



BI-WEEKLY TREATY REVIEW



09 September – 22 September 2008

DTRA

ARMS CONTROL (GENERAL)

United States Backs Off Civilian Nuclear Pact with Russia

The New York Times, 9 September 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/>

The Bush administration formally withdrew an agreement for civilian nuclear cooperation with Russia from congressional consideration on Monday [September 8]. (829 words)

[Click here for full text.](#)

CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION (CWC)

Colorado Dismisses Risk of Delays Due to Chem Demil Litigation

Superfund Report, 22 September 2008, accessed via Lexis Nexis

As a dispute between Colorado and the Defense Department (DoD) over chemical weapons destruction escalates... a Colorado state attorney general source maintains the litigation is not expected to cause delays in destruction of chemical weapons in Pueblo, CO...]. (828 words)

[Click here for full text.](#)

CLUSTER MUNITIONS

Cluster Bomb Campaign Targets Balkans

Associated Press Worldstream, 19 September 2008, accessed via Lexis Nexis

Seven southeast European countries reaffirmed their commitment Friday [September 19] to sign a global treaty this year banning the production and use of cluster bombs. (267 words)

[Click here for full text.](#)

COMPREHENSIVE NUCLEAR TEST-BAN TREATY (CTBT)

CTBTO Signs Tsunami Warning Arrangements with Australia and the Philippines

M2 PressWIRE, 12 September 2008, accessed via Lexis Nexis

The Philippines signed a tsunami warning agreement today [September 12] with the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO). (536 words) [Click here for full text.](#)



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BI-WEEKLY TREATY REVIEW



09 September – 22 September 2008

DTRA

INTEGRATED SAFEGUARDS

Iran Blocks Probe of Alleged Atom Bomb Work: IAEA

Reuters, 15 September 2008, <http://www.reuters.com/>

Iran has stymied a U.N. inquiry into whether it covertly researched how to make an atom bomb while steadily expanding uranium enrichment in defiance of international demands, a nuclear watchdog report said on Monday [September 15]. (642 words) [Click here for full text.](#)

North Korea Asks IAEA to Remove Seals from Facilities

AFP, 22 September 2008, <http://news.google.com/>

North Korea has asked the U.N. atomic watchdog to remove seals and surveillance equipment from its Yongbyon nuclear plant, IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei said on Monday [September 22]. (336 words) [Click here for full text.](#)

OPEN SKIES TREATY

Belarus, Russia to Exchange Military Inspectors with NATO Members

Interfax-AVN, 22 September 2008, accessed via Open Source Center

While [the] U.S. and Czech military will inspect Russia and Belarus, military inspectors from Belarus will visit one of Lithuanian formations, a spokesperson for the Defense Ministry told Interfax. (143 words) [Click here for full text.](#)

OTTAWA CONVENTION

MACA Hands Over 17 Sites of Cleared Land to Eight Communities

Pajhwok Afghan News, 21 September 2008, accessed via Lexis Nexis

To commemorate the International Peace Day celebrations the Mine Action Center for Afghanistan (MACA) in partnership with the Department of Mine Clearance (DMC) officially handed over lands cleared of mines and Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) to the people of Bamyan. (319 words) [Click here for full text.](#)

 [back to top](#)

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BI-WEEKLY TREATY REVIEW



09 September – 22 September 2008

DTRA

PROLIFERATION SECURITY INITIATIVE

ROK Official Says ROK to Send Observer Delegation to PSI Exercise

Seoul Yonhap, 14 September 2008, accessed via Lexis Nexis

South Korea will participate in the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) interdiction training exercise to be held in New Zealand this week as an observer, officials said Sunday [September 14]. (288 words) [Click here for full text.](#)

International Exercise Looks for Weapons of Mass Destruction

New Zealand Press Association, 15 September 2008, accessed via Lexis Nexis

Weapons of mass destruction (WMD) are on the hit list for New Zealand Customs and the military today [September 15] as ships from several nations patrol the Hauraki Gulf. (319 words) [Click here for full text.](#)

FULL TEXT OF BI-WEEKLY ARTICLES FOLLOWS:

[back to top](#)

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BI-WEEKLY TREATY REVIEW



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DTRA

United States Backs Off Civilian Nuclear Pact with Russia

The New York Times, 9 September 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/>

The Bush administration formally withdrew an agreement for civilian nuclear cooperation with Russia from congressional consideration on Monday [September 8].

