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Los Angeles Times  
4 January 2010

## ***Obama's Nuclear-Free Vision Mired In Debate***

*Pentagon officials have pushed back against the president's goals to shrink the U.S. stockpile and reduce the role of such weapons in foreign policy, sources say.*

By Paul Richter

President Obama's ambitious plan to begin phasing out nuclear weapons has run up against powerful resistance from officials in the Pentagon and other U.S. agencies, posing a threat to one of his most important foreign policy initiatives.

Obama laid out his vision of a nuclear-free world in a speech in Prague, Czech Republic, last April, pledging that the U.S. would take dramatic steps to lead the way. Nine months later, the administration is locked in internal debate over a top-secret policy blueprint for shrinking the U.S. nuclear arsenal and reducing the role of such weapons in America's military strategy and foreign policy.

Officials in the Pentagon and elsewhere have pushed back against Obama administration proposals to cut the number of weapons and narrow their mission, according to U.S. officials and outsiders who have been briefed on the process.

In turn, White House officials, unhappy with early Pentagon-led drafts of the blueprint known as the Nuclear Posture Review, have stepped up their involvement in the deliberations and ordered that the document reflect Obama's preference for sweeping change, according to the U.S. officials and others, who described discussions on condition of anonymity because of their sensitivity and secrecy.

The Pentagon has stressed the importance of continued U.S. deterrence, an objective Obama has said he agrees with. But a senior Defense official acknowledged in an interview that some officials are concerned that the administration may be going too far. He described the debate as "spirited. . . . I think we have every possible point of view in the world represented."

The debate represents another collision between Obama's administration and key parts of the national security establishment, after scrapes over troop levels in Afghanistan and missile defenses in Eastern Europe.

But more than those issues, the future of U.S. nuclear weapons policy is directly tied to a series of initiatives Obama has advanced as a prime goal of his presidency.

"This is the first test of Obama's nuclear commitments," said former U.S. Ambassador Nancy E. Soderberg, who held senior foreign policy positions in the Clinton administration. "They can't afford to fall short at the outset."

Congress called for the nuclear review, the third such study since the end of the Cold War, placing the Pentagon in charge. Similar reviews were conducted near the beginning of the Clinton and the George W. Bush administrations, but Obama's is the first in which substantial changes stand to be made both in the number of U.S. nuclear weapons and in how they are used.

The government maintains an estimated 9,400 nuclear weapons, about 1,000 fewer than in 2002. But Obama believes that stepping up efforts to reduce the stockpile will give U.S. officials added credibility in their quest to strengthen the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, the cornerstone international arms-control pact.

The timing of the administration debate on the nuclear review is crucial, because a key international meeting on the treaty is planned for May in New York.

Also looming this year are other elements of Obama's nuclear agenda, including renewal of an arms-reduction treaty with Russia and a push for Senate ratification of a global ban on nuclear testing.

The nonproliferation treaty has been weakened in recent years by the spread of nuclear technologies to countries such as North Korea, Pakistan and Iran. But nonnuclear countries are wary of intrusive new rules, arguing that though the United States preaches nuclear arms control to others, it has failed to live up to its own promises to disarm.

For Obama, the stakes are high. The difficulties posed by challenges in Afghanistan, Pakistan, North Korea and the Middle East underscore the need for progress on arms control.

Obama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in part because of expectations that he would make good on his pledge to reduce the nuclear threat.

Obama would not be the first president to suffer setbacks on nuclear policy at the hands of politics and the U.S. bureaucracy. President Clinton and Defense Secretary Les Aspin had ambitious plans to overhaul nuclear policy.

But their 1994 review quickly bogged down in internal disagreement, and ended largely by preserving the status quo.

Obama has vowed to move toward abolishing American nuclear weapons, but has acknowledged that the process may not be completed in his lifetime.

The president told world leaders at the United Nations General Assembly meeting in September that his administration would soon set out a new nuclear posture policy statement that "opens the door to deeper cuts and reduces the role of nuclear weapons."

But the process of doing so in Washington has encountered difficulty on several scores, according to those who described the talks.

A core issue under debate, officials said, is whether the United States should shed its long-standing ambiguity about whether it would use nuclear weapons in certain circumstances, in hopes that greater specificity would give foreign governments more confidence to make their own decisions on nuclear arms.

Some in the U.S. argue that the administration should assure foreign governments that it won't use nuclear weapons in reaction to a biological, chemical or conventional attack, but only in a nuclear exchange. Others argue that the United States should promise that it would never use nuclear weapons first, but only in response to a nuclear attack.

Pentagon officials question the value of such public declarations, contending that foreign governments may not even believe them, said the U.S. officials and others.

During the Cold War, Soviet officials declared that they would use nuclear weapons only in response to a nuclear attack. But when Soviet archives were opened, it became clear that "there were scenarios where they would have contemplated first use," said Charles Ferguson, a former State Department official who now heads the Federation of American Scientists.

The lingering skepticism that resulted could carry over to similar U.S. declarations, limiting their worth, some officials have argued.

A "no-first-use" policy may represent a bigger step than the Obama administration would be willing to take, private analysts said.

Instead, they think the administration might hedge its policy by saying, for instance, that the United States would use nuclear weapons only in situations that threatened its existence.

Another issue being debated is how to scale back the U.S. stockpile while continuing to provide nuclear protection to allies, in part to keep them from developing their own nuclear arsenals. The U.S. maintains hundreds of nuclear weapons overseas for such purposes.

For instance, some U.S. submarines in the Pacific carry nuclear-tipped torpedoes, which, Ferguson said, many Japanese officials like for their possible deterrent effect against a growing Chinese navy. Because nuclear weapons provide such assurance to a key ally, some U.S. officials are reluctant to cut back on the capability.

For similar reasons, some U.S. officials want to keep about 200 U.S. bombs at European bases, providing security for Eastern European countries.

