

Nuclear, Missile & Space Digest

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A Fortnightly Newsletter from the MP-IDSA

June 15, 2024

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A. India

India making Bay of Bengal into a nuclear launchpad

Asia Times, June 4, 2024

India is constructing a submarine base in the Bay of Bengal that when completed will provide a sanctuary for its sea-based nuclear deterrent against Pakistan and China.

This month, the Indian Defense Research Wing (IDRW) reported that India's ambitious Project Varsha, a sprawling 1,680-acre naval base, is rapidly taking shape on the Eastern Coast at Rambilli. Recent satellite images indicate a rapid expansion, suggesting the project is on track for completion within its designated timeframe.

Project Varsha is a strategic naval base designed to house a fleet of over 12 nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs). Its most striking feature is an extensive underground complex, revealed by satellite imagery, which includes tunnels likely intended as submarine pens.

The base's underground sanctuary promises to protect India's SSBNs from aerial threats and prying eyes while also providing essential support facilities for nuclear engineering. Above ground, the construction of piers suggests the capability to accommodate a variety of surface vessels, enhancing the base's operational flexibility.

Project Varsha's location offers a strategic advantage by positioning the Indian Navy closer to the critical shipping lanes of the Indo-Pacific. This proximity allows for a swift response to regional threats and facilitates collaboration with the Bhabha Atomic Research Center (BARC), India's nuclear establishment.

<https://asiatimes.com/2024/06/india-making-bay-of-bengal-into-a-nuclear-launchpad/>

Indian Navy gets fifth Missile-Cum-Ammunition Barge

The Economic Times, June 11, 2024

The 'Missile Cum Ammunition Barge, LSAM 13, Yard 81, the fifth Barge of the

Missile Cum Ammunition Barge project, built by MSME Shipyard, SECON Engineering Projects Pvt Ltd (SEPPL), Visakhapatnam for Indian Navy, was undertaken on June 10. According to an official statement from the Ministry of Defence, the launching ceremony was presided over by Commodore Manish Vig, General Manager (QA), ND(Mbi). The contract for building Missile Cum Ammunition Barge was signed between MoD and M/s SECON Engineering Projects Pvt Ltd, Visakhapatnam on 19 February 2021.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/indian-navy-gets-fifth-missile-cum-ammunition-barge/articleshow/110909768.cms?from=mdr>

B. Pakistan

Pakistani communication satellite successfully enters earth's orbit – national space agency

Arab News, June 7, 2024

Pakistan's latest modern communication satellite, PAKSAT MM1, has successfully entered the earth's orbit, the country's national space agency confirmed on Friday, more than a week after its launch with China's assistance. The launch of PAKSAT MM1 from China's Xichang Satellite Launch Center was broadcast live by Islamabad and Karachi offices of the Pakistan Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (Suparco) on May 30.

Suparco spokesperson Maria Tariq said the satellite successfully entered its intended orbit on June 5.

<https://www.arabnews.com/node/2525641/pakistan>

Pakistan and China cooperation has reached space, even higher than sky: Pakistani planning minister

Global Times, June 7, 2024

From June 4 to 8, 2024, Pakistani Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif made an official visit to China. This was Sharif's first visit to

China since being re-elected as Prime Minister this year. He was accompanied by several members of the Pakistani cabinet and businessmen. Ahsan Iqbal (Iqbal), Pakistani minister for planning, development and special initiatives was among the delegation. Due to his strong promotion of cooperation under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Ahsan Iqbal is known as "Mr. CPEC." In an exclusive interview with the Global Times, Iqbal said that over the past decade, the CPEC has transformed Pakistan's energy and infrastructure landscape, greatly advancing the country's socio-economic development.

<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202406/1313792.shtml>

Pakistan's budgetary allocation for defence falls to 1.7 per cent of its GDP

The Economic Times, June 13, 2024

Pakistan's budgetary allocation of Rs 2,122 billion for defence for 2024-25 constitutes just 1.7 per cent of the cash-strapped but nuclear-armed nation's GDP, which is the same as the previous year, despite the higher than the Rs 1,804 billion set aside during the outgoing fiscal 2023-24, according to budget documents. Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb on Wednesday presented a Rs 18,877 billion heavily taxed budget for 2024-25.

The finance minister's speech and various budget documents show that Rs 2,122 billion allocated for the next fiscal year is Rs 318 billion higher than Rs 1,804 billion budgeted for the outgoing fiscal year 2023-24, ending on June 30.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/pakistans-budgetary-allocation-for-defence-falls-to-1-7-per-cent-of-its-gdp/articleshow/110967351.cms?from=mdr>

C. China

China's secret space plane has released another unknown object over Earth

Live Science, June 1, 2024

China's mysterious Shenlong space plane released an unidentified flying object 372

miles (600 kilometers) above Earth's surface. Experts outside China don't know exactly what the object is, but they believe it may be a small satellite or a piece of hardware ejected before the craft is scheduled to deorbit. The U.S. Space Force has been tracking the space plane since it launched aboard a Long March 2F rocket from Jiuquan Launch Center on Dec. 14. Little is known about the craft, although it appears to be similar to the clandestine Boeing X-37B space plane developed by the U.S., which is capable of making years-long excursions into orbit.