"The president has notified Congress that he has today rescinded his prior determination regarding the U.S.-Russia agreement for peaceful nuclear cooperation," the State Department said in a prepared statement. "We make this decision with regret."

The step is the most meaningful show of displeasure the United States has yet made over Russia's military action in Georgia. But it stops short of the more aggressive measures that some have proposed.

The White House has stepped up economic aid to Georgia, but it has so far ruled out providing military assistance. Similarly, the White House has not sought to impose economic sanctions against Russia or to revoke its membership in the Group of Eight, despite the strong warnings that American officials issued as the crisis was unfolding that Russia would face consequences for its actions.

Withdrawing the pact from congressional consideration is a less definitive step than canceling it; withdrawal leaves open the possibility that this administration or a successor could resubmit the agreement to Congress if tensions subside. And the pact's chances of winning approval any time soon had already grown cloudy.

"After Russia's invasion of Georgia, it's not appropriate at this time" to go ahead with the pact, a senior administration official said earlier on Monday, discussing the agreement on grounds of anonymity because the official announcement of the withdrawal had not yet been made.

The announcement came the same day that a European delegation in Moscow said it had received Russian reassurances concerning Georgia and its intentions there.

The withdrawal of the pact, which was submitted to Congress in May, could cost Russia billions of dollars in potential earnings, but will also unravel a program that is central to President George W. Bush's hopes of safely spreading the use of civilian nuclear energy.

The agreement would have cleared the way for extensive commercial nuclear trade, technology transfers and joint nuclear research between the two countries. And it would have allowed

 [back to top](#)

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BI-WEEKLY TREATY REVIEW



09 September – 22 September 2008

DTRA

Russia to move forward with the lucrative business of importing, storing and possibly reprocessing spent nuclear fuel from U.S.-supplied reactors around the world.

“The Russians have some very ambitious goals in developing their civilian nuclear reactor export industry,” said Andrew Kuchins, director of the Russia and Eurasia Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, “and to get to some of the newer markets, they have to have the United States stamp of approval.”

Michael O’Hanlon, a national security specialist with the Brookings Institution, said the deal should be viewed primarily as a commercial one. “It’s not trivial,” he said, in evaluating the impact of its withdrawal. “But it’s also not the breadbasket of Russia.”

American officials have made clear the depth of their displeasure over Russia’s brief war with Georgia. Vice President Dick Cheney, speaking Saturday at a conference in Italy after visiting Georgia, called Russia’s action an “affront to civilized standards.”

But officials also acknowledge the importance of Russian cooperation with the United States on a range of sensitive topics. Ultimately, the senior administration official said, “the focus is trying to get back to a good relationship.”

The nuclear cooperation agreement had already faced skepticism from American lawmakers who are angry at Russia for, among other things, resisting the imposition of tougher international sanctions on Iran over its nuclear program.

The Russia-Georgia clash in early August appears to have ended any remaining chance it had of passage, at least for now.

“Its chances to pass before August 8 were going to be a challenge, and after August 8 they’re zero,” said Mr. Kuchins. The withdrawal of the accord, he said, is “a recognition of the political reality.”

In a statement, Representative John D. Dingell, the Michigan Democrat and chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee, underlined the depth of congressional skepticism. “Even without Russia’s incursion into Georgia,” he said, “Russian support for Iranian nuclear and missile programs alone is enough to call into question the wisdom of committing to a 30-year agreement to transfer sensitive nuclear technologies and materials to Russia.”

[back to top](#)

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BI-WEEKLY TREATY REVIEW



09 September – 22 September 2008

DTRA

Mr. Dingell said his committee would continue to monitor Russian support for Iranian nuclear programs.

Senator John McCain, the Republican presidential candidate, has angrily denounced the Russian action in Georgia and has called for ousting Russia from the Group of Eight. Mr. McCain also favors blocking Russian aspirations to join the World Trade Organization.

His Democratic rival, Senator Barack Obama, has said that Russia's application to the trade group should be reviewed.

