THE MISSILE TECHNOLOGY CONTROL REGIME AND STRATEGIC ARMS REDUCTIONS – A VIEW FROM RUSSIA[1]

Vladimir Rybachenkov[2]

While reviewing the MTCR activities during the 25 years of its existence it would be fair to acknowledge that this regime has been a successful vehicle in preventing and curbing the proliferation of ballistic missile systems and corresponding technologies. In spite of the fact that MTCR has no enforcement organization and is limited in membership it has been instrumental in blocking several missile programs.

Argentina, Egypt and Iraq abandoned their joint Condor II ballistic missile program. Brazil, South Africa, South Korea and Taiwan also shelved or eliminated missile or space launch programs. Some Eastern European countries like Poland and the Czech Republic destroyed their ballistic missiles, in part, to improve their chances of joining MTCR. The Regime has further hampered Libyan and Syrian missile efforts.[3] Most European and Asian countries tightened their export control legislation and some have persecuted individuals who were involved in illicit transfers of missile technologies. After having joined the Regime in 1995 Russia has stopped exporting entire missile systems that fall within MTCR parameters. MTCR may be also credited with slowing missile development in India, which voluntarily committed in 2008 to follow Regime's export control guidelines.

China is not yet an MTCR member but promised to observe its guidelines (after the USA has imposed economic sanctions on Chinese companies for missile transfers to Pakistan) on the condition that Washington would lift those sanctions, resuming, in particular, processing applications for the US companies to launch satellites on Chinese rockets. The statement detailing the commitment issued by the Foreign Ministry in Beijing on November 21, 2000 indicated that China would not help states to develop "ballistic missiles that can be used to deliver nuclear weapons (i.e. missiles capable of delivering a payload of at least 500 kg at a distance of at least 300 km)."[4] Though it made no mention of the MTCR the statement does say that China will take into account the relevant practices of other countries and the range as well as the payload guidelines it specifies conforms to those in the MTCR.

---

[1] A presentation at the 11-th UN-RK Joint Conference on Disarmament and Nonproliferation Issues. Jeju (Republic of Korea), December 2-4, 2012.

[2] Senior Research Scientist, Center for Arms Control, Energy & Environment Studies.

[3] D. Kimball, "The Missile Technology Control Regime at a Glance," Arms Control Association, August 2012 (http://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/mtcr).

[4] J. Scoblic, "China issues missile export pledge," Arms Control Today, December 2000 (http://www.armscontrol.org/print/780).

Since most of the countries cannot produce and integrate all the sophisticated components required for long-range ballistic missiles many observers agree that MTCR and complementary export controls will probably continue to impede development of the most advanced missiles.[5]

Against this positive background one has to recognize that MTCR has been unable to stop missile development in such countries like North Korea and Iran the major challenge here being that much of the international trade in missiles and corresponding technologies occurs between the countries that are not MTCR members. Reported North Korea's exports of missile production technology to Iran, Pakistan, Syria and Egypt undercut the international standards and goals of the Regime and emphasize the urgency of expanding the Regime in order to make it more difficult for such proliferation to occur.

Reality shows that the main reasons prompting third countries to possess missiles stems from regional instability and regional conflicts. It is therefore evident that mitigation of regional tensions would substantially weaken the grounds for proliferation. To avoid transformation of missile potential of states possessing missile programs into missile threats it is mandatory to sustain strategic stability in the world, including inviolability of existing treaties on limitations and reductions of armaments and non-proliferation regimes, settlement of regional conflicts first of all on the Korean Peninsula, in the Middle East and South Asia, active political dialogue and cooperation with "countries of concern," development of different arrangements removing incentives for missile proliferation.

In other words, priority should be given to non-military, political and diplomatic legal efforts. It is important not to isolate countries – possessors of missile programs, not to put them arbitrarily on the list of "rogue states" in case they have problems in relations with other states.

Negative actions, including economic sanctions against MTCR violators should be coupled with incentives to induce countries to refrain from proliferation. Such measures could include trade credits, development assistance, technology transfers, access to space launch and space capabilities. Here one can refer to a positive experience accumulated in the sphere of nuclear non-proliferation. With the view of preventing the spread of enrichment technologies, potentially conducive to the production of nuclear weapons, an International Center for uranium enrichment has been established in 2007 in Russia (Angarsk city, Lake Baikal region). In 2010 an agreement was signed between the Government of Russia and the International Atomic Energy Agency about creation on the territory of the Center of a low enriched uranium storage containing 120 tons of feed sufficient to produce nuclear fuel for two 1 Gwt light water reactors. The material could be delivered upon request of the IAEA Director General to the countries whose access to nuclear fuel was denied for politi-

[5] M. Nikitine, "Proliferation Control Regimes: Background and Status," Congressional Research Service Report, October 25, 2012.

cal reasons. This initiative created an incentive for nuclear energy newcomers not to set up their own enrichment capabilities thanks to the IAEA guaranties of unimpeded nuclear fuel deliveries.

