapons (NSNW) into the US-Russia negotiating agenda. In the Senate's approval resolution of the New Treaty a point was introduced calling the president to undertake efforts to include NSNW in the negotiating agenda with Russia no later than one year after the entry into force of the New START Treaty.<sup>2</sup> Statements of the U.S. officials show that Washington is getting ready for consultations with the Russian side on this issue.<sup>3</sup> However, the Statements by lower house of the Russian parliament accompanying the Federal law on ratification as well as statements by Russian officials indicate that Moscow has no intention to negotiate NSNWs, or at least its position on this issue has not yet been formed.<sup>4</sup>

For this type of nuclear weapons there are different definitions in the publications: tactical nuclear weapons, sub-strategic nuclear weapons, short-range nuclear weapons. In this paper, the term NSNW refers to nuclear weapons of the United States and Russian Federation intended to equip those nuclear weapon delivery means, which are not covered by U.S.-Russian nuclear arms control agreements. Accordingly, the combination of such delivery means and related nuclear weapons is to be called non-strategic nuclear arms.

While NSNWs is not covered by arms control agreements, the unilateral and reciprocal initiatives adopted by Presidents Bush and Gorbachev in 1991 (Presidential Nuclear Initiatives) led to a significant (by a factor of several times) reduction of the U.S. and Russia's NSNW stockpiles in comparison with the levels possessed

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<sup>1</sup> Director, Center for Arms Control, Energy and Environmental Studies at the Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology.

<sup>2</sup> Resolution of Senate of the United States, December 22, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Arms Talks Now Turn to Short-Range Weapons by Peter Baker, New York Times, December 24, 2010; The Honorable Rose E. Gottemoeller, Assistant Secretary of State for Arms Control, Verification and Compliance, Opening Statement to the Conference on Disarmament, Geneva, Switzerland, January 27, 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Закон РФ «О ратификации Договора между Российской Федерацией и Соединенными Штатами Америки о мерах по дальнейшему сокращению и ограничению стратегических наступательных вооружений», принят Государственной Думой 25 января 2011 года; Михаил Маргелов, интервью радио «Эхо Москвы», 24 декабря 2010; Remarks and Response to Questions by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov at Press Conference on 2010 Foreign Policy Outcomes at MFA, January 13, 2011.

by the U.S. and Soviet Union in 1991. However, the Presidential Nuclear Initiatives on NSNW are not legally binding, and reductions were carried out by each party on a voluntary basis, without application of bilateral transparency and verification measures.

The United States and Russia have never declared their NSNW warheads holdings. According to estimates of non-governmental experts, the U.S. currently has about 500 warheads in the active arsenal, of which about 200 warheads deployed on the territory of several European countries (Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Turkey). During the Cold War the principal mission of U.S. nuclear weapons stationed in Europe was to provide European allies with nuclear assurance and extended nuclear deterrence before the threat of use of overwhelming conventional forces of the USSR and its allies. With the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, this mission of the U.S. NSNW in Europe has lost its significance. Given this, a number of European countries (Germany, Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg and Norway) made attempts to raise the issue of withdrawal of U.S. nuclear weapons from Europe.<sup>5</sup> However, this initiative did not receive adequate support and, in accordance with the new strategic concept approved by NATO at the summit in Lisbon on 19-21 November 2010, the Alliance remains nuclear and U.S. nuclear weapons remain in Europe.<sup>6</sup>

According to the Russian officials, the number of Russia's NSNW currently is no more than 25% of what it was in 1991.<sup>7</sup> Unofficial estimates of the Russia's NSNW arsenal appearing in various publications vary from 2000 to 5000 warheads, but most of authoritative experts agree that Russia's active NSNW stockpile currently contains about 2,000 warheads.<sup>8</sup> According to official information, all Russian NSNW were removed from delivery means and concentrated at central storage facilities located within the national territory with adequate measures of safety and security ensured.<sup>9</sup>