"Unfortunately, the tendency right now on both sides is a strong momentum to kind of throw out the baby with the bathwater," Mr. Kuchins said. "The Russians immediately announced that they're going to not abide by some W.T.O. accession agreements; they've bailed on NATO-Russia cooperation; and we respond by withdrawing the civilian nuclear cooperation agreement. It's a bad action-reaction cycle."

 [back to top](#)

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BI-WEEKLY TREATY REVIEW



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DTRA

Colorado Dismisses Risk of Delays Due to Chem Demil Litigation

Superfund Report, 22 September 2008, accessed via Lexis Nexis

As a dispute between Colorado and the Defense Department (DoD) over chemical weapons destruction escalates—now moving to federal court—a Colorado state attorney general source maintains the litigation is not expected to cause delays in destruction of chemical weapons in Pueblo, CO—one of the last stockpiles in the country slated to be destroyed.

The state is asserting that no delays will occur as a result of the litigation involving hazardous waste requirements, dismissing concerns raised by citizen activists that the legal wrangling runs the risk of impeding progress in the destruction of the weapons at Pueblo Chemical Depot.

The Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment (CDPHE) September 2 filed suit against the Army and Defense Department, asking the U.S. District Court for the District of Colorado to compel the military to destroy stored chemical weapons at Pueblo by December 31, 2017, four years earlier than the current schedule DoD is following, and to comply with other waste requirements listed in a compliance order the state issued in June. The order requires the destruction by 2017 of hundreds of permitted containers of chemical munitions waste and thousands of stockpiled chemical munitions, which are slated to be chemically neutralized on site prior to a secondary treatment that will effectively destroy them.

"Given recurring delays by the Department of Defense for completing treatment and destruction of these wastes, the division is seeking an enforceable schedule for their timely treatment," Gary Baughman, CDPHE hazardous waste division director said in a September 2 statement. "We believe the 2017 deadline is more than reasonable to complete treatment and destruction of the chemical weapons." The complaint is available on insideepa.com. [subscribers only]

The lawsuit comes not long after DoD and the Army appealed the compliance order to Colorado's administrative courts. But the state in filing the lawsuit is effectively bypassing the administrative legal review, and instead is bringing the matter before a federal court to decide.

Colorado issued the order in June after becoming frustrated with continuing schedule delays for the weapons destruction at the depot. The order indicates the depot has long been in violation of state hazardous waste regulations that limit the amount of time hazardous waste may be stored. Both the compliance order and lawsuit would compel the military to file a chemical waste treatment plan for destroying the weapons and agent wastes within 60 days once a final decision is in effect. CDPHE would then delineate certain milestones in the treatment plan as enforceable.

 [back to top](#)

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BI-WEEKLY TREATY REVIEW



09 September – 22 September 2008

DTRA

It is these enforceable interim milestones leading up to the 2017 deadline, not the 2017 deadline itself, that have been a sticking point between the state and military, a Colorado state source has said. While Congress recently established 2017 as a federal legal deadline by which the country's chemical weapons, including those in Colorado, have to be destroyed, Colorado's order and lawsuit, if upheld, would make that 2017 congressional deadline enforceable by the state. DoD is currently reviewing its options to speed stockpile destruction in order to meet the 2017 timeline, rather than its current schedule of 2021, according to a spokeswoman for the DoD program that oversees chemical weapons destruction at Pueblo.

Pueblo falls under DoD's Assembled Chemical Weapons Alternatives (ACWA) program, which is destroying the weapons through neutralization, rather than the traditional incineration method, at two of the Army's stockpile sites. The ACWA program's funding has had a roller-coaster history. Over the past several years, DoD has requested a budget that drastically dipped and then rebounded somewhat, as its level of priority fluctuated. In 2006, then Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld told Congress the United States would not meet the 2012 deadline set by the Chemical Weapons Convention, to which the United States is a party. Less than a year later, the Pentagon announced it would limit budgets for ACWA and stretch out the timeline, costing more in the long-run while bowing to other competing budgetary items. But lawmakers have pushed for shrinking the schedule, along with funding increases—with DoD now weighing how to meet the 2017 deadline.