<https://www.livescience.com/space/space-exploration/chinas-secret-space-plane-has-releasedanother-unknown-object-over-earth>

Xian H-20: China has big plans to build a stealth bomber like the B-2

The National Interest, June 1, 2024

While the United States is excited about the B-21 bomber it unveiled to the public in early December of last year, China has plans for a rival stealth bomber. The H-20, seen as a competitor to the B-2 or maybe even in some respects B-21 stealth bomber, will likely be nuclear-capable and could attack targets in U.S. allied nations or the U.S. The aircraft will be a key piece of China's nuclear triad in the coming decades and can place China at the forefront of the world's air forces.

<https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/xian-h-20-china-has-big-plans-build-stealth-bomber-b-2-208137>

China emphasizes non-proliferation efforts at Shangri-La Dialogue

China Daily, June 2, 2024

Chinese Defence Minister Admiral Dong Jun reaffirmed China's unwavering commitment to preventing nuclear war during his keynote speech at the Shangri-La Dialogue security forum. "Nuclear war has no winners and must not be fought," declared Admiral Dong. He emphasized the stability, consistency, and predictability of China's nuclear policy.

Dong reiterated China's adherence to the principle of "no first use" of nuclear weapons, pledging to never initiate a nuclear attack under any circumstances.

<https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202406/02/WS665bf060a31082fc043ca6c4.html>

China makes history as it nails second landing on Moon's far side

Global Times, June 2, 2024

China has successfully landed its second spacecraft - the Chang'e-6 unmanned probe - on the Moon's far side on Sunday, when no other country has done it once. The feat marks a key milestone in achieving its mission to bring home, for the first time in human history, samples from an unexplored region from Earth's natural satellite, as stargazers around the world hold their breaths for this epic moment. Chinese experts said while the US is setting unrealistic, grand goals but giving it a tight schedule in order to outpace China, China is steadily moving forward step by step, achieving concrete and rich results.

<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202406/1313487.shtml>

Chang'e-6 bags precious lunar sample in Earth-returning vehicle

Global Times, June 6, 2024

Two days after lifting off from the moon's surface, the ascender of China's Chang'e-6 lunar probe completed a rendezvous and docking with the orbiter-returner combination, delivering the world's first lunar samples collected from the far side of the moon to the Earth-returning vehicle. After undergoing key steps such as the lunar-to-Earth transfer and the separation of the orbiter and returner, the returner is scheduled to land with the lunar samples at the Siziwang Banner landing site in North China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region.

<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202406/1313761.shtml>

D. Russia

All seven pillars of nuclear safety at Zaporozhye nuke plant compromised – IAEA chief

TASS, June 3, 2024

Each of the seven security pillars outlined by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has been compromised, IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi said.

"The situation at the Zaporozhye Nuclear Power Plant remains precarious," Grossi said as he delivered his opening statement to the IAEA Board of Governors on Monday. "All Seven Pillars of Nuclear Safety and Security have been fully or partially compromised," he added.

According to Grossi, the attacks and the regular disconnection of the off-site electricity lines amid "military activity" have caused a grave situation at the nuke plant.

<https://tass.com/defense/1797305>

Russian-Belarusian nuclear drills proceeding as scheduled – Belarusian General Staff

TASS, June 3, 2024

The Russian-Belarusian nuclear drills are proceeding as scheduled, without any accidents, Deputy Chief of the Belarusian General Staff Viktor Tumar said.

"The drills are proceeding as scheduled. No accidents or incidents have been reported. Things are going on as they should," he said.

Russia's Defense Ministry reported earlier that pursuant to an instruction by President Vladimir Putin and for the purpose of raising the preparedness of the non-strategic nuclear forces for combat objectives, the General Staff had launched preparations for drills in the immediate future with missile formations of the Southern Military District with the involvement of aircraft and naval forces.

<https://tass.com/world/1797577>

Russia stops operating An-22 airlifters in 2024

TASS, June 4, 2024

The Russian military-transport aviation stops operating the biggest turboprop An-22 Antey airlifters from 2024, Commander Lieutenant General Vladimir Benediktov said.

"We are in Tver, which is actually the unofficial capital of the military-transport aviation. The heaviest 12th division in the world is deployed here and operates the biggest An-124 Ruslan airlifters. There were legendary Antey before, which we unfortunately have to stop operating this year," he told the Solovyov Live TV.

Sixty-seven An-22 were produced by the Antonov plant in Soviet Ukraine. "Some remained in Ukraine, we had close to 60 in our airlifter fleet," he said.

An-22 was the first wide-body and the biggest turboprop airlifter in the world. It is 57-meter long and 12.5-meter high. The wingspan is 64.4 meters. Antey made the maiden flight in 1965. The maximum takeoff weight is 225 tons and the carrying capacity is 60 tons. The airlifter can carry a 40-ton cargo to a distance of over 5,000 kilometers. The full-payload range is 3.1 thousand kilometers.

