

DAILY TRACKER

NUCLEAR ISSUES

1. New reporting around the chaotic final stages of President Trump's tenure underscores essential problems with the U.S. nuclear command-and-control system. Why it matters: One person possesses the authority to launch America's massive nuclear arsenal and quite possibly end the world: the president. And there's no clear, legal way to circumvent that authority if they can't be trusted.

Source: <https://www.axios.com/donald-trump-sole-authority-nuclear-weapons-345eb396-7a1f-41d4-84db-ceed7c687835.html> 16 September 2021

2. Australia's decision to build nuclear submarines will isolate Australia from its regional neighbours who have, for decades, pursued a nuclear-free Pacific, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (Ican) has said. While the Australian government and defence force have insisted the submarines will be nuclear-powered, and never nuclear-armed, Ican, the winner of the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize, argues that a military nuclear reactor built in Adelaide was a "foot in the door" towards weapons development.

Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/sep/16/australian-nuclear-submarine-plan-wrong-direction-at-the-wrong-time-nobel-prize-winning-group-says> 16 September 2021

3. The Defense Department relies on nuclear-armed bombers, submarines and intercontinental ballistic missiles, as well as space-based sensors, to provide a strategic deterrence umbrella for the homeland and to protect deployed forces, allies and partners. However, sensitive microelectronics used in these assets could be vulnerable to high levels of ionizing radiation caused by a number of factors, including cosmic rays in outer space, severe solar storms, and an electromagnetic pulse caused by a high-altitude nuclear detonation.

Source: <https://www.defense.gov/Explore/News/Article/Article/2775364/dod-taking-measures-to-protect-nuclear-weapons-space-assets/> 16 September 2021

4. Iran has been enriching nuclear fuel to near bomb-grade levels, says the NYT report adding that Tehran has gained the capability to produce the fuel needed for a single nuclear warhead within a month or so, under the most extreme timeline. On September 13th the Director General of IAEA, Rafael Mariano Grossi told the IAEA Board of Governors "I remain deeply concerned that nuclear material has been



present at undeclared locations in Iran and that the current locations of this nuclear material are not known to the Agency,”

Source: <https://www.indiatoday.in/news-analysis/story/iran-nuclear-warhead-fear-is-the-key-1853071-2021-09-15> *15 September 2021*

5. The U.S. Department of Energy’s National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) is mounting a full-court press for the “modernization” of the nuclear weapons production complex, an effort packed with capital-intensive projects on which contractors thrive. A cornerstone of modernization, a new plant to make the plutonium “pits” for new nuclear weapons already faces problems. Yet, Congress and the Biden administration are moving ahead despite gathering storm clouds.

Source: <https://thehill.com/opinion/energy-environment/572477-stumbling-plutonium-pit-project-reveals-does-uphill-climb-of> *15 September 2021*

6. From the late 2000s, it reached another dimension – space. An overarching sphere that now encompasses even cyber, nuclear, and conventional domains, its dynamics and nuances are far trickier and destabilizing. Conventional war uses space-based assets to monitor adversaries, guide missiles, jets, and communications. Even something as simple as a Global Positioning System (GPS) for both military and civilian purposes is beamed from satellites. Nuclear war, on the other hand, uses the same satellites to monitor missiles, track their launches, alert countries of an attack, and guide missiles.

Source: <https://eurasianimes.com/us-military-to-declassify-its-super-secret-space-weapon-experts-call-it-warning-to-adversaries/> *15 September 2021*

7. In the weeks after September 11, while the nation was still grappling with the trauma of the attacks, U.S. leaders confronted the possibility that an even more unimaginable horror was unfolding before them. In October 2001, the CIA director informed the president and other senior officials that a source, code-named “Dragonfire,” had confided that al-Qaeda, which had been entertaining thoughts of nuclear terrorism since the mid-1990s, had smuggled a 10-kiloton nuclear device into the United States and planned to detonate it New York City. At the president’s direction, scientists from the Department of Energy’s Nuclear Emergency Support Team (NEST) quietly scoured the city for the device as part of operation “Radiant Angel” until the CIA learned its initial report was erroneous. Yet in the years that followed, the fear that the world’s most potent weapons would fall into the hands of fanatics would remain a central preoccupation at the highest levels of the U.S. government.



