

## Time to De-Fund Russia's Military Modernization

By J. MICHAEL WALLER

Last week one small step was taken toward redressing a major flaw in the U.S. drive to promote reform in Russia. A congressional panel led by Republican Representative Curt Weldon called for an investigation into reports that Russian nuclear scientists receiving aid money from the U.S. are still active in developing arms for Russia's nuclear and chemical-weapons industry. The original purpose of the aid money, under the program developed by Senators Sam Nunn and Richard Lugar, was to discourage these scientists from taking lucrative jobs with Third World regimes eager to develop weapons of mass destruction.

The massive show of Russian high-tech military might during the May 9 "Victory Day" celebration in Moscow was a reminder that Soviet militarist traditions remain strong. Congress needed that reminder. Just a week earlier, Deputy Defense Minister Yevgeny Maslin had visited Capitol Hill to lobby senators to continue bankrolling and subsidizing the "conversion" of Russian military enterprises and encouraging American firms to provide them with capital and technology. Col. Gen. Maslin said that such programs benefit "the national security of the United States." Yet when pressed by reporters, he acknowledged that Russian military plants are in the process of modernizing the country's strategic nuclear-weapons systems.

Gen. Maslin's defense of strategic modernization underscored the U.S. intelligence reports, until recently virtually ignored, stating that Moscow is building a new generation of silo-based intercontinental ballistic missiles, mobile ICBMs, and submarine-launched ballistic missiles—all designed to destroy the United States. At the same time, Russian officials strongly oppose U.S. efforts to develop even the most localized antiballistic missile defense systems.

Somehow this is not a serious concern to the Clinton administration or to most of the Republicans who now control Congress. Possessed with the misguided and outdated view that they are promoting reform, the Republicans—despite Mr. Clinton's complete failure at the May 10 summit—have been intent to provide more money to help modernize Rus-

sian military design bureaus and factories—places that focus on producing better weapons. Congressman Weldon has prompted a reconsideration of this view.

A July 1994 cable from the U.S. Embassy in Moscow states flatly that the Kremlin's strategy is to channel Western aid "to a small number of key technology-rich research and design institutes," most of which will remain state-owned, and few of which are going out of the military business. "Russia's... military leaders are anxious to learn about the management and manufacturing methods of the West," says the cable, adding, "the Russian military is attempting to regain military potency with dwindling financial resources."

The cable offers a run-down on how the Russian armed forces are going high-tech and "shifting strategies and doctrine" to focus on "systems upgrade and research." Strangely though, it views this as a business opportunity rather than as a military threat. The cable shows how Russia wants to upgrade its technologies, retool its plants, and create new "defense-industrial-financial conglomerates" that would produce both civilian and military high-tech equipment. The cable also notes that the military is broadening beyond an emphasis on weapons procurement, with efforts to improve weapons maintenance, upgrade information processing, and develop "better battle management."

This is where Western aid and technology come in. But instead of warning American companies to be wary of Moscow's military modernization or suggesting that the U.S. should contemplate how its aid dollars might work against U.S. national security interests, the State Department cable encourages American companies to invest in the effort. The Department of Commerce is distributing the document to American firms for this purpose.

Last year Congress ignored warnings that Russian arms modernization could benefit by the Nunn-Lugar conversion program. A 1994 General Accounting Office report states: "Many of the companies selected for conversion will continue to produce weapons. Profits and technology from the newly privatized firms could be returned to the parent defense enterprises. Furthermore, many Russian officials remain interested in preserving a siz-

able defense industry to earn hard currency by exporting arms."

In other words, American and other Western aid designed to promote the conversion of Russian military plants is actually helping those plants become more self-sufficient, with new civilian production lines, while they continue to manufacture high-tech weapons. Those weapons will enhance Russia's own offensive military capability, including strategic nuclear modernization, and will generate hard currency for the military-industrial complex by proliferating arms to rogue regimes around the world. Moscow has made no secret of its desire to re-arm Syria and Iraq.

A Commerce Department bulletin encouraging American companies to become part of the "conversion" game provides the contact names at each Russian plant, including addresses, telephone numbers, and fax numbers, and even describes the plants' production. One firm, says the bulletin, is "a leading developer of space satellite systems, sea- and land-based cruise missile systems, and intercontinental ballistic missile systems." Yet another is "a leader in the development and production of electronic control systems for missile complexes."

None of these firms is reported to be going out of the weapons business. Yet each of them is a candidate for American aid, capital and technology transfers.

While talking tough about punishing Moscow for its vicious war in Chechnya, aggression against its neighbors, nuclear proliferation to Iran and resurgent militarism, many congressional Republicans nevertheless support continued U.S. aid to fund Russian military "conversion." Just weeks ago, House Speaker Newt Gingrich specifically exempted "conversion" aid from being frozen in protest of Kremlin militarism.

The time for such assistance, if it ever existed, has passed. Congress must get over its romance with Russia's retrograde generals and de-fund their high-tech modernization program before they start another arms race.

*Mr. Waller is vice president of the American Foreign Policy Council in Washington, D.C., and author of "Secret Empire: The KGB In Russia Today" (Westview, 1994).*

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