

# Obama appeals to Republicans to back Russia arms treaty

By Patrick Martin

The Obama administration has launched a full-scale effort to appeal to Senate Republicans to approve the New START weapons treaty with Russia. The campaign is significant both for its politics—lobbying for Republican support by invoking the Cold War policies of Ronald Reagan—and for the decision to focus on this issue above all others in the current lame duck session of Congress, including the impending expiration of unemployment benefits for two million jobless workers.

The White House campaign began with an appearance by Obama alongside former secretary of state Henry Kissinger—long linked to war crimes in Vietnam, Chile and other countries targeted by US imperialism—and other ex-officials. It continued with the president's radio speech Saturday and interviews on Sunday morning television talk shows by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Admiral Michael Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The new treaty would replace the START agreement negotiated by the administration of George W. Bush and the Vladimir Putin government in Russia, which expired last De-



President Barack Obama

cember, cutting off—among other things—the mutual inspection process under which US and Russian experts monitored each others' nuclear weapons facilities.

New START would extend the very minor reductions in nuclear weapons stockpiles carried out by Bush and Putin, while keeping intact enough nuclear capability to destroy all human life on the planet many times over.

A major purpose of the treaty, from the standpoint of American imperialism, is to keep the Russian government on board as a facilitator in the war in Afghanistan (much US military equipment passes

through Russia on the way to the battlefield) and in the campaign led by Washington to isolate Iran and impose economic sanctions.

Obama cited both these reasons in his radio speech, noting the importance of Russian cooperation in relation to both Afghanistan and Iran. But his main focus was not on Russia but on the Republican Party.

In the course of the five-minute address, he dropped the name of Ronald Reagan four times, along with the names of four former Republican secretaries of state—Colin Powell, George Shultz, James Baker and Kissinger—and the ranking Republican on the Senate

Foreign Relations Committee, Richard Lugar of Indiana. He also cited the concerns of the leading Republican critic of the treaty, Senator Jon Kyl of Arizona.

Obama began his address by declaring, "This Treaty is rooted in a practice that dates back to Ronald Reagan." He went on to support a massive modernization of US nuclear weapons production facilities, pledging "to invest at least \$85 billion in that effort over the next ten years—a significant increase from the Bush Administration."

The amount of money earmarked for refurbishing Los Alamos, Oak Ridge and other facilities for making weapons that could kill hundreds of millions of people exceeds the total amount committed to New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina or to the entire Gulf Coast after the BP oil spill.

The same day, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, while visiting Santiago, Chile, warned that failure of the Senate to Pass the START treaty would have "significant consequences" in terms of Russian cooperation with US foreign policy.

Hillary Clinton, the secretary of state, sounded the same theme in Sunday interviews on CBS, NBC and Fox, calling treaty ratification a vital national security issue. On CBS,

she rebuffed a suggestion from host Bob Schieffer that failure to win treaty ratification would be viewed internationally as a further sign of the weakening of the Obama administration, like the debacle of the G20 summit last week in South Korea.

Admiral Mullen was the administration advocate for the treaty on ABC's Sunday morning program "This Week," and he declared the Pentagon's unreserved support for Senate ratification as soon as possible. He said that nothing in the treaty would limit the US ability to modernize nuclear infrastructure—one of the principal pretexts employed by Republican advocates of delaying ratification.

Kyl, the deputy minority leader in the Senate and the lead Republican negotiator with the White House, had pressed for an additional \$4 billion for the nuclear modernization program, and the Obama administration agreed to deliver this sum. But after pocketing the concession, Kyl simply shifted the grounds for his opposition, declaring there was not sufficient time during the lame duck session to examine all the implications of the treaty.

He called for putting off consideration until the new Senate convenes in January, when the Republican Party will have 47 senators, up from the present 41, and correspondingly greater influence.

The real goal of these political maneuvers seems not to be the actual torpedoing of the

START treaty, but rather to use the treaty as leverage on the White House to extract the maximum concessions on domestic policy, particular on extension of the Bush tax cuts for the wealthy.

It is no exaggeration to say that the actions of the congressional Republican leadership are driven almost entirely by the immediate pecuniary interests of the super-rich, who are adamantly demanding that Washington act, and act now, to extend tax cuts worth \$700 billion to the financial aristocracy.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell gave a glimpse of this maniacal focus of maximizing personal wealth, when he gave the official Republican response to Obama's radio speech. He declared that extending all the Bush-era tax cuts should be the top priority of the lame duck session of Congress, and that anything else was a diversion.

