

Soviet Union Accused Of Treaty Violations

The Administration has repeated earlier charges but declined to accuse the Soviets of preparing a national ABM defense

IN a report that has been held up for several weeks by interagency squabbling, the Reagan Administration has reiterated accusations that the Soviet Union has violated several arms control agreements. The report seems to have few fans, however.

Officials in the U.S. Department of Defense are unhappy because they failed to persuade the White House to include new charges. The private Arms Control Association

is upset because it says the report contains accusations that rest on "old and largely discredited or irrelevant assertions." And the Soviet newspaper *Izvestia* has, perhaps predictably, called the document "irresponsible."

The report, an annual compilation of Administration concerns about Soviet treaty compliance, complains of a "continuing pattern" of violations and says that the Soviets have "made no real progress toward meeting

our concerns." All the allegations were made in previous years' reports; for the first time, this edition contains no new charges.

The Defense Department wanted a serious new charge included, however. For several weeks, DOD officials have been trying to persuade the White House to accuse the Soviets of violating the 1972 Antiballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty by preparing a nationwide ABM defense (*Science*, 30 January, p. 524). But the State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency fought this move, arguing that intelligence data do not support such an accusation. They prevailed. The report stops short of an outright charge, suggesting instead that the Soviet Union "may be preparing an ABM defense of its national territory" (emphasis added). This was the language used in previous reports.

Some arms control experts argue that even this goes well beyond the evidence, however. In an analysis of the report, the Arms Control Association says that the allegations of noncompliance with the ABM Treaty are, with one exception, "old issues of marginal military significance, based on contentious interpretations of the treaty language and the available data."

The one exception is the infamous Krasnoyarsk radar, which is situated in central Siberia rather than on the Soviet coast, where the treaty says such facilities should be built. There is near unanimity in the West that the radar is a clear-cut violation and on 17 February, the U.S. Senate passed a resolution calling on the Soviets to dismantle it.

The Defense Department has argued that the Krasnoyarsk radar, along with eight similar large radars around the periphery of the Soviet Union—three of which were detected by American spy satellites for the first time last year—form part of a potential ballistic missile tracking network. DOD officials have also raised concerns, which are echoed in the Administration's report, that the Soviet Union has tested smaller ABM radars that could be assembled in a matter of months. This could violate a ban on mobile ABM systems, DOD says. Moreover, the report notes that the Soviets have tested antiaircraft systems in conjunction with ABM defenses, a move that could be designed to give them some capability to intercept incoming warheads. The report acknowledges that there is insufficient evidence to judge whether these activities violate the ABM Treaty, but says they are further evidence that the Soviet Union may be preparing a nationwide ABM defense.

The State Department is said to have argued that these developments do not lead to that conclusion. Aside from the Krasnoyarsk radar, all the large phased-array radars around the Soviet Union are early-warning

Denmark OK's Radar

The Danish Parliament has decided not to oppose the current upgrading of the U.S. early-warning radar system at Thule in Greenland, a move the Soviet Union has claimed would be in violation of the Antiballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty of 1972 (*Science*, 30 January, p. 525). However, the Parliament has stipulated that the radar should not be used as part of an ABM system or in connection with the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI).

The United States is replacing an old mechanically steered radar at Thule with a large phased-array radar. The Soviet Union and some U.S. arms control experts have argued that this would violate a provision in the ABM Treaty that seeks to limit construction of new early-warning large phased-array radars to the periphery of the United States and the Soviet Union.

The Danish decision, which is binding on the government, took the form of a resolution passed on 5 March by 103 votes to 2 in the Folketing, the Parliament in Copenhagen. The resolution stated that the radar system should not be used offensively, and that the authorities of both Denmark and Greenland—for whose foreign policy Denmark is responsible—should be "informed" about any developments at Thule.

"We are probably ready to accept the upgrading to a phased-array system, but we want to make sure that one day we are not suddenly told that now it is to be used for an ABM system or for SDI," Lasse Budtz, a leading defense spokesman of the opposition Social Democratic Party, said in a telephone interview last week.

The Parliamentary resolution also urged the United States and the Soviet Union to come to a common understanding on the status of the Thule station under the ABM Treaty, while requiring the Danish government to keep to a "strict interpretation" of the treaty in its negotiations with the United States and within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Danish Foreign Minister Uffe Elleman-Jensen said during the Parliamentary debate that the government currently believes that the upgrading of the radar facility at Thule was not in conflict with the ABM Treaty.

"We are insisting that the superpowers come to an agreement on which are the stations that are violating the ABM," says Budtz, pointing out that the government had supported the resolution even though the conservative majority had abstained in a vote last year rejecting Danish participation in the SDI research program.

