

In Focus Transatlantic News Digest

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Some of the most important events in 2007

The world did not become safer and more secure in 2007. Despite the fact that North Korea and Iran agreed to cooperate on their nuclear programs, the United States did not change its intentions to build an anti-missile defense shield in Europe and Russia suspended a major European arms treaty. As a summary of the year developments, below are some highlights of some of the most important events that took place in 2007 and have had a significant impact on both the international and regional military and defense affairs and the international security climate in general.

U.S. anti-ballistic missile base in Europe: The Bush Administration is going to establish a new anti-missile site in Poland and the Czech Republic that would be designed to stop attacks by Iran against the United States and its European allies. The establishment of an anti-missile base in Eastern Europe would have enormous political implications. The deployment of U.S. anti-missile interceptors in Poland, for example, would mark the first permanent U.S. military presence there and further solidify the already close ties between the military establishments of the two countries. It has also prompted strong Russian concerns and charges that Washington's hidden agenda is to expand the U.S. presence in the former Warsaw Pact nation and to undermine Russia's security and the nuclear balance of power. In a recently televised speech Russian President Vladimir Putin said "It is already clear that a new phase in the arms race is unfolding in the world... It is not our fault, because we did not start it...Russia has, and always will have, responses to these new challenges"...

Russia's withdrawal from the CFE Treaty: In July 2007 Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree to suspend the application of a key Cold War arms control treaty - the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty (CFE). The CFE agreement was one of the most significant arms control agreements of the Cold War era. Cornerstone of European security, it limits the amount of key military equipment in designated areas. The treaty was negotiated by NATO and ex-Warsaw Pact member states and signed in 1990 and it came into force in 1992. The 1999 revised version of the treaty was never ratified by NATO countries. Russia says the reason to suspend the treaty is that the NATO countries did not ratify the agreement. Moscow considers the original CFE Treaty to be outdated since it does not reflect the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, or recent NATO expansion. Russian officials say that the suspension is not a full-scale withdrawal but it means that Russia will no longer permit inspections or exchange data on its deployments in Europe.

The situation on Turkey-Iraq border: Last summer, Kurdish guerillas, members of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) based in Northern Iraq have intensified their attacks on the Turkish military. In October, the Turkish Parliament approved a resolution giving the government legal basis to order cross-border military operations into Iraq if and when it deemed necessary. The United States tried to prevent this conflict that could undermine the unstable situation in Iraq, Turkey and other neighboring countries. However, the Turkish army has been conducting cross-border operations against PKK bases in Iraq. The PKK, listed by the United States and Turkey as a terrorist group, took up arms against Turkey in 1984 with the aim of creating an ethnic homeland in Turkey's southeast. More than 37,000 people have been killed in the over-two-decade conflict.

Canada's mission in Afghanistan

Prime Minister Stephen Harper must take personal responsibility for the success or failure of Canada's Afghan mission by pressing NATO allies for extra troops for Kandahar while better explaining the mission to Canadians, the recently released Manley report on Afghanistan says. The report set forward a number of recommendations to the Canadian Government. Prime Minister Harper agreed that Canada will continue its mission only if certain conditions are met. The two major conditions are:

- The assignment of an additional battle group of about 1,000 soldiers to Kandahar by NATO and/or other allies before February 2009;
- New, medium-lift helicopters and high-performance unmanned aerial vehicles for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance before that date.

The full text of the report can be accessed here:
http://www3.thestar.com/static/PDF/080122_afghan_report.pdf

Harper agreed with the panel that if these conditions are not met, Canada should not proceed with the mission. "Canada has done what it said it would do and more. We now say we need help. I think if NATO can't come through with that help, then I think, quite frankly, NATO's own reputation and future will be in grave jeopardy." NATO can't afford to see its first major international mission collapse in disarray. Its credibility would be shattered.

