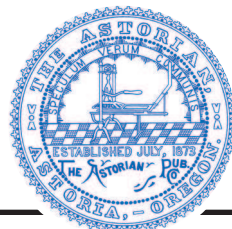


OPINION



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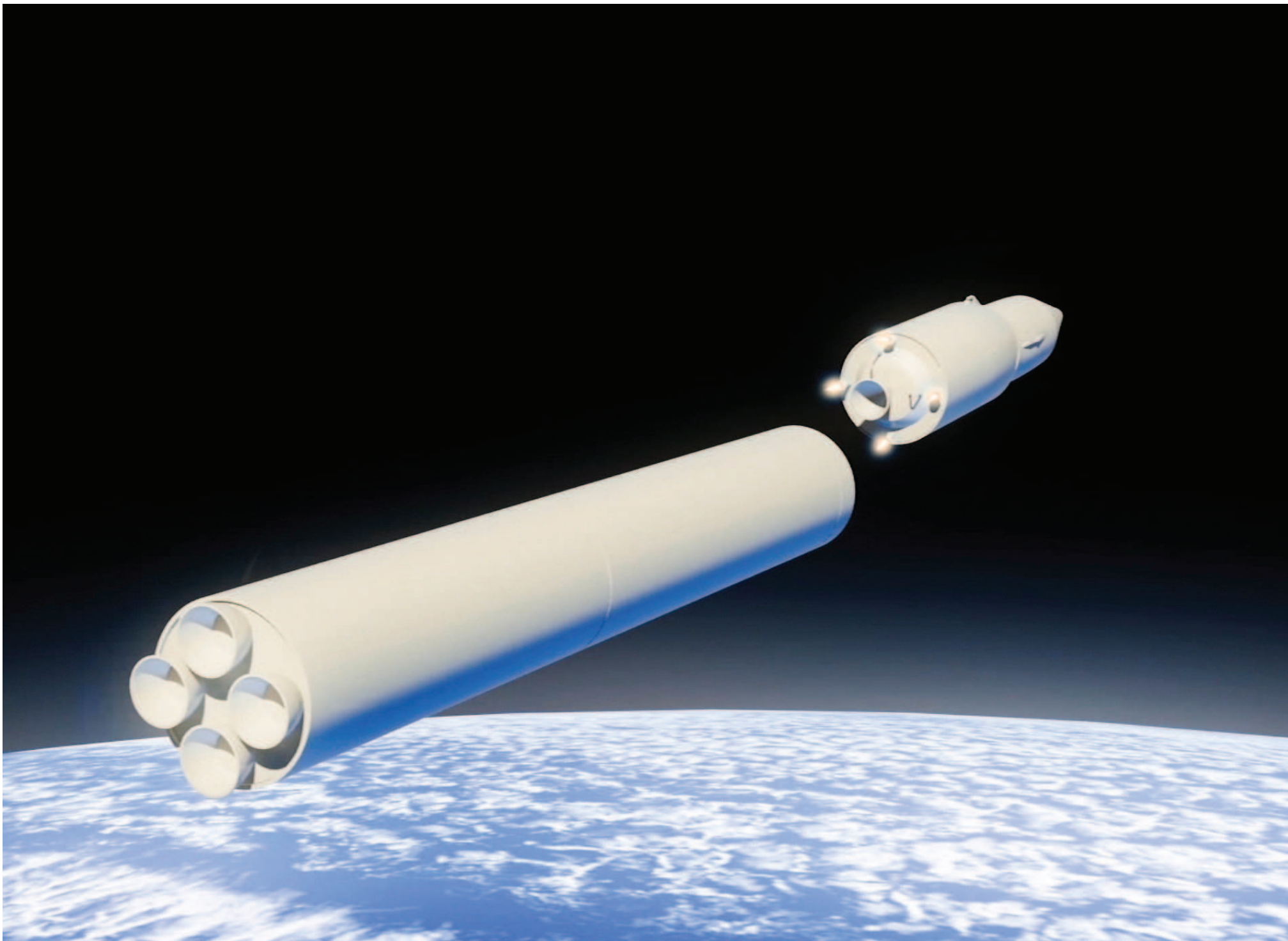
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PRO-CON

Should US beef up its nuclear arsenal?



RU-RTR Russian Television

A computer simulation shows the Avangard hypersonic vehicle being released from booster rockets. Russian President Vladimir Putin boasted about his country's prospective nuclear weapons, saying they are years and even decades ahead of foreign designs.

PRO: America's nuclear force must match Russia's and then some

WASHINGTON — “If you're not moving forward, you're falling behind.” It's a bromide, yes, but undeniably true when talking about the state of our nuclear weapons program.

In this area, America is falling further and further behind our competitors. It leaves us more vulnerable, and the world less safe.

Deterrence remains the surest way to prevent a future nuclear crisis, and that requires modernizing and upgrading America's nuclear arsenal.

President Barack Obama took U.S. nuclear policy in the opposite direction. Deemphasizing the tried and true deterrent model, he took us on a journey on the “road to nuclear zero.”

An early milestone was the U.S. commitment to the new START nuclear agreement with the Russians, which placed limits on the types and numbers of nuclear weapons each country could have.

It was one of the most lopsided pacts in history. Only the U.S. had to cut its arsenal. The Russians could build more — which, in fact, they did. The supposed “denuclearization” agreement actually resulted in more nuclear weapons — only all of the new ones were Russian.

Further, the agreement did not cover tactical nuclear weapons where the Russians already had an overwhelming advantage.