Another debate is whether the U.S. needs three major delivery systems for its nuclear weapons -- long-range missiles, submarines and bombers. But eliminating one of them would face strong resistance from the affected military services and the lawmakers who support them.

The senior Defense official said the nuclear posture debate centers on the different ways toward the twin goals of nonproliferation and deterrence.

"We are not looking at whether to reduce the roles of nuclear weapons and whether to reduce [their numbers]," he said.

"We're looking at how."

*Julian E. Barnes in the Washington bureau contributed to this report.*

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nation-and-world/la-na-obama-nuclear4-2010jan04,0,2198537,full.story>

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## ***Clashes Seen Over Obama's Disarmament Goals***

President Barack Obama's intention to pursue significant U.S. nuclear arsenal cutbacks has been subject to intense debate as his administration prepares to wrap up a congressionally mandated review of the nation's nuclear weapons policy, the *Los Angeles Times* reported today (see *GSN*, Oct. 26, 2009).

Elements within the Defense Department and other agencies have resisted calls to reduce the country's nuclear deterrent in size and strategic scope, said U.S. officials and independent observers with knowledge of the dispute. The White House, in turn, has pressed the Pentagon to revise the pending Nuclear Posture Review to more fully address steps toward achieving disarmament goals articulated by Obama in the Czech Republic last April (see *GSN*, April 6, 2009).

The United States possesses around 9,400 nuclear weapons, down from approximately 10,400 such armaments in 2002, according to the *Times*. Obama's administration hopes that moving toward significant U.S. nuclear arms reductions would advance Washington's efforts to update the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

Proposals to adopt a nuclear "no-first-use" policy or to rule out nuclear retaliation to a biological, chemical or conventional strike have emerged as key matters of contention, officials said. Some Pentagon officials have questioned arguments that such moves could encourage other nations to make similar policy adjustments.

Officials have also clashed over how to pursue nuclear arsenal reductions while maintaining a reliable nuclear umbrella as a means of discouraging U.S. allies from producing their own strategic stockpiles. Such concerns have prompted some officials to defend deployments of nuclear-armed torpedoes near Japan and roughly 200 nuclear bombs at bases in Europe.

"This is the first test of Obama's nuclear commitments. They can't afford to fall short at the outset," said Nancy Soderberg, a former U.S. official who occupied several key diplomatic posts under the Clinton administration.

One Pentagon official referred to exchanges on nuclear policy issues as "spirited ... I think we have every possible point of view in the world represented."

"We are not looking at whether to reduce the roles of nuclear weapons and whether to reduce (their numbers). We're looking at how," the official added (Paul Richter, *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 4).

The administration has also considered whether the United States must continue to rely on a "triad" of land-, air- and sea-based nuclear weapons, the *Boston Globe* reported yesterday (see *GSN*, Dec. 16, 2009).

The review could call for dropping the U.S. arsenal of deployed nuclear warheads to no more than 1,000, according to administration officials.

"I would recommend giving up the bomber leg," said retired Gen. Eugene Habiger, a former head of U.S. Strategic Command, referring to the nation's 114 long-range nuclear bombers.

Reductions have also been considered to the number of U.S. ballistic missiles deployed on land -- the count now stands at 450 ICBMs -- and on 14 submarines.

A rapid U.S. nuclear weapons cutback, though, might encourage China and other nuclear-armed states to quickly build up their own arsenals, warned Henry Sokolski, head of the Nonproliferation Policy Education Center.

Arms Control Association head Daryl Kimball suggested that such a development is unlikely to occur.

"The United States and Russia each deploy more than 2,000 strategic warheads, most of which exist only to deter a massive nuclear attack by the other. No other country possesses more than 300 nuclear warheads, and China currently has fewer than 30 nuclear-armed missiles capable of striking the continental United States," Kimball said (Bryan Bender, *Boston Globe*, Jan. 3).

[http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw\\_20100104\\_2405.php](http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20100104_2405.php)

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Washington Post  
1 January 2010

## ***Israel Backs Obama's Push for Sanctions On Iran***

By Howard Schneider  
Washington Post Foreign Service

JERUSALEM -- Israeli officials say they will support President Obama's move to impose sanctions on Iran as a next step in the standoff over the country's nuclear program, though the narrower measures being considered by the White House may fall short of the "crippling" restrictions advocated here.

With the expiration of the United States' year-end deadline for Iran to resolve the issue, Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu is "focused on working with the international community to upgrade the pressure on Iran in a way that makes the Iranian regime know that its nuclear program is unacceptable, that they are going to pay a price that will make them rethink," said spokesman Mark Regev. Obama "has been successful in galvanizing an international coalition that many people were cynical about. We are on the same page."

The endorsement is significant because it comes from a country that is considered the most likely to launch a military strike to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's denial of the Holocaust and his anti-Israel rhetoric have led Netanyahu to draw parallels to the years preceding World War II, and Israeli officials have said that all options are open in preparing for what some here regard as an "existential" threat.

Israelis were initially skeptical of Obama's decision to engage Iran diplomatically, worried it would lead to the same end as previous diplomatic overtures -- years of talks and ineffective resolutions while Iran continued its nuclear development.

The events of the last few months, however, helped curb the doubts. Ongoing pro-democracy demonstrations in Iran have created the sense of a regime vulnerable to pressure, while revelations about the extent and nature of the country's nuclear program have broadened international support for action.

Israeli officials and analysts say they understand the limits Obama faces in pushing more stringent measures through the U.N. Security Council, where China holds a veto and remains hesitant to act against the Islamic republic. But they also say Obama now shares their sense of urgency and will soon propose a meaningful set of restrictions on the Iranian leadership -- sticking to a rough deadline he mentioned in a meeting with Netanyahu in May.

With European nations and, more importantly, Russia looking poised to go along, "Israel is a spectator, like most other countries in the international community," said Deputy Foreign Minister Daniel Ayalon. "We trust that Obama and the U.S. will lead."