<https://tass.com/defense/1797853>

Russia kicks off naval drills involving two nuclear submarines in Barents Sea

TASS, June 4, 2024

Russia's Northern Fleet has started exercises involving two large anti-submarine ships and two nuclear-powered submarines in the Barents Sea, the fleet said in a statement.

"Today, as part of combat training activities of the summer training period, Northern Fleet forces began a scheduled anti-submarine exercise in the Barents Sea. The large anti-submarine ships Admiral Levchenko and Rear Admiral Kulakov left the Northern Fleet's main base in Severomorsk to the designated areas as part

of a naval search and strike group," the statement said.

As part of the exercise, the naval search and strike group will rehearse various elements of anti-submarine missions of the combat training course, including the organization of submarine search and tracking in cooperation with a submarine crew and anti-submarine aircraft.

<https://tass.com/defense/1797919>

Russian Baltic Fleet's amphibious assault ships hold artillery firings in drills

TASS, June 5, 2024

The Baltic Fleet's small air-cushion amphibious assault ships Yevgeny Kocheshkov and Mordovia successfully accomplished artillery firings against aerial and naval targets during drills, the Fleet's press office reported on Wednesday.

"The artillery firings were conducted from 140mm Ogon rocket launchers (the seaborne version of the Grad multiple launch rocket system) against a special buoy field simulating an enemy coastal battery and small-size mobile targets designating seaborne drones," the press office said in a statement.

The crews of the small amphibious assault ships also fired 30mm AK-630 automatic artillery guns against simulated aerial targets. Illumination artillery shells fired by a 152mm Akatsiya battalion self-propelled artillery system from Taran Cape in the Kaliningrad Region simulated aerial targets in the drills, it said.

<https://tass.com/defense/1798585>

Russian Baltic Fleet's Bastion missile systems strike seaborne targets in drills

TASS, June 6, 2024

The Baltic Fleet's Bastion coastal defense missile systems wiped out a notional enemy's warships during a tactical exercise in Russia's westernmost

Kaliningrad Region, the Fleet's press office reported on Thursday.

"During the drills, teams of Bastion coastal defense missile systems conducted electronic launches by Oniks anti-ship missiles against notional targets in the Baltic Sea simulating a hypothetical enemy's naval group," the press office said in a statement.

Data recorders confirmed the destruction of the designated targets, it said.

During the drills, Bastion mobile missile launchers were deployed in the designated area with equipped positions after a multi-kilometer march. Pursuant to the instructions received, the missile crews stealthily changed their firing positions after conducting electronic launches against the simulated enemy's warships, it specified.

<https://tass.com/defense/1799821>

Russian, Syrian warplanes jointly patrol Arab Republic's airspace

TASS, June 7, 2024

Russian and Syrian warplanes conducted joint patrols and practiced concerted action in airspace of the Arab Republic as part of a bilateral military exercise, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

The maneuvers involved Su-35 fighter jets and Su-34 bombers of the Russian Aerospace Forces, as well as Su-24 tactical bombers of the Syrian Air Force.

As part of the exercise, Russian and Syrian pilots patrolled airspace above the eastern and southern regions of the country. Also, flight crews of the two states practiced air strikes on dummy targets in the Syrian desert, attacking them solo and in groups.

The joint Russian-Syrian exercise to practice defending the Arab Republic's territorial integrity from internal and external threats began on June 5. Maneuvers are held in Syrian airspace, in some of its territories and in the eastern section of the Mediterranean Sea.

<https://tass.com/defense/1800039>

HeliRussia showcases unmanned helicopter to fight sea drones

TASS, June 10, 2024

The HeliRussia 2024 exhibition showcases Hunter unmanned scout and attack complex armed with missiles to destroy sea drones.

It was designed by Unmanned Systems Company and comprises two unmanned Hunter helicopters, a ground control station, a ground delivery system, and two transportation platforms.

"It destroys sea drones, slow-speed air targets, armored hardware and hostile troops. It has avionics for automatic mission fulfilment and payload control," the company said.

The helicopter is armed with a remotely controlled turret with 7.62mm machinegun, a system of uninterrupted supply of 550 cartridges, eight air missiles and 16 antitank bombs. There is also a stabilized optical-electronic system.

<https://tass.com/defense/1801587>

Russian, Egyptian warships to holds drills, practice maneuvering

TASS, June 10, 2024

Russian and Egyptian naval ships plan to hold joint exercises during a visit of Russian warships to Alexandria, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

According to the ministry, the ships that called at Alexandria are the Guards Missile Cruiser Varyag and frigate Marshal Shaposhnikov. As part of the call, on Russia Day, June 12, the Varyag will host a reception with representatives of the Egyptian Navy Command.

"The call of Russian warships will last to June 14 and will end with a bilateral Passex exercise with Egyptian naval ships. The ships will practice elements of joint maneuvering, conduct training in communication and inspection," the ministry said.

