

Is the U.S. Preparing To Start A Nuclear War with Russia?

by Carl Osgood

March 28—Is the U.S. preparing for theater nuclear war against Russia in Europe? After that question was raised by Dr. Konstantin Sivkov, a top-level Russian strategist, in a March 18 article entitled “West Prepares for War with Russia,” an array of sources—ranging from spokesmen for the Administration to top military analysts, indicate that the measures which Dr. Sivkov described, indeed point to preparations for just such an act of insanity.

“What this reflects is British extremism, and Obama insanity,” Lyndon LaRouche said on March 22, after being briefed on the Sivkov article. “So, he’s now behaving in a way which we would have to consider clinically insane. In other words, he’s Hitler in the bunker. But the author of this whole thing is the British monarchy—the British empire. And that’s the capability. The essential one is a U.S. entry as an ally of the British empire. That’s how it would be conducted. That’s actually how you would run a global program.

“If Obama tries to launch a World War III, the only counterstrike that’s effective is an obliteration of the British monarchy circles and their accomplices. That would be a deterrent. You’ve got to think of a psychological deterrent. The greatest deterrent is to have the British imperial system believe that *it* is a target of extermination, rather than any other part of the world.”

Modernization of the B61 Bomb

Sivkov, president of the Academy for Geopolitical Studies, founded by former senior Russian Defense Ministry official Gen. Leonid Ivashov (ret.), points to the modernization of the B61 tactical nuclear bomb and plans to integrate it into the F-16 and Tornado aircraft of five NATO countries—Belgium, The Netherlands, Turkey, Germany, and Italy—as well as U.S. forces stationed in Europe, a task to be completed by about 2019, ahead of the 2020 delivery date for the first B61-12s. Around the end of the decade, the F-16s are to be re-

placed by F-35 Joint Strike Fighters, which will also be capable of delivering the enhanced B61 bomb. Germany is not buying the F-35, but instead, the Anglo-German Typhoon aircraft, which is not capable of carrying the B61, so what happens to the German nuclear mission after the Luftwaffe retires the Tornado in the mid-20s remains to be seen.

Sivkov is clearly drawing on two recent postings by Hans M. Kristensen, the author of the Federation of American Scientists Strategic Security Blog, although without attribution. In a Feb. 28 posting, Kristensen very strongly suggested that the B61-12 enhancement is a violation of the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review and of, if not the letter, at least the spirit of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, because it essentially creates a new nuclear capability that doesn’t exist with the current versions of that bomb, but does it under the pretext of a life-extension program (albeit one that’s behind schedule and over budget).

Under the program, the upgraded bomb gets a new tail-kit assembly that substantially improves its accuracy, which Kristensen estimates to be a reduction from about 110-180 meters with unguided bombs, down to about 30 meters. The tail kit also gives the bomb the capability of gliding toward its target, something else that current non-guided versions of the bomb can’t do. Kristensen reports that the Nuclear Posture Review “explicitly promised that ‘Life Extension Programs will not support new military missions or provide for new military capability capabilities.’ But the guided tail kit is a new military capability and so is a different explosive yield.” About 200 out of 400-500 bombs to be produced are planned to be deployed to Europe.

Kristensen noted that NATO decided in 2012 “that the Alliance’s nuclear force posture currently meets the criteria for an effective deterrence and defense posture.” If so, he asks, “why enhance it with guided B61-12 nuclear bombs and F-35 stealth fighter-bomb-



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NATO's Tornado and F-16 aircraft, shown here, are being modernized to carry the B61 tactical nuclear bomb, for deployment by five NATO member countries.

The Pentagon Responds

On March 21, *EIR* sent a query to the Pentagon regarding the Sivkov article, asking: “How does the DoD respond to the statements made, in the article by Dr. Sivkov, on the B61 modernization and, in general, on US nuclear modernization with respect to Russia’s nuclear deterrent, that, in fact, the US is developing a counterforce strategy to neutralize Russia’s nuclear deterrent?”

Pentagon spokeswoman Cynthia O. Smith responded to the query on March 26 with the

ers?” Indeed, why create this new capability when the publicly professed goal is to eliminate the need for nuclear weapons altogether, and why create it when it’s not even appropriate for the security needs of Europe today?

‘Direct Attack on Russia’

Sivkov asks the same questions that Kristensen did, but then he says what Kristensen won’t: that the failure of American strategy in Eurasia may lead to a more radical policy, “a direct attack on Russia.” Therefore, “In this context, increasing the potential of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe is perfectly understandable: it is about the attainment of superiority in these weapons over Russia.” If the U.S. succeeds in this goal, then an aggressive NATO war will become possible, and Russia’s ability to retaliate in kind will be limited by the risk of a U.S. strategic response.

