

Missile Defense: Cheney's Nuclear War Doctrine

by Carl Osgood

When Russian President Vladimir Putin charged, in effect, that U.S. plans to install missile defenses in Europe, were an extension to Europe of the Cheney-Bush offensive nuclear warfare doctrine, he was not speaking off the cuff. Under the Bush Administration, U.S. nuclear doctrine has been undergoing radical redesign, to further the imposition of a new imperial order. Military sources have told *EIR* that the most radical aspect of that redesign has been the consolidation of offensive nuclear warfare capabilities, with both missile defense and current and future space-war capabilities. This consolidation, they say, betrays a long-term intention of the doctrine first promoted by then-Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney and his aides, Undersecretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, and deputy Lewis "Scooter" Libby, in 1991. They proposed a plan for an American military empire, striking out against any nation or alliance of nations that would threaten American hegemony. The use of a new generation of nuclear weapons was part and parcel of the plan. The idea was shot down by President George H.W. Bush and Secretary of State James Baker III, but was resurrected when Cheney and his hand-picked team of military utopians came to power on Jan. 20, 2001.

Speaking to foreign press June 4, Putin minced no words in strategically situating U.S. plans to install ground-based missile defenses in Poland and the Czech Republic. "If this missile system is put in place," Putin said, "it will work automatically with the entire nuclear capability of the U.S.A." He added, "For the first time in history, there are elements of the U.S. nuclear capability on the European continent. It simply changes the whole configuration of international security."

Putin ridiculed the notion that the system is needed to protect Europe from attack by Iran, which possesses no missiles of 5,000 to 8,000 km range that could hit targets in Europe. "We are being told that this missile defense system is there to defend against something that doesn't exist," he said. There-

fore, "our military experts certainly believe that this system affects the territory of the Russian Federation in front of the Ural Mountains. And, of course, we have to respond to that."

Putin noted that it was the United States that withdrew from the ABM Treaty in 2003, not Russia. "We both understand that a missile defense system for one side, and no such system for the other, creates an illusion of security and increases the possibility of a nuclear conflict," he said.

President Bush responded, from Prague, by declaring, "The Cold War is over." He said he would tell Putin, "You shouldn't fear a missile defense system," and even offered Russia cooperation on missile defense. So, what did Putin mean by calling the missile defense system "an integral part of U.S. nuclear capability?"

U.S. Offensive Warfare Doctrine

When the Bush Administration took office, it initiated a fundamental shift in U.S. strategic policy, away from the deterrence posture that had been maintained by the Clinton Administration, to one of nuclear war-fighting. This was first signaled by the Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) released in 2002, which proposed to replace the Cold War-era nuclear triad of bombers, land-based ICBMs, and submarine-based nuclear missiles, with a "new triad" of strategic nuclear and non-nuclear forces, active and passive defense systems, and "responsive infrastructure," that is, the capability to design, develop, and produce new weapons, all to be tied together by an advanced command-and-control system. Columnist William Arkin, long a critic of U.S. nuclear weapons policy, reported in a March 9, 2002 column, that the document also named seven countries—Russia, China, North Korea, Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Libya—as potential targets for U.S. nuclear weapons, because of existing or potential weapons of mass destruction.

Arkin noted that the document departed from the view of nuclear weapons as weapons of last resort, an “option reserved for when national survival hung in the balance,” towards viewing nuclear weapons through the prism of the 9/11 attacks. Nuclear weapons were now seen, as Bush himself has indicated, in response to questions about Iran, as “an option that is always on the table.” In short, Arkin concluded, “what has evolved since last year’s terror attacks is an integrated, significantly expanded planning doctrine for nuclear wars.”