Speaking to CBC, John Manley said an open-ended war would be a concern for many Canadians but security there, as well as Canada's international reputation, were at stake if the mission ends next year. "We've heard it again and again, 'This is NATO's most important mission.' Well, it's time for the rhetoric to end he said. "Either they mean it, that this is the most important mission, or they don't. If they don't, then we need to look to the well-being of our young people."

Harper's threat has caused some alarm at NATO headquarters in Brussels, but NATO spokesperson James Appathurai is optimistic over NATO's capability to find more soldiers. NATO itself has been struggling to persuade some members to contribute more troops and not to worsen matters by pulling out.

With a 250,000-member military and Europe's biggest economy, Germany is facing considerable pressure to do more in Afghanistan. The German Defense Ministry received a "stern" letter days from U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates, pressing for thousands more troops, including for southern Afghanistan. German Defense Minister reiterated that his country's contingent of 3,200

soldiers would stay in the Northern provinces, where they patrol some of the most secure areas of Afghanistan and that it will have to continue to be their focus.

During his recent visit to Canada, Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski criticized some NATO members for not committing enough troops to Afghanistan and said he would commit Polish troops and helicopters to assist Canadian soldiers.

Canada's hardball strategy has been described as playing chicken with NATO and that it could backfire because European allies have thus far largely rejected reinforcing not only Canadian troops, but U.S., Dutch and British forces. However, Canada's ultimatum was at the top of the agenda at the meeting of the NATO defense ministers in Lithuania on February 7 and 8.

As the defense ministers gathered for the critical meeting in Vilnius, Lithuania on how alliance members are sharing the burden of fighting in southern Afghanistan, Canada's Defense Minister Peter MacKay held bilateral sessions with other countries with troops in Afghanistan's dangerous south, including Britain, Netherlands, and Australia and others, sharing information about which countries might be coaxed into doing more there. He made clear that Canada will not extend its military mission to Kandahar beyond February 2009 unless it gets troop reinforcements and equipment help, and spelled out the timeline for a parliamentary vote in late March. It was not delivered as an ultimatum, but understood by all as a call for a commitment before the vote.

France's defense minister, Hervé Morin, announced after the closed-door meetings that his country was ready to respond - significantly, and shortly: France is ready to send 700 troops into the volatile Kandahar region, where most of Canada's 2,500 troops are based. A team of Department of National Defense officials will work with their French colleagues to finalize the plan.

Speaking at the a Security Conference in Munich, French Defense Minister Morin criticized European countries for relying on American military forces when it comes to global security. "Europe does not assume enough responsibility; it simply falls into dependence," he said.

A Conservative motion put forward last week extends Canada's combat role in Afghanistan by two years to February 2011. Prime Minister Stephen Harper said the vote on the motion will be treated as a confidence matter, meaning a loss could trigger a spring election.

Proliferation News

Iran's Nuclear Program

On January 28, western countries began a new round of persuading members of the UN Security Council that a third set of modest economic sanctions would force Iran to come clean about its nuclear ambitions where earlier measures had failed. The new package of measure was revealed on January 25 and, as described by European diplomats, is very much like another turn of the screw, which, however, seems unlikely to break Iran's intransigence. The proposed measures would impose a travel ban and asset freeze on Iranians most closely involved with the nuclear program. Member states would also be urged to monitor more closely the activities of all Iranian banks.

Iran warned about "serious consequences" if the UN Security Council adopts fresh sanctions against Tehran. "If a resolution is passed... it will have serious and logical consequences and we will announce them later," Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki told. Iran is already under two sets of UN sanctions for its refusal to halt enrichment.

In the meantime, Iran has received a shipment from Russia of enriched uranium, a 8.6-ton consignment (77 out of 82 tons), for its light-water nuclear plant in Bushehr. The U.S. initially opposed Russian participation in the building of the Bushehr reactor and supplying it with fuel, but reversed its position about a year ago to obtain Moscow's support for the first set of UN sanctions against Iran.