Source: <https://www.hstoday.us/911/state-of-nuclear-security-trends-threaten-progress-against-nuclear-terrorism/> 15 September 2021

- China's US embassy has told the US, UK and Australia to "shake off their cold war mentality and ideological prejudice" after the trio announced a new security pact on Thursday. The trilateral security partnership, named Aukus, was announced by the three nations' leaders via videolink, and will draw up an 18-month plan to provide Australia with nuclear-powered submarines. It also drew strong political reaction domestically in Australia and the UK, and from France, whose existing \$90bn submarine contract with Australia has now come to an abrupt end.

Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/sep/16/cold-war-mentality-china-criticises-aukus-us-uk-australia-submarine-pact> 16 September 2021

- The fevered race to build an atomic bomb during the second World War famously ended in an airburst 580m above Hiroshima that killed 140,000 people and incinerated the city in August 1945. The destruction of Nagasaki and another 70,000 lives followed three days later. Less well known is that wartime Japanese scientists were also trying to build a bomb. A new Japanese movie called Taiyo no Ko (Gift of Fire) for the first time dramatises that history, depicting the attempt to develop a nuclear weapon at Kyoto University, led by physicist Bunsaku Arakatsu, a brilliant protege of Albert Einstein.

Source: <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/asia-pacific/new-film-pushes-japan-to-confront-a-wartime-taboo-1.4674055> 15 September 2021

- Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom have announced a new trilateral security alliance, including a joint effort to help the Australian military acquire nuclear-powered submarines, in an apparent attempt to counter China. The leaders of all three countries unveiled the alliance – dubbed AUKUS – on Wednesday. They stressed that the submarines would be nuclear powered, not carrying nuclear weapons.

Source: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/9/15/uk-and-us-to-help-australia-acquire-nuclear-powered-submarines> 15 September 2021

MISSILES/BIO WEAPONS



1. Members of the UN Security Council have gathered behind closed doors for an emergency meeting about North Korea's latest ballistic missile test, which member states consider a "major threat," according to France's ambassador to the UN, Nicolas de Riviere. Riviere said there was consensus among the group to condemn the test, which North Korea said was launched using a "railway-borne missile system".

Source: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/9/16/n-korea-says-it-tested-new-railway-borne-missile-system> *16 September 2021*

2. Next-generation BrahMos missiles would be manufactured in UP's Defence Corridor at a facility between Lucknow and Kanpur. The land was nearly finalised and would be handed over to the DRDO by the end of this month, said Satish Mahana, minister for industrial development.

Source: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/lucknow-news/brahmos-missiles-unit-to-come-up-between-lucknow-and-kanpur-101631722980055.html> *16 September 2021*

3. North and South Korea tested ballistic missiles hours apart Wednesday in a display of military might that is sure to exacerbate tensions between the rivals at a time when talks aimed at stripping the North of its nuclear program are stalled. South Korea's presidential office said the country conducted its first underwater-launched ballistic missile test. It said the domestically built missile flew from a submarine and hit its designated target.

Source: <https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/world/rival-koreas-test-missiles-hours-apart-raising-tensions-7470611.html> *16 September 2021*

4. North Korea said its latest volley of ballistic missiles was test-fired from a train, suggesting that leader Kim Jong Un had added a new option for a quick strike against U.S. allies in the region. The missiles were launched Wednesday from a "railway-borne missile system deployed for action for the first time," said the official Korean Central News Agency, with photos of at least one launch splashed on the front page of the country's biggest newspaper. North Korea's test of two short-range ballistic missiles Wednesday -- a provocation banned under United Nations resolutions -- was its first since March, and prompted an emergency UN Security Council session hours later.



Source: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-09-15/> *16 September 2021*

5. Australia on Thursday (Sept 16) announced that it would acquire long-range US Tomahawk cruise missiles, shortly after forging a new alliance with the US and Britain to strengthen military capabilities in the face of growing rivalry with China. "We will be enhancing our long-range strike capability, including Tomahawk cruise missiles to be fielded on the Royal Australian Navy Hobart-class destroyers and joint air-to-surface stand-off missiles extended range for our Royal Australian Air Force capabilities," Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison told reporters in Canberra.