The U.S. principal interest in negotiations on NSNW is linked to the numerical superiority of Russia in this type of nuclear weapons over the United States, which is also worrisome for the European allies. The necessity of dealing with this imbalance is stated in the official U.S. documents like the final report of the Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture (Perry-Schlesinger Report) and the

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<sup>5</sup> WikiLeaks: Heated debate in Germany over nuclear weapons on its soil from David de Sola, CNN, December 01, 2010, [http://articles.cnn.com/2010-12-01/world/europe.wikileaks.nukes\\_1\\_nuclear-weapons-hans-kristensen-short-range-weapons/2?\\_s=PM:WORLD](http://articles.cnn.com/2010-12-01/world/europe.wikileaks.nukes_1_nuclear-weapons-hans-kristensen-short-range-weapons/2?_s=PM:WORLD)

<sup>6</sup> Oliver Meir, "NATO revises nuclear policy", Arms Control Today, December 2010, [http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2010\\_12/NATO\\_Nuclear](http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2010_12/NATO_Nuclear)

<sup>7</sup> С.В. Лавров, Новый Договор о СНВ в матрице глобальной безопасности. Политическое измерение, *Международная жизнь*, №7, июль 2010 г.

<sup>8</sup> SIPRI Yearbook 2010. Armaments, Disarmament and International Security. NY.: Oxford University Press.

<sup>9</sup> Выступление делегации Российской Федерации на первой сессии Подготовительного комитета Конференции 2005 года по рассмотрению действия ДНЯО по статье VI Договора 11 апреля, 2002 года, Нью-Йорк, [www.mid.ru](http://www.mid.ru)

new U.S. Nuclear Posture Review.<sup>10</sup> Both documents, pointing out the need to address NSNW in future negotiations on nuclear weapons, note that the United States need to pursue significant numerical reduction of the Russian NSNW.<sup>11</sup> The relevant recommendation of the Perry-Schlesinger Report provided the basis for the U.S. Senate Republican Policy Committee to require the administration to include the NSNW into the negotiating agenda, as early as at the stage of negotiating of the New START treaty.<sup>12</sup>

Sometimes, non-governmental experts and some officials express concerns about safety of Russian NSNW. They use such concerns as a pretext for their inclusion into the agenda of negotiations by assuming possibility that the weapons might be lost or stolen and fall into terrorist hands. It seems that such allegations are groundless and are of speculative nature.

The recent Russian military doctrine, adopted on February 5, 2010, does not provide any specific information about the mission and role for NSNW. But many Russian experts believe that Russia's reliance on nuclear weapons, and especially on its non-strategic component, increases for reasons related to its geo-strategic and economic situation. Russia has to take into account that its territory is within the range of nuclear weapons of other nuclear weapon states located along the perimeter of its territory. Approaching of the NATO military structure to its borders, taking into account technological and numeric superiority of alliance's conventional forces is another factor that is kept in mind by the Russian political and military leadership.<sup>13</sup> In this context, Moscow is considering NSNW as a means to compensate the weakness of Russia's conventional forces. It plays a vital role in ensuring national security, giving Russia an opportunity to complete military reform and to ensure the transformation of its conventional forces to the condition corresponding to modern requirements.

The current Russia's approach to establishing control over non-strategic nuclear weapons has been shaped by the following factors.

First, the U.S. nuclear arms remaining in Europe are seen by Moscow as actually strategic, since they are capable of covering a significant part of Russian territory and threaten the security of its strategic assets. Given NATO's eastward expansion this factor is particularly strengthened. For this reason, consolidation of NSNW

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<sup>10</sup> America's Strategic Posture, the Final report of the Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States, United States Institute of Peace Press, Washington DC, 2009, [http://www.usip.org/files/America's\\_Strategic\\_Posture\\_Auth\\_Ed.pdf](http://www.usip.org/files/America's_Strategic_Posture_Auth_Ed.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Among others key NPR recommendations include: "Address non-strategic nuclear weapons, together with the non-deployed nuclear weapons of both sides, in any post-New START negotiations with Russia", Nuclear Posture Review Report, April 2010, Department of Defense, USA, Washington, DC, 2010.

