

## EFFECTS OF NATIONAL MISSILE DEFENSE ON ARMS CONTROL AND STRATEGIC STABILITY

---

YURIY KAPRALOV

*Director, Department for Security Affairs and Disarmament,  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Moscow, Russia*

The ABM Treaty is a cornerstone of strategic stability and a basis for further reductions of strategic offensive weapons. This recognition made possible a joint statement of the five nuclear weapon powers at the NPT Review Conference and contributed to its success. The fact that some saw in this formula a mere constructive ambiguity does not detract from its significance. To the contrary this circumstance only adds value to the statement by underlying that nobody risks to openly challenge its wisdom.

The formula is a simple recognition of an obvious fact: it is exactly strategic stability and its cornerstone - the ABM Treaty - in the first place that let us avoid dangerous outbreaks of tension between nuclear powers and in the world at large for the past 30 years; it is exactly these favorable conditions that allowed us to make a significant way on the path of reductions and limitations of strategic and tactical nuclear weapons, as well as conventional arms, to more endurable global security and promising international cooperation.

These achievements are sometimes taken for granted. It is useful to look back and be reminded of what some of them mean for all of us today.

On the same day the ABM Treaty was signed in May 1972 the United States and the USSR signed Interim Agreement on Certain Measures with respect to the Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms, known as SALT I.

On June 18, 1979 the US and the USSR signed the Treaty on the Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms, referred to as SALT II.

On December 8, 1987 the Soviet Union and the United States signed the Treaty on the Elimination of their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles - the INF Treaty that eradicated the whole class of very dangerous and destabilizing weapons.

On July 31, 1991 the Soviet Union and the United States signed the Treaty on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms - the START I Treaty that is now under implementation. In fact, Russia as a state-continuator exceeded the rate of phasing out and liquidation of the appropriate weapons, is doing it ahead of schedule. As a result of these reductions the level of strategic nuclear arms in Russia and the United States will be brought down from the levels between 10000 and 11000 to 6000 weapons and even less.

In 1991-1992 both countries announced unilateral reductions and other restrictive measures for their respective nuclear arsenals. Their implementation has been continuing since then by Russia and the United States, leading to a number of important steps in the direction of diminishing reliance on nuclear weapons.

On January 3, 1993. The Treaty on Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (START II) was signed by the Russian Federation and the United States with the obligation of bringing their respective levels of strategic nuclear arms to 3000-3500 units and with other significant qualitative restrictions.

On March 21, 1997 Presidents of the Russian Federation and the United States of America at a summit in Helsinki agreed on basic components of a START III Treaty including aggregate levels of 2000-2500 strategic nuclear warheads of for each the parties.

In July 2000 President V. Putin handed over to President W. Clinton a detailed document on START III negotiations with a proposition to lower the respective levels for strategic nuclear warheads of the Russian Federation and the United States to 1500 units.

On September 6, 2000 the Russian and US Presidents adopted a Joint Statement on "Strategic Stability cooperation Initiative", approving a concrete plan of cooperative measures for the coming months.

On November 13, 2000 President V. Putin issued a statement advocating speedy and radical reductions of strategic offensive arms of the Russian Federation and the United States to the levels of 1500 nuclear warheads and showing readiness to go to even lower limits.

These are but a few major events reflecting a consistent trend towards reducing nuclear arsenals and building a safer world. They are mainly of a bilateral Russia-US cooperation. To this should be added such events, as signature and ratification by many states including Russia of Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, reductions of their respective nuclear forces by France and the United Kingdom, restraint shown by the People's Republic of China in building its nuclear arsenal, a broad international cooperation in the area of maintaining safety of nuclear weapons, plutonium disposition, and so on.

The deployment of a National Missile Defense by the United States would ruin this legacy and a hope for better and safer world. Eliminating both conceptual and physical foundation of strategic stability the deployment of NMD would have a lasting and spreading negative effect not only on arms control efforts, but at much larger scale on military, political, economic situation and generally on international security, both regional and global.

It is highly indicative that while the deployment of an NMD has not even started, the plans for such defense for the US territory already now adversely affect arms control process. Suffice it to mention the situation around the prohibition of the production of fissile material for weapon purposes at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva (FMCT, or a "cut-off" Treaty). Even the START III negotiations, with its universal popularity, has fallen victim of NMD plans: the outgoing US administration during its last months established a linkage between the official negotiations on START III and an agreement on the part of Russia to NMD deployment by the US. No wonder the START-III negotiations have not even started.

The most direct and potentially dangerous effect the NMD deployment, irrespective of its scope, would exert on strategic situation and nuclear forces.

The deployment of NMD would result in undermining the strategic stability and a sharp increase in uncertainty and unpredictability. For the military it would mean heightened alert and readiness (who dreamed of de-alerting and greater transparency at a recent NPT Review Conference?); for a population it would mean a much greater risk of serious accidents and use of nuclear weapons. Among other things, it would turn upside down the present correlation of offensive and defensive strategic arms, nullify the tested and proved effective "rules of the game", greatly complicate and toughen conditions of functioning for Strategic Forces Command and Control Centers.

On the part of other nuclear powers historically engaged in competition with the US a natural response would be measures to offset the unilateral advantage of deploying NMD, to ensure survival of a first strike, to overcome or disable the NMD of the United States. That means - "good-bye" to radical reductions and R&D restraint, "welcome" to new arms race, to an accelerated development of new technologies and techniques to make the defended territory vulnerable again and retain the deterrence at all cost. And that would inevitably mean an increase of potential vulnerability for the US territory instead of stronger defense, global and regional instability, moving competition to new frontiers - outer space, cyber technologies etc.