Source: <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/australianz/australia-to-acquire-us-tomahawk-cruise-missiles-as-part-of-trilateral-defence-pact> *16 September 2021*

6. The Indian Air Force has inducted a medium range surface-to-air-missile system that is capable of destroying aerial threats, including enemy fighter jets, unmanned aerial vehicles and missiles, at a range of 70km. The MRSAM has been developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation in partnership with Israel Aerospace Industries.

Sources: <https://www.telegraphindia.com/india/iaf-inducts-medium-range-surface-to-air-missile-system/cid/1830885> *16 September 2021*

NUCLEAR NON PROLIFERATION

1. In 1971, radioactive isotopes were found in the Adelaide water supply having emanated from the French atmospheric tests being conducted on the Mururoa Atoll in the Pacific. As the Australian people learnt about the dangers posed by these tests, they rose up. Thousands marched in city streets, and entire pages of letters to the editor were published about the "bloody French". So powerful was this outcry that prime minister Whitlam took France to the International Court of Justice, which ruled the tests were illegal.

Source: <https://www.smh.com.au/national/morrison-makes-soothing-noises-about-nuclear-non-proliferation-but-what-of-future-governments-20210916-p58saf.html> *16 September 2021*

2. Australia's decision to build nuclear submarines will isolate Australia from its regional neighbours who have, for decades, pursued a nuclear-free Pacific, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear



Weapons (Ican) has said. While the Australian government and defence force have insisted the submarines will be nuclear-powered, and never nuclear-armed, Ican, the winner of the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize, argues that a military nuclear reactor built in Adelaide was a “foot in the door” towards weapons development.

Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/sep/16/australian-nuclear-submarine-plan-wrong-direction-at-the-wrong-time-nobel-prize-winning-group-says> *16 September 2021*

3. The proliferation of weapons-grade nuclear materials has long been nightmare fuel for US security professionals, and the effort to stem the flow has been ongoing for decades. In the op-ed below, Prof. Alan Kuperman argues it’s up to lawmakers, and the US Navy, to address a vulnerability of America’s own making. As the annual defense authorization and spending bills head to congressional floor votes this month, lawmakers have a chance to take the next step in the critical fight against nuclear proliferation — by pushing the US Navy to change the way it powers some of its ships.

Source: <https://breakingdefense.com/2021/09/the-us-navys-nuclear-proliferation-problem/> *16 September 2021*

4. On September 15, 2021, State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi delivered a speech at a meeting marking the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the China Arms Control and Disarmament Association (CACDA) & Arms Control Symposium of the 50th anniversary of the restoration of the lawful seat of the People’s Republic of China in the United Nations (UN) via video link. Wang Yi congratulated on the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the CACDA. Wang Yi said, over 20 years, the CACDA has advanced innovation in theory and practice of the arms control diplomacy with Chinese characteristics, taken persistent efforts to carry out people-to-people arms control diplomacy, actively publicized Chinese policies, vision and initiatives related to arms control, and supported the nonproliferation export control system and capacity building, playing a significant role in serving China’s overall diplomacy and social and economic development. Wang Yi expressed, since China recovered its lawful seat in the United Nations, it has fully participated in multilateral arms control. Under the strong leadership of the CPC Central Committee, Chinese arms control diplomacy has scored substantial and concrete outcomes, which effectively safeguards China’s legitimate and lawful rights and makes positive contributions to world peace and stability.

Source: https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1907230.shtml *16 September 2021*



UN REFORMS

1. Urgent action is needed as it can take time to assess and address the serious risks this technology poses to human rights, warned the High Commissioner: “The higher the risk for human rights, the stricter the legal requirements for the use of AI technology should be”. Ms. Bachelet also called for AI applications that cannot be used in compliance with international human rights law, to be banned. “Artificial intelligence can be a force for good, helping societies overcome some of the great challenges of our times. But AI technologies can have negative, even catastrophic, effects if they are used without sufficient regard to how they affect people’s human rights”.

Source: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/09/1099972> 16 September 2021

2. UN chief Antonio Guterres stressed on Wednesday that he cannot ask world leaders to show they have been vaccinated against COVID-19, after New York City officials said proof should be required for anyone entering the U.N. General Assembly Hall. Dozens of heads of state and government and foreign ministers – accompanied by countless diplomats – are due to be in New York next week for an annual high-level gathering at the United Nations. Some leaders are staying away and sending a video statement instead because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Source: <https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/world/vaccinated-mr-president-new-york-wants-proof-un-chief-cannot-enforce-7472011.html> 16 September 2021

3. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will speak before the United Nations General Assembly on the morning of September 25, local time. The major issues he is likely to bring up are the following: Global cooperation on Covid and the possibility of economic stimulus, Development Assistance for needy countries, Reform of the United Nations to make it more representative and not reflect a post World War 2 mindset.

