

# U.S. Moves Toward Nuclear First Strike Capability

by Carl Osgood and Rachel Douglas

March 9—On March 1, the *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, a journal published by the U.S. Air Force’s Air University, published an article admitting what both Lyndon LaRouche and *EIR*, and the Russians, have long been warning against: that U.S. strategic policy under the Obama Administration is seeking to create the capability to launch a first strike against Russia and/or China, without fear of nuclear retaliation, and that this is making nuclear war *more*, not less, likely.

While the two authors, Keir A. Leiber, associate professor at the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University, and Daryl G. Press, an associate professor of government at Dartmouth University, have been warning against this danger since at least 2006, this is the first time one of their articles has appeared in a U.S. military publication, a tacit admission, perhaps, that their argument has merit, and must be considered.

The *Strategic Studies* article comes on the heels of a report from Moscow, by the Izborsk Club, an association of high-level Russian intellectuals who characterize themselves as “patriotic and anti-liberal,” warning of the same danger of an emerging “counterforce” threat to Russia’s strategic deterrent, and laying out the steps that Russia must take, militarily, to defend against it.

Since Barack Obama ascended to the office of the Presidency, he has *expanded* the Bush-Cheney policy of strategic confrontation with Russia, most notably,

with respect to Iran and Syria. In Syria, the U.S. policy is one of regime change, a policy strongly opposed by Russia. At the same time, the U.S. has been ringing Russia with missile defenses, including land-based sites in Poland and Romania, and moving forward with a plan to forward-base four Aegis missile defense destroyers in Rota, Spain.

On May 3, 2012, then-Chief of the Russian Armed Forces General Staff Gen. Nikolai Makarov declared that further advances in the deployment of a BMD system by the United States and NATO in Europe would so greatly threaten Russia’s security, as to necessitate a pre-emptive attack on such installations: The outbreak of military hostilities between the U.S.A. and Russia would mean nuclear war. “Considering the destabilizing nature of the BMDS,” Makarov told an audience including U.S. officials, “*specifically the creation of the illusion of being able to inflict a disarming first strike without retaliation*, a decision on the pre-emptive use of available offensive weapons will be taken during the period of an escalating situation” (emphasis added).

What Makarov was pointing out is that ostensibly defensive systems can be used in offensive warfare—in this case, to enable the West to launch a pre-emptive first strike without fear of a retaliatory response. Just two weeks later, at a conference in Virginia, former U.S. Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. James Cartwright acknowledged that “there’s the potential that you could, in fact, generate a scenario



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*Last May, Gen. Nikolai Makarov warned that deployment of a U.S./NATO BMD system on Russia's borders could quickly lead to nuclear war. Here, Makarov addresses a meeting with NATO in May 2010.*

where, in a bolt from the blue, we launch a pre-emptive attack and then use missile defense to weed out" Russia's remaining missiles launched in response. "We're going to have to think our way out of this," he said. "We're going to have to figure out how we're going to do this."

If the alleged threat from Iran, which is used to justify the missile defense deployment in Europe, is so great, then why not cooperate with Russia on missile defense? Indeed, Russia has been proposing such cooperation since 2007, when then-President Vladimir Putin traveled to Kennebunkport, Maine, to propose to then-President George W. Bush, cooperation with the U.S. and NATO on missile defense. Bush never accepted the proposal, and neither has Obama.

If the U.S.-NATO European system is not aimed at Russia, then the U.S. ought to be able to provide guarantees that that's the case, as Russia has been demanding, but this is dismissed by the U.S. and NATO as "unnecessary." The Russians have repeatedly warned that the U.S.-NATO plan upsets the strategic balance and increases the risk of war, and have acted accordingly, even as they have made numerous proposals that would avoid such a confrontation. The U.S. refusal to acknowledge Russian concerns, in concert with its regime-change policies in Syria and

Iran, is setting the stage for that confrontation.

### **U.S. Seeks Strategic Primacy**

In their March 1 article, "The New Era of Nuclear Weapons, Deterrence, and Conflict," Leiber and Press posit that, number one, "technological innovation has dramatically improved the ability of states to launch 'counterforce' attacks—that is, military strikes aimed at disarming an adversary by destroying its nuclear weapons." Number two, they argue, is that "in the coming decades, deterring the use of nuclear weapons during conventional wars will be much harder than most analysts believe."