While environmentalists maintain the legal fight could bring further delays to the program at Pueblo, state sources deny any such result. A spokeswoman for CDPHE says the state "skipped a major delay" by averting the administrative appeals process and going straight to federal court. And the source with the Colorado attorney general's office believes the suit should not prompt delays in destruction. This source says nothing in the lawsuit impedes the ability of ACWA to get the state permits it needs to operate. In fact, the source says the state and ACWA are cooperating in terms of getting the permits for construction and operation of the facility...

In response to the lawsuit, the spokeswoman for DoD's ACWA program said in a statement that the department would review the complaint once it is officially received. DoD shares in Colorado citizens' desire "to see the Pueblo stockpile destroyed as safely and expeditiously as possible," the spokeswoman says in the statement.

 [back to top](#)

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DTRA

Cluster Bomb Campaign Targets Balkans

Associated Press Worldstream, 19 September 2008, accessed via Lexis Nexis

Seven southeast European countries reaffirmed their commitment Friday [September 19] to sign a global treaty this year banning the production and use of cluster bombs.

But another three—Greece, Turkey and Romania—failed to take a clear position at a regional conference in Sofia.

At a May meeting in Dublin, 107 nations agreed to a treaty restricting the development, sale and use of cluster bombs, which endanger civilians. The pact will be formally signed December 3 in Oslo, Norway.

"In the Balkans, which have recently seen real conflicts with use of this type of munition, this is a sensitive issue, and we should be among the regions that will first dispose of this type of weapon," Bulgarian Deputy Foreign Minister Todor Churov said.

He was speaking at the end of the two-day meeting, organized by the Bulgarian and Norwegian foreign ministries, and supported by the Cluster Munitions Coalition, an umbrella group of campaigners against the weapon.

Seven of the ten participating countries—Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia—said they will sign the Oslo Treaty.

The weapons, which scatter hundreds of smaller explosives over a large area, have caused civilian casualties during conflicts over the last two decades in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, and Serbia.

They were most recently used in Georgia last month by both sides.

The biggest makers and users of cluster bombs are the United States, Russia, China, Israel, India and Pakistan. None have signed the Dublin agreement.

Activists say the weapon caused more civilian casualties in Iraq in 2003 and Kosovo in 1999 than any other weapon system.

 [back to top](#)

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BI-WEEKLY TREATY REVIEW



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DTRA

CTBTO Signs Tsunami Warning Arrangements with Australia and the Philippines

M2 PressWIRE, 12 September 2008, accessed via Lexis Nexis

The Philippines signed a tsunami warning agreement today [September 12] with the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO). This was followed by the signing of a tsunami warning arrangement between Australia and the CTBTO.

At the first signing ceremony, which took place at the headquarters of the CTBTO in Vienna, Austria, Alberto Romulo, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Philippines, stressed the importance of the agreement, especially in view of the location of the Philippines where tsunamis have caused substantial damage and claimed thousands of lives in coastal areas over the years. He stated that: "...the provision of data for tsunami warning purposes will improve the capability of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology to determine the occurrence of a tsunami on the archipelago. It is very, very important."

Romulo referred to the CTBTO's 232 monitoring facilities that are already part of the International Monitoring System (IMS) and the 105 facilities that are currently undergoing testing or are under construction, saying that "...the IMS and other related accomplishments of the CTBTO Preparatory Commission since 1996 are a testimony to the near universal support of nations for the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and its objective to permanently ban nuclear testing."

The CTBTO's Executive Secretary, Tibor Toth, emphasized the symbolism of the arrangement and spoke of the "speed, the quality and the reliability" of the CTBT data on tsunami warnings, which adds two to two and a half minutes to the warning time necessary to alert populations in the event of a tsunami and move them out of affected areas. Toth explained that the data are particularly reliable: "because the dedicated communications is very close to 100% compared to 82% of other international arrangements. And the precision of the location of events is much higher as a result of the high density of stations and as a result of standardized equipment and standardized processing."

Peter Shannon, Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations, signed the tsunami warning arrangement on behalf of the Government of Australia. He called the arrangement: "...an important one for Australia... it's part of a network that has developed since the terrible disasters that the Asia-Pacific region experienced. The data from Vienna provide the backbone to these national operations."