The call of Russian warships at Alexandria is another practical step in strengthening Russian-Egyptian naval cooperation, according to the ministry.

<https://tass.com/defense/1801737>

Iskander system launches to be practiced at nonstrategic nuclear forces exercise

TASS, June 12, 2024

Missile operators of the Leningrad Military District will practice concealed movement of Iskander ballistic missile systems to a designated area as part of the second stage of the nonstrategic nuclear forces exercise, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

"The personnel of a missile unit of the Leningrad Military District is practicing training missions of receiving special training munitions for the Iskander-M short-range ballistic missile system, charging of carrier missiles with them, and the concealed movement to a designated position area for preparations to make missile launches," the ministry said.

<https://tass.com/defense/1802443>

Russia, Belarus practice readying tactical nuclear forces and capabilities in joint drills

TASS, June 13, 2024

Russia and Belarus practiced jointly readying Belarusian combat and Russian nuclear provision forces during the second stage of the joint tactical nuclear weapon drills, Russia's Defense Ministry reported on Thursday.

"The presidents of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus made a decision on the second stage of the non-strategic nuclear forces' drills. This exercise practiced, in particular, jointly readying Belarusian combat employment and Russian nuclear provision units. In fulfilling their objectives, mobile formations of the Russian Defense Ministry's 12th Main Department delivered practice nuclear munitions to field storage sites of a missile brigade's positioning area

and an attack aircraft operational airfield," the ministry said in a statement.

<https://tass.com/defense/1802803>

E. Europe

Germany's Diehl to further expand production of IRIS-T air defence systems

Reuters, June 6, 2024

German arms maker Diehl plans to further expand production of the IRIS-T medium-range air defence system, CEO Helmut Rauch told reporters at the ILA air show in Berlin on Thursday.

Diehl wants to produce at least 10 firing units from 2026 and to double production of IRIS-T medium-range missiles from 2025, Rauch said.

This is the second time in nine months that the firm has announced plans to increase IRIS-T production as Germany continues to increase its defence capabilities amid heightened threats from Russia as it advances in Ukraine.

Germany has supplied two IRIS-T units to Ukraine, where they are mainly used to guard Kyiv against Russian missile attacks.

Berlin has pledged to supply another six IRIS-T units to Kyiv and expects to take delivery of the first of six systems for its own air force in October.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/germanys-diehl-further-expand-production-iris-t-air-defence-systems-2024-06-06/>

European Space Agency plans first launch of Ariane 6 rocket

Fox Weather, June 7, 2024

After a year-long hiatus without independent access to space, the European Space Agency is ready for the inaugural launch of its Ariane 6 rocket.

ESA Director General Josef Aschbacher announced this week that the space agency is targeting July 9 for the first

launch of Ariane 6 from Europe's launch facility in French Guiana. Previously, ESA announced a launch period of two weeks; the announcement officially sets a target launch date.

The new heavy-lift rocket, developed by primary contractor ArianeGroup, replaces its predecessor, Ariane 5, which launched NASA's James Webb Space Telescope in 2021.

Multiple versions of the Ariane 6 can be adapted to accommodate different payload sizes. The rocket has two nose cone sizes and can fly with two or four boosters, depending on the destination in space.

ESA plans to offer ride-sharing launches for small satellites, similar to those offered by SpaceX. Its first flight will be a ride-sharing mission, with 11 small satellites and science payloads, including a NASA payload, lifting off.

<https://www.foxweather.com/earth-space/european-space-agency-plans-first-launch-ariane-6-rocket>

France to supply Mirage 2000-5 jets to Ukraine, train pilots

Defense News, June 7, 2024

France plans to supply Mirage 2000-5 jets to Ukraine and begin training pilots this summer, with the first training completed by the end of the year, French President Emmanuel Macron said Thursday.

France is building a coalition with other countries to provide the jets, similar to the coalition by several other European countries to supply Ukraine with F-16 fighters, Macron said in an interview with broadcasters TF1 and France 2. The French president and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy were in Normandy for D-Day commemorations.

<https://www.defensenews.com/air/2024/06/07/france-to-supply-mirage-2000-5-jets-to-ukraine-train-pilots/>

Ukraine-France, EDF-Energoatom nuclear cooperation agreements

World Nuclear News, June 10, 2024

The agreement between the two state-owned nuclear power giants covers the study of EDF's gigawatt-scale EPR and Nuward small modular reactor technologies as well as "exchange of experience in the operation of nuclear power plants, maintenance of safety, reliability and efficiency of reactors".

The exchange of experience will also include the supply of nuclear fuel for VVER reactors for countries wanting to diversify their supply away from Russia.

Energoatom's Chairman Petro Kotin said: "Ukraine, like France, has unique experience in the nuclear industry. Therefore, our active cooperation and joint efforts in increasing the role of nuclear energy on the European continent will contribute to the achievement of climate goals and ensuring the stable production of clean and safe electricity."