“Presumably, the American leadership assumes that Russia is waging war against NATO in the European theater of war, and will not decide to use strategic nuclear weapons against the United States for fear of retaliation,” writes Sivkov. He adds that the U.S. decision to increase the capacity of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe is “a sign of the preparation of the United States for war against Russia.” Sivkov’s article is another indication of the close attention Russian military analysts, both behind the scenes, and in writings published by independent organizations, are paying to attempts to neutralize Russia’s nuclear deterrent.

following statement:

“The 2010 Nuclear Posture Review concluded that the United States will not develop new nuclear warheads; the US is pursuing warhead Life Extension Programs (LEPs) to ensure a safe, secure and effective nuclear stockpile without nuclear testing. The objective of the LEPs is to strengthen deterrence by ensuring effective means for holding targets at risk, not to support new military missions or provide new military capabilities. LEPs will not give the weapons new missions or capabilities. LEPs may change measurable performance/design characteristics in the process of replacing age-affected components. For example, the B61 LEP will allow more space to incorporate safety and surety measures in the warhead. The B61 LEP will also allow for increased aircraft survivability, and safer delivery profiles.”

In response to the claim that the U.S. is seeking to negate the Russian strategic deterrent, she said:

“As stated in the June 2013 Report to Congress on US Nuclear Employment Strategy, the United States seeks to maintain strategic stability with Russia. Consistent with the objective of maintaining an effective deterrent posture, the United States seeks to improve strategic stability by demonstrating that it is not our intent to negate Russia’s strategic nuclear deterrent, or to destabilize the strategic military relationship with Russia. Strategic stability would be strengthened through similar Russian steps toward the United States and U.S. Allies.”

In effect, the Pentagon affirms Sivkov’s point. It

argues that the changes in the performance of the weapon referenced in the statement—that it allows for increased aircraft survivability—as well as the improvement in accuracy and its low yield (adjustable from 0.3 to 50 KT, although Kristensen suggested on Feb. 28 that there might be a different yield), actually constitutes a new nuclear capability which blurs the distinction between nuclear and conventional weapons, and makes them more militarily “usable.”

Public testimony from a top-level U.S. military spokesman provides further disturbing confirmation: Gen. Robert Kehler, then Commander of the U.S. Strategic Command, in testimony to the House Strategic Forces Subcommittee during an Oct. 29, 2013 hearing on the B61 modernization. Democrat John Garamendi (Calif.) was questioning why the U.S. had to go with such an expensive program of \$10-12 billion rather than some cheaper alternative. One alternative that Garamendi thought worth exploring was the B83 bomb, which has another ten years to go, according to the witnesses, before it needs a life-extension program.

Kehler explained that “It’s about deterring. It’s about assuring our allies of our extended deterrence commitment to them. And from a military standpoint, it’s about being able to offer the president a series of options that include nuclear options in extreme circumstances as among those from what he can choose.” And the problem with the B83? The problem with the B83, Kehler said, is that “it has a very high yield and we’re trying to pursue weapons that actually are reducing in yield because we’re concerned about maintaining weapons that would have less collateral effect if the president ever had to use them. . . .”

After he caught himself, Kehler said that, in order for it to be useful as a deterrent, there has to be credibility that the weapon will be used. Kehler explained that the B83 “is not as flexible as the B61,” that is, “in terms of our ability to use various yields that will be matched to the targets.” The B83 also can’t be delivered by any aircraft other than the B-2 stealth bomber.

So, the Holy Grail of *usability* is what’s behind the modernization of the B61 into the B61-12 version. No wonder there are concerns that it blurs the distinction between conventional weapons and nuclear weapons.

Military Show Concerns

This is what worries saner elements among U.S. military circles. Retired Defense Intelligence Agency officer Col. W. Patrick Lang, whose blog “Sic Semper

Tyrannis” is widely read among both retired and currently serving military officers who represent an institutional factor in Washington, described the effort to make the B61 bomb “more usable,” as a “worrisome factor” in the confrontation with Russia, in a March 27 posting. “Nuclear weapons can not be used against another nuclear state without risking escalation to mutual annihilation and the use of such weapons against a non-nuclear state would simply be mass murder,” he wrote. “The only justification for the possession of these true Weapons of Mass Destruction is as a deterrent.”

In response to the Pentagon reply, Lyndon LaRouche noted that there is no dodging the fact that the British Empire is pushing a policy of nuclear show-down with Russia and China in response to the imminent death of the current global monetary system, which has entered the “bail-in” doom phase. The fact is that the development and deployment of the new tactical nuclear weapons, combined with the deployment of the European missile defense program, is nothing but a first-strike policy. It is a first-strike policy devised in London by the British Empire and pursued by their White House stooge Obama.