 [back to top](#)

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BI-WEEKLY TREATY REVIEW



09 September – 22 September 2008

DTRA

Shannon stressed the importance of regional cooperation, concluding: "I'm confident that we are not too far away from having really slick regional facilities and cooperation that will put us in the best possible position if there's another disaster in the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean."

HOW IMS DATA HELPS TSUNAMI WARNING CENTERS

The CTBTO has been providing real-time and continuous data on a test basis to four tsunami warning centers in Australia, Hawaii, Japan and Malaysia since March 2005 in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). These data increase the ability of the centers to identify potentially tsunami-generating earthquakes as well as enabling them to provide vulnerable communities with faster warnings.

Based on the success of this test phase, the CTBTO is now able to enter into formal tsunami warning agreements and arrangements with Member States. Japan was the first country to formalize such an arrangement on August 11, 2008.

 [back to top](#)

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DTRA

Iran Blocks Probe of Alleged Atom Bomb Work: IAEA

Reuters, 15 September 2008, <http://www.reuters.com/>

Iran has stymied a U.N. inquiry into whether it covertly researched how to make an atom bomb while steadily expanding uranium enrichment in defiance of international demands, a nuclear watchdog report said on Monday [September 15].

Iran blamed the International Atomic Energy Agency [IAEA] for the impasse. A senior Iranian official, who asked not to be named, called on the Vienna-based IAEA to change its approach and work in a "legal and logical" manner.

The White House called on Iran to stop enriching uranium or face the possibility of more U.N. sanctions adding to relatively modest punitive measures the Islamic Republic has shrugged off.

A confidential report by the IAEA, the U.N.'s nuclear agency, said Iran had raised the number of centrifuges enriching uranium to 3,820, compared with 3,300 in May, with over 2,000 more being installed.

"We have arrived at a gridlock," said a senior U.N. official familiar with the latest report, which urged Iran to take the intelligence allegations seriously to defuse suspicions its nuclear work is not entirely peaceful.

But Iran seemed some way from refining enough uranium to build a nuclear weapon, if it chose, the report indicated. Iran had stockpiled 480 kg (1,050 pounds) of low-enriched uranium so far. It would need 1,700 kg (3,740 pounds) to convert into high-enriched uranium (HEU) for fuelling an atom bomb, said U.N. officials who spoke on condition of anonymity.

"That would be a significant quantity, one unit of HEU, and would take of the order of two years," said one official.

On the day the report emerged, Iran announced air defense exercises in half of the Islamic Republic's 30 provinces. Air defense commander Brigadier General Ahmad Mighani "emphasized that the enemies would receive a serious response for any aggression and we would surprise them and make them regretful," the ISNA agency in Tehran reported.

Washington says it wants a diplomatic solution to the nuclear standoff, but has not ruled out military action if that fails. Iran, the world's fourth-largest oil exporter, says its nuclear program is a peaceful drive to generate electricity.

 back to top

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DTRA

FULL DISCLOSURE

In its last report in May, the IAEA said Iran appeared to be withholding information needed to explain intelligence that it had linked projects to process uranium, test high explosives and modify a missile cone in a way suitable for a nuclear warhead.

IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei called on Iran then for "full disclosure"—namely, going beyond flat denials without providing access to sites, documentation or relevant officials for interviews to substantiate their stance.

Monday's report said Iran had done nothing to that end.

"Regrettably the agency has not been able to make any substantial progress on the alleged (weaponization) studies and other associated key remaining issues which remain of serious concern," the report said.

It said IAEA investigators had stressed to Iran that the intelligence documentation was detailed and consistent enough "that it needs to be taken seriously, particularly in light of the fact that, as acknowledged by Iran, some of the information contained in it was factually accurate," it said.

Unless Iran provided such transparency and allowed wider-ranging, snap U.N. inspections, the report said, the agency "will not be able to provide credible assurances about the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities in Iran".

Gregory Schulte, U.S. ambassador to the IAEA, said Iran was continuing to "rebuff the IAEA across the board" in defiance of four U.N. Security Council resolutions demanding it suspend enrichment and come clean with U.N. investigators.

"Iran's refusal to address the (issues) is particularly troubling as it continues to develop the abilities to produce fissile material that could be weaponized into a nuclear bomb," Schulte told reporters.

The report said Iran was also pressing ahead with tests of advanced centrifuges able to refine uranium 2-3 times faster than the machine it now uses, adapted from an antiquated 1970s model.