Along with the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, Iran has been at the core of U.S.-Israeli discussions since Obama and Netanyahu took office in early 2009. They began with an overlapping set of priorities -- Obama viewing establishment of a Palestinian state as key to curbing Iran's influence over Islamist radicals in the region, and Netanyahu viewing Iranian influence as a security threat that needed to be addressed for the conflict with the Palestinians to be resolved.

Beyond the risk of an Iranian nuclear strike on Israel -- considered unlikely because of Israel's nuclear deterrent capacity and the possible U.S. response -- Netanyahu has argued that a nuclear Iran would destabilize moderate Arab states in the region and embolden Iran-supported groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah that sit on Israel's borders.

Obama and Netanyahu seem to have reached an understanding, with some of Netanyahu's overtures to the Palestinians winning U.S. support and Obama's policy toward Iran gaining Israeli trust.

Meanwhile, talk of an Israeli strike has been tempered by discussion of the complexity of such an operation and the likelihood that it would do little other than delay Iran's progress.

"As long as Obama is engaged in some kind of diplomatic effort, Israel is going to wait and see how it plays out," said Emily Landau, director of the arms control program at Tel Aviv University's Institute for National Security Studies. "It is in Israel's interest for it to be dealt with diplomatically. The military option is only getting more and more difficult."

Other options are being discussed. At a Jerusalem news conference this week, Canadian lawmaker and former justice minister Irwin Cotler announced an effort to try Iran on grounds that its actions and the statements of its leaders put it in violation of international treaties on genocide prevention.

Cotler, who has close ties to Israel, has been discussing the initiative with Israeli leaders as a way to further pressure Iran using international law -- a sensitive topic here because of similar efforts to target Israeli leaders and military officials for their country's recent war in the Gaza Strip. The initiative could also help lay the groundwork under international law for military action, if all diplomatic efforts are exhausted.

"A nuclear, genocidal, rights-violating Iran is a clear and present danger to international peace and security," Cotler said. "There have been deadlines before. We should not wait for atrocities."

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/12/31/AR2009123101934.html>

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Washington Times  
2 January 2010

## ***Iran Warns It Will Make Its Own Nuclear Fuel***

By Ali Akbar Dareini, ASSOCIATED PRESS

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) -- Iran warned on Saturday the West has until the end of the month to accept Tehran's counterproposal to a U.N.-drafted plan on a nuclear exchange, or the country will start producing nuclear fuel on its own.

The warning was a show of defiance and a hardening in Iran's stance over its controversial nuclear program, which the West fears masks an effort to make nuclear weapons. Tehran insists the program is only for peaceful, electricity production purposes and says it has no intention of making a bomb.

"We have given them an ultimatum. There is one month left and that is by the end of January," Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said, speaking on state television.

However, even if Tehran started working on the fuel production immediately, it would likely take years before it can master the technology to turn uranium, enriched to the level of 20 percent, into rods that make the fuel.

Iran dismissed an end-of-2009 deadline imposed by the Obama administration and the West to accept a U.N.-drafted deal to swap most of its enriched uranium for nuclear fuel. The deal would have reduced Iran's stockpile of low enriched uranium, limiting -- at least for the moment -- its capabilities to make nuclear weapons.

The U.S. and its allies have demanded Iran accept the terms of the U.N.-brokered plan without changes.

Instead, Tehran came up with a counterproposal: to have the West either sell nuclear fuel to Iran, or swap its nuclear fuel for Iran's enriched uranium in smaller batches instead of at once as the U.N. plan calls for.

This is unacceptable to the West because it would leave Tehran with enough enriched material to make nuclear arms.

The U.N. deal has been the centerpiece of the West's diplomatic effort toward Iran.

Under the plan, drafted in November, Iran would export most of its stockpile of low-enriched uranium for further enrichment in Russia and France, where it would be converted into fuel rods. The rods, which Iran needs for a research reactor in Tehran, would be returned to the country about a year later.

Exporting the uranium would temporarily leave Iran without enough stockpiles to further enrich the uranium into the material for a nuclear warhead, and the rods that are returned could not be used to make weapons.

"They (the West) must decide on supplying fuel for the Tehran reactor on one of the two offers, purchase or swap," Mottaki said. "Otherwise, the Islamic Republic of Iran will produce the 20 percent enriched fuel with its own capable experts."

Enrichment is at the core of the nuclear controversy. Iran currently has one operating enrichment facility that churns out 3.5 percent enriched uranium. The country needs fuel enriched to 20 percent to power a Tehran medical research reactor. For nuclear weapons, uranium needs to be enriched to 90 percent or more.

The U.N. has demanded Iran suspend all enrichment, a demand Tehran refuses, saying it has a right to develop the technology under the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Iran has also defiantly announced it intends to build 10 new uranium enrichment sites, drawing a forceful rebuke from the U.N. nuclear watchdog agency and warnings of the possibility of new U.N. sanctions.

[http://washingtontimes.com/news/2010/jan/02/iran-warns-it-will-make-its-own-nuclear-fuel/?feat=home\\_headlines](http://washingtontimes.com/news/2010/jan/02/iran-warns-it-will-make-its-own-nuclear-fuel/?feat=home_headlines)

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London Guardian – U.K.  
3 January 2010

## ***US Wants New UN Sanctions Against Iran's 'Continuing' Nuclear Ambitions***

*Washington believes Tehran working on weapon design despite spy reports that programme has ended*

By Julian Borger, diplomatic editor

The US believes the official intelligence assessment of Iran's nuclear programme is wrong and Tehran is working on the design of a nuclear weapon, it was reported today.

Washington is seeking support for new sanctions against Iran at the UN security council following the expiry of a new year deadline, imposed by the US president, Barack Obama, for Tehran to respond to an offer of economic help and improved diplomatic relations in return for curbing its nuclear programme.

Washington is distancing itself from a controversial National Intelligence Estimate (NIE), produced by several US spy agencies in 2007, which suggested Iran had suspended work on weapons design four years earlier.