The basis of the authors' first argument is that: "Very accurate delivery systems, new reconnaissance technologies, and the downsizing of

arsenals from Cold War levels have made both conventional and nuclear counterforce strikes against nuclear arsenals much more feasible than ever before." During the Cold War, they note, neither the U.S. nor the Soviet Union could launch a disarming first strike against the other because each side had so many weapons deliverable by different modes, that an attempted counterforce strike could not prevent a retaliatory reply. This is no longer the case. The reduction of nuclear arsenals on both sides means there are now fewer targets to hit, especially on the Russian side.

In 2006, Leiber and Press modeled a hypothetical U.S. first strike against Russia. "The same models that were used during the Cold War to demonstrate the inescapability of stalemate—the condition of 'mutual assured destruction,' or MAD—now suggested that even the large Russian arsenal could be destroyed in a disarming strike." Their point was to demonstrate that the Cold War axioms of mutual and assured destruction and deterrence no longer apply.

But the authors go further to argue that the U.S. is knowingly pursuing a strategy of strategic primacy against potential adversaries, "meaning that Washington seeks the ability to defeat enemy nuclear forces (as well as other WMD) but that U.S. nuclear weapons are but one dimension of that effort. In fact, the effort to

neutralize adversary strategic forces—that is, achieve strategic primacy—spans nearly every realm of warfare: for example, ballistic missile defense, antisubmarine warfare, intelligence, surveillance-and-reconnaissance systems, offensive cyber warfare, conventional precision strike, and long-range precision strike, in addition to nuclear strike capabilities.”

Rather than pointing out the obvious—that the U.S. is building a first-strike capability against any potential adversary, including Russia and China—they ask, instead: “How is deterrence likely to work when nuclear use does not automatically imply suicide and mass slaughter?”

Their second point is equally disturbing. If the United States gets involved in a conflict with a power that has nuclear weapons, the risk that those weapons will be used is actually increasing. They dispense with the counter-argument that no one in his right mind would launch nuclear war against the United States. In peacetime, this is certainly true, but if you are already being attacked by the United States, then regime survival may depend on what they call escalatory coercion. “Leaders of weaker states—those unlikely to prevail on the conventional battlefield—face life-and-death pressures to compel a stalemate,” they write. “And nuclear weapons provide a better means of coercive escalation than virtually any other.”

This is not so far-fetched. In fact, this was NATO’s strategy during much of the Cold War. It is Pakistan’s strategy against India, and is used as a hedge by Israel, should its conventional forces ever face catastrophic defeat. “Those who were weak during the Cold War are now strong, and another set of militarily weak countries—such as North Korea, Iran, Pakistan, and even China and Russia—now clutch or seek nuclear weapons to defend themselves from overwhelming military might, just as NATO once did,” they write.

## **U.S. and Russian Strategic Nuclear Forces**

In Russia, the strategic intention, and Russia’s weaknesses in the face of it, are very well understood. Russia’s nuclear forces collapsed quickly after the end of the Cold War. As of Sept. 1, 2012, at the time of the last data exchange between the U.S. and Russia under the new START treaty, Russia had 1,499 warheads on 491 delivery vehicles, putting it already below the treaty limitation of 1,550 warheads. The U.S., on the

other hand, declared 1,722 warheads on 806 delivery vehicles. Most of the Russian warheads, 1,092 of them, in fact, are concentrated in its ICBM force of 334 missiles of various types, all silo-based except for 36 road-mobile systems.

The most important element of the U.S. strategic force is the Ohio-class ballistic-missile-armed submarines, 14 of which are in service, and at least 4 of which are reportedly on deterrent patrol at any one time, capable of carrying up to 8 warheads per missile, of either the 100-kt W76 model or the 475-kt W88 model. According to data provided by the Navy, in response to an *EIR* Freedom of Information Act request, U.S. Trident submarines conducted 38 patrols in 2009; 33 in 2010; and 28 in 2011, in both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. To this, must be added Britain’s nuclear ballistic-missile submarine force of 4 Vanguard-class submarines, 1 of which is on patrol at all times, carrying 48 warheads.

