

DAILY TRACKER

NUCLEAR ISSUES

1. Belgian officials announced on Thursday that the country's existing nuclear power stations will be phased out by 2025, with gas serving as a bridge to more sustainable energy sources and, maybe, new-technology nuclear choices later.

Source: <https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/power/belgium-commits-to-phasing-out-existing-nuclear-power-plants/88468019>

2. According to a recent IBRS poll, support for nuclear energy has risen to 65 percent in the Czech Republic, with 93 percent of people wanting the country to remain self-sufficient in electricity generation.

Source: <https://www.world-nuclear-news.org/Articles/Czech-support-for-nuclear-rises-in-energy-crisis>

3. The French Alternative Energies and Atomic Energy Commission (CEA) and Onet Technologies plan to start dismantling the APM pilot used fuel reprocessing plant facility's C419 cell at CEA's Marcoule site early next year. Onet Technologies is a French engineering and services company that supports nuclear industry players in the development of projects, operation and maintenance in safe conditions and in the dismantling of nuclear facilities.

Source: <https://www.world-nuclear-news.org/Articles/Dismantling-of-Marcoule-reprocessing-cell-approach>

4. The first equipment has arrived at a deconversion plant in eastern Siberia being developed by Russia's Rosatom and France's Orano. The plant is part of a long-term plan in Russia to manage and utilise depleted uranium stockpiles. The facility, called W2-EHZ, is sited at the Electrochemical Plant in Zheleznogorsk, which is owned by Rosatom's fuel subsidiary TVEL.

Source: <https://www.world-nuclear-news.org/Articles/Equipment-for-deconversion-arrives-at-Zheleznogorsk>

5. When combined with intermittent wind and solar generation, Bill Gates' high-tech start-up TerraPower LLC is designing a new nuclear reactor connected to a massive, cheap energy storage tank that, when combined with intermittent wind and solar generation, will provide the reliable electricity needed for a carbon-free future. Sodium is one of the most advanced reactor designs on the market today.

Source: <https://nei.org/news/2020/sodium-nuclear-pairs-renewables-energy-storage>

MISSILES/ BIO WEAPONS

1. In the face of China's rapid military expansion and North Korea's nuclear and missile programmes, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's administration approved record defence spending on Friday, with a 10th consecutive yearly increase in 2022.

Source: https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/japan-plans-record-defence-spending-2022-with-10th-straight-annual-increase-2021-12-24/?taid=61c56c7292a8110001a58255&utm_campaign=trueAnthem:+Trending+Content&utm_medium=trueAnthem&utm_source=twitter

2. Afghan families fleeing the Taliban landed in Kentucky, a little town well-versed in hosting refugees, after long treks that brought them from Kabul to Qatar, European cities, and U.S. military posts.

Source: https://www.reuters.com/world/kabul-kentucky-afghans-put-down-roots-refugee-haven-2021-12-23/?taid=61c5782d92a8110001a584de&utm_campaign=trueAnthem:+Trending+Content&utm_medium=trueAnthem&utm_source=twitter

3. Myanmar's military carried out further airstrikes on a rebel-controlled territory near the Thai border on Friday, according to the rebel group, in the latest round of violence that has seen hundreds flee to Thailand.

Source: https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/myanmar-airstrikes-displace-more-people-a-long-thai-myanmar-border-2021-12-24/?taid=61c58f9c5bce710001f0fb92&utm_campaign=trueAnthem:+Trending+Content&utm_medium=trueAnthem&utm_source=twitter

4. On Tuesday, the Joint Staff Office of the Japan Self-Defense Force said that a six-ship People's Liberation Army Navy carrier group lead by aircraft carrier Liaoning (16) is presently operating in the Pacific Ocean. On Dec. 20, the PLAN carrier group, which included Liaoning, destroyer Nanchang (101), a Luyang III-class destroyer, frigate Rizhao (598) and another Type 54A Jiangkai II frigate, as well as a Type 901 replenishment ship, was in the vicinity of the waters off the uninhabited Oki Daito Island, 315 kilometres southeast of Okinawa.