 [back to top](#)

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North Korea Asks IAEA to Remove Seals from Facilities

AFP, 22 September 2008, <http://news.google.com/>

North Korea has asked the U.N. atomic watchdog to remove seals and surveillance equipment from its Yongbyon nuclear plant, IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei said on Monday [September 22].

"This morning, the DPRK (North Korea) authorities asked the Agency's inspectors to remove seals and surveillance equipment to enable them to carry out tests at the reprocessing plant, which they say will not involve nuclear material," ElBaradei told the IAEA's 35-member board of governors here.

Earlier, South Korea's Yonhap news agency reported that North Korea had removed seals placed by the U.N. atomic watchdog on its nuclear facilities.

The North said last week that it was working to restart its atomic reactor at Yongbyon and no longer wanted U.S. concessions promised under a landmark deal in June in return for its de-nuclearization.

The six-nation aid-for-disarmament deal is deadlocked by a dispute over verification of the declaration of its nuclear program, which the North delivered as part of the agreement.

The hard-line communist regime stopped work to disable its Yongbyon complex last month before confirming last Friday that it was working to restart the plutonium-producing reactor. North Korea is angry that the United States has failed to drop it from a terrorism blacklist in return for the disablement work. Washington says it will not do so until it accepts outside inspections to verify the details of the nuclear declaration.

In his opening address to the week-long meeting of the IAEA board, director general ElBaradei said agency inspectors "have observed ... that some equipment previously removed by the DPRK during the disablement process has been brought back."

Nevertheless, "this has not changed the shutdown status of the nuclear facilities at Yongbyon," ElBaradei said. The IAEA has not been asked to take part in disablement activities, "but has been able to observe and document them," he explained.

"I still hope that conditions can be created for the DPRK to return to the Non-Proliferation Treaty [NPT] at the earliest possible date and for the resumption by the agency of comprehensive safeguards," ElBaradei said.

 [back to top](#)

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BI-WEEKLY TREATY REVIEW



09 September – 22 September 2008

DTRA

Belarus, Russia to Exchange Military Inspectors with NATO Members

Interfax-AVN, 22 September 2008, accessed via Open Source Center

While [the] U.S. and Czech military will inspect Russia and Belarus, military inspectors from Belarus will visit one of Lithuania's formations, a spokesperson for the Defense Ministry told Interfax.

"Between September 22 and 26 the U.S. and Czech observation mission is planning to fly over Russia and Belarus on the U.S. OC-135 observation aircraft to... [observe] military activities under the Treaty on Open Skies," the ministry spokesman said.

Between September 22 and 24 a group of Belarusian inspectors will visit [the] Lithuanian Motorized Infantry Brigade "Iron Wolf" as part of the bilateral regional agreements on additional confidence and security measures, the official said.

"The purpose of the visit is to assess the information provided by Lithuania to OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) member states as part of the 1999 Vienna Document regarding personnel, principal armament systems and military hardware," the spokesman said.

[back to top](#)

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BI-WEEKLY TREATY REVIEW



09 September – 22 September 2008

DTRA

MACA Hands Over 17 Sites of Cleared Land to Eight Communities

Pajhwok Afghan News, 21 September 2008, accessed via Lexis Nexis

To commemorate the International Peace Day celebrations, the Mine Action Center for Afghanistan (MACA) in partnership with the Department of Mine Clearance (DMC) officially handed over lands cleared of mines and Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) to the people of Bamyan.

Since the start of de-mining and explosive ordinance disposal operations which was carried out by the Afghan Technical Consultants (ATC) some 1,990,440 square meters was cleared resulting in the removal and destruction of 1 anti-tank mine, 322 anti-personnel mines and 2155 Explosive Remnants of War (ERW). The cleared area is now formally handed over to the people for agriculture, housing, grazing and other activities.

There were 21 suspected hazardous areas (SHA) in the Center of Bamyan province, of which 17 are now completely cleared. Four other SHA located in important archaeological areas of the World Heritage site will be cleared next year with assistance from UNESCO and under supervision of the Afghan authorities.

Additionally, all villages in the centre of Bamyan (146 villages) have been searched for Explosive Remnants of War through village by village clearance activities.