On the same day, the governments of the two countries exchanged letters putting into place a 20-year renewal of their 1998 agreement on the peaceful use of nuclear energy. The renewal, signed by Ukraine's Economy Minister Yulia Svyridenko and French Foreign Minister Stephane Séjournay, creates the legal framework for cooperation in the field of maintenance of nuclear facilities and renews the agreement which expired four years ago.

<https://www.world-nuclear-news.org/Articles/Ukraine-France,-EDF-Energoatom-nuclear-cooperation>

Germany to Deliver Patriot Missiles, Strike Drones to Ukraine

Bloomberg, June 11, 2024

Germany will deliver several thousands strike drones and 100 additional Patriot

guided-missiles to Ukraine as part of the latest military aid package for the war-battered country.

Defense Minister Boris Pistorius unveiled the support during a joint visit with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at a military site in Sanitz, northern Germany, where Ukrainian soldiers are being trained to operate the Patriot air-defense system.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2024-06-11/germany-to-deliver-patriot-missiles-strike-drones-to-ukraine>

French president confirms project to build eight new nuclear reactors

CGTN, June 12, 2024

French President Emmanuel Macron confirmed on Wednesday a project to build eight new nuclear reactors in France which he said were “essential” to the country’s energy transition.

Macron made the comment during a speech addressing his decision to call a snap parliamentary election after the far-right pummeled his party in Sunday’s European Parliament election.

<https://news.cgtn.com/news/2024-06-12/news-1unkG8fyoOA/p.html>

France, Germany, Britain condemn Iran’s steps to expand nuclear programme

Reuters, June 15, 2024

France, Germany and Britain on Saturday condemned Iran’s latest steps, as reported by the IAEA, to further expand its nuclear programme.

“Iran has taken further steps in hollowing out the JCPOA, by operating dozens of additional advanced centrifuges at the Natanz enrichment site as well as announcing it will install thousands more centrifuges at both its Fordow and Natanz sites,” the joint statement said, referring to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action signed with Iran in 2015.

“This decision is a further escalation of Iran’s nuclear programme, which carries significant proliferation risks,” it added.

The joint statement stressed that “Iran’s decision to substantially increase its production capacity at the underground Fordow facility is especially concerning”.

“Iran is legally obliged under the Non-Proliferation Treaty to fully implement its safeguards agreement, which is separate to the JCPOA.”

<https://www.reuters.com/world/france-germany-britain-condemn-irans-steps-expand-nuclear-programme-2024-06-15/>

F. The United States of America

US test-fires two unarmed Minuteman III ballistic missiles

Defense News, June 6, 2024

The U.S. military test-fired two unarmed Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missiles this week, with the Air Force noting they were not driven by “current world events.”

The tests, which involved the Air Force and Space Force, took place June 4 and June 6 from Vandenberg Space Force Base, California, Air Force Global Strike Command noted in its news releases. That command is tasked with handling two legs of the United States’ nuclear triad, which is made up of land-, submarine- and bomber-launched nuclear weapons.

A spokesperson for the command told Defense News both tests were “successful.”

<https://www.defensenews.com/training-sim/2024/06/06/us-test-fires-two-unarmed-minute-man-iii-ballistic-missiles/>

U.S. Considers Expanded Nuclear Arsenal, a Reversal of Decades of Cuts

The New York Times, June 7, 2024

A senior Biden administration official warned on Friday that “absent a change” in nuclear strategy by China and Russia,

the United States may be forced to expand its nuclear arsenal, after decades of cutting back through now largely abandoned arms control agreements.

The comments on Friday from Pranay Vaddi, a senior director of the National Security Council, were the most explicit public warning yet that the United States was prepared to shift from simply modernizing its arsenal to expanding it. They were also a warning to President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia about the likely U.S. reaction if the last major nuclear arms control agreement, called New START, expires in February 2026 with no replacement.

Mr. Vaddi, speaking at the annual meeting of the Arms Control Association, a group that advocates limits on nuclear weapons, confirmed what officials have been saying in private conversations and closed congressional testimony for more than a year. It is the inevitable outgrowth, they have argued, of China's rapid nuclear expansion and Russia's repeated threats to use tactical nuclear weapons in Ukraine.

But it would be an epochal shift, and one fraught with dangers that many Americans thought they had left behind at the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/06/07/us/politics/us-nuclear-russia-china.html>

US issues major nuclear weapons alert amid fears of all-out war: 'If that day comes...'

The Hindustan Times, June 8, 2024

Amid rising geopolitical tensions, the White House has issued a major warning, stating that the United States may have to broaden its nuclear weapons arsenal in reaction to Russia, China, and North Korea expanding their nuke programs "at a breakneck pace".

Speaking to the Arms Control Association on Friday, Pranay Vaddi, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Arms Control at the White House, stated: "Absent a change in adversary arsenals, we may reach a point in the coming years where

an increase from current deployed numbers is required. We need to be fully prepared to execute if the president makes that decision."