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Senate Republican Policy Committee, September 30, 2009, <http://rpc.senate.gov>

<sup>13</sup> Генерал Макаров: Тактическое ядерное оружие России – это фактор сдерживания громадных вооружений, накопившихся в Европе, *ИТАР-ТАСС*, 10 декабря 2008 г; Алексей Арбатов, «Тактическое ядерное оружие – проблемы и решения», ВПК, №17 (333), 5 мая 2010 г., <http://www.vpk-news.ru/17-333/geopolitics/takticheskoe-jadernoe-oruzhie-problemy-i-resheniya>

within national territories is considered by Moscow as a precondition for any discussions on the issue of NSNW.<sup>14</sup> For the U.S. and its NATO allies this is equivalent to requiring withdrawal of US nuclear weapons from Europe.

Second, in Moscow's view, taking into account roles and missions of NSNWs, they cannot be considered in isolation from other types of arms, including conventional arms, and numerical disparities. In this context, Moscow believes that possible further measures on non-strategic nuclear weapons, including the development of transparency measures, can be considered only with the assessment of general military-strategic situation and the factors that directly affect the maintenance of the balance of power in the world, including nuclear weapon of the other states.

Third, Moscow reasonably believes that in possible future negotiations on this type of nuclear weapons Washington is unlikely to abandon the principle of parity. Therefore, the U.S. will insist on equal numbers of NSNWs for both sides, and current numerical superiority on NSNW maintained by Russia in addressing its security concerns might become a problem.

Given these factors, as well as a chill perception by the West of the idea of the new European security system proposed by Russia, and the recent decision by NATO to preserve the U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe, one can conclude that Moscow has no motivation to start negotiations on NSNW.

Realizing this, Washington, in order to attract the interest of Moscow, has proposed to include in the negotiating agenda non-deployed warheads of strategic delivery means.<sup>15</sup> As it is well known at the insistence of Washington the new START Treaty counts only "deployed" warheads, i.e. only warheads that are actually deployed on ICBMs and SLBMs. Warheads downloaded from the strategic delivery means and placed in storage are not counted and controlled under the Treaty. The United States possess more than two thousand non-deployed strategic warheads, much more than Russia does. This inventory of the U.S non-deployed warheads has always been regarded by Russian experts as a "breakout potential", which gives the U.S. a significant advantage, because in case of need the U.S. is capable to place these warheads back on to ICBMs and SLBMs relatively quickly. Apparently Washington believes that the inclusion in the agenda of non-deployed strategic warheads provides the way for the NSNW, which are currently also "non-deployed" and placed into storage facilities, to be included as well.

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<sup>14</sup> Remarks and Response to Questions by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov at Press Conference on 2010 Foreign Policy Outcomes at MFA, January 13, 2011.

<sup>15</sup> Office of the Press Secretary, The White House, "Remarks by President Obama and President Medvedev of Russia at New START Treaty Signing Ceremony and Press Conference," April 8, 2010, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-obama-and-president-medvedev-russia-new-start-treaty-signing-cere>; Nuclear Posture Review, <http://www.pentagon.afic.osd.mil/>; The Honorable Rose E. Gottemoeller, Assistant Secretary of State for Arms Control, Verification and Compliance, Opening Statement to the Conference on Disarmament, Geneva, Switzerland, January 27, 2011.

However such “package” of negotiations may not present an interest for Russia for both political and technical reasons. The political reasons were mentioned above and among them the recent NATO decision on the continued presence of U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe and Alliance’s skepticism to the Russian proposal for a new security system in Europe.

