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PM: Nuclear Notes and A THAAD Story

by Polly Mann

Nice to Hear! As far as I know it's the first time ever! This June the Annual Conference of Mayors meeting in Miami passed a resolution calling for the president to lower nuclear tensions by engaging in “intense diplomatic efforts” with nuclear-armed nations and their allies. The mayors recommended passage of the proposed Restricting First Use of Nuclear Weapons Act of 2017, a bill that would prevent the president from conducting a nuclear first-strike without the approval of Congress. In addition, they recommended that the government transfer nuclear weapons funds to causes more intimately related to the public's well-being.

Nuclear Nuts! The Pentagon has proposed a reclassification of nuclear safety records in order “to avoid disclosing too much information about U.S. nuclear capabilities to the public.” The U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff recommendation was made in 2014 by its spokesman, Greg Hicks, who said that the decision would ensure that “as long as nuclear weapons exist the U.S. will maintain a safe, secure and effective nuclear stockpile.” However, prior to this reclassification, inspection records regularly revealed major flaws in the U.S. nuclear program.

It's a THAAD Story

During the many years I've used the computer I've never before seen anything humorous in the text of information about weapons. That is, until today, when I was surveying material about weapon systems, the following appeared on the screen: “This is a THAAD story. Beijing is furious that Korea has decided to, jointly with the United States, install the THAAD missile.”. The installation on the Korean peninsula of the THAAD system (the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system designed to shoot down incoming missiles) is objected to by China, Russia, and North Korea. They say it's fueling an arms race and that THAAD's powerful radar would be used to spy on China and also affect its deterrent capabilities.

In March of this year the U.S. began the installation of the system in South Korea. A few weeks later, the situation on the Korean Peninsula escalated dramatically. North Korean state media reported that the country had practiced attempts to hit U.S. military bases in Japan. (a training exercise). Then the U.S. announced that it had begun shipping the THAAD system to South Korea and that much of the equipment would be held at the U.S. air base in Osan until the site was prepared. The response from China was immediate with a statement from a foreign ministry spokesman: “We will resolutely take necessary measures to defend our security interests.”

320,000 U.S. and South Korean troops have been involved in joint military exercises. Japanese, U.S., and South Korean warships have also been engaged in military drills near the North Korean coast. China is concerned that the U.S. is hoping to use both South Korea and Japan to contain China in the future and has placed restrictions on South Korean businesses that operate in China. Chinese travel agencies are stopping the sale of tickets to South Korea. But 2015 figures show China is South Korea's largest trading partner with 25% of its exports going to China, only 14%

to the U.S. No surprise that *Business Times* reported at the beginning of this year that South Korea risks economic retaliation from China.

At the end of July, North Korea fired a test missile that it claims can reach California. The U.S. fired off a THAAD test missile into the Pacific Ocean. Intercontinental missiles can be outfitted with nuclear weapons and therein lies the danger. President Donald Trump, Vice President Pence, and U.S. Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley all rebuked China for not doing more to stop North Korea from escalating tensions. *So it's China's problem? Really?* A THAAD story, indeed!

Polly Mann is a co-founder of WAMM and regular contributor to this newsletter.

Update:

On August 5, many people throughout the world were scratching their heads surprised by Russia and China voting with the UN Security Council to impose new sanctions on North Korea. Why would they gang up with the U.S. on North Korea? The U.S. is the catalyst for the problem; it's clear that the installation of THAAD, increasing militarization of South Korea and engaging in war games near North Korea, creates a reaction on the part of North Korea to defend itself with its own show of force.

Geo-political analyst Stephen Lendman explained China and Russia's Security Council vote this way: "Beijing and Russia oppose its nuclear and ballistic missile programs. They want these issues handled diplomatically—most of all non-militarily, the main reason they went along with sanctions to preserve a measure of stability on the Korean peninsula...China and Russia seek an 'integrated,' realistic and feasible resolution to Korean peninsula issues. Increased U.S. regional militarization is [the] polar opposite [of] what's needed to resolve contentious issues." He quoted China's UN envoy Liu Jieyi: "We hope the parties concerned will immediately take effective action to prevent the situation from further escalating, create conditions for the resumption of talks and exert efforts to bring back at an early date the nuclear issue of the peninsula to the right track of seeking a peaceful solution through dialogue and consultation".

(Why China and Russia Agreed to Tough New Sanctions on North Korea. August 7, 2017. globalresearch.ca)