Source: [https://news.usni.org/2021/12/22/chinese-carrier-group-drills-in-pacific-ocean-carl-vins-on-carrier-strike-group-wraps-up-exercise-with-australia?utm_source=USNI+News&utm_campaign=2dea614525-USNI_NEWS_DAILY&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_0dd4a1450b-2dea614525-234743818&ct=t\(USNI_NEWS_DAILY\)&mc_cid=2dea614525&mc_eid=2c709e51f7](https://news.usni.org/2021/12/22/chinese-carrier-group-drills-in-pacific-ocean-carl-vins-on-carrier-strike-group-wraps-up-exercise-with-australia?utm_source=USNI+News&utm_campaign=2dea614525-USNI_NEWS_DAILY&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_0dd4a1450b-2dea614525-234743818&ct=t(USNI_NEWS_DAILY)&mc_cid=2dea614525&mc_eid=2c709e51f7)

5. Saudi Arabia is now producing ballistic missiles with China's help, according to US intelligence services, a move that could have major ramifications for the Middle East and complicate efforts by

the Biden administration to control Iran's nuclear ambitions, Saudi Arabia's perennial rival.

Source: <https://www.wionews.com/world/us-intel-shows-china-is-helping-saudi-arabia-build-its-own-ballistic-missiles-report-439499>

6. In March 2020, Japan announced ambitions to create its own hypersonic weapons, joining a group of countries that already possess the technology, including the United States, Russia, China, India, Australia, France, Germany, and North Korea. With signals that Tokyo may modify its pacifist constitution to allow for stronger offensive military weapons, those plans are taking on new geopolitical significance. The Hypersonic Cruise Missile (HCM) and Hyper Velocity Gliding Projectile (HVGP) are two types of hypersonic weaponry that Japan aims to use (HVGP).

Source: https://asiatimes.com/2021/12/japans-hypersonics-aim-for-strategic-independence/?mc_cid=893f22e4b3&mc_eid=00400db71d

7. The launcher's single-piece high-explosive fragmentation shell used a fuse with an altimeter, which allowed the altitude to be controlled and the projectile to be detonated either at a height of several metres or when it impacted the ground. By the end of the decade, the Russian military will be using a new self-propelled multiple rocket launch system, as the new Tornado-S large-caliber platform will obliterate the earlier systems.

Source: <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/reboot/russias-new-tornado-s-rocket-launcher-can-flatten-anything-198338>

8. To compete with foreign manufacturers China is building its own engines. The state-controlled Global Times reported that China has developed “world’s most powerful Stirling engine”, a form of heat engine that is used in power production and submarine propulsion.

Source: <https://eurasianimes.com/china-built-worlds-most-powerful-emission-free-engine-submarines/>

9. As tensions with China have grown, Taiwan has made every effort to improve its defensive capabilities. Deals with the United States on arms are a big part of this. This series of contracts, which included Taipei's high-profile purchase of F-16V (Viper) fighter planes, may soon include MQ-9B SkyGuardian drones.

Source: <https://eurasianimes.com/after-f-16-viper-us-to-arm-taiwan-with-deadly-mq-9b-skyguardian-drones/>

10. Malaysia has expressed interest in purchasing F/A-18 (Hornet) fighter jets from Kuwait. However, contrary to reports, Kuwait has denied that it is in talks with Malaysia about selling its fighter fighters.

Source: <https://eurasianimes.com/kuwait-denies-media-reports-of-malaysia-interested-in-acquiring-its-f-a-18-hornet/>

11. According to new satellite photographs taken by a private US company, Russia has continued to build up its forces in annexed Crimea and near Ukraine in recent weeks.



Source: https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/satellite-images-show-russia-still-building-up-forces-near-ukraine-2021-12-24/?taid=61c5c45792a8110001a591e2&utm_campaign=trueAnthem:+Trending+Content&utm_medium=trueAnthem&utm_source=twitter

12. The delivery of the first Australian nuclear submarine under the \$90 billion deal with the United States and the United Kingdom has been accelerated due to rising tensions with China. As the West prepares for a conflict with China, Australia appears to be on track to launch its first nuclear-powered submarine five years ahead of schedule.

Source: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10341127/Australia-nuclear-submarine-early-90billion-project-China-tensions-rise.html>

NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION

1. Israel Air Force (IAF) Maj.-Gen. Tomer Bar said in an interview published on Wednesday that Israel could successfully strike Iran's nuclear program tomorrow if necessary.

Source: <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-689441>

2. Russian President Vladimir Putin has accused the West of "standing with missiles on our doorstep" and reiterated his opposition to Nato's expansion into Ukraine.

