

## **Little Progress on ABM, START at Moscow Summit; Putin Proposes Joint Anti-Missile 'Umbrella'**

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As Clinton administration officials expected, Russia rebuffed U.S. entreaties at the June 3-5 Moscow summit to amend the 1972 ABM Treaty to permit the United States to deploy its proposed limited national missile defense (NMD). As an alternative, Moscow proposed putting an "umbrella" over potential missile threats, but Washington said that such a plan could only supplement, not replace, a U.S. NMD system. In addition to building upon two secondary arms control agreements (see p. 28), Presidents Bill Clinton and Vladimir Putin issued a compromise "Joint Statement on Principles of Strategic Stability," committing the two sides to further intensify discussions on ABM issues in parallel with talks on future strategic reductions.

Aiming to protect all 50 states from a limited attack by or accidental launch of strategic ballistic missiles, the Clinton administration is currently developing a land-based missile defense system for deployment by 2005. The proposed system would violate the ABM Treaty, which prohibits strategic missile defenses capable of protecting a country's entire territory or the base for such a defense. Not wanting to abrogate the treaty, Clinton has sought negotiations with Russia to modify the accord to allow the planned U.S. system, but Moscow has staunchly refused every effort.

Putin proved no more receptive to U.S. missile defense plans during the summit with Clinton, the first between the two presidents. Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott, speaking June 4, said Putin made it "absolutely clear" that Russia still opposes amending the ABM Treaty and fears a U.S. NMD will "undermine strategic stability, threaten Russia's strategic deterrent, and provoke a new arms race." If Washington withdraws from the treaty, Putin and other Russian officials have warned that Moscow will withdraw from other arms control accords, including START II and the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty.

The 100 missile interceptors currently planned for the first phase of the U.S. defense could be easily overwhelmed by Russia's current strategic arsenal, but the Clinton administration has made clear that after winning amendments to facilitate the initial NMD deployment, the United States will seek additional amendments for an expanded NMD. Russian leaders fear that system could be rapidly augmented in the future, when Moscow assumes it will have a much smaller nuclear force, threatening Russia's deterrent capability.

While disagreeing on U.S. NMD plans, the presidents were able to reach a compromise statement that emphasized the importance of the ABM Treaty—reaffirming it as a "cornerstone of strategic stability"—while also noting that new threats could alter the international security environment. Administration officials pointed out that the statement also provided for consideration of "possible proposals for further increasing the viability of the Treaty." However, Talbott emphasized that this provision did not imply Russia had agreed to amend the accord; it only meant that discussions on possible changes could take place.

According to the statement, talks on the ABM Treaty will be held in parallel with future strategic reduction discussions within the framework of a START III accord, which, according to a 1997 agreement, would limit Russia and the United States to 2,000 to 2,500 deployed strategic warheads

apiece. Moscow wants a lower agreed level of 1,500 warheads each. Talbott explained that the joint statement established a "clear agreement between [Russia and the United States] that these two processes are going to have to move forward together—the control of strategic defenses and the reduction of strategic offenses."

Clinton, as well as other U.S. officials, highlighted Russia's acknowledgment in the joint statement that the world faces a "growing threat of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery." Yet shortly after the summit, Russian leaders challenged the perception that they had moved closer to sharing the U.S. threat assessment, which most countries view with skepticism. Putin, in an interview with the German newspaper *Welt am Sonntag* published June 11, said the threats most commonly cited by Washington do "fundamentally not exist, neither today, nor in the foreseeable future."

In the joint statement, however, the presidents agreed to address emerging threats through "mutual cooperation and mutual respect of each other's security interests."

### Joint Defense Cooperation Proposed

Just two days prior to Clinton's arrival in Moscow, Putin, who warned the ABM Treaty "should not be touched," caught U.S. officials off-guard with a vague proposal on "NBC News" that a jointly developed umbrella be placed over "potential areas of threat." Putin offered no specifics on his proposal during the summit.

Top Russian officials later explained to U.S. and European officials that the proposal was meant as a broad framework for cooperation, beginning with threat assessments and progressing eventually, if there is agreement a threat actually exists, to non-strategic missile defenses, including Europe-based theater missile defenses. Russian officials also alluded to a boost-phase missile defense, but on June 29, Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon said, "They have not come forward with details."

Unlike the planned U.S. system, which would try to hit a warhead during its mid-course flight outside the atmosphere, the goal of a boost-phase system would be to hit the missile during its ascent, when the rocket engine is still burning and before the warhead, as well as any possible decoys, have separated from the booster. Underscoring the technical challenges, Pentagon officials said acquiring and shooting down a target in its boost phase would need to take place within 300 seconds of its launch, requiring interceptors to be deployed close to the launch site.

After meeting with Putin and Russian Defense Minister Igor Sergeev in Moscow on June 13, Secretary of Defense William Cohen said that Washington is "prepared to cooperate" on both theater and boost-phase missile defense but that neither would serve as a substitute for U.S. NMD plans. Cohen noted that a European theater missile defense would not protect the United States and that a boost-phase system would not defend the United States in the short term because the technology does not yet exist. The day before, he had said such a system would be at least 10 years away.

Clinton officials point to recent U.S. intelligence estimates warning that North Korea could possess an ICBM by 2005 as a rationale for rapid NMD deployment. Other so-called rogue states, a term publicly abandoned June 19 by the State Department in favor of "states of concern," are also cited as possibly developing long-range missiles by 2015. The language shift came on the heels of the first-ever presidential summit between North and South Korea, held June 13 to 15, at which the two countries talked of eventual reunification. (See p. 32.) When questioned as to whether the Korean summit would affect the U.S. threat assessment, State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said June 14 that there were no "seeds of any changes that would change the possible threat that we might face." A day later, Bacon added that "North Korea is not the only country we worry about."

On June 20, Pyongyang reaffirmed its September 1999 moratorium on missile flight testing, and on June 28 the United States announced it would hold a formal round of missile talks, the first since March 1999, with North Korea from July 10 to 12. While describing the Korean summit as a "very,

very important development" and saying he felt "encouraged" by Pyongyang's extension of its flight-testing moratorium, Clinton cautioned June 28 that he did not think the North Korean missile program problem had yet been resolved.

Clinton also stressed that he had not yet made a final decision on NMD deployment and repeated that his decision would be based on an assessment of the technological readiness of the system, the maturity of the threat, the system's cost, and its impact on U.S. national security, including relations with European allies, Russia, and China. He also noted that he would need to consider the possible "boomerang effect" that China's reaction could have on India and Pakistan. The president said he would formulate his position over the next several weeks.

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