The Russian ballistic-missile submarine force, which consist of 11 vessels, is not known to be maintaining a continuous at-sea posture, but Russia has been making efforts to upgrade it with the addition of the Borey-class of missile-launching submarines, the first of which was accepted into service in January, out of a total of 8 that are planned.

## **The Izborsk Report**

In late January, the Izborsk Club, Russia’s new policy-shaping group, released a report entitled “Defense Reform as an Integral Part of a Security Conception for the Russian Federation: a Systemic and Dynamic Evaluation.” The sections of the 85-page report dealing with a potential thermonuclear global showdown demonstrate that leading Russian circles are well aware of the developments discussed in the latest Leiber-Press article, regarding U.S. attempts to develop a “counterforce” capability—to be able to take out Russia’s means to retaliate against a nuclear attack, thus making thermonuclear war more likely.

The Izborsk Club, founded on Lyndon LaRouche’s 90th birthday, Sept. 8, 2012 (a fact of which the group officially took note), brings together leading patriotic, anti-liberal Russian analysts with figures close to the Kremlin. Its new report was co-authored by Gen. Leonid Ivashov (ret.) (former head of the International Relations Department of the Ministry of Defense), Academician Sergei Glazyev, editors Alexander Prokhanov

and Alexander Nagorny from the weekly *Zavtra*, and historian Andrei Fursov, among others.

The document was issued in a setting of turmoil within the Russian Armed Forces. Former furniture-store manager and tax collector Anatoli Serdyukov, who, as Defense Minister, oversaw defense reform for four years under Dmitri Medvedev's Presidency, is under interrogation by the federal Investigative Committee in connection with the embezzlement scandal around the Ministry's real estate agency, which had been headed by a woman who was apparently his mistress.

On Feb. 27, President Putin and his appointee as Defense Minister, Sergei Shoygu, addressed an expanded meeting of the Defense Ministry Board, to deal with the past year's developments, and what Putin called "a difficult and at times painful" modernization process in the military. In this speech, Putin stated that, "We see methodical attempts to undermine the strategic balance in various ways and forms. The United States has essentially launched now the second phase in its global missile defense system." In this and several other passages, Putin's remarks were consonant with the assessments and recommendations of the Izborsk Club.

Like LaRouche, the Izborsk authors soberly assess the danger of thermonuclear war, and its finality, as stemming from utopian policies reigning in the West. They write:

"Washington is escalating its efforts to achieve overwhelming military-technological superiority over Russia, such that the R[ussian] F[ederation] would dismantle its strategic nuclear arsenal, thus losing its retaliatory nuclear-strike capability and, consequently, losing strategic parity with the U.S.A. Washington is pursuing this goal both by developing advanced strategic rearmament programs, and through diplomatic efforts to impose upon Russia strategic and conventional arms reduction agreements that are advantageous to the U.S.A...."

"Washington's likely line in its Russia policy in the near future will be to involve Russia in a NEW RESET scheme, using the NATO bloc in order to (a) prevent Russia's rapprochement with China, and (b) weaken Russia's military potential as much as possible. This weakening will be accomplished through a series of disarmament agreements, reducing Russia's strategic nuclear missile potential, as well as tactical

nuclear weapons, to a minimum; the latter are especially important in the event of regional and local conflicts, including in Central Asia and the Caucasus region...."

"For the decades ahead, however, any real threat of a massive nuclear-missile strike against Russia would originate only from the U.S.A and its allies. For the time being, the likelihood of such a war can be regarded as very small, as long as as Russia maintains its strategic nuclear forces and its deterrent capability of launching an assured retaliatory nuclear-missile strike. This turns nuclear weapons into the military-political *ultima ratio*, and makes them the subject of continuous military-technological competition between the superpowers, in attempts to neutralize this power factor. At the same time, in wars on a local or regional scale, tactical weapons are gaining more and more importance. Over the last decade, the USA and the NATO countries have been intensely developing the conception of a disarming non-nuclear strike against Russia's control systems and its strategic nuclear forces. Such a counterforce strike would rule out the possibility of Russian nuclear retaliation that would cause unacceptable damage to the U.S.A."