"After reviewing new documents that have leaked out of Iran and debriefing defectors lured to the west, Mr Obama's advisers say they believe the work on weapons design is continuing on a smaller scale – the same assessment reached by Britain, France, Germany and Israel," the New York Times reported.

The key sources of new intelligence are likely to include two recent Iranian defectors – Ali Reza Asgari, a Revolutionary Guards general who vanished in Istanbul in 2007, and Shahram Amiri, a leading Iranian nuclear scientist, who disappeared while on a pilgrimage to Mecca last summer.

The Iranian government has blamed the US for their disappearance.

However, the Obama administration believes there is still time to try sanctions as a means of stemming Iran's nuclear ambitions.

It feels there is scope for them to work because of serious technical problems in the country's uranium enrichment programme and because the regime is distracted by continuing political unrest.

A report by the International Atomic Energy Agency, published late last year, recorded a significant decline in the number of working centrifuges at the enrichment plant in Natanz.

Experts said this could be a result of the technical shortcomings in the Pakistani centrifuge design Iran bought from the rogue nuclear scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan and also because of a covert sabotage campaign by the west.

Iran – which denies having any ambitions to acquire nuclear weapons – currently has enough low enriched uranium to make a single bomb if it was further enriched to weapons grade purity.

Western officials have said it would take more than a year for the Tehran to accumulate enough for even a small arsenal.

"For now, the Iranians don't have a credible breakout option, and we don't think they will have one for at least 18 months, maybe two or three years," a senior Obama administration official told the New York Times.

The newspaper also quoted a senior Israeli diplomat in Washington as saying that Israel was prepared to put military options on hold for the time being.

"Obama has convinced us that it's worth trying the sanctions, at least for a few months," the diplomat said.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jan/03/us-intelligence-iran-nuclear-weapons/print>

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Al Jazeera  
3 January 2010

## ***US Dismisses Iran Nuclear Ultimatum***

The US has dismissed an ultimatum from Iran to accept a uranium exchange deal, saying the move amounted to Tehran "standing in its own way".

Responding on Saturday to Iran's demand that the West accept the swap or watch Tehran produce its own nuclear fuel, Washington said an existing international Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) proposal should be sufficient.



"The IAEA has a balanced proposal on the table that would fulfil Iran's own request for fuel, and has the backing of the international community," Mike Hammer, a spokesman for the US national security council, said.

"If getting access to fuel is Iran's objective, then there is absolutely no reason why the existing proposal, which Iran accepted in principle at Geneva, is insufficient.

"The Iranian government is standing in its own way."

If Tehran was to ignore the IAEA offer and start working on its own fuel production, it is though it would take years before Tehran will be able to turn its uranium into nuclear fuel.

### **Iranian 'ultimatum'**

The US comments follow those by Manouchehr Mottaki, the Iranian foreign minister, who was quoted by Iranian state television as saying the West had just one month left to decide whether to accept Iran's proposal that it swap abroad its low-enriched uranium for nuclear fuel.

Iran has already rejected a December 31 deadline to accept the IAEA deal that would see Iran ship most of its low-enriched uranium to Russia and France for processing into fuel for a research reactor in Tehran.

Germany, one of six world powers engaged in United Nations-backed talks to ensure Iran's nuclear programme is peaceful, also said Tehran's ultimatum made no difference.

The "situation has not changed," a German foreign ministry spokesman was quoted by the AFP news agency.

"The proposal of the international community remains valid. Iran must seize this opportunity."

Iran is already under three sets of UN sanctions for refusing to abandon its sensitive programme of uranium enrichment, the process which produces nuclear fuel or, in highly extended form, the fissile core of an atomic bomb.

### **Further sanctions**

The administration of Barack Obama, the US president, is said to be considering another round of more targeted sanctions since the December 31 deadline passed.

*The New York Times* on Saturday reported that Washington believes the domestic unrest in Iran, sparked by disputed elections last June, has made its leader particularly vulnerable to new sanctions.

Citing unnamed officials, the newspaper said the long-discussed sanctions proposal comes as the administration completes a fresh review of Iran's nuclear progress.

Obama's strategists believe Iran's top political and military leaders have been distracted in recent months by turmoil in the streets and political infighting, and that their drive to produce nuclear fuel appears to have faltered, the report said.

A UN diplomatic source in New York said preliminary work on drafting a sanctions resolution was likely to begin in mid-January.

The UN has demanded Iran suspend all enrichment, a demand Tehran refuses, saying it has a right to develop the technology under the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Iran has also defiantly announced it intends to build 10 new uranium enrichment sites, drawing a forceful rebuke from the UN nuclear watchdog agency and warnings of the possibility of new UN sanctions.

<http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2010/01/2010136181350536.html>

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Times of India  
4 January 2010

## ***Chinese Firms Trading With Iran Evade US Sanctions: Report***

Agence France-Presse (AFP)

WASHINGTON: Chinese companies banned from doing business in the United States for selling military equipment to Iran are evading US sanctions, The Wall Street Journal said late Sunday on its website citing a nonproliferation watchdog group.

The Chinese firms are continuing to do brisk trade with US companies and the indications are that US sanctions have become so numerous and complex that they have become difficult to enforce, the Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control said.



"We spend a lot of time convincing other countries that we need tighter sanctions on Iran when we need to better enforce our own laws already on the books," says Wisconsin Project director Gary Milhollin, a former Pentagon consultant on nuclear-proliferation matters.

The sanctions breach by Chinese firms comes at a time when President Barack Obama considers a fresh batch of sanctions against Iran for harboring suspected nuclear weapons ambitions.

The Wall Street Journal said it consulted some US companies who said they were unaware they were doing business with banned entities.

The Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control, tasked with policing the sanctions regime, has not fined any US companies for trading with Chinese companies banned in 2006, The Wall Street Journal said.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/us/Chinese-firms-trading-with-Iran-evade-US-sanctions-Report/articleshow/5408712.cms>

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Wall Street Journal  
4 January 2010

## ***Tehran Plans A Major Military Exercise***

*Drill to Boost 'Defensive Capabilities' Coincides With Deadline Iran Has Set for West on Nuclear Offer*  
By CHIP CUMMINS

Iranian media on Sunday reported Tehran will conduct a large-scale defensive military exercise next month, coinciding with what government officials now say is a deadline for the West to respond to its counteroffer to a nuclear-fuel deal.

The commander of Iran's ground forces, Brig. Gen. Ahmad-Reza Pourdastan, said the drill will be conducted by Iran's army, in conjunction with some units of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, to improve "defensive capabilities," Press TV, the English-language, state-run media outlet reported.

The report follows comments by Iran's foreign minister Manouchehr Mottaki on Saturday, challenging Western nations to decide by the end of the month on counterproposals Tehran has floated to an internationally brokered nuclear-fuel deal. In the counterproposals, Iran has said it would agree to swap the bulk of its low-enriched uranium for higher enriched uranium, but in small batches and on Iranian soil.

Iranian officials also have named Turkey as a possible venue to swap the fuel. Iran has separately suggested it would be willing to buy enriched uranium from a third party.

The U.S. and Western allies have dismissed the counterproposals outright. In autumn, negotiators from Iran, the U.S., France, Russia and the International Atomic Energy Agency hammered out a proposed deal in which Iran would agree to ship out the bulk of its uranium to Russia, where it would be enriched and shipped back for use in a medical-research reactor. But Iranian officials refused to endorse the deal, despite a U.S.-imposed year-end deadline for Tehran to show progress in talks.

An IAEA spokesman declined to comment on the latest Iranian statements.

A European diplomat said that on Monday, the diplomatic year begins with a "review of measures the international community can use to increase its pressure on Iran" to begin serious negotiations.

The administration of U.S. President Barack Obama has said it would push for new sanctions against Iran early this year if Tehran didn't respond positively to the nuclear-fuel deal. Israeli officials, meanwhile, have suggested they would strike militarily if they thought Iran was nearing nuclear-weapons capability.

Mr. Obama has "begun talking to our friends and allies to consider the next step in this process," National Security Council Chief of Staff Denis McDonough said last week in Honolulu.

The U.S. is expected to push for United Nations-backed sanctions, despite uncertain support from Security Council members Russia and China. Washington is also consulting allies who might be willing to back sanctions outside the U.N., including Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Arab support would further isolate Iran from some of its closest trading partners. While Iran and its Arab neighbors along the Persian Gulf have long had testy relations, Tehran depends on Arab Gulf states for significant trade -- in particular on the U.A.E.'s Dubai, a regional re-export hub.

Not all Arab neighbors are onboard with Washington's sanction plans. In a heavily attended security conference in Manama early last month, Bahrain's foreign minister said further Iranian sanctions wouldn't be fair.

"I think the people of Iran have had enough," Sheikh Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa said to delegates, including Mr. Mottaki and top U.S. diplomats and military officials. Bahrain is a staunch American ally, hosting the U.S. Fifth Fleet.

Recent Iranian domestic unrest raises fresh challenges for the Obama administration in crafting any new sanctions. Officials must weigh measures that are tough enough to pressure the regime, but not too tough to enflame popular anger and shore up domestic support for President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

The original, IAEA-backed fuel proposal was embraced by Washington because it was seen as a first step in a longer negotiating process over Iran's nuclear ambitions.

Iran says it is pursuing peaceful energy, but many officials in the West suspect it's building weapons. The deal would have removed enough fissile material to delay the manufacture of any weapon for at least a short while.

Mr. Mottaki on Saturday said Iran would go ahead and produce and enrich its own fuel for the medical reactor if Western powers didn't agree either to swap the fuel or to sell it enriched uranium.

The U.S. has rejected any proposal other than the one hammered out with the IAEA.

"The IAEA has a balanced proposal on the table that would fulfill Iran's own request for fuel and has the backing of the international community," Mike Hammer, a spokesman for the National Security Council, said in an emailed statement.

—Elizabeth Williamson and David Crawford contributed to this article

[http://online.wsj.com/article/SB126254286128213977.html?mod=rss\\_Today's\\_Most\\_Popular](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB126254286128213977.html?mod=rss_Today's_Most_Popular)

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Tehran Times – Iran  
5 January 2010

## ***Majlis Backs Administration's Ultimatum To The West: MP*** *Tehran Times Political Desk*

TEHRAN – Majlis Deputy Speaker Mohammad Hassan Abu Torabi has said that the Majlis supports the administration's in setting a deadline for the West to provide Iran with the 20 percent enriched uranium.

"The message of the Iranian Majlis to the West and the International Atomic Energy Agency is that they should be serious in providing the nuclear fuel for the Tehran medical reactor," he told the Mehr News Agency on Monday.

Abu Torabi added that the nation is determined to get the 20 percent enriched uranium.

He also pointed out that if the West refrain from providing the 20 percent enriched uranium, Iran will begin to enrich uranium to the required level.

Iran has said that it will produce 20 percent enriched nuclear fuel for the Tehran research reactor if the West refuses to provide the fuel by February.

The West should decide whether it wants to sell nuclear fuel to Iran or swap 20 percent nuclear fuel for Iran's low-enriched uranium, Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki has said.

"This is an ultimatum," Mottaki asserted.

"The international community has only one more month to make a decision. Otherwise, Tehran will enrich uranium to the higher purity needed for the fuel," he added.

Iran has no hope in the West

Mahmoud Ahmadi of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee has said that there is no hope that the West will provide Iran with the nuclear fuel for the Tehran reactor.

"We should continue our activities based on the International Atomic Energy Agency regulations and should not have any hope in the West's cooperation," he told the MNA on Monday.