Source: <https://www.channel4.com/news/vladimir-putin-accuses-west-of-standing-with-missiles-on-our-doorstep>

3. The US and its allies are talking about time frames for nuclear diplomacy with Iran, according to US national security adviser Jake Sullivan, who added that present talks with Tehran might be over in a matter of weeks.

Source: https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/biden-aide-sullivan-says-us-israel-need-joint-strategy-amid-iran-diplomacy-2021-12-22/?taid=61c39d8992a8110001a52426&utm_campaign=trueAnthem:+Trending+Content&utm_medium=trueAnthem&utm_source=twitter

4. If progressive presidential candidate Lee Jae-myung wins in March, South Korea may attempt to add nuclear-powered submarines to its navy fleet to guard against North Korean weapons threats.

Source: <https://www.nknews.org/2021/12/lee-jae-myung-pledges-for-nuclear-submarine-opcon-transfer-by-end-of-term/>

UN REFORMS

1. Two additional Hong Kong colleges demolished public memorials to the 1989 Tiananmen Square demonstrations in Beijing on Friday, following the removal of a sculpture commemorating the crackdown's victims at another campus earlier this week.
Source: https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/two-more-tiananmen-monuments-removed-hong-kong-university-campuses-2021-12-24/?taid=61c56a1a92a8110001a5823d&utm_campaign=trueAnthem:+Trending+Content&utm_medium=trueAnthem&utm_source=twitter
2. Peng Shuai, the tennis star who went missing after accusing one of China's most influential men of sexual assault, appeared to withdraw her prior charges of abuse in an interview this past Sunday. Peng is still not speaking freely, given the Chinese government's well-documented history of compelling dissidents and activists to film recordings in which they publicly deny their mistreatment.
Source: <https://www.watoday.com.au/world/asia/peng-shuai-s-new-statements-fit-a-pattern-in-china-the-world-mustn-t-fall-for-it-20211223-p59jt0.html>
3. The "Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act," signed by US President Joe Biden on Thursday, prohibits the importation of goods created with forced labour in China's Xinjiang province into the US. The White House said in a press release that "On Thursday, December 23, 2021, the President signed into law: H.R. 6256, which bans imports from the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (Xinjiang) of the People's Republic of China and imposes sanctions on foreign individuals responsible for forced labour in the region."
Source: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/joe-biden-signs-bill-to-ban-imports-from-china-s-xinjiang-into-law-101640277968830.html>
4. Myanmar's military carried out further airstrikes on a rebel-controlled territory near the Thai border on Friday, according to the rebel group, in the latest round of violence that has seen hundreds flee to Thailand.
Source: https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/myanmar-airstrikes-displace-more-people-along-thai-myanmar-border-2021-12-24/?taid=61c5c32af25af2000198c7d4&utm_campaign=trueAnthem:+Trending+Content&utm_medium=trueAnthem&utm_source=twitter
5. According to local officials and residents, Myanmar's military launched airstrikes and heavy artillery on a small hamlet controlled by ethnic militants, forcing hundreds of civilians to flee across a river into Thailand.
Source: <https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/myanmar-army-airstrikes-send-hundreds-fleeing-thailand-81928004>

6. Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla discussed India's border security with Myanmar's State Administration Council during his first high-level outreach to the military junta here, during which he emphasised New Delhi's interest in seeing the country return to democracy as soon as possible and the release of detainees and prisoners.

Source: <https://www.news18.com/news/india/shringla-raises-security-concerns-with-myanmars-military-junta-emphasises-indias-interest-in-seeing-early-return-to-democracy-4587275.html>

7. According to a recent survey, more than 6,400 journalists in Afghanistan have lost their employment since the Taliban takeover of the country. The Afghan media scene has changed dramatically since the Taliban took power, according to a survey undertaken by non-profit organisation Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and the Afghan Independent Journalists Association (AIJA).

Source: <https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/over-6-400-journalists-in-afghanistan-lost-jobs-since-taliban-takeover-report-2668703>

8. The UN Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution on Wednesday clearing the way for aid to reach Afghans in desperate need of basic assistance while preventing funds from falling into the hands of the Taliban, a move hailed as a "milestone" decision that will save lives by the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator.

Source: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/12/1108642>

9. The US will contribute \$10 million to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to aid in the response to COVID-19 and addressing dangers to human, animal, and environmental health, including future pandemics. The money will go toward the UN agency's COVID-19 Response and Recovery Program, which is part of its larger One Health initiative.

Source: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/12/1108712>