Russia began shipping nuclear fuel to Iran following the U.S. intelligence estimate report released in December 2007 that concluded Tehran had stopped its nuclear weapons program in late 2003 and had not resumed it since. After delivering the first shipment of fuel in December, Russia said Iran no longer needed to pursue its own uranium enrichment. Iran warned, however, that the deliveries of Russian nuclear fuel would not change its intention to enrich uranium on its own.

Iranian members of parliament are already mulling retaliatory action over the stance of Western powers, particularly reducing economic ties with France over President Nicolas Sarkozy's "unfriendly" stance.

On February 4, Iran launched a long-range missile into space which caused some suspicions from the Russian side over Iran's true nature of its nuclear program. Long-range missiles are one of the components of a nuclear weapons system but Iranians say it would be used to launch research satellites.

"We need to have an active and influential presence in space," Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said in a televised ceremony before the launch.

The U.S. State Department said the launch was troubling, as it was an example of the same technology behind long-range ballistic missiles. In the past, Russia has been more skeptical than some Western powers about Iran's missile capability, saying it would take a long time to build long-range missiles.

Egypt takes offers for nuclear projects

Egypt will begin taking bids in February to build the country's first nuclear reactor. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak announced plans for the nuclear power project last year, saying it would diversify Egypt's energy resources and preserve the country's oil and gas. He said the reactor would be for peaceful, power-generating purposes only and that Egypt would not seek a nuclear bomb. Hosni Mubarak has been discussing a nuclear energy program with China, France, Russia and the United States. The project is expected to cost between \$1.5 billion and \$1.8 billion and could take 10 years to develop.

Egypt has pledged to allow the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to supervise the project. The country has been conducting nuclear experiments since the late 1960s and according to the IAEA, some of the experiments were not reported.

U.S. State Department spokesman said the United States would not object to the program as long as Egypt adhered to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and International Atomic Energy Agency guidelines.

U.S.-Turkey nuclear cooperation

The U.S. will support Turkey's plans to develop nuclear energy and encouraged Ankara to become a member in an international partnership facilitating the worldwide expansion of nuclear energy in a safe manner.

U.S. President George Bush approved a cooperation deal with Turkey concerning peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Bush sent the U.S. Congress a July 2000 agreement, signed by then president Bill Clinton, which would clear the way for transfers of nuclear know-how to Turkey's planned civilian atomic sector.

"In my judgment, entry into force of the Agreement will serve as a strong incentive for Turkey to continue its support for nonproliferation objectives and enact future sound nonproliferation policies and practices. It will also promote closer political and economic ties with a NATO ally, and provide the necessary legal framework for U.S. industry to make nuclear exports to Turkey's planned civil nuclear sector," Bush said in a message to members of the U.S. Congress.

Turkey is preparing to issue a public tender for the construction of its first nuclear power plant and plans to build at least two nuclear reactors by 2015. The government, led by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, sees the development of national nuclear power industry as one of its priorities.

Serbian Presidential Election and Kosovo's status

A 1,800-strong EU police and justice mission to Kosovo has been agreed by all 27 member states within 24 hours of Serbia's presidential election coming to an end on February 3. No launch date has yet been given although that is likely to be decided by EU foreign ministers on 18 February. The mission will be called EULEX Kosovo and will cost 205m Euros for the first 16 months.

Kosovo is expected to declare independence in the next few weeks. This depended much on the outcome of the presidential election, in which a pro-western candidate, Boris Tadic, has claimed victory over his ultra-nationalist challenger Tomislav Nikolic. He won 50.5 percent of the vote, while his pro-Russian opponent Nikolic had 47.7 percent - a difference of some 128,000 votes among the 4.5 million registered voters.

The main issue in the campaign has been Serbia's future orientation. The election was seen as a referendum on Serbia's relations with Europe with Tadic promising EU-backed prosperity against Nikolic's pro-Moscow campaign. Mr. Nikolic's party was aligned with Slobodan Milosevic in the 1990s and favors closer ties to Russia, Serbia's main ally in opposing independence for Kosovo. Tadic similarly opposes Kosovo independence, but favors closer links with the West and rapid moves towards membership in the European Union.

