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Bush and Putin Tie Antimissile Talks to Big Arms Cuts

By DAVID E. SANGER

GENOVA, Italy, July 22 — President Bush and President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia agreed today to link discussions of American plans to deploy a missile defense system with the prospect of large cuts in both nuclear arsenals. If an accord was reached quickly, it might take the place of the 1972 Antiballistic Missile Treaty.

Mr. Putin's willingness to enter into simultaneous talks on both offensive and defensive weapons, which American officials said was a surprise, was greeted enthusiastically by Mr. Bush. He had proposed both the offensive and defensive changes during his presidential campaign.

"I believe that we will come up with an accord," Mr. Bush, looking almost ebullient, said at a news conference this afternoon, after the two leaders met for two hours in a 15th-century palace and after the Group of 8 summit meeting closed.

When Mr. Putin was asked what would happen if the United States went ahead with tests that violated the ABM treaty, his answer seemed starkly different from the stand he took last month in Moscow, when he had warned that any violation could touch off a renewed arms race.

"If, as we understood from each other today, we are ready to look at the issue of offensive and defensive systems together as a set, we might not ever need to look at that option," Mr. Putin said.

For all the smiles and warm embraces today between Mr. Bush and Mr. Putin, who met for the first time last month in Slovenia, all that was agreed upon today was to start a series of intensive "consultations." Condoleezza Rice, Mr. Bush's national security adviser and a Russia expert, said tonight that the consultations — which she carefully did not refer to as negotiations — would take place on "an aggressive schedule," which she would work out on a visit to Moscow this week.

But in the past, Ms. Rice has expressed considerable skepticism about the arms control process that dragged on through the cold war, and she has made clear in recent days that she is not looking to replace the ABM treaty with another formal treaty, subject to Senate approval. "What we are not interested in doing is replicating the old arms control process where it takes 15 years to come to an agreement," she said tonight.

Speaking to a small group of reporters, she also sounded more cautious than did her boss. Whether the talks succeed or fail, she said, at some point Mr. Bush will "need to move forward at an appropriate time" on missile defense tests that violate the ABM treaty's restrictions. The deputy secretary of defense, Paul D. Wolfowitz, told Congress recently that such time should be measured in months, not years.

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For Mr. Putin, the politics of the talks are complex, and one of the outstanding questions is whether he is really willing to give up the ABM treaty or whether he is simply testing Mr. Bush's bottom line. But he does stand to gain from a cut in offensive weapons.

The United States now has about 7,000 strategic weapons; under Start II, the treaty to reduce strategic arms, the figure is supposed to fall to between 3,000 and 3,500. In 1997, Presidents Clinton and Boris N. Yeltsin agreed in principle that those numbers could fall to 2,500 or below. Mr. Putin talks of 1,500; Mr. Bush has never specified a number.

In a brief statement, the two presidents did not state their intentions for the ABM treaty, nor did they address how or in what order the two issues would be taken up.

The upbeat meeting with Mr. Putin today redeemed for Mr. Bush a summit meeting in this ancient port city that, until late today, had the makings of a fiasco.

The three-day session was so overshadowed by violent anti-globalization demonstrations in the streets, which left one protester dead and more than 100 badly wounded, that Canada announced that next year's meeting of the seven largest industrial nations and Russia would be held in a small resort, Kananaskis, an hour from Calgary, Alberta. Canada's prime minister, Jean Chrétien, clearly hopes that the site will prove remote enough to discourage demonstrators, who poured into Genoa by bus, rail and plane.

And to restore the summit meetings to the kind of intimate gathering they were conceived as a quarter century ago, he insisted that each nation would be limited to 30 to 35 members at the central site. Mr. Bush's Secret Service detail is sometimes that size; here in Genoa, he was accompanied by somewhere between 800 and 1,000 staff members.

Mr. Bush insisted today that the summit meeting was "a success," and he stressed the discussions that took place with leaders of a handful of developing nations as evidence that the group was refocusing its attention on helping the world's poorest. But other leaders seemed relieved to be leaving town, and used considerable restraint in describing the meeting's accomplishments.

"Everyone feels the G-8 has to continue," insisted Italy's prime minister, Silvio Berlusconi, who now faces what could be a politically damaging inquiry into abuses here by the Italian police, including a raid on Saturday night on the headquarters of one of the main protest groups. The police went in swinging clubs, and today there were signs of blood in the building.

