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European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

By Andre Damon
24.08.2019

Why is the US preparing for nuclear war with Russia and China?

After withdrawing from the landmark Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty, the United States has been barreling ahead with its preparations to fight a nuclear war with China, Russia, or both, by testing and stockpiling dangerous new weapons in a nuclear arms race.

In an interview with Fox News, Defense Secretary Mark Esper said the United States military is changing its focus from “low-intensity conflict,” such as the war in Afghanistan, to “high-intensity conflicts against competitors such as Russia and China.”



The US tests a ground-launched Tomahawk cruise missile that was banned under the INF treaty

Key to fighting such “high-intensity conflicts” is the United States’ arsenal of nuclear weapons, which Esper called “strategic forces.”

“Our strategic forces are a key deterrent to nuclear war. I think a strong, reliable, capable, ready deterrent is really what prevents nuclear war from happening in the first place,” he said.

In the Orwellian language of the “Defense” department, preserving “peace” is accomplished by expanding America’s “deterrent,” another name for the hellish nuclear weapons that can kill billions of people within an hour.

Esper made no secret of who he is seeking to “deter,” saying “China is the number one priority for this department.” He claimed China is trying to “push the United States out” of the “Indo-Pacific theater.”



Air Force Airmen perform seal checks on their gas masks during a chemical, biological, and nuclear defense class [Credit: US Air Force]

The term “theater” was defined by military theorist Carl Clausewitz as “a portion of the space over which war prevails.” Esper thinks the Indo-Pacific region—home to more than half of the world’s people—is, to the surprise of its inhabitants, a military “theater,” and one over which the United States supposedly has claim, despite being located on the other side of the world.

But to secure this supposedly God-given right to dominance over Asia, the United States—the only country to use nuclear weapons in World War II—is making active preparations to ring the entire Chinese mainland with nuclear-capable missiles.

Missiles that could reach the Chinese mainland from places like Japan and South Korea were banned under the INF treaty, which the United States pulled out of earlier this year.

The United States, Esper said, now needs “to be able to strike at intermediate ranges” to “deter Chinese bad behavior,” as if he were talking about disciplining a child, not annihilating a country of nearly 1.4 billion people.

The United States is moving full-speed ahead with the deployment of new missiles. The Pentagon said Monday it had tested a ground-launched, Tomahawk missile, which would have been banned under the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces treaty.

Earlier this month, Esper said that he would like to begin deploying medium-range missiles near China within a matter of “months.” Once conventional missiles are deployed, those with nuclear warheads will inevitably follow.

The INF treaty was signed on December 8, 1987, between President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, after protracted arms control negotiations. It prohibited the deployment of land-based ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges between 500 and 5,500 kilometers.

The treaty mandated the elimination of intermediate range missiles for the United States, the Soviet Union, and its successor states.



Donald Trump smiles with House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi [Credit: US Air Force]

The United States said that it was withdrawing from the INF in response to Russia’s development of the Novator 9M729 missile, which is based on the earlier SSC-X-4 ground launched cruise missile that the US claimed violated the treaty. Despite the fact that Russia invited the United States to inspect its missile production facilities, the US was unable to seriously substantiate the charges that nominally led it to repudiate the treaty.

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Even as the United States ramps up its plans to develop new nuclear weapons, the US military is stockpiling masses of conventional weapons.

“The Pentagon has boosted spending to significantly increase the quantity of purchases of high-end weapons that would be used in a war against a peer competitor,” wrote Roman Schweizer, in a research note cited by Defense One.

He noted that the Defense Department added \$20 billion in spending for “high-end weapons: \$12.7B for Lockheed, \$6.2B for Raytheon and \$1.2B for Boeing.”

The Pentagon’s free spending was made possible by congressional Democrats, who voted overwhelmingly for the \$738 billion military budget demanded by the Trump administration—the largest Pentagon budget in US history.

In fact, the foundations of Trump’s nuclear build-up were laid by the Obama administration, which initiated a multi-trillion dollar nuclear “modernization” program. Trump has only expanded this basic program, developing it within the framework of the Pentagon’s doctrine of “strategic competition,” and pushing for smaller, more “usable” nuclear weapons.

The *Washington Post* and *New York Times*, the newspapers of Trump’s supposed political opposition, are cheerleaders for the US military buildup.

Earlier this month, *Times* columnist Bret Stephens wrote an op-ed titled “The U.S. Needs More Nukes,” that managed to denounce Ronald Reagan as being soft on Russia for passing the INF treaty in the first place.

The *Times* subsequently carried a letter to the editor rebuking Stephens’s warmongering, by Robert Dodge, the resident of Physicians for Social Responsibility Los Angeles.

“No, the United States does not need new nukes,” Dodge wrote. “New scientific studies have shown that the old paradigm of mutually assured destruction, or MAD, has morphed into SAD, self-assured destruction, inviting global famine from catastrophic climate changes after a small regional nuclear war. Even without a retaliatory strike, our own fate is sealed. There are no winners.”

Dodge’s comments came amid the publication this month of a new study that found that a nuclear war between the United States and a peer nuclear power—in this case Russia—would result in nuclear winter.

The study, published in the *Journal of Geophysical Research: Atmospheres* concluded: “The planet would grow colder due to the huge amount of smoke generated by fires ignited by the atomic blasts—the smoke would cover the entire planet for years, blocking the sun.”

The actions of the United States are precipitating a global arms race with potentially incalculable consequences. Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian president Vladimir Putin, who said last year that anyone who launches a nuclear attack against Russia would go to “hell,” are responding to the American threats with a military build-up of their own. Earlier this month, seven people were killed when a Russian nuclear-powered cruise missile malfunctioned and exploded, in the second Russian nuclear disaster in the span of one month.

23 August 2019