The European Union welcomed the results, saying it wished to encourage the country's progress toward membership. In a message to Boris Tadic, Jose Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission - the EU's executive arm - said the result was "a victory for democracy in Serbia and for the European values we share. We wish to accelerate Serbia's progress towards the European Union." Both the EU and the U.S. support independence for Kosovo and have promised to compensate Serbia by accelerating its integration into the West.

European officials believe Kosovo's recognition will come in three waves: some 10 states will recognize Kosovo on the day it declares independence, 10 will follow a little later and the rest will come a good deal afterwards. Under this scenario, the 10 states expected to recognize Kosovo immediately include France, Germany and the UK. Spain, and possibly Italy, would form a second

wave. Greece, Romania and Slovakia are set to delay recognition. Cyprus is likely to be the sole state to reject Kosovo's independence.

Recommended Readings

At NATO, No Time For Cold Feet

A Chance to Cement the Peace In the Balkans - and Beyond

By Bruce P. Jackson

Washington Post, February 4, 2008

For centuries, the Balkans and Europe's East have deserved their reputations for igniting wider European wars and have given to European history the place names of genocide and mass starvation. In 1949, the creation of NATO secured the post-World War II peace in Western Europe. Since the end of the Cold War, the alliance has played a transformational role in building a second peace -- this time in Central and Eastern Europe. Now NATO has an opportunity to lay the foundation for a third European peace -- this time in the Balkans -- and to open a dialogue that could lead to a fourth: a more constructive relationship between Europe and Russia. *Read the full article [here](#).*

New Europe, Old Russia

By Robert Kagan

Washington Post, February 6, 2008

Russia and the European Union are neighbors geographically. But geopolitically they live in different centuries. A 21st-century European Union, with its noble ambition to transcend power politics and build an order based on laws and institutions, confronts a Russia that behaves like a traditional 19th-century power. Both are shaped by their histories. The supranational, legalistic EU spirit is a response to the conflicts of the 20th century, when nationalism and power politics twice destroyed the continent. But Vladimir Putin's Russia, as Ivan Krastev has noted, is driven in part by the perceived failure of "post-national politics" after the Soviet collapse. Europe's nightmares are the 1930s; Russia's nightmares are the 1990s. Europe sees the answer to its problems in transcending the nation-state and power. For Russians, the solution is in restoring them. *Read the full article [here](#).*

Afghanistan: The Need for International Resolve

International Crisis Group

Asia Report N°145, 6 February 2008

Afghanistan is not lost but the signs are not good. Its growing insurgency reflects a collective failure to tackle the root causes of violence. Six years after the Taliban's ouster, the international community lacks a common diagnosis of what is needed to stabilize the country as well as a common set of objectives. Long-term improvement of institutions is vital for both state building and counter-insurgency, but without a more strategic approach, the increased attention and resources now directed at quelling the conflict could even prove counterproductive by furthering a tendency to seek quick fixes. Growing tensions over burden sharing risk undermining the very foundations of multilateralism, including NATO's future. The U.S., which is demanding more commitment by allies, must realize that its unilateral actions weaken the will of others. At the same time, those sniping from the sidelines need to recognize that the Afghan intervention is ultimately about global security and do more. Read more [here](#).

Sources: Nezavisimoe Voennoe Obozrenie (Independent Military Observer, in Russian), Xinhua English www.chinaview.cn, Toronto Star, Globe and Mail, Financial Times, Washington Post, New York Times, International Herald Tribune, CBC News, BBC News, The Canadian Press, Associated Press, Agence France Press, Reuters, ITAR TASS Russian News Agency, Russian Information Agency RIA Novosti, Al-Jazeera, ITAR RASS, PanArmenian News Network www.panarmenian.net, Voice of America, Today's Zaman www.todayszaman.com, The Bulletin www.bulletin.us.

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