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Remarks at the Warsaw Workshop
"Prospects for information sharing and confidence building
on non-strategic nuclear weapons in Europe"
Warsaw, 7-8 February, 2013

**RUSSIAN APPROACH
TO NON-STRATEGIC NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND CONFIDENCE BUILDING
PROSPECTS**

I would like to share my views on 4 major topics: first, functional definitions of TNW (why not NSNW); second, ways of counting them; third, when we could start TART (tactical arms reduction talks), and, finally, practical suggestions.

1. FINDING PROPER DEFINITIONS WILL BE DIFFICULT

There are several major objective obstacles erected en route leading to reduction of non-strategic nuclear weapons (NSNW) or tactical nuclear weapons (TNW) and prospects for information sharing about the numbers, location and the status of the TNW and the respective CBMs related to them.

There are 7 different words describing TNW, carefully cataloged by a colleague of ours – so to say descriptive definitions. Probably, one more can be added – "operational tactical". But what is final verdict? In the US Senate Resolution of Ratification on New START there are two definitions of NSNW/TNW in the same sentence concerning potential talks: "nonstrategic (tactical) nuclear weapons" and simply "tactical nuclear weapons".¹ In Russian military political vocabulary you may find both options on an equal footing.

In this context this kind of weapon is a unique one: while the SOA and INF nuclear weapons have a clear-cut, internationally-recognized definitions, the TNW **is a three-headed weapon**, depending on by what kind of carriers it is being delivered to a target (**slide 2**). Some experts carefully bypass this fact. But this is very important factor, because free-fall nuclear bombs can be brought to the targets not by a magic button, but by specific carrier – an aircraft.

So, on one hand, according to definition by exclusion (minus SOA and INF weapons), TNW is a kind of weapon that can be delivered from 0 to 500 km.

But, on the other, **it could be called "intermediate weapon"** (medium and shorter range weapon under the INF Treaty provisions), if it is transported by a contemporary fighter-bomber at a distance up to 2,500-3,000 km (without refueling).

There is also the third option in the quest of proper term – **it can be identified as "strategic" weapon**, if it is on board of two types of heavy strategic bombers flying with the maximum range of 11,000 km without refueling or 18,000 km with air-to-air refueling as a part of traditional strategic offensive nuclear triad.

¹ The US Congressional Record. December 22, 2010. S.10982.

E.g. three types of the US "tactical" gravity nuclear bombs of various B-61 modifications can be carried by the US B-2A and B-52H strategic bombers (up to 16 pieces per bomber). These bombs are specifically called in the Pentagon and the US State Department as "strategic" weapon.² **(slide 2)**. Some of them even have more nuclear yield than real strategic nuclear warheads.

So, it should be reasonable "to call a spade a spade" – tactical nuclear weapons as "tactical", and not as "non-strategic" one, because if we agree with "non-strategic" term, we may pretend that in this case "strategic" tactical nuclear weapon does not exist – but it really does, and in any future TART we have to take into account all TN bombs delivered by strategic bombers (currently, under the New START they are counted as 1 unit).

2. COUNTING TNW BEFORE TART (TACTICAL ARMS REDUCTION TALKS)?

The **second unique feature** of the TNW is that no nuclear-weapon state has ever exchanged official information on them. There are no such precedents to do so **before** any nuclear arms control talks held by the USA and Russia. Moscow is not ready to do this in terms with the TNW. There is an impression that Washington is also not ready to disclose information on the size and the location of its own TNW – either on the continental USA or in Europe.³ There is another reason, why the two sides will not count them before any official negotiations commence between Moscow and Washington. This reason is prudence: what, if these talks collapse, but the highly secured figures have been already disclosed to the general public?

Nevertheless, when the necessity arises, any potential counting of the TNW should be done on the official bases – by the respective military and diplomatic agencies, and during TART. No NGOs or prominent personalities can be invited to count TNW. The relevant data exchange, e.g. between Russia and the USA has to be made public after they reach the relevant accord, thus using the counting precedent of the INF Treaty between them or SOA talks. While counting, the sides have to take into account SLEP and modernization plans for the TNW as well, and count them on a global scale, not regionally, specifying both operationally deployed and operationally non-deployed weapons – in 'a big pot'.⁴ **(slide 3)**.

3. NO TART, NO TNW CBMS UNTIL...

The TNW has another unique feature: there had not been so far any official talks on them between 'de jure' and 'de facto' nuclear-weapon states.