"Since the treaty was signed by the two superpowers, it is they who must decide on its interpretation." ■ DAVID DICKSON

facilities that are in permitted locations. Indeed, at the insistence of the State Department, the report specifically acknowledges that fact. The Arms Control Association also notes that even the illegal Krasnoyarsk radar is not well suited to a role in an ABM system. Like the other early-warning radars, it is highly vulnerable to direct attack and operates at a frequency that renders it susceptible to blackout. It appears to be an early-warning radar in a proscribed location.

The Arms Control Association also points out that only about six of the smaller ABM radars that DOD claims can quickly be erected at ABM sites are known to have been built (all of them at permitted test sites) and several have recently been dismantled. The radars would take many weeks to construct, which scarcely makes them "mobile" under the terms of the treaty, the association says. In addition, the simultaneous testing of anti-aircraft and ABM systems took place in the 1970s and early 1980s, and the United States and Soviet Union reached an understanding in 1985 that would prohibit such activities in the future. "These items simply do not add up to a 'base' for a nationwide ABM defense," the association says.

The Administration's report also repeats a controversial charge made last year concerning nuclear testing. It says that some Soviet tests are "likely" violations of the 1974 Threshold Test Ban Treaty because they appear to have exceeded the 150-kiloton limit specified by the treaty.

This charge has been contested by several seismologists, however, who argue that a variety of seismic factors lead to overestimates of explosions at the Soviet test site. As a result, the Central Intelligence Agency last year revised its estimates of Soviet explosive yields downward by some 20% and in recent congressional testimony, Roger Batzel of the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory said that the Soviets "appear to be observing some yield limit. Livermore's best estimate of this yield limit . . . is that it is consistent with [Threshold Test Ban Treaty] compliance." The Administration's report acknowledges that this reassessment is in process, but says that until the analysis is complete, its charge of likely treaty violations will stand.

Most of the other accusations in the report are restatements of last year's charges, and many of them revolve around interpretations of treaty language that is not crystal clear. As for allegations of breaches of the SALT I and SALT II agreements, the Administration says they are now moot because the United States itself has decided that it will no longer comply with the treaties. ■

COLIN NORMAN

When Nunn Speaks . . .

When Senator Sam Nunn (D-GA) speaks on military affairs, people listen. Last week, the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee spoke three times on the Senate floor about the 1972 Antiballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, and he gained an international audience.

In measured southern tones, Nunn savaged the Administration's recent attempts to reinterpret the treaty in a way that would permit extensive development and testing of space-based missile defenses. He argued that when the Senate ratified the treaty it clearly did so on the understanding that it prohibited such activities. He also argued that the classified negotiating record itself contradicts the Administration's reinterpretation of the treaty, and noted that the Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations all worked on the understanding that anything beyond research on strategic defenses is prohibited. If the Administration adopts its new interpretation, it would have "profoundly disturbing constitutional implications," Nunn warned. The White House has so far made no detailed response.

Nunn's analysis, which is based on his personal perusal of the negotiating record and the Senate ratification debates, is likely to play a key role in the development of President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). The Administration has been considering accelerating the schedule for some SDI tests that would contravene a strict interpretation of the treaty, and has therefore been debating whether to move to the new, more permissive interpretation. Nunn has now served notice that such a move would prompt a major fight with Congress.

The debate centers on what types of development and testing of ABM systems are permitted by the treaty. Until recently, there was general agreement that the treaty allowed development and testing of fixed, land-based missile defenses but prohibited such work on mobile systems or on systems that would be based in space. But in October 1985, the Administration announced that it had reviewed the treaty and concluded that it applies only to technologies that were "current" in the early 1970s, when the pact was negotiated. New technologies developed since that time could be worked on to the point of actual deployment without violating the treaty, the Administration said. A furor greeted this announcement, and the Administration consequently said it would continue to abide by the traditional strict interpretation while reserving the right to adopt its new reading at any time. It recently suggested that the time may have come.

Nunn has concluded that the Administration's legal defense of its reading of the treaty distorts the record and resulted from a "fundamentally flawed" procedure. The State Department's legal counsel, Abraham Sofaer, who was primarily responsible for the reinterpretation "had not conducted a rigorous study of the Senate ratification proceedings or the record of U.S. and Soviet practices . . . [and] made no effort to interview any principal ABM negotiator," Nunn said. "To say that this is a woefully inadequate foundation for a major policy and legal change is a vast understatement," Nunn remarked.

Nunn concluded by noting that last year General James Abrahamson, the director of the SDI program, told Congress that no tests that would contravene even a strict interpretation of the treaty were planned before the early 1990s. He therefore said the Armed Services Committee requires an analysis of any changes in that assessment before it votes on the SDI program's budget for next year. Moreover, he said, "It is important for us to know that we are getting an analysis by scientists and not ideologists who have an agenda that has nothing to do with the technology and the tests at hand." ■ C.N.

