

U.S., Russian weapons pact: handle with care

OUR OPINION: The START II nuclear weapons treaty raises more questions than it answers

The Senate made a move in the right direction by ratifying the "START II" treaty that bans the United States and Russia from having any land-based nuclear weapons with multiple warheads in their arsenals. The vote comes three years after an agreement was reached between the Bush administration and Russia.

We can't throw a party just yet, because Russia's parliament hasn't signed off on the treaty.

Waiting with fingers crossed, U.S. leaders are concerned that if the Russian legislature doesn't ratify the weapons ban before Russian President Boris Yeltsin's term is up in June, ratification could become a Russian political campaign chip, making passage of the deal more difficult.

As is the case with doomsday entities such as nuclear weaponry, even if Russia does sign the agreement, the world won't necessarily be a safer place to live in.

One of the problems with this agreement is that not all of Russia's former satellite states, having recently separated themselves from Mother Russia's control, are included in this arms-reduction deal.

Regions like the Ukraine probably still have nuclear weapons left over from when the Soviet army was in charge. Who is to keep these desperate countries from using these weapons, or from selling or trading them off to a country that will?

It would be next to impossible to have some kind of international team try to inspect all the potential nuclear weapon hiding places throughout the former Soviet Union and Europe. An effort like that would amount to a frustrating and dangerous search for deadly needles in a haystack.

Ever since the war-induced tragedies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the United States and the rest of the world have been trying to put the nuclear "genie" back in the bottle.

Globally, just the opposite is happening.

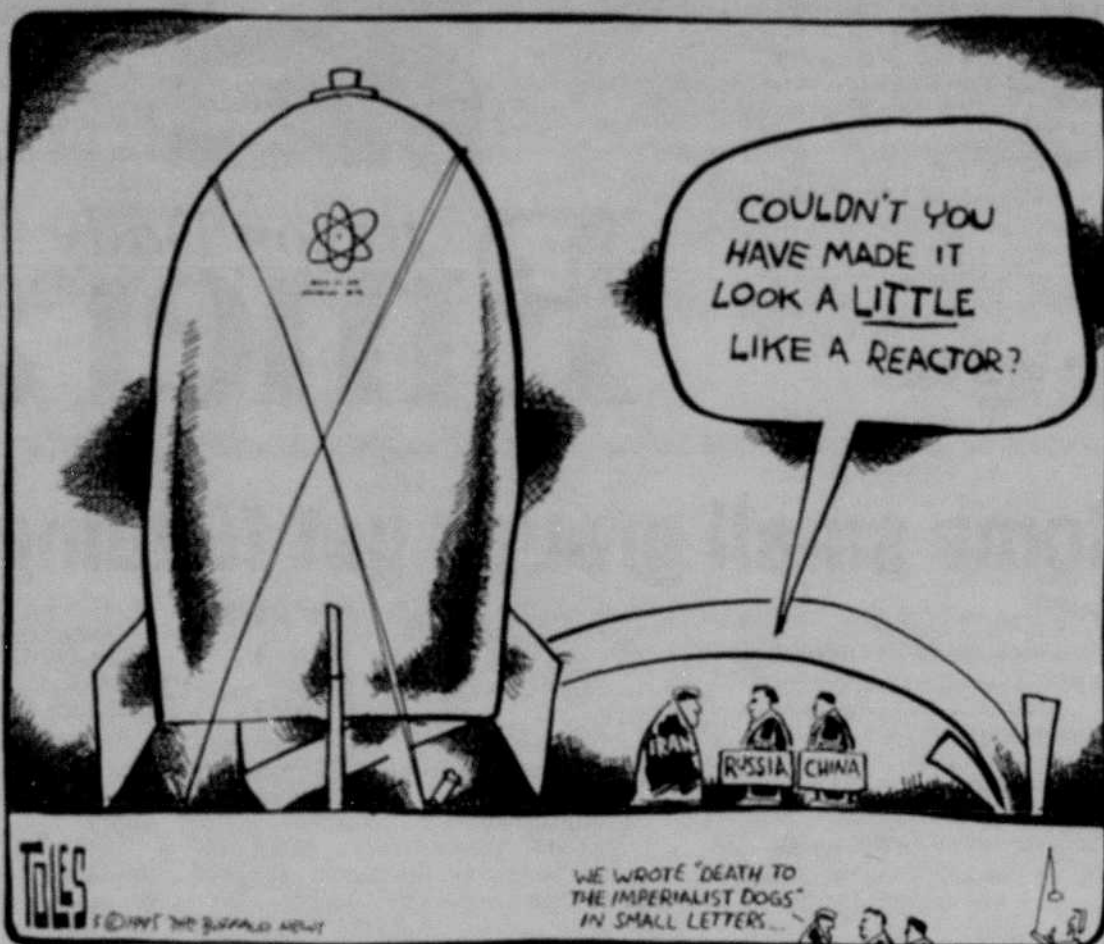
As the United States and Russia work to scale down their nuclear arsenals (even reducing their stockpiles ahead of the START II schedule), nations like France continue to conduct nuclear tests while China, India and Iran are now either fully nuclear capable or in the process of becoming so.