The Russians went on to cheat under another pact, the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty, by introducing a new class of nuclear weapons.

Again, Obama opted to lead the way to denuclearization by doing nothing. The result: Putin's arsenal became even larger and more diverse, threatening the delicate balance of deterrent power.

Eventually, even Obama recognized the imprudence of allowing Russian nuclear might to go unchecked and started a modest modernization program of our triad of nuclear delivery systems — air, land and sea.

Under President Donald Trump, America took an off-ramp from the road to zero. The official U.S. Nuclear Posture Review called for a robust upgrade of our nuclear deterrent and negotiating arms control agreements from a position of strength.

The Trump administration withdrew from INF because of Russian cheating and signaled it might not renew the new START when that agreement expires.

This puts the administration on a collision course with the new chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.). He wants the administration to “redo” the Nuclear Posture Review, trash its modernization plans and forget about upgrading the triad.

This is not a case of Smith just wanting to “do the opposite” of Trump or feeling nostalgia for the road to zero. He is a long-standing critic of U.S. nuclear policy and the 12-year, \$1.2 trillion price tag to modernize it.

The problem is that Smith is stuck in the rose-colored mindset of the post-Cold War era when folks thought nuclear competition was over and done. It's not.

The great power competition between the U.S. and Russia is back, and nuclear rivalry is part of it. Stability will come from strength not weakness.

That's the lesson of the last decade. While we walked back the U.S. nuclear deterrent, both Russia and China accelerated.

In showing strength now, Washington won't be starting a new arms race. It's already started, with Moscow in the lead. But by getting back in the race, Washington may get the other competitors to back down.

At a bare minimum we should modernize all elements of triad: build the new B-21 bomber; fully deploy the Ohio class submarine and develop the Ground Based Strategic Deterrent, the replacement for the aging Minuteman intercontinental ballistic missile.

The U.S. should also pursue low nuclear yield submarine-launched ballistic and cruise missile capabilities, and continue investing in nuclear infrastructure and the capacity test nuclear weapons, if needed.

Like it or not, we live in an age of nuclear proliferation. “Peace through strength” remains the best path forward, and strength requires both a deterrent nuclear force and effective missile defenses.

James Jay Carafano is a 25-year Army veteran and vice president of Defense and Foreign Policy Studies at The Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank.



James Carafano

CON: Scrap nuclear arms race, use money to benefit people on both sides

COLUMBUS, Ohio — In December, Russia tested a new weapons delivery system that it calls Avangard.

Launched by a rocket, a vehicle that could carry a nuclear payload detaches and glides back to earth at 20 times the speed of sound.

In major fanfare accompanying the test, Russian President Vladimir Putin claimed that the system can evade any existing missile defenses.

In a document titled “Nuclear Posture Review” that it released last February, the Trump administration made its case for mass spending to keep ahead of Russia on nuclear weapons.

The document stated that Russia would “deploy new nuclear warheads and launchers” as part of a “complete modernization of its nuclear arsenal.”

The Trump administration, as stated in the review, plans to continue a nuclear modernization plan initiated by the Obama administration.

Obama's plan was no small potatoes, calling for over a trillion dollars in expenditures over the next 30 years.

Trump also wants to develop several pricy new nuclear weapons systems: a submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) and a new nuclear submarine-launched cruise missile (SLCM).

Trump's review acknowledges that the upgrade costs are “substantial,” coming to 6.4 percent of the overall defense budget.

The Arms Control Association, a Washington-based think tank, reports its own projection of the cost as much higher. The Congressional Budget Office, which has also weighed in on the issue, agrees on a much higher likely price tag.

The Obama projections plus the Trump add-ons envisage expenditures well above what Russia is spending. The policy question today is whether the United States should commit to these expenditures.

The answer the Trump administration does not want to hear is a resounding “No.” But that is the answer it needs to hear. We should not keep upping the ante with Russia.

It takes two to wage an arms race, and we, unfortunately, have given

impetus to Russia.

That is hardly of Trump's doing alone. The Obama administration tickled the Russian bear in 2016 by installing a ground-based missile defense system in Romania, supposedly to deter rogue states in the Middle East. But Russia saw it as a threat, calling it an “attempt to destroy the strategic balance” in Europe.

At the same time, Obama was pushing NATO activities closer to the Russian border. In 2017 U.S. and other NATO-country forces began regular deployments in eastern European countries that used to be part of the Soviet Union. Again, Russia took our action as a threat.

A few months ago Trump said that the United States will withdraw from the Intermediate Nuclear Force treaty, a 1987 agreement with Russia that has kept both countries from deploying nuclear missiles in Europe for the last 30 years.

Trump says that the withdrawal is a response to Russian violations of that treaty, but the withdrawal fuels Russian trepidations.

While Russia and the United States are far and away the countries with most of the world's nuclear weapons, the U.S.-Russia tension is not the only element in the overall nuclear weapon picture.

We are trying to force Iran to forgo developing nukes. Iran is a party, as are we, to the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which aims at dissuading non-nuclear states from acquiring nuclear weapons.

As an incentive to non-nuclear powers to stay on the sidelines, the treaty includes a pledge by the nuclear powers to reduce their existing nuclear arsenals. By building up instead of down, we undermine our message to Iran.

Nor does our build-up help as we ask other countries to pressure North Korea to scrap its incipient nuclear arsenal.

Both Russia and the United States are wasting billions that could be put to better use improving the lives of their populations. The only sure outcome of an arms race is that there are no winners.

John B. Quigley is distinguished professor of law at The Ohio State University.



John Quigley