This evaluation was borne out by subsequent developments, such as the September 2002 National Security Strategy, which made pre-emptive war part of the national security doctrine, and the reshaping of U.S. Strategic Command, from the single custodian for nuclear weapons and delivery systems, into a sort of “global strike command,” where nuclear weapons are seen as just one among many options, available to the President. Under the 2002 Unified Command Plan, the new Stratcom became responsible for global strike, missile defense integration, Defense Department information operations, and what the military refers to as C4ISR, or command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance. The development of these mission sets has largely been overseen by Marine Gen. James Cartright, who was appointed commander of Stratcom in 2004, and has recently been nominated as vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

A crucial part of the transformation was the merger of Stratcom with U.S. Space Command on Oct. 1, 2002, by then-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. The space operations and support that had been provided by Space Command, now came under the same roof as the strategic nuclear operations of the old Strategic Command. Under the new Strategic Command, military space operations are an integral part of the global strike mission. The Bush Administration’s National Space Policy, which was quietly released last October, makes clear the offensive nature of U.S. space policy. It asserts that the United States will “preserve its rights, capabilities, and freedom of action in space.” To do this, the U.S. will “dissuade or *deter* others from either impeding those rights or *developing capabilities intended to do so*; take those actions necessary to protect its space capabilities; *respond to interference*; and *deny, if necessary, adversaries the use of space capabilities hostile to U.S. national interests*” (emphasis added)—an outlook straight out of Cheney’s 1991 pre-emptive war doctrine.

Adm. James. O. Ellis, Cartright’s predecessor as Stratcom chief, clearly stated the intended close link between missile defense and offensive nuclear warfare. He told the Senate Armed Services Committee, on March 11, 2004, “An active missile defense provides a broader range of options to senior leadership decision-makers while adding additional strategic deterrent capability. Integrating these capabilities with responsive offensive actions further increases the probability of success in countering an adversary’s attack.”

This process, however, did not originate with the post-9/11 Pentagon. As Jeffrey Steinberg documented in *EIR* (March 7, 2003), the utopians went to work almost immediately after the 1991 Gulf War, and the collapse of the Soviet Union, to demand the reshaping of the U.S. nuclear weapons arsenal from strategic warheads that, if at all, could only be used in a massive retaliation against the Soviet Union, to weapons for use against so-called “rogue states.” Shortly after Desert Storm, Cheney issued a top-secret “Nuclear Weapons Employment Policy,” that tasked military planners to plan for the use of nuclear weapons against Third World nations thought to be capable of developing WMDs. This spurred the weapons designers to develop weapons that could credibly be used against such countries. These utopians had to lay low, however, as neither the elder Bush, nor his successor, Bill Clinton, were persuaded of the necessity of such a policy.

A True War Avoidance Policy

Putin relied to Bush’s Prague remarks with irony: “Our American partners want us to provide them with our missiles as targets, so that they can conduct exercises using our missiles,” he said June 6. “This is just brilliant. What a great idea they’ve thought up.” The next day, Putin made his proposal for jointly siting and controlling anti-missile radars at a Russian-rented base near Gabala, Azerbaijan. He emphasized that the system would cover all of Europe, and parts of Central Asia. President Ilham Aliyev had agreed that Gabala could be jointly used by Russia and the United States, for missile defense against threats from “rogue states.” (Former Russian Defense Ministry official Gen. Leonid Ivashov pointed out that the Gabala radar could also detect U.S. cruise missiles fired from the Indian Ocean.)

Well-placed U.S. diplomatic and intelligence sources expressed relief that Putin had outflanked, for the moment, those promoting a new Cold War between Washington and Moscow. The Gabala radar plan, the sources said, is feasible, though it would require selecting new sites for the anti-missile systems, besides the radar component. Beyond the technical issues, the sources emphasized that Putin’s offer had undercut the new Cold War momentum.

The insanity of shifting nuclear war-fighting preparations towards attacks on “rogue states,” but including major nuclear powers like Russia and China among those, is dramatized by other, ongoing Chinese and Russian responses. Early this year, came reports of China’s anti-satellite test. On June 19, Russian First Deputy Premier Sergei Ivanov chaired a session of Russia’s Military-Industrial Commission, dedicated to a ten-year plan to develop military forces in space—part of Russia’s “asymmetric” effort to compensate for the U.S. threat to its nuclear deterrent. “We should be prepared for any possible scenarios of events,” the former defense minister said, “In the foreseeable future, it can be anticipated that the main objectives of war will be achieved primarily through air and space intelligence and strike forces.”