Source: <https://www.timesnownews.com/india/article/pm-modi-likely-to-raise-issues-of-terrorism-un-reform-afghanistan-crisis-at-76th-unga-session/812503> 16 September 2021

4. The UN will withdraw Gabon’s 450-strong peacekeeping contingent from the Central African Republic over sexual abuse allegations, a scourge that has long tarnished UN interventions, Gabon’s



defence ministry said on Wednesday. “In recent weeks, exceptionally serious acts that go against military ethics and the honour of the armed forces, committed by certain elements in the Gabonese battalions... have been reported,” the ministry said.

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1646674/un-withdraws-peacekeepers-from-african-state-over-sex-abuse-claims> *16 September 2021*

5. A new report from the United Nations on Wednesday highlights divergent economic recoveries between nations and throws fresh urgency behind warnings that richer nations are not doing enough to help poorer countries from falling further behind as the world recovers from COVID-19 disruptions. “It’s really frustrating to see how responses to the pandemic have panned out rather disjointedly,” said Inu Manak, an expert in international political economy at the Cato Institute, a libertarian think-tank based in Washington, DC in the United States.

Source: <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2021/9/15/as-rich-poor-divide-widens-between-nations-un-urges> *15 September 2021*

6. The United Nations (UN) has published a report titled 'UNCTAD Trade and Development Report 2021', stating the Indian economy can grow at a 7.2%, but the growth rate might decelerate in the next year. The report said, "The recovery in the country is constrained by the ongoing human and economic cost of the Covid-19 pandemic and the negative impact of food price inflation on private consumption." The UN has also mentioned the wealth inequalities in India coupled with the increase in 'social unrest'.

Source: <https://www.goodreturns.in/news/un-estimates-indian-economy-will-grow-at-7-2-in-2021-fall-next-year-1223606.html> *16 September 2021*

7. A submission has been made by Amnesty International to the United Nations (UN) stating the government's Troubles amnesty proposals are "an utter betrayal" of victims. The group has included video testimony by some of those who could be affected. The government's plan to end all investigations, inquests and civil actions has been denounced by all of Northern Ireland's political parties. Last month, UN human rights experts also expressed serious concerns. Amnesty International has now followed up with the UN Human Rights Council.

Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-58577603> *16 September 2021*

8. Cutting universal credit by £20 a week is an “unconscionable” move that breaches international human rights law and is likely to trigger an explosion of poverty, the United Nations’ poverty envoy has said. In an excoriating intervention alongside a letter to the UK government, Olivier De Schutter, the UN-appointed rapporteur on extreme poverty, told the Guardian that the withdrawal of the £1,000-a-year



uplift from next month was “deliberately retrogressive” and incompatible with Britain’s obligation to protect its citizens’ rights to an adequate standard of living.

Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/sep/16/unconscionable-universal-credit-cut-breaks-human-rights-law-says-un-envoy> *16 September 2021*

9. Members of the UN Security Council have gathered behind closed doors for an emergency meeting about North Korea’s latest ballistic missile test, which member states consider a “major threat,” according to France’s ambassador to the UN, Nicolas de Riviere. Riviere said there was consensus among the group to condemn the test, which North Korea said was launched using a “railway-borne missile system”.

Source: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/9/16/n-korea-says-it-tested-new-railway-borne-missile-system> *16 September 2021*

10. The UN chief urges "rapid" emission cuts to curb climate change. And it is not. He also noted that the drop in emissions seen during the pandemic could be viewed as a positive sign that significant cuts are possible if entire economies are weaned off fossil fuels. The United States, Britain and the European Union have already made pledges that if implemented would help avert dangerous planetary warming, said Mann. Kim Cobb, a professor of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences at Georgia Tech, was equally reassured that the 1.5C target isn't out of reach.

Source: <https://www.devdiscourse.com/article/science-environment/1732082-un-chief-urges-rapid-emission-cuts-to-curb-climate-change> *16 September 2021*