² U.S. Nuclear Weapons Stockpile Life Extension Programs. Bureau of Arms Control, Verification and Compliance. Fact Sheet. January 3, 2013.

³ A Problem Deferred? NATO's Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons After Chicago. The Whitehall Report 4-12//Ed. by Chalmers H., Chalmers M. and Berger A. RUSI, 2012, p.11.

⁴ The US B-61 TNW are currently undergoing a modernization through a 30-year LEP, providing them with new technical features, including enhanced penetration capabilities to destroy hardened targets. It seems that the role of these TNW will not be changed significantly in the future, with the NATO's DDRP stating that the Alliance is seeking only to '**create conditions** ... for further reductions of the NSWS' – a very reserved wording for any nuclear arms control, because these conditions and timeframes for further cuts have not been elaborated so far. By the way, this formula applies not to all NATO member-states, but only to the NPG – minus France.

Many scholars understand Russian stance on the TNW in the right way: the Russian Federation will **not** agree to downsize its TNW or to elaborate the relevant confidence-building or transparency measures:

- *first*, until the USA, in a good-will gesture **withdraw all its TNW from Europe to the continental US** and dismantle all TNW-related infrastructure on the European continent and the Asian part of Turkey – prior to the beginning of the TART with Russia – thus creating equal starting positions for any potential TART;
- *second*, until the USA in the spirit of cooperation **will cancel entirely its 2, 3 and 4 stages of the EPAA , and especially agree not deploy the BMD assets close to Russian borders** – also prior to the beginning of the TART with Russia. **(slide 4)**.⁵ Please, look at this map – it is an impressive one, we can not turn a blind eye to this situation.

The US TNW and BMDS are “forward based weapons” deployed very close to the Russian territory, and therefore are threatening its national security, partly today. By the way, the US/NATO ‘dual-key’ TNW in Europe is a ‘dual-track’ violation of the NPT – by the USA as a supplier of TNW to non-nuclear states, and by non-nuclear states as the ‘recipients’ of the US TNW on their territories.

These two types of weapons (TNW and BMDS) are operationally and strategically linked with conventional forces of the transatlantic alliance – the relevant decision has been made at the NATO Summit in Chicago in May 2012 that has forged a **qualitatively new “Chicago Triad” – an “appropriate mix” of nuclear, conventional and missile defense weapons** that might be used together as synchronized mechanism in Europe and outside it – actually, on a global scale **(slide 5)**.

For better understanding Russia’s view on TNW it is important to note that while earlier – before the EPAA was announced September 17, 2009 at Diplomatic Receptions Room of the White House by President Barack Obama – Russian TNW was regarded as a **compensation for supremacy of the West in conventional forces**. Since that time Russian TNW acquired an extra mission: it also **offsets the growing disparities existing in the BMDS** between Moscow and Washington in terms of quantities and the geographical distribution: Russia does not deploy its missile defense close to the US shores, while the USA in relation to Russia – still do.

The potential use of the US TNW is regulated by the offensive nuclear doctrine – “the extended nuclear deterrence” – a part of the US general nuclear deterrence doctrine that presupposes the first use of this weapon in a “pre-emptive and preventive nuclear strikes” while protecting their non-nuclear allies with ‘nuclear umbrella’ **(slide 6)**.

The NATO DDPR or Deterrence and Defense Posture Review also states that BMDS can complement nuclear deterrence. An important factor: Russia has not participated in the drafting the EPAA, NATO Action plan on BMD deployment and the Rules of Engagement for the use of BMDS. The current US sea-based BMD assets constitute though a limited, but nevertheless a real threat to Russia’s security interests – whatever **political assurances** are given to Moscow. With the increased production of SM-3 interceptors in the USA (nearly 700 by 2020; THAAD interceptors are not counted here), improvement of their engines and pin-point

⁵ See: Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev’s interview to CNN, 27 January 2013//<http://правительство.рф/docs/22547/>.

accuracies plus enlargement of their distances such a threat to my country will increase proportionally.

For these multifaceted reasons mentioned above it is also **impossible to repeat once again the 1991 US-Russia unilateral initiatives** to withdraw their most TNW warheads from deployment or to pool back Russian TNW capabilities from the areas adjacent to the EU or NATO member-states.