Commenting on Iran's ultimatum to the West, the MP stated, "Neither the agency nor any country can prevent Iran from achieving nuclear technology because; this is what the nation wants and we cannot step back from the people's demand."

IAEA should take the ultimatum as an opportunity

MP Esmail Kosari stated that the IAEA should take advantage of Iran's ultimatum.

"If the agency misses Iran's deadline, Iran will attempt to produce the 20 percent enriched uranium," he told the MNA on Monday.

The member of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee added that if the West does not provide Iran with the fuel, the legitimacy of the IAEA will come under question.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Kosari pointed out that Tehran should try to store enriched uranium for the future.

[http://www.tehrantimes.com/Index\\_view.asp?code=211368](http://www.tehrantimes.com/Index_view.asp?code=211368)

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Washington Post

1 January 2010

## ***N. Korea's New Year's Message Calls For 'Lasting Peace' On Its Peninsula***

By Kwang-Tae Kim

SEOUL -- North Korea said it was committed to a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula in a New Year's message Friday, brightening the prospect that Pyongyang might rejoin the stalled international talks aimed at ending its nuclear weapons programs.

In a statement, the Pyongyang government said it wants "a lasting peace system on the Korean Peninsula."

North Korea traditionally marks New Year's Day with a joint editorial by the country's three major newspapers representing its communist party, military and youth militia force. The editorial was carried by the North's official Korean Central News Agency.

The Jan. 1 messages are examined annually for clues to the regime's policies for the coming year. This year, the government said it will strive to develop good relations and friendship with other countries, while calling for an end to hostile relations with the United States.

The North has long called for Washington to end hostility toward the regime and said it developed nuclear weapons to deter a U.S. attack. Washington has repeatedly said it has no intention of invading the communist country.

The North's latest commitment came as Washington is trying to coax Pyongyang to return to the international disarmament talks.

The two countries agreed on the need to resume the negotiations during a trip to Pyongyang by President Obama's special envoy in early December, but North Korea did not make a firm commitment on when it would rejoin the talks.

North Korea quit the disarmament talks last year in anger over international criticism of its long-range rocket launch, which was denounced as a test of its missile technology. The regime then conducted a nuclear test and test-fired a series of ballistic missiles.

In 2007, North Korea agreed to dismantle its nuclear program in exchange for aid and other concessions from South Korea, China, Japan, Russia and the United States, but the process has stalled over how to verify its accounting of its past atomic activities.

The statement released Friday appealed to North Korean soldiers to unite around leader Kim Jong Il and remain vigilant to thwart any surprise attacks.

It urged the country's 1.1 million-strong military, the backbone of Kim's totalitarian rule, to "defend with our very lives the leadership of revolution headed" by Kim.

The lengthy message also said that Pyongyang remains committed to improving its relations with South Korea, urging the South to refrain from taking actions that would aggravate the confrontation and tension.

"Unshakable is our stand that we will improve the North-South relations and open the way for national reunification," the message said.

The two Koreas are still technically at war because the 1950-53 Korean War ended with an armistice, not a peace treaty.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/12/31/AR2009123102582.html?hpid=moreheadlines>

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## ***N.K. Shifts To Softer Mode***

4 January 2010

North Korea's latest New Year's message showed that the Pyongyang regime is prepared to cooperate to restart the stalled multilateral talks aimed at ending Pyongyang's nuclear weapons programs.

The North also appeared to be considering better relations with South Korea and the United States, towards which it has been vigorously critical of in the past.

Pyongyang is refraining from such attacks and setting down "unreasonable" preconditions for cooperating with Seoul or others.

"Regardless of whether this is a strategic ploy or not, the North has shown strong signs of willingness to improve relations with nations such as Seoul and Washington," said Professor Yang Moo-jin of the University of North Korean Studies here.

Both South Korea and the United States, along with China, Japan and Russia are the North's partners in the six-nation dialogue that has been halted since April after Pyongyang quit citing a United Nations denouncement of its rocket launch.

Towards Seoul, the North directly called on the need to "open the path for improving relations between the two Koreas" in the message carried in a joint newspaper editorial on Jan. 1.

Pyongyang stressed that this year marks the 10th anniversary of the June 15 agreement reached between the two sides under former president Roh Moo-hyun.

There has been speculation since last year that the two Koreas may be heading towards a summit as the mood of reconciliation deepened following a rare visit by Washington's special envoy Stephen Bosworth to Pyongyang.

Smoother relations with the United States usually give the North a push to patch up ties with the South, mostly for strategic reasons, according to experts here.

The time for the next round of six-nations talks have yet to be set despite Bosworth's visit, but many including government officials here have said February to be the best time for the discussions to pick up.

The six-party roundtable may spawn four-way talks for replacing the current armistice with a permanent peace treaty, experts said.

Pyongyang reportedly relayed to Bosworth its demands for such a treaty as being crucial for stabilizing the peninsular. The four parties discussing the treaty would be the two Koreas, the United States and China.

Other noticeable points of the message were the regime's emphasis on the economy.

"Pyongyang, for the first time in many years, has put more focus on the economy than the military," Yang said.

North Korea is seen to be under the influence of an ongoing global financial crisis.

Conditions are expected to have worsened in the wake of stringent sanctions laid down by the U.N. after the North conducted its second nuclear test in May last year.

The unfavorable economic climate is part of the reason Pyongyang is so eager to mend fences with Seoul, experts said, as inter-Korean projects have served the North well financially.

"There is also a political twist to the North's focus on the economy and cooperation with others," Professor Yang said. "It is all proof that North Korean leader Kim Jong-il is desperate to stabilize his state before relinquishing his throne."

The 68-year-old Kim has since last year been visibly preparing to bequeath his authority to his youngest son Jong-eun.

Kim recently launched a rare currency reform, partly to retrieve liquidity from the black markets, but also to reinforce authoritarian control.

Officials here, however, were cautious about being overly optimistic on the North's latest message.