If that day comes, Vaddi believes it will lead to the conclusion that additional nuclear arsenals are needed to dissuade US adversaries while also protecting the American people, and Washington's allies, and partners.

Vaddi's statements come amid rising tensions between the United States, Russia, and China, raising worries of an all-out conflict. In May, Russia carried out strategic nuclear arms training "in response to provocative statements and threats by individual Western officials."

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/us-news/us-issues-major-nuclear-weapons-alert-amid-fears-of-all-out-war-if-that-day-comes-101717854501474.html>

U.S. to Send Another Patriot Missile Battery to Ukraine

The New York Times, June 11, 2024

President Biden has approved the deployment of another Patriot missile system to Ukraine, senior administration and military officials said, as the country struggles to fend off Russian attacks on its cities, infrastructure and electrical grid.

Mr. Biden's decision came last week, the officials said, after a series of high-level meetings and an internal debate over how to meet Ukraine's pressing needs for bolstered air defenses without jeopardizing U.S. combat readiness.

The new Patriot system — the second that the United States has sent to Ukraine — will come from Poland, where it has been protecting a rotational force of American troops who will be returning to the United States, officials said.

The system could be deployed to Ukraine's front lines in the next several days, U.S. officials said, depending on any maintenance or modifications it needs.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/06/11/us/politics/patriot-missiles-ukraine-war.html>

Boeing Starliner set for June 22 undocking, return to Earth, NASA says

Reuters, June 14, 2024

The Boeing Starliner spacecraft is now scheduled to undock from the International Space Station and return to Earth on June 22 with its inaugural astronaut crew, NASA said on Friday, giving more time to finalize planning for the complicated process.

NASA astronauts Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams were launched aboard Starliner June 5 and arrived at the ISS the next day, following a 24-hour flight in which the spacecraft encountered four helium leaks and five failures of its 28 maneuvering thrusters.

"The extra time allows the team to finalize departure planning and operations while the spacecraft remains cleared for crew emergency return scenarios within the flight rules," NASA and Boeing said in a statement.

They are targeting a departure no earlier than June 22, leaving open an opportunity for further extensions of time at the ISS. Starliner, while designed for future six-month missions, can stay docked to the ISS for a maximum of 45 days during its current mission.

<https://www.reuters.com/technology/space/boeing-starliner-undocking-return-earth-set-june-22-nasa-says-2024-06-14/>

US-Saudi Nuclear Deal Near, Congress Briefed on Details

Bloomberg, June 14, 2024

National Security Council officials briefed members of Congress on a long-sought nuclear technology-sharing deal with Saudi Arabia that could let American companies build reactors in the kingdom, lawmakers said.

Members of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee received a classified briefing on the contours of the deal on Tuesday, Senator

Jeff Merkley, an Oregon Democrat who serves on the panel said in an interview.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2024-06-14/us-saudi-nuclear-deal-near-congress-briefed-on-details>

West Asia

G. Iran

Operation True Promise a source of national pride: IRGC chief

IRNA, June 2, 2024

"This country, in the Operation True Promise openly and without any secrecy, and with the knowledge that a political power beyond the Zionist regime was facing it, carried out a missile operation," Major General Hossein Salami said on Sunday in an address to university Basij officials in Tehran.

"The magnitude of this operation is a source of pride," he declared.

General Salami pointed out that many countries, including the United Kingdom, had sought to dissuade Iran from carrying out the strike, which was meant to punish the Israeli regime for a deadly attack on Iran's diplomatic premises in Syria.

"Everyone was worried, but we were calm and prepared for all possible enemy scenarios and to overcome them. This is a sign of our power," he said.

The IRGC commander noted that the Iranian people took to the streets to express jubilation upon hearing the news of the missile launch against the Israeli regime.

<https://en.irna.ir/news/85497616/Operation-True-Promise-a-source-of-national-pride-IRGC-chief>

Many countries interested in Iranian drones: Commander

IRNA, June 9, 2024

Brigadier General Vahedi made the remarks on Sunday while touring the

Yasini military base in the southern city of Bushehr.

The Army's Air Force, along with other armed forces, has so far been able to produce varied drones with different ranges, he said.

He added that many countries are interested in purchasing Iranian-developed drones.

The Army's Air Force has made remarkable progress in terms of equipment and internal cohesion, the official underlined.

Brigadier General Vahedi also argued that since the Islamic Republic has a privileged and strategic position, it has always faced many threats throughout history.

Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier General Mohammad-Reza Ashtiani has said that the Islamic Republic is producing the majority of the equipment required by the country's Armed Forces domestically.

Iran has achieved self-sufficiency in the field of making drone engines, he said, adding that the country is seeking to reach higher levels in manufacturing heavier engines.

<https://en.irna.ir/news/85502993/Many-countries-interested-in-Iranian-drones-Commander>

Tehran, Baku hold joint military drill in northwestern Iran

IRNA, June 13, 2024

The drill aims to show the combat readiness of Iran and Azerbaijan in the fight against terrorism, Brigadier General Karim Cheshak said on Thursday.