Mine Risk Education has been provided to 2,729 people including 765 men, 25 women, 1,627 boys and 312 girls.

Bamyan province in the central region of Afghanistan is a priority due to the existence of the historical sites that were declared a World Heritage Site of global significance. The Government of Afghanistan plans to have all mines and ERW cleared from the Bamyan province by the end of the de-mining season next year.

The Mine Action Center for Afghanistan supported by the United Nations in partnership with the Department of Mine Clearance coordinates the activities of the Mine Action Program for Afghanistan including survey, mine clearance, battlefield clearance, mine risk education, and victim assistance activities throughout the country. Afghanistan became a State Party to the Ottawa Convention in March 2003 and committed to clearing all minefields in the country by 2013.

 [back to top](#)

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BI-WEEKLY TREATY REVIEW



09 September – 22 September 2008

DTRA

ROK Official Says ROK to Send Observer Delegation to PSI Exercise

Seoul Yonhap, 14 September 2008, accessed via Lexis Nexis

South Korea will participate in the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) interdiction training exercise to be held in New Zealand this week as an observer, officials said Sunday [September 14].

South Korea's role in the PSI is a sensitive geopolitical issue, because North Korea is a prime target of the U.S.-led campaign aimed at tackling the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and related delivery equipment. North Korea has criticized the PSI, calling it a product of Washington's hostile policy against Pyongyang.

"As in previous years, the government will join this year's exercise as an observer," a Foreign Ministry official said, asking not to be named.

Lee Baek-soon, deputy director-general of the ministry's North American Affairs Bureau, is to lead an inter-agency delegation to the drills to take place off the coast of Auckland from Monday to Friday, he added.

The United States launched the PSI in 2003 to bolster international cooperation in efforts to stop the spread of WMDs through the monitoring and interdiction of suspicious vessels. It has more than 90 member states.

South Korea has taken part in the PSI as an observer, apparently in a bid to avoid antagonizing its communist neighbor. The United States has called for South Korea to expand its role in the program.

The Lee Myung-bak [Yi Myo'ng-pak] administration's stance on the matter has drawn keen attention. Since his inauguration in February, the conservative president has openly sought closer ties between Seoul and Washington and also taken a tougher line towards Pyongyang than that of his two liberal predecessors.

But the Lee government remains cautious about the PSI issue.

"Nothing has been decided yet on our future role in the PSI," the official said. "We are still reviewing the issue."

 [back to top](#)

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BI-WEEKLY TREATY REVIEW



09 September – 22 September 2008



International Exercise Looks for Weapons of Mass Destruction

New Zealand Press Association, 15 September 2008, accessed via Lexis Nexis

Weapons of mass destruction (WMD) are on the hit list for New Zealand Customs and the military today as ships from several nations patrol the Hauraki Gulf.

The ships and air force aircraft will be part of an international exercise involving several countries which will test New Zealand's ability to find and stop a shipment of material used to make the weapons.

Exercise Maru, which begins today and lasts until Friday, was being led by the New Zealand Customs Service and involved the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the New Zealand Defense Force, several other domestic agencies and the Ports of Auckland.

The Australian navy patrol boat HMAS Maryborough and the French navy patrol boat FNS La Glorieuse, were also in Auckland for the exercise which would include ship-boarding and the searching of vessels and containers.

“The exercise will have a strong law enforcement focus on preventing the proliferation of WMD-related materials across our borders, including examining the legal issues which arise after a WMD item has been intercepted,” said Robert Lake, New Zealand Customs Service Deputy Comptroller of Operations.

He said it was an example of New Zealand's strong commitment to the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI)—an international initiative to stop illegal shipments of weapons of mass destruction.

Customs Minister Nanaia Mahuta said the exercise was aimed at stopping the shipment of technology and materials used to build weapons of mass destruction, and not about halting the transport of a one-piece weapon.

She said the weapons were built with an array of components that may have “perfectly peaceful, legitimate, everyday uses as well as weapons applications.”

“Chemicals used as cleaning agents could be used in weapons production and medical products could be used in the production of agents for biological weapons,” she said.

She said New Zealand could be used by weapons traffickers as a staging point for materials used to make weapons of mass destruction.

 [back to top](#)

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