A communiqué issued by the eight leaders — from the United States, Britain, Japan, Germany, Italy, France, Canada and Russia — made no progress on their most contentious issue: global warming. The European nations, Japan and Russia succeeded in isolating Mr. Bush in his opposition to the treaty, and after hours of negotiation the communiqué demonstrated that Mr. Bush had not budged from his insistence that the emissions restrictions that are part of the Kyoto Protocol would prove costly to the United States.

"We all firmly agree on the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions," the

communiqué said. "While there is currently disagreement on the Kyoto Protocol and its ratification, we are committed to working intensively together to meet our common objective."

Mr. Bush pointed instead to an agreement to set up a \$1.3 billion United Nations fund to help people with AIDS and other communicable diseases, but that was negotiated before anyone arrived in Genoa.

He also called for restarting the global trade talks that collapsed in Seattle in 1999, saying free trade is the way out of poverty. But at least in public, he never explicated the argument with much detail.

While the annual meetings are rarely a hotbed of decisiveness, veterans of many such sessions said this one would be remembered more for the violence than for the accords.

But Mr. Bush clearly hopes that it will be remembered, eventually, for something else: as the meeting that took the bite out of the opposition to his missile defense plan, and to the broader strategic rethinking behind it. And within hours of the announcement with Mr. Putin, it seemed to be having some of that effect.

Senator Joseph R. Biden Jr., the Delaware Democrat who is chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee and a critic of Mr. Bush's plans to break out of the ABM treaty, said on CNN today, "This is very good news to me." The president's decision to open talks with the Russians, he added, "implies at least to me" that Mr. Bush "will not break out of the ABM treaty in the meantime."

He concluded, "You don't walk away from a treaty without a new system being in place."

Senator Tom Daschle, the Democratic leader, said he wanted to look at the development more closely, but added on NBC's "Meet the Press," that it was good for both sides "to try to find ways to put forth constructive dialogue and ultimately come to some agreement here."

Daryl G. Kimball, director of the Coalition to Reduce Nuclear Dangers, said, "This acknowledges the reality of the U.S.-Russian strategic dialogue for years, that the United States' interest in missile defenses has stymied the achievement of reductions in offensive arsenals."

Senator Joseph I. Lieberman of Connecticut, the Democratic vice presidential candidate last year, called it "another indication of what those of us who support the development of a missile defense have been saying, which is that it's a new world."

The talks with Mr. Putin have also taken some pressure off Mr. Bush here in Europe. The Europeans had used Mr. Bush's determination to go ahead with missile defense as a symbol of American unilateralism, and warned that he risked alienating the Russians. But as a senior British official said when Mr. Bush was in London on Wednesday, "if the Russians aren't complaining, we're certainly going to give the president some room."

Several months ago, Mr. Bush's top aides said they were prepared to offer Mr. Putin several incentives to abandon the ABM treaty and cooperate on a missile shield meant

to repel such things as terrorist attacks, blackmail threats by rogue states, and accidental missile launchings.

Mr. Putin traveled through Europe earlier this year drumming up opposition to an American missile defense system, claiming that it would prompt an arms race Russia could not afford but that it would pursue, if necessary. But then, after the Slovenia meeting, he took another tack, telling reporters that he believed that the missile defense system, if deployed, would not effectively counter Russia's huge nuclear arsenal for at least 25 years.

"He's right," a senior Bush adviser said here. "Actually, it's probably longer than that." If so, Mr. Putin may conclude that the coming talks are the only way of determining if the United States is truly willing to cut its nuclear arsenal dramatically.

And there is a more subtle advantage for Mr. Putin: By haggling as an equal with Mr. Bush, he may help restore Russia's sense that it remains a major power in the world, despite its economic decline, its territorial shrinkage and its declining diplomatic influence.

If an agreement is reached, the biggest effects may be on China, which will not be a party to the new talks. While Russia would retain a nuclear force able to overwhelm the kind of defense system that Mr. Bush has described, China's small nuclear force could well be countered.

Only last week Mr. Putin and President Jiang Zemin of China signed a friendship treaty, but it is unclear how Mr. Putin plans to juggle the superpowers on his east and west flanks.

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