Even such CBMs as relocation and de-mating of nuclear warheads from the TNW can not be considered. A general remark in this case: in conventional forces there is a possibility to elaborate CBMs without reducing them. A reminder: naval CBMs have been developed and launched a long time ago, while Eastern and Western Navies have not been reduced at all: a classical example in this case are INCSEA accords (incidents-at-sea prevention agreements) involving a dozen of Navies. But in the nuclear sphere nuclear CBMs can be implemented only after the relevant reduction accords have been reached. A suitable example in this domain – INCSUB talks between the USA and Russia in mid 90s – the talks that were supposed to avoid collisions of their SSBNs and SSNs during patrol missions while submerged. The US negotiators refused to reach an accord by eloquently saying that they did not want to draw grids in the World Oceans. But their behind-the scene explanation *de facto* looked differently: they simply did not want to change their nuclear strategy.

To wind up: “Russia should not be dragged into the discussion aimed at elimination of its TNW”, said Vladimir Putin in Sarov city, February 24, 2012 Besides this formula, there some other objective hindrances down the road leading to TART. **(slide 7)**.

The other views – 180 degrees opposite (to start TART and to launch TNW CBMs) – expressed by many experts will not be able to change Russia’s national stance on TNW. Their major setback is that they neglect two objective factors dealt with the TNW: deployment of the US TNW *per se* and US BMDS in Europe added to their value. But TNW is not an abstract, virtual vision.

Nevertheless, the academic debates on TNW issues should continue at various levels and in any suitable format – the exchange of views in this domain is needed and is highly welcomed. Such discussions are gradually raising an intellectual capital: “В спорах рождается истина» or: “Disputes produce the verity”. It is obvious: sometimes NGOs and individual researches create more practical ideas than officials. In the democratic societies it is normal.

4. PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

Instead of trying to resuscitate the “reset”, which has turned out to be counter-productive and has yielded only limited results, Russia and the USA should – to continue the IT metaphor – not only change the “hard disk” and the “matrix”, but upgrade the entire “operational system”. They should do this, especially in the nuclear, space, missile defense and conventional arms control.

Before new START and TART commence, Russia and the three Western nuclear powers could elaborate very substantial confidence-building measures (CBMs) in the nuclear sphere – **by transitioning** from their first-ever nuclear confidence-building measure agreement reached in the 1990s on de-targeting their nuclear missiles towards **a more radical nuclear CBMs in 2013: namely, to a pledge not to use nuclear weapons in a first strike against each other** – embracing both TNW and strategic offensive nuclear arms **(slide 8)**. This could be

really significant nuclear CBM. Other nuclear CBMs are second-rate or subsequent CBMs that can be elaborated later.

If the EPAA is cancelled by the USA, Moscow in its turn and on the basis of reciprocity has to repeat its pledge not to deploy its BMD assets close to the American continent. The two sides may even proclaim a number of zones on each other's doorsteps free from their nuclear weapons and missile defense capabilities, thus rendering these measures more legally binding.

Finally, while concentrating on reduction of nuclear arms on a selective or joint basis (SOA and TNW), the US and Russian leaders should explore how to achieve the most formidable goal – to make the entire world **nuclear-free by the year 2045** (the centenary of US nuclear attack on Hiroshima and Nagasaki) (**slide 9**). Such target date has to be announced. It will help to achieve the goal of making the world nuclear free. It will consolidate the NPT regime. It will send a signal to nuclear-weapon states: why to build more nuclear weapons, if at the end of the day they will be scrapped for good.

All these positive measures are practical steps, and therefore require practical solutions to be found by Washington and Moscow. If these steps are implemented, the entire world would no doubt assess them in a very positive light. Such steps would symbolize that the words of two great powers have been converted into practical deeds, thus consolidating global security to the benefits of all.

Once upon a time Abraham Lincoln used to observe that he always won victories over his enemies by making them his friends. So, US/NATO TNW and BMDS in Europe will never make Russia as their true friend, if these systems are still fielded on the European continent to the detriment of our relations. If the relevant decisions are reconsidered, this would be a solid proof that the two nuclear superpowers really have changed their "hard disks" and upgraded the entire "operational system", despite the continued chill in their mutual relations, which fall well short of a "strategic partnership". But if the words remain empty words, the locomotive will stand still near the same station called "Stagnation" or "Deadlock".

I believe that, given their enormous responsibility for maintaining a strategic equilibrium on the global scale, Moscow and Washington have little choice but to seek to reshape bilateral relations on a qualitatively new, innovative ground. All Russians have such a dream. I have the same dream either.