There would be other unpleasant consequences like accelerated development of nuclear missiles and missile technologies in the so called "threshold states", which would augment the risk of nuclear arms conflicts in crisis areas of the world, make these technologies objectively more accessible for international criminal groups and consequently - to nuclear terrorists.

One may ask: why all this should happen? Russia and the US are not enemies anymore; they are partners and are supposed to cooperate? In this context we also put some questions to our American partners. One of them was: how come that the number of targets on the territory of the Russian Federation in their latest SIOP for the US strategic offensive weapons has increased since the beginning of the 90's? Against the backdrop of shrinking economy and drastically reduced armed forces in my country this is difficult to comprehend. In fact, we never heard an answer.

We never got an answer to another question: what is the planned application of dozens of US tactical nuclear weapons stationed in Europe? It is worth to note that for Russia, the territory of which they reach, there is no difference between these tactical and the strategic systems deployed in the US strategic arsenal. Except, probably, the fact that weapons stationed in Europe may be used in a more flexible way. It is also worth noting that no nuclear weapons of the Russian Federation are stationed on a foreign soil.

Another objection to the gloomy scenario in case NMD is deployed: Russia will not be able to compete because of a known state of her economy. Right? Wrong! The response in any way would not be symmetrical. And even if Russia were not capable to put up a competition in defense of her national interests and were doomed to ailing and degrading strategic forces that would not mean a safer environment for the US and others, rather the opposite.

In short, militarily the NMD deployment would not bring the US greater security (neither to Russia, for that matter). And I would agree with the known authority on Russian affairs Ambassador Jack F. Matlock: the bottom line is security.

These assessments will understandably carry more weight if we support them with statements of President V. Putin and Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defense of the Russian Federation.

NMD deployment "no doubt, would cause great damage to the existing system of national security, undermine all the positive achievements of the last decade in the world in this area" (President V. Putin at his visit to Canada, December 18, 2000).

Minister of Defense Marshal I. Sergeev in a long interview specifically on NMD ("Nezavissimaya gazeta" June 22, 2000) stated that the deployment of NMD would have "extremely negative consequences for the whole strategic situation on the planet"... "The whole system of international agreements in the area of arms control will be denied its basis..."

Minister for Foreign Affairs I. Ivanov in his statement at the NPT Review Conference (April 25, 2000) put it very clearly: "One has to be fully aware of the fact that the present system of arms control agreements is a complex and quite fragile structure. Once one of its key elements has been weakened, the entire system is destabilized. And in the context of globalization the interdependence of these elements has drastically increased. The collapse of the ABM Treaty would, therefore, undermine the entirety of disarmament agreements concluded over the last 30 years. The threat of the erosion of the non-proliferation regimes related to nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery vehicles would, therefore, grow".

These views are strongly supported by both Houses of the Russian Parliament.

Indeed, the damage would not be limited to the military side of the picture. The following would be the most immediate consequences of NMD deployment for the arms control process:

1. The Russian Federation would discontinue the implementation of START I Treaty (it is conditioned by the preservation and strict compliance with the ABM Treaty - a statement of the Soviet side at the Soviet-American negotiations on June 13, 1991).
2. The START II Treaty (ratified by the Russian Federation and not yet ratified by the United States) would not be enacted, since its entering into force and implementation are conditioned according to the law of ratification by the preservation and compliance of the US with the ABM Treaty;
3. Further agreed upon reductions of strategic offensive arms (START III) would become impossible (one should be out of touch with reality to assume that it is feasible to radically reduce on a reciprocal basis strategic offensive arms and simultaneously have a national missile defense deployed for one side).
4. The on-going implementation of unilateral initiatives of 1991-1992 would be stopped and reviewed;
5. The expedience of the INF Treaty in a new strategic environment would be closely examined with more chances for the Treaty to be scrapped;

6. Even CFE Treaty, recently adapted, would be put in doubt (at least that was mentioned during ratification of START II and CTBT).

This list of the immediate victims of NMD deployment may be easily continued.

An opposite view to the effect that Russia with her reduced (compared to the Soviet Union) potential is allegedly more interested than the US in preserving the present system of arms control agreements and limitations and for that reason would not abrogate them is not valid. Russia is indeed interested in preserving what has been achieved in this area in all its basic elements and balances. Yet destruction of the ABM Treaty would drastically disfigure the present strategic situation and require profound change in Russia's defense posture. Present limitations and obligations designed to fit today's strategic environment will not necessarily serve the Russia's national interests under much changed circumstances.

Political and economic relations, in their turn, would not remain immune in case of such unfortunate development. They can't. Though one may expect responsible world leaders to somehow save the situation, absorb the shock and compensate for inevitable deterioration of political climate, it is hard to imagine that trust and cooperation, investment and human exchanges, would grow in the environment of heightened suspicion and military tension.

I would refrain from making projections as to concrete manifestation of this negative trend in political and economic situation in case of NMD deployment in the United States. One conclusion is certain: everybody would pay a price.

As far as the position of the Russian Federation is concerned, I would like to underline the following:

1. Russia is resolutely opposed to the plans to deploy NMD by the United States. Such deployment would spell the end of the ABM Treaty and Strategic Stability. This is the first part of our position.
2. The second part is represented in a number of constructive initiatives aimed at resolving the problem of existing concerns in the United States and elsewhere with regard to nuclear, missile and missile technologies proliferation. We advocate broad international cooperation. This part deserves a special presentation at this Forum due to its significance and content.
3. The Russian's position is not confrontational. We are defending fundamental values of international security based on strategic stability and are acting in the interests of the whole world community. We believe that preserving strategic stability is a common cause.

