

## I. Closer to Nuclear War

### PUTIN IN BISHKEK

# The World Changed on December 9th

*Dec. 16—Russian President Vladimir Putin on Dec. 9 clarified his startling, but cryptic remark made two days earlier, that “if Russia does not use nuclear weapons first, it won’t use them second, either.”*

*President Putin’s clarification was carefully worded, and more than sobering. He informed the world, that given current United States nuclear doctrine and practice, Russia is now considering changing its long-standing doctrine of using a retaliatory nuclear strike as a deterrent, to match that of the United States, which admits the possibility of a “preventive” nuclear strike to disarm opponents before they can retaliate.*

*He specified, for the benefit of any U.S. officials entertaining plans for launching a disarming strike using hypersonic weapons against Russia, that the United States does not yet have such weapons, but “we do.”*

*That it has come to this, that the world’s two largest nuclear powers—in a de facto war on the Ukrainian battlefield, at a moment when virtually all trust between them has been lost, with only a few, tenuous channels of communication remaining open—now assume they must prepare to make a decision for a possible first strike to disarm the other when deemed necessary. That should have been the lead headline story in every media in the world. It was not.*

*Nor has there yet been any substantive public response from policymaking layers in the West to the actual import of Putin’s comments. Mainstream media*

*misrepresented the Bishkek comments, if mentioned at all, as Putin “once again threatening to use tactical nuclear weapons against Ukraine.” Putin said nothing of the sort, nor has any top Russian government official ever said anything of the sort.*

*Thus, EIR is publishing the full transcript of the exchange on U.S. and Russian nuclear doctrine and practice from Putin’s December 9 press conference in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan following the conclusion of the Eurasian Economic Union summit. Our text is taken from the Kremlin [transcript](#).*



kremlin.ru

*Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation, speaking to a news conference following his attendance at the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council Summit in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, Dec. 9, 2022.*

**Konstantin Panyushkin, Channel One:** You said [on Wednesday] and I quote: “If Russia does not use nuclear weapons first, it won’t use them second, either.” This caused an uproar. Please explain what you meant.

**Vladimir Putin:** I understand that everyone is worried and has always been worried since the advent of nuclear arms, and weapons of mass destruction in general. People, all of human-

ity, have been concerned about what will happen to the planet and to us? But look what I had in mind, I will explain some things.

The United States has this theory of a preventive strike. This is the first point. Now the second point. They are developing a system for a disarming strike. What does that mean? It means striking at control centers with modern high-tech weapons to destroy the opponent’s ability to counterattack, and so on.

What are these modern weapons? These are cruise missiles that we did not have at one time—we did not have land-based cruise missiles. We removed them; we scrapped them. Meanwhile, the Americans were smarter at that time when they were holding talks with the Soviet Union. They scrapped land-based missiles but retained air- and sea-based missiles that were not covered by the treaty, and we became defenseless. But now we have them, and they are more modern and even more efficient.

There were plans to deliver a preventive disarming strike with hypersonic weapons. The United States does not have these weapons, but we do. Regarding a disarming strike, perhaps we should think about using the achievements of our U.S. partners and their ideas about how to ensure their own security. We are just thinking about this. No one was shy about discussing it out loud in the past. This is the first point.

The United States has a theory and even practice. They have the concept of a preventive strike in their strategy and other policy documents. We do not. Our strategy talks about a retaliatory strike. There are no secrets whatsoever. What is a retaliatory strike? That is a response strike. It is when our early warning system,

the missile attack warning system, detects missiles launched towards Russian Federation territory. First, it detects the launches, and then response actions begin.

We hold regular exercises of our nuclear forces. You can see them all, we are not hiding anything. We provide information under our agreements with all nuclear countries, including the United States. We inform our partners that we are conducting these exercises. Rest assured they do the exact same thing.

After the early warning system receives a signal indicating a missile attack, hundreds of our missiles are launched and they cannot be stopped. But it is still a retaliatory strike. What does that mean? It means that enemy missile warheads will fall on the territory of the Russian Federation. This cannot be avoided. They will fall anyway. True, nothing will remain of the enemy, because it is impossible to intercept hundreds of missiles. And this is, without a doubt, a potent deterrent.

But if a potential adversary believes it is possible to use the preventive strike theory, while we do not, this still makes us think about the threat that such ideas in the sphere of other countries' defence pose to us. That is all I have to say about that.

# Nuclear Doctrine: A U.S. First Strike Nuclear Weapons Policy?

by Carl Osgood

Dec. 15—In his careful remarks during a Dec. 9 [press conference](#) in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, Russian President Vladimir Putin made a number of points about U.S. nuclear weapons policy and doctrine. In particular, he noted that the U.S. has a theory of *preventive* strike and has developed a system for a *disarming* strike aimed at taking out an opponent's ability to respond to a first strike from the U.S.

Russian nuclear weapons doctrine, on the other hand, is that of a *retaliatory* strike in response to a strategic attack on Russia. Putin on Dec. 9, 2022 in Bishkek, said of this:

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such ideas in the sphere of other countries' defence pose to us.

A review of materials gathered by EIR News Service over the past two decades, shows that the policies that Putin pointed to, began with the G.W. Bush Administration in 2001–2002, including the preventive war policy and the development of the system for a first strike capability. Over the succeeding administrations the policies were revised from being aimed at terrorism and alleged rogue nations, to now aimed at “detering” two “near peer” powers, that is, Russia and China.

What follows is a review of the evolution of U.S. nuclear weapons policy, in four categories: preventive strikes, Prompt Global Strike, the absence of a no-first-