"It was a good to see the North not as hostile as before, but we are still far from seeing Pyongyang proving itself to be sincerely committed to denuclearization," one high-ranking official said on the condition of anonymity.

The Lee Myung-bak administration, known to be more hawkish than its two predecessors, remains adamant that the North must embark on irreversible and complete denuclearization before Seoul can reach out for talks or financial aid.

President Lee last year proposed a "grand bargain" to the North under which Seoul and its partners of the six-nation talks would offer significant financial incentives in return for denuclearization.

[http://www.koreaherald.co.kr/NEWKHSITE/data/html\\_dir/2010/01/04/201001040020.asp](http://www.koreaherald.co.kr/NEWKHSITE/data/html_dir/2010/01/04/201001040020.asp)

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Bangkok Post – Thailand  
4 January 2010

## ***S.Korea Seeks 'Turning Point' In Ties With North***

South Korea said on Monday it was seeking "a turning point" in relations with North Korea and again urged its communist nuclear-armed northern neighbour to disarm.

President Lee Myung-Bak's remarks followed a call by North Korea on Friday for an end to hostile relations with South Korea's key ally, the United States, and a nuclear-free peninsula.

"This year, South Korea and North Korea should create a turning point in their relations," Lee said in a nationally television New Year's address, suggesting the establishment of an inter-Korean dialogue body.

Inter-Korean ties have been strained since the conservative Lee took office in 2008 and linked the South's massive aid and economic cooperation to progress in the North's nuclear disarmament.

Lee also repeated his call for North Korea to return "as soon as possible" to the six-party nuclear disarmament talks that Pyongyang quit nine months ago, so that the two neighbours can improve their relationship.

"For this, there needs to be a standing dialogue organisation between the South and the North," Lee said, without elaborating.

"I wish North Korea can sincerely open its heart and walk on the path of dialogue and cooperation."

A presidential official told AFP that Lee had proposed in an interview with The Washington Post in April 2008 that both Koreas establish "permanent high-level liaison offices" in each other's capital.

But the official did not confirm whether Lee was referring to the liaison offices in his proposal for an inter-Korean dialogue body.

In a policy-setting editorial in the state media on New Year's Day, North Korea called for an end to hostile relations with the US and vowed to work towards a nuclear-free peninsula.

"The fundamental task for ensuring peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and in the rest of Asia is to put an end to the hostile relationship between the DPRK (North Korea) and the USA," the editorial said.

"It is the consistent stand of the DPRK to establish a lasting peace system on the Korean Peninsula and make it nuclear-free through dialogue and negotiations."

North Korea left six-party nuclear disarmament talks in April last year in protest at international censure over its launch of a long-range rocket. In May, it staged its second nuclear test since 2006.

US envoy Stephen Bosworth visited the communist nation last month and reached a "common understanding" on the need to resume the talks, which group the two Koreas, Japan, China, Russia and the United States. However, no date has been fixed.

South Korean Unification Minister Hyun In-Taek, in charge of handling cross-border relations, said Monday he would bring in "a new paradigm" of relationship between the two Koreas this year.

"We should try our best to achieve improvement of the South-North relationship with principles and productive humanitarianism, strengthening the potential for preparing for unification," Hyun said in a New Year message.

"Most of all, a turning point of denuclearisation must be made through productive communication between South Korea and North Korea."

<http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/asia/164399/s-korea-seeks-turning-point-in-ties-with-north>

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## ***Iran Expands Its Target List***

*I was the Marine commander in Beirut in 1983. I've seen these tactics before.*

By TIMOTHY J. GERAGHTY

The nagging question of the nuclear age has been what if a madman gets hold of an atomic bomb? That question is about to be answered as Iran's defiance puts it on a collision course with the West.

On Nov. 4, 2009, Israeli commandos intercepted an Antiguan-flagged ship 100 miles off the Israeli coast. It was carrying hundreds of tons of weapons from Iran and bound for Hezbollah in Lebanon. Since the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah war, Iran has rearmed Hezbollah with 40,000 rockets and missiles that will likely rain on Israeli cities—and even European cities and U.S. military bases in the Middle East—if Iran is attacked. Our 200,000 troops in 33 bases are vulnerable. Shortly before this weapons seizure, Hamas test-fired a missile capable of striking Israel's largest city, Tel Aviv.

Iran is capable of disrupting Persian Gulf shipping lanes, which could cause the price of oil to surge above \$300 a barrel. Iran could also create mayhem in oil markets by attacking Saudi oil refineries. Moreover, Iran possesses Soviet made SS-N-22 "Sunburn" supersonic antiship missiles that it could use to contest a naval blockade.

Iran could unleash suicide bombers in Iraq and Afghanistan or, more ominously, activate Hezbollah sleeper cells in the U.S. to carry out coordinated attacks nationwide. FBI, CIA and other U.S. officials have acknowledged in congressional testimony that Hezbollah has a working partnership with Mexican drug cartels and has been using cartel smuggling routes to get personnel and contraband into the U.S.

While Iranian centrifuges continue to produce low-enriched uranium, the mullahs and their henchmen have been carrying out a campaign of deception. In October 2009, Iran rejected a plan to ship its low-enriched uranium out of country, primarily to Russia and France, to be highly enriched and then sent back to Iran for "peaceful medical purposes."

On Nov. 28, 2009, reacting to increased pressure from the International Atomic Energy Agency, Iran warned it may pull out of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. This would seriously undermine international attempts to stop Iran's nuclear weapons program. Two days later, Iran announced plans to build 10 new nuclear plants within six years.

In another sphere, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez are openly cooperating to "oppose world hegemony," as Mr. Ahmadinejad has said, while weekly flights between Iran and Venezuela are not monitored for personnel and cargo. Meanwhile, Russia is building an arms plant in Venezuela to produce AK-103 automatic rifles and finalizing contracts to send 53 military helicopters to the country.

