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Senior Executive Intelligence Brief

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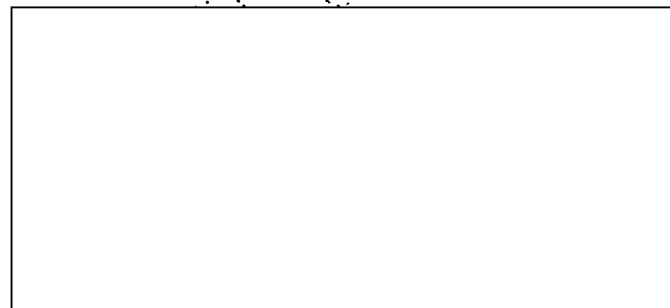
Tuesday, 4 May 1999

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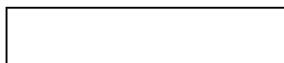
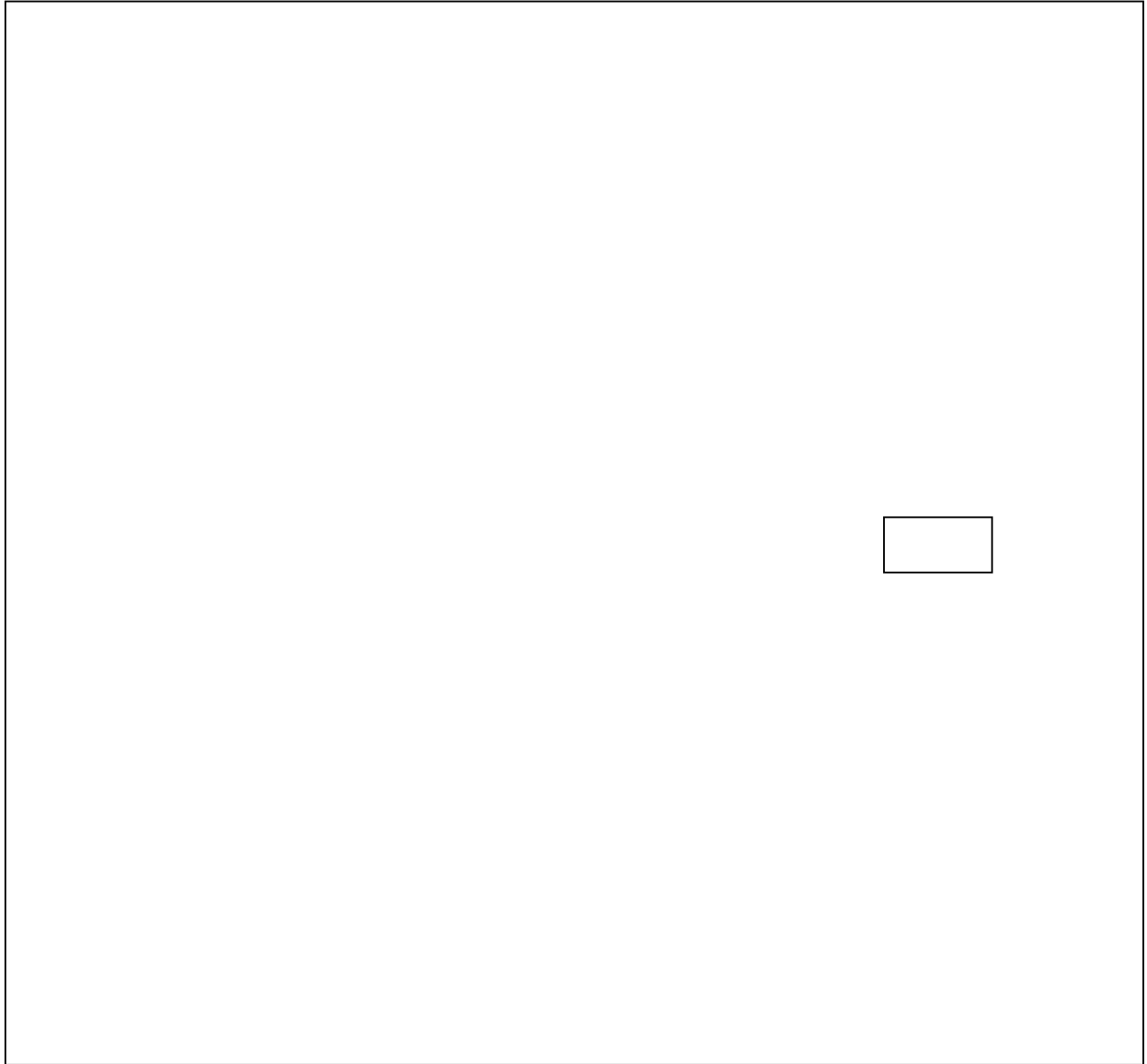
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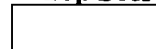
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Russia: Mikhaylov Pressing for Hydronuclear Experiments