Concerning a "major war scenario," the report continues:

"The nature of such a war will be:

—high-intensity and high-technology, since any of the countries named above would seek to deliver a preemptive, disarming strike with HPW [high-precision weapons] against our strategic nuclear forces, reconnaissance, control, and communications systems in outer space, in the air, and on the ground;

—"based on a massive employment of HPW and conventional forces and means of battle in the first attack echelon (in all-or-nothing mode), in order to destroy our forces and achieve the basic war objectives before a retaliatory nuclear strike can be launched and before the initiation of political negotiations.

"—In strategic terms, such a conflict may be preceded by a period of escalating conflict potential, which could allow the timely detection of war preparations by intelligence/ reconnaissance forces and assets, and the ability to carry out the needed countermobilization."

## The Way Out

The Leiber-Press article appears to have only one major weakness—how the U.S. should get out of the

strategic trap it has marched into. They offer the alternatives of either avoiding war with nuclear-armed states, which they say may not be possible, or doing more of what it is currently doing, that is, building its counterforce capabilities to the point that it overcomes the danger of coercive escalation. They don't suggest, however, a complete change in the *strategic policy* of the United States, but such a strategic change would require the Constitutional removal of President Obama from office and a paradigm shift in the way that strategic policy is made in Washington.

Recently, two top-level Russian officials, Sergei Ivanov, former Defense Minister and present head of the Russian Presidential Administration, and Vladimir Kozin, a member of an interagency working group attached to the Russian Presidential Administration and a researcher at the Russian Institute of Strategic Studies, both argued that the U.S. must stop surrounding Russia with missile defenses, and instead should join with the world community to develop the defenses necessary to protect the Earth from asteroid strikes.

Ivanov told *Komsomolskaya Pravda* on March 5 that the U.S. ABM system in Europe “does not appear to respond to potential threats coming from North Korea and Iran. This affects Russia’s strategic nuclear forces and undermines the balance of forces. In this case Moscow can’t afford a new round of nuclear arms reduction as the U.S. currently outnumbers Russia in nuclear weapons.”

Ivanov said that Russia sees “no light at the end of tunnel” in missile defense discussion with the U.S.” *Pravda* added, “Mr. Ivanov implied that Washington’s position is not sincere and cannot be taken seriously.” On planetary defense, he said, “No country, not even the United States, can solve this alone,” and therefore there must be a collective effort.

Ivanov’s remarks followed a hard-hitting Feb. 28 article in the *Moscow Times* by Kozin, who warned that the U.S. anti-ballistic missile (ABM) systems are out to “destroy Russia intercontinental ballistic missiles,” and advising that instead of trying to surround Russia, the United States should be working *with* Russia to defend the Earth from meteorites and similar dangers. Kozin’s piece is an unusually detailed analysis that rips into President Obama’s phony offers of reducing offensive systems, and shows that Obama is covering up the buildup of tactical nuclear weapons at the same time as the ABM systems are built up.

“U.S. operational missile defense systems to be de-

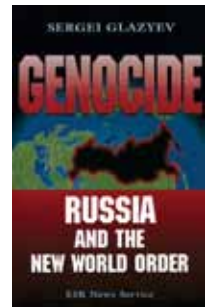
ployed in Romania and Poland in 2015 and 2018, respectively, are not designed to intercept potential ballistic missiles launched by Iran—the reason that the U.S. gave for introducing the missile shield,” Kozin writes. “This is the task of the missile defense systems of the United States and its allies deployed in the Gulf region. *The only purpose of the U.S. missile defense equipment deployed in Europe is to destroy Russian intercontinental ballistic missiles* [emphasis added].

“The fact that our country is never mentioned in the missile shield program as a potential participant, proves that it is aimed at Russia. Russia is missing from both the NATO Missile Defense Action Plan and the U.S. and alliance’s ‘rules of engagement’ concerning the use of anti-ballistic missiles, endorsed shortly after the NATO Chicago summit last year.”

In conclusion, Kozen puts the defense of Earth question onto the table. “Quite frankly, instead of thinking how to encircle Russia with nuclear and missile defense weapons,” he writes, “the American side should think about how it can work together with us and other interested parties to prevent meteorites from raining down on our planet.”

# GENOCIDE

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