It would be appropriate to state at this point that a considerable impetus has been given to the MTCR by strategic arms limitations and reductions initiated by Russia and the USA, which created a favorable atmosphere for the implementation of its goals. Impartial assessment of the arms control process shows that nuclear potentials of two countries were steadily going down during last 20 years. The 1994 START I Treaty resulted in a removal of about 40% of deployed strategic nuclear weapons of two superpowers and the New START Treaty signed in April 2010 provided for their fourfold reduction and twofold cutback of nuclear carriers. The 1987 Treaty on Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces eliminated a whole class of intermediate and short-range nuclear missiles. The 1991 unilateral Presidential initiatives led to drastic reductions of the US and Russian tactical nuclear weapons (TNW) stockpiles. According to official statements all Russian TNW were removed since then from their delivery means and placed in central storage facilities with adequate safety and security measures[6], the current stockpile of these devices constituting no more than 25% of its 1991 level.

The New START Treaty made a substantial contribution to the strategic stability by enhancing predictability of US-Russian relations but a year and a half after its ratification the "reset" between the two countries seems to be in trouble and next steps in nuclear arms reductions remain uncertain. One has to acknowledge that despite the statements to the effect that the Cold war is over long time ago the truth is that recent problems in the US-Russian strategic dialogue are the product of remaining distrust which is contaminating the debate on missile defense cooperation, tactical nuclear weapons and the US Prompt Global Strike program.

The gist of the logjam over the European Missile Defense System is that Russia expresses serious concerns about the NATO'S Phased Adaptive Approach which could in the end put at risk Russian nuclear deterrence potential. The US and other NATO countries express willingness to provide a political statement that the European MD system does not jeopardize Russia's national security but are not ready to adopt a legally binding commitment fixing quantitative and geographic limits to the system which would be agreeable to the Russian side.

The overall situation was aggravated by an exchange of rhetoric on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. The US Senate nomination of a new Ambassador to Moscow was coupled with a demand not to disclose to Russians confidential information on SM-3 Aegis missile for European MD system under pretext it could be passed on to Iranians. Was not either helpful a recent statement by the Republican candidate for the US presidency Mitt Romney who branded Russia the Number 1 political foe. No

[6] Statement of the Russian delegation at the first session of the NPT Preparatory Committee, New York, April 11, 2002.

wonder that Russian President Vladimir Putin promptly reacted declaring that such a comment made Russia feel justified in opposing America's missile defense plans in Europe.

Another issue that impeded the launch of substantial negotiations on further nuclear cuts was tactical nuclear weapons. Independent experts concur that Russia's apparently increasing reliance on nuclear weapons, including tactical component, is determined by geostrategic and economic factors. Firstly, Russia, as opposed to the USA, is within the reach of nuclear weapons of several *de jure* and *de facto* nuclear states and this reality must be adequately tackled. Secondly, Russia' s nuclear posture is linked to a perception of NATO superiority in conventional forces in Europe against the backdrop of a weakened military capability of Russia.[7]

A standing Russian position on TNW continues to be that its withdrawal from Europe constitutes a precondition for beginning negotiations with the USA on this issue. Such a stance is replicated by Russian diplomatic and military communities at different forums in Moscow and abroad the emphasis of the discourse being put on the asymmetric composition of the American and Russian tactical nuclear weapons: while all Russian TNW were removed from delivery means and placed at central storage facilities within national territory nearly 200 US nuclear bombs are still stored in five European countries at active bases inside aircraft shelters.

At the same time the size and location of Russian TNW have become a source of serious concern to the USA and other NATO member-countries. The final US Senate resolution on the New START Treaty ratification stipulates "initiation, following consultations with the Allies but not later than one year the New START entry into force, negotiations with Russia on agreement to address disparity between TNW stockpiles of Russia and the USA and to secure and reduce TNW in a verifiable manner."

The prevailing view in Moscow after the NATO Summit in Chicago where a Defense and Deterrence Posture Review (DDPR) was adopted is that this document did not change the Alliance nuclear *status quo* and only copied the Lisbon formula that "NATO is prepared to consider further reducing its requirements for nonstrategic nuclear weapons assigned to the Alliance in the context of reciprocal steps by Russia taking into account the greater Russia stockpiles stationed in the Euro-Atlantic area." Russian experts also note that the DDPR TNW real cuts have been reduced to a vague promise to develop confidence building and transparency measures between NATO and Russia, which is, in their view, necessary but not sufficient.

At this point two questions arise so familiar to my compatriots since the time of 19-th century prerevolutionary Russia – "Who is to blame?" and "What has to be done?"

Answering to the first question it would be right to say that each side has its part of guilt as it often happens in international relations. The key problem is that neither the USA (in case of the European Missile defense system) nor Russia (in case of its

[7] General Makarov: "Tactical Nuclear Weapons – A Deterrence Against Enormous Stockpiles Accumulated In Europe," ITAR-TASS, December 10, 2008.

tactical nuclear weapons) are ready to take into consideration sound concerns of the other party, which means that in order to find a way out of the current impasse in the bilateral strategic dialogue mutual concessions are needed.

Hopefully positive signs of a good will are beginning to show up – President Obama made it known during his June meeting with the Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev in Seoul that if reelected he would have more flexibility in tackling the Missile Defense problem. For their part several high ranking Russian officials have declared that the doors for negotiations were not closed. Many independent Russian experts presume that during the next round of bilateral nuclear cuts talks a ceiling of one thousand warheads could be negotiated with the understanding that further reductions might require involvement of other nuclear states including France, UK and China. They also believe advisable not to set rigid linkages between different disputable issues in the US-Russian strategic dialogue so that the lack of progress on one of them at any given time would not mean the sacrifice of others. Anyway there is a clear understanding that further progress in strategic arms reductions would among other things play a positive role in enhancing the Missiles Technology Control Regime.

December 11, 2012.