The increasing international fear (especially in this country) is that some wacko terrorist group will finally get a hold of a nuclear device and blow a huge number of innocent people into the next world — all in the service and name of their cause or god.

What if Timothy McVeigh and his heartless, bumbling cohorts had detonated a nuclear bomb outside the Oklahoma City Federal Building?

What if Saddam Hussein had launched a nuclear-tipped Scud missile at Israel during the Gulf War?

These are the kinds of questions the START II treaty begins to address. We can only hope the answers don't arrive too late.



Sober duties for life's drunken delights

"I will make it felony to drink small beer."
—William Shakespeare in Henry VI, Part II

I love beer. I really, really do. And tequila — especially tequila. They are soooooo tasty. They're even better when you're able to share them with a few good friends (or a few hundred good friends, as the case may be). You sit around sipping on a few tasty ones, start feeling good, go do something stupid (e.g., have a yodeling contest), come back, drink some more, get really fuschnickered, talk about anything and everything, do some of that male/female bonding crap, puke and then pass out.

It's great, and then there's the added benefit of having a hangover, which is always a kick in the pants. The only thing that could be more fun would be a full-blown root canal. Of course, there's the ugly side of it, too.

Just go to Guido's on Mug Night. You'll have nightmares for weeks. Bad beer and drunken greeds — you'll think you've died and gone straight to collegiate hell.

But tending bar is my favorite activity. I don't know why; I just get a kick out of it. Perhaps it's because I don't get to do it that often, and so it's kind of a treat. Pouring beer and wine, mixing drinks, bantering with the customers: it's great. I just hate having to cut people off when they have had too much.

You see, there's this little regulation set down by the Oregon Liquor Control Commission (OLCC) that states that a visibly intoxicated person cannot be served. For all the other ways that the OLCC may be a mess of bureaucratic red tape (much like this fine educational establishment), it got one thing right. It denies someone who's drunk more alcohol.

Granted, if you're in your home or the home of a friend, so what? Only your liver cares. But in a public place where you have to find a way home, being bombed out of your mind is more of a factor.

Fortunately, having to cut people off doesn't happen to me that often. But when it does, it's almost always the same — whoever gets cut off gets indignant as hell.

They demand (rather than ask) to be served another drink. They say they are fine, and they could drive home without a problem.

Maybe. But I doubt it. I tell them "no" again, and they hit the roof. Why do I believe they're intoxicated? What the hell do I know? I'm just some stupid, college kid. "Look at me; I'm perfectly fine."

And then they start in with the sobriety tests. They lean their heads back and start to do the finger-to-nose thing. Their faces are red, and their pupils dilated. They're belligerent and argumentative.

Hmmm. Why, yes. Now that you've insulted my intelligence, questioned my judgment, and

have been an overall unpleasant person, I do believe you are completely sober. Here, have another drink. Cuervo double-shot with a beer chaser followed by a Long Island Iced Tea? Certainly, here you go. No wait. Why not take the whole bottle? You can obviously handle it. What was I thinking? You? drunk? I must have been high on crack.

The primary reason that people who are cut off act the way they do is because they are embarrassed. They've had too much, and they're no longer in control. In most social situations, no one wants to admit that he or she has had too much to drink, much less be told it. Hence, they get embarrassed, indignant and argumentative.

A word of advice: If you're in a situation where you have been cut off, accept it. The more you argue, the less likely it is that you'll get anything from the person serving you. Just be cool; deal with it. Don't make an ass of yourself.

Getting pickled with the guys/gals is fun. If it weren't such a blast, we wouldn't do it. Yes, booze is a social lubricant, and when you're swimming in it, you'll tell people things you normally wouldn't.

Among friends, that isn't such a bad thing. Among a bunch of yahoos you don't know, however, it's not the most brilliant of ideas.

Which leads me to the preachy part. Don't drive drunk. Real plain. Real simple.

Call a friend, a taxi, or the ASUO "Drunk tank" shuttle at 346-0621 (clip it out and put it in your wallet). If you drive while intoxicated, you stand a good chance of either killing yourself or someone else or both.

If you want to kill yourself, do everyone a big favor and go play with a toaster in the bathtub. Also, don't lose control around people you don't know. You never know what kind of sick weirdos might be around.

Many a rapist has attacked a woman who is too drunk to defend herself. Of course, in a perfect world women wouldn't have to worry about defending themselves, but this world is far from perfect. To men: watch out for these women. If they're getting too soused, keep a watchful eye on them just in case.

Enough already with the doom and gloom. Eat, drink and be merry. Very merry. Alcohol can be great fun, but it's also a drug. Don't be an idiot, and don't abuse it.

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