Days before the Security Council meeting last week, First Deputy Minister for Atomic Energy Mikhaylov published an article justifying hydronuclear experiments, which he said release "practically no" radiation. While emphasizing the safety benefits of such tests, he noted that none of the nuclear powers rejects the improvement of nuclear weapons or the development of qualitatively new types.

- Commenting on the US insistence on a "zero-yield" interpretation of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, Mikhaylov argued that determining the scope of permitted activities is not simple and that only "professionals" can address it correctly.
- He said even US specialists now speak of the need for a "broader interpretation" of permitted activities.

In addition, Mikhaylov supported his argument for hydronuclear experiments by saying that, because the US reserves the right to renew underground nuclear tests if necessary for maintaining confidence in stockpiles of nuclear weapons, Russia should proceed from the same principle. He asserted that nuclear proliferators would not be able to validate weapons designs based on hydronuclear experiments alone, and the established nuclear powers could use such experiments to help improve the reliability of their nuclear arsenals.

- All countries, he said, would gain from this practice because it would reduce the risk of nuclear accidents.

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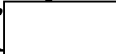
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Russia:
Analytic Perspective

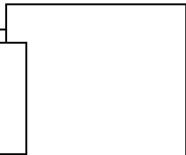
Security Council Adopts Nuclear Weapons Plans 


President Yel'tsin at a session of the Russian Security Council last Thursday signed two decrees on the development and use of nuclear weapons, according to Russian press reports. Security Council Secretary Putin emphasized to journalists that the weapons covered by these decrees include tactical nuclear weapons.


— Putin said Yel'tsin signed a third top secret document but refused to disclose its nature. 

Putin said the scheduled meeting was unrelated to events in the Balkans, but a Security Council staffer told a reporter that recent changes in NATO strategy—presumably a reference to the NATO Strategic Concept—and combat operations against the FRY “did not go unnoticed.” 

Russian press reports have speculated that the documents—whose contents have not been made public—outline a first-use nuclear strike posture, renege on Moscow's unilateral pledge of 1991 to eliminate the Ground Forces' tactical nuclear capability, and direct the redeployment of nuclear weapons to border areas and Belarus.

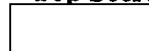
— The last of these speculations appears unfounded—

— At a minimum, the decrees point to a more robust tactical nuclear arsenal, suggesting Moscow is moving away from relying almost solely on strategic weapons for deterrence. Several Russian civilian defense experts have said Russia's tactical nuclear stockpile is becoming obsolete and will soon disappear. 

Concern About Ability To Test 

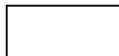
Putin said the Council discussed problems in the area of nuclear weapons testing. He asserted that Russia was first among the nuclear powers to stop testing and risks being left behind if it does not develop “such technologies as would enable us to hold nuclear tests” without violating treaty obligations, with which he said Russia “will unfailingly comply.”

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— Russian experts have said the superior computing power of Western nuclear laboratories gives the West the ability to substitute simulations for nuclear testing to a degree impossible for Russia.

— Authorities including First Deputy Minister for Atomic Energy Mikhaylov have said Russia is looking at a range of techniques—including hydronuclear experiments—that they say would allow them to continue warhead design and maintenance research within the limits of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.



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