Both sides also depict their excellent capability in preserving lasting security in the local area of Aras, which is subject to possible attacks by terrorist groups, he added.

Bolstering bilateral relations at the strategic and operational level to maintain peace, safeguard mutual interests, and boost sustainable security in the geopolitical sphere of the South Caucasus are among the objectives of the drill, he said.

The joint drill consisted of four operational stages, the commander stated.

The drill aims to further cement the friendly, long-standing bond between the nations, he said, adding the maneuver was conducted to further deepen regional peace and stability in the region, he further noted.

<https://en.irna.ir/news/85508329/Tehran-Baku-hold-joint-military-drill-in-northwestern-Iran>

H. Israel

Dutch Army to Acquire Elbit's E-Lynx Tactical Radios and Raptor C2 Systems

Israel Defense, June 1, 20024

The Dutch Ministry of Defense has announced that the Dutch army has begun using E-LynX PNR-1000 software-based tactical radios, manufactured by Israeli company Elbit Systems, for its dismounted infantry soldiers. Additionally, the ministry announced that the army is now equipped with Elbit's Raptor C2 system.

Elbit's E-LynX radios are used by several armies worldwide, including those of Germany, Switzerland, India, Brazil, and Israel.

According to Elbit Systems, the Raptor is an all-in-one, wearable, and ultra-compact computing unit designed as an optimal tactical solution for dismounted soldiers. It provides a user-friendly digital toolkit and is a core component of Elbit Systems' Torch-X Dismounted solutions. The Raptor enables forces to dominate the battlefield by giving dismounted soldiers full situational awareness through net-centric integrated information systems.

<https://www.israeldefense.co.il/en/node/62185>

Israel Aerospace Industries Unveils COMPACT ADA: A Jam-Resistant GNSS System

Israel Defense, June 1, 2024

Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) has unveiled Compact ADA, offering reduced size, weight, and power (SWaP), an advanced system that protects avionic systems from GNSS jamming.

The Compact ADA system maintains assured PNT (position, navigation, and timing) by overcoming GNSS jamming, and ensuring that tactical platforms can continue to operate with consistent GNSS availability as compared to most navigation, communication, and warfare systems which depend on the continuous availability of GPS/GNSS signals. However, the cheap, low-end equipment, can seriously degrade GNSS PNT even to the point of total solution denial.

IAI has over 20 years of proven experience in supplying a wide range of GNSS Anti-Jam solutions for the most demanding requirements, and vast experience in integrating immune navigation solutions into airborne (manned and UAV), surface, maritime, and guided munitions.

<https://www.israeldefense.co.il/en/node/62183>

Elbit Unveils Lightweight UT30 Turret

Israel Defense, June 4, 2024

Elbit Systems has designed a lighter-weight variant of its Unmanned Turret UT30, capable of being carried by 6×6 and even 4×4 tactical ground vehicles.

According to Janes, a company spokesperson confirmed that the Lightweight UT30 Mk 3 has already been manufactured and integrated into a 6×6 mine-resistant ambush-protected (MRAP) vehicle, revealing this information at the Black Sea Defense and Aerospace (BSDA) 2024 exhibition held in Bucharest about two weeks ago. Serial deliveries are currently underway. However, the spokesperson did not disclose the identity of the client or where live-fire drills with a Cougar 6×6 MRAP had been held.

The Lightweight UT30 features the same 30×173 mm MK44 airburst munition gun and sensor payloads as Elbit's UT30 Mk 2. Weight savings come from a new design concept as well as a reduction in protection levels, according to the spokesperson, adding that the new turret weighs approximately one ton.

<https://www.israeldefense.co.il/en/node/62218>

Aeronautics Unveils the Hybrid Octoper

Israel Defense, June 5, 2024

Aeronautics Ltd., an Israeli designer and producer of unmanned aerial systems (UAS) for global defense and HLS markets, is launching the Hybrid Octoper™, a tactical multi-rotor UAS with a hybrid propulsion system. According to Aeronautics, the Hybrid Octoper™ sets a new standard in tactical UAS capabilities, offering significantly extended mission endurance of up to four hours and multi-payload capability.

Surpassing the conventional limitations of electric UAVs, the Hybrid Octoper™ enables significantly longer flight durations, reducing the need for frequent battery and UAV replacements while maintaining critical persistent surveillance during complex missions. By integrating fuel combustion and electric power sources, the Hybrid Octoper™ extends operational capabilities through optimized energy usage and cost-effectiveness.

The Hybrid Octoper™, a multi-role tactical drone with a military-oriented design, offers high survivability and seamless integration with diverse sensors, payloads, radar systems, and more. Operating from the customer's C4I capabilities, it supports autonomous landing, GNSS-denied navigation, and encrypted communication. Advanced video processing and analytics enhance situational awareness, while various payload options ensure mission versatility.