"Americans don't think we should be raising taxes on anybody, especially in the middle of a recession," McConnell claimed, although opinion polls consistently show overwhelming public support for ending the tax cuts for the wealthy.

In a speech on the Senate floor Thursday, McConnell was even more explicit, declaring, "The most important thing we can do to create jobs between now and Jan. 1 is to send a message to job creators that we're not going to raise their taxes." In other words,

if the rich don't get their tax cut, they will continue the effective freeze on hiring by major corporate employers that has contributed to the persistence of unemployment at double-digit levels. **WSWS**

## Nigeria to hold presidential poll on April 9 next year

LAGOS, — Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Abuja on Tuesday said the presidential election will be held on April 9, 2011.

Releasing the schedule of electoral activities, INEC Chairman Attahiru Jega also said elections into the National Assembly were slated for April 2, 2011, while governorship and state houses of assembly elections were fixed for April 16.

"In accordance with Electoral Act 2010, the conduct of party primaries by political parties is to hold from November 26 to January 15, 2011 as provided

by section 87 of Electoral Act 2010," he told reporters.

Registration of voters holds from Jan. 15-29, 2011 and display of voters' register for claims and objections begins on Feb. 3-8, 2011.

Jega said run-off elections to the Office of Governor of a state and Office of The President, if any, would be held within 7 days after the announcement of the affected result.

He added that the new timetable superseded the earlier one issued by the commission.

The election had been scheduled for January next year, but

Jega had proposed in September that the poll be postponed to April to ensure full preparation for a smooth election.

On Sept. 22, he formally asked for a three-month delay to January's presidential elections, adding that more time was needed to iron out problems with voter registration.

"What is worth doing is worth doing well," he said at a meeting with political parties.

"If we are willing to give an extension up to March, our preference is that we should get an extension up to April because when we get this sufficient time, we will have enough room to do an excellent job," he added. Jega also told reporters that the May 29 date for the inauguration of the winner of the presidential election would remain sacrosanct even if the voting timetable were amended. **(Xinhua)**

in a statement Wednesday that its military measures taken in the exchange of artillery firing with South Korea on Nov. 23 is in "self-defense", the official news agency KCNA reported. **(Xinhua)**

## EU offers Zambia equipment to test quality of products

LUSAKA, — The European Union (EU) has given Zambia a testing and metrology laboratory to improve the country's capacity to check the quality of imported and export products, the Zambia Daily Mail reported on Wednesday.

The equipment will help the Zambia Bureau of Standards (ZBS) in checking the quality of products coming and leaving the southern African nation.

The country's Minister of Commerce, Trade and Industry Felix Mutati said when receiving the equipment that this

will help the country export quality products to the American and European markets.

The Zambian minister further said with the equipment in place, customers were expected to have quality products on both the local and international markets.

The assistance had been provided under a five-year Capacity Building for the Private Sector Development (CBPSD) project funded by the EU which comes to an end next month. The EU has supported the Zambian govern-

ment to promote the project in the past five years by providing 15 million euros, Daily Mail said.

According to Mutati, the private sector in the country should accredit themselves with ZABS so that their products were certified, especially now that the country was a preferred investment destination. The new equipment has the capacity to test standards, microbiology, packaging, food and agriculture testing, condom testing, petroleum, timber technology, textiles and paint testing, according to Daily Mail. **(Xinhua)**

## Republic of Congo to create three special economic zones

BRAZZAVILLE, — The Republic of Congo is planning to create three special economic zones under a government program to diversify the Central African country's economy, the government has announced.

The targeted zones are in the country's economic capital Pointe-Noire, in Ollombo and in Ouessou-Pokola, according to an official statement released

this week.

Three bidders are involved to win the contract to evaluate these potential sites, including Sofred Consult, Gazprom Bank and Egis Bceom.

The chosen consultancy firm is expected to suggest to the Congolese government the type of activities to be carried out in each zone, in light of its socio-economic, cultural and

environmental realities.

The county's public works deputy director Jean Jacques Bouya told an opening ceremony of the tenders on Monday that the creation of these special economic zones will make the country's economy more attractive, competitive, dynamic and prosperous.

The country set up a ministry charged with Special Economic Zones in September 2009. **(Xinhua)**

## Artillery firing in self-defense: DPRK

PYONGYANG, — A spokesman of the Foreign Ministry of

the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) said

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