The technical reasons are linked to the fact that control over NSNWs as well as non-deployed strategic warheads means application of the transparency and verifications measures over nuclear warheads themselves. As it is known, verification measures in the Russian-American agreements on nuclear arms reduction are mainly applied to the delivery means: intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarine launched ballistic missiles and strategic bombers. National technical means of verification, as well as various types of on-site inspections are used for this purpose. However, the use of national technical means to monitor weapons held in storage is not possible. Verification can be implemented with sufficient confidence only through inspection of delivery means, the warheads storage facilities and facilities for their production (dismantling). But the use of the inspection mechanism over nuclear warheads is prevented by the fact that their design, manufacturing, transportation, storage and maintenance are among the most closely guarded secrets in all nuclear weapon states. Also taken into account should be the asymmetry of the Russian and U.S. NSNW arsenals and nuclear weapons production complexes. Thus, today, neither Russia nor the U.S. is ready to introduce such measures due to their extreme sensitivity. The development and implementation of control and verification measures over nuclear weapons is an extremely difficult task. It is evident that its solution will require significant efforts of specialists of both countries, as well as establishing a sufficiently high level of confidence between the two countries.

Therefore, taking into consideration the general attitude of Moscow to negotiations on NSNWs and recognizing that control of this type of weapons should include verification measures over nuclear warheads, implementation of which is an extremely difficult task, it is unlikely that negotiations will begin in the near future.

Under such circumstances the coordinated unilateral actions look like more preferable actions leading to the establishment of a control regime over NSNWs, even though as mentioned above such actions have many drawbacks. In the first place, these unilateral initiatives could be primarily aimed at the introduction and development of transparency measures among Russia, the U.S. and NATO. It is essential to stress that if Russia introduces transparency into its NSNW policy, this could undercut the justification for maintaining US NSNW deployments in Europe. Simultaneously, it would serve to demonstrate the renunciation of Cold War concepts and would reaffirm Russia’s wish to become a full-fledged member of the community of European states.

Transparency measures could be implemented in two phases. First, all U.S. and Russian NSNW arsenals could be divided into two categories. The first category

would include those NSNW warheads, which stay in storage but can be deployed in case of need (active arsenal). The second category could include warheads whose lifespan is over and which are to be eliminated.

**It the first stage**, Russia, the United States and NATO could:

- share information about the total number of NSNW warheads eliminated since 1992 to present;
- share information about the number of nuclear warheads on different types of associated delivery systems, which were completely eliminated in accordance with the unilateral commitments in 1991 (e.g. land mines and artillery shells);
- annually share information on the total number of warheads in active arsenal and their storage locations. The sides should make commitments that warheads of this category will stay only in the declared storage sites;
- declare that they have no plans to transfer warheads from the second (to-be-eliminated) category to the first category (active arsenal);
- exchange information on the principles of nuclear planning.

This exchange of information could be implemented on the basis of confidentiality, in accordance with national legislation of each side.

Another initiative that could significantly facilitate establishing a verification regime over NSNWs would be unilateral commitments of Russia and the United States not to conduct research, development and manufacture of new types of NSNW warheads.

**At the second stage** the sides could:

- exchange information on the number of NSNW warheads associated with each type of delivery systems;
- permit visits to the facilities where active NSNW warheads are stored. The purpose of these visits would be to confirm that the number of warheads at the visited sites do not exceed the declared number;
- provide evidence of the elimination of the second category of warheads;
- permit visits to the second category warhead storage facilities after all warheads kept in these storage facilities have been eliminated.

Obviously, the implementation of this stage will require an agreement on the protection of sensitive information, which the sides will be providing each other (for example location of storage).

In parallel with the implementation of the above initiatives, Russian and US experts could work jointly on the development of technical means and procedures for nuclear warhead verification. It should be noted that Russian and the U.S. specialists already carried out such joint work in the mid 90's with the task to develop verification method for nuclear weapons and their elimination while protecting sensitive information. The joint work in this direction would contribute to build-

ing trust and creating technical basis for reaching the Russian-U.S. agreement on control of nuclear warheads. If an agreement on control of nuclear warheads is reached, the sides would have means of verification and procedures for their implementation which could guarantee protection of "sensitive" information regarding design of warheads, while simultaneously providing high enough confidence of the control.

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