<https://www.israeldefense.co.il/en/node/62234>

Peruvian Army to Equip with Hundreds of IWI Arad 7 Rifles

Israel Defense, June 5, 2024

The Peruvian army recently received the first shipment of 500 Arad 7 assault rifles in 7.62×51 mm caliber, manufactured by the Army Weapons and Ammunition Factory (FAME SAC) under license from Israeli IWI. The Spanish website Defensa.com reports that in the coming days, another 300 Arad 7 rifles will be delivered to the army.

These shipments are part of an overall deal for the purchase of 10,000 Arad 7 assault rifles for the Peruvian army, valued at approximately \$27.3 million. FAME signed this agreement with IWI in August 2023, and the rifles are intended for the Southern Command of the Peruvian army.

<https://www.israeldefense.co.il/en/node/62233>

Israel Aerospace Industries Introduces the AIR LORA

Israel Defense, June 9, 2024

The Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) has unveiled the AIR LORA, a new long-range air-launched ballistic missile.

According to company information, AIR LORA is an effective deep stand-off air-to-ground missile system for quick, all-weather, and highly accurate attack capabilities. It can hit a target with supersonic velocity from deep stand-off ranges within a few minutes, to provide a quick response against time-critical targets (TCT) while maintaining low collateral damage.

The AIR LORA is flexible to target location changes and can define new target locations during the airborne mission flight. It is easy to integrate and simple to operate, and can be supported by an independent avionic solution for fast initial operation capability without changing the existing avionic of the aircraft.

<https://www.israeldefense.co.il/en/node/62255>

Aeronautics Unveils Its Latest Loitering Munition System, the Orbiter 2 LM

Israel Defense, June 11, 2024

Aeronautics, an Israeli designer, developer, and manufacturer of Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) for the global defense and HLS markets, introduces the Orbiter 2 LM (Loitering Munition), the latest addition to its portfolio of loitering munition systems.

According to Aeronautics, the Orbiter 2 LM combines the functionality of a loitering munition with ISR capabilities. With an extended endurance of two hours, the

system offers high mission flexibility, ensuring success in uncertain operational scenarios, particularly those involving targets with short time windows.

The system is fully operational in GPS-denied areas and utilizes advanced, interference-immune, and encrypted communication for secure data transmission. It also supports full connectivity to external C4I systems.

<https://www.israeldefense.co.il/en/node/62278>

I. Yemen

Yemen's Houthis say they targeted Greek-owned ship in Red Sea

Al Jazeera, June 13, 2024

Yemen's Houthi rebels have claimed responsibility for a small watercraft and missile attack that left a Greek-owned cargo ship taking water and in need of rescue near the Red Sea port of Hodeidah.

There were no immediate reports of casualties in Wednesday's attack on the cargo ship. It is unclear if the vessel's ownership has any connection to Israel.

The Iran-backed group, which is at war with a Saudi Arabia-led coalition, has been in control of Yemen's capital Sanaa and its most populous areas. It has been launching scores of drone and missile attacks on shipping in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden since November in support of the Palestinians under Israeli attack in Gaza. They have sunk one ship, seized another vessel, and killed three seafarers in several attacks.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/6/13/yemens-houthis-say-they-targeted-greek-owned-ship-in-red-sea>

J. Southeast Asia

US Defense Secretary discusses military exchanges in visit to China ally Cambodia

Reuters, June 4, 2024

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin met Cambodia's leadership on Tuesday and

discussed resuming military training programmes, in a visit aimed at reversing gains made by China amid concern about its growing presence at a Cambodian naval base.

Cambodia allowing China to develop Ream Naval Base, located at a key waterway to the Gulf of Thailand in Sihanoukville province, has Washington worried that it will give Beijing a new outpost near the contested South China Sea, much of which is claimed by China.

Ties between the United States and Cambodia have been strained in recent years, with Washington vocal over the government's dismantling of the political opposition, opens new tab and concerned about China's growing influence.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/us-defense-secretary-visits-cambodia-it-moves-closer-beijing-2024-06-04/>

K. East Asia

Missile boats join Chinese army live drills in East China Sea

Anadolu Ajansi, June 7, 2024

The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) on Friday launched live drills in the East China Sea which were joined by missile boats, state media reported.

The naval unit from the PLA's Eastern Theater Command led multiple missile boats for "comprehensive training" that included live weapon training and formation maneuvers.

According to the command, the exercise "focused on honing combat forces under complex conditions, emphasizing command control, personnel coordination, and emergency response."

In the East China Sea, Beijing shares maritime borders with North Korea, South Korea, and Japan, as well as Taiwan.

"It aims to identify and resolve issues, test weapon system performance, and further enhance the unit's combat readiness and operational capabilities," it said.

Meanwhile, a fleet of China Coast Guard (CCG) Friday conducted patrols around the disputed Diaoyu Islands.

"It is a rights-safeguarding patrol carried out by the CCG in accordance with the law," said the coast guard.

The Diaoyu Islands are known as the Senkaku Islands in Japan. The islands have long been a source of contention for both nations.

<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/missile-boats-join-chinese-army-live-drills-in-east-china-sea/3242886>

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