I have seen this play before. In 1983, I was the Marine commander of the U.S. Multinational Peacekeeping Force in Beirut, Lebanon. Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' (IRGC) Lebanon contingent trained and equipped Hezbollah to execute attacks that killed 241 of my men and 58 French Peacekeepers on Oct. 23, 1983.

Today, Hezbollah directly threatens Israel, destabilizes Lebanon, and undercuts the Israeli-Palestinian peace accords. Something similar is underway in Venezuela. Remember Hezbollah used the Beirut truck-bomb model for the attack on the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires on March 17, 1992 and the July 18, 1994 attack on the Argentine Israeli Mutual Association that killed 85 and wounded 200.

The man directly responsible for those bombings was the commander of the IRGC's Quds Force, Gen. Ahmad Vahidi. He is listed on Interpol's most wanted list and was a key operative in the 1983 attacks on peacekeepers in Lebanon. In August 2009, he was named Iran's minister of defense. He succeeded Gen. Mostafa Mohammad Najjar, who was the commander of the IRGC Lebanon contingent and the chief organizer of the 1983 Beirut bombings. Both have Beirut peacekeepers' blood on their hands and are the same key leaders who today are orchestrating Iranian deception and defiance as they march lock-step toward their ultimate goal—nuclear weapons.

*Col. Geraghty, USMC (Ret.), is the author of "Peacekeepers at War; Beirut 1983—The Marine Commander Tells His Story" (Potomac Books, 2009).*

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704152804574628334107697564.html?mod=rss> Today's Most Popular

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# *Global Threats*

*Lax 2009, rough 2010*

By John R. Bolton

Although President Obama spent much of his first year in office trying to revolutionize the U.S. health care system, the external world often inconveniently intruded. As the attempted Christmas mass murder of passengers flying from Amsterdam to Detroit demonstrates, our adversaries have not been idle. Nor will they be idle in 2010.

A critical question, therefore, is whether the president has learned anything during his first year, or whether he will continue pursuing national security policies that leave us at greater risk. The outlook is not promising. Too often, Mr. Obama seems either uninterested in the global threats we face, unpersuaded that they constitute dangers to the country, or content simply to blame his predecessors.

When he does see international threats, his instinct is to negotiate with them rather than defeat them. Facing totalitarian menaces in 1939, British politician Harold Nicolson said of Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and his closest aide that they "stepped into diplomacy with the bright faithfulness of two curates entering a pub for the first time; they did not observe the differences between a social gathering and a rough-house; nor did they realize that the tough guys assembled did not speak or understand their language."

Nicolson could be writing today about Mr. Obama. Consider some of the issues lying ahead:

(1) The global war on terror: Despite the administration's verbal about-face on the effectiveness of our antiterrorism efforts within days of the unsuccessful Christmas attack, its fundamental approach remains flawed. Mr. Obama himself has led the charge in shifting from a "Global War on Terror" toward a law-enforcement paradigm, continuing, for example, to press for closing the Guantanamo Bay detention facility. Even today, the administration is treating would-be bomber Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab as a criminal rather than an enemy combatant, thus losing the chance to gain enormously valuable information on al Qaeda activities and plans.

Al Qaeda-style terrorism has never been susceptible to law-enforcement methods. It is not simply a crime like bank robbery, which is why military and intelligence agencies have undertaken much of our antiterrorist activity since Sept. 11, 2001. And it is why sidelining them now can have potentially catastrophic consequences for the United States and our allies.

Mr. Obama should articulate some grand strategy for countering terrorism. Withdrawing from Iraq, mixed signals in Afghanistan (surge troops in 2010, but begin withdrawing in 2011), and public defenders for airplane bombers is a prescription for failure. Indeed, the Christmas near miss demonstrates that more, not less, attention must be devoted to al Qaeda in Yemen and elsewhere, such as Somalia.

(2) Nuclear proliferation: Iran and North Korea, the two gravest nuclear proliferation threats, have so far spurned Mr. Obama's "open hand." This is truly remarkable, since both rogue states have skillfully used prior negotiations to their advantage, buying time to advance their nuclear and ballistic missile efforts, and extracting tangible economic and political benefits from America and others. Accordingly, their current unwillingness to talk shows they think they can extract an even higher price from Mr. Obama before even sitting down, a truly discouraging sign.

In fact, neither Iran nor North Korea will be negotiated out of the nuclear weapons programs (or their chemical or biological weapons, which are not even on the horizon for discussion). Moreover, we cannot be content merely trying to "contain" nuclear rogue states, since so doing simply leaves the initiative entirely with them, given their asymmetric advantage of threatening or actually using their weapons. These countries, each for its own peculiar reasons, are not subject to the Cold War deterrence principals. Still worse, the risks of further proliferation are both palpable and threatening if Pyongyang and Tehran keep their nuclear capabilities. There is simply no sign Mr. Obama understands these ever-growing risks.

Instead, Mr. Obama is negotiating drastic nuclear weapons reductions with Russia, even as he eviscerates our missile defense capabilities, apparently believing unilateral strategic arms cutbacks will entrance Moscow and persuade rogue proliferators to dismantle their programs. This is naive and dangerous.

(3) Global governance. Although the Copenhagen Conference on climate change failed to achieve anything like its sponsors' objectives, their under lying push for greater international control over the economies of the world's nations, and their tax and regulatory systems, continues unabated. In fact, as the president's speeches - especially those given at the United Nations in September - demonstrate, he entirely buys into the notion of "global governance," with the United States in time subordinating elements of its sovereignty to international authority.

This worrisome predilection has only been whetted by the failure at Copenhagen, and we can anticipate far more activity in 2010 and beyond, not only on climate change but in a host of areas traditionally considered "domestic" policy (such as abortion, firearms control and the death penalty).



Frustrated by their failures in the United States, the American left has increasingly resorted to international treaties and conferences to advance its agenda. Mr. Obama's administration is filled with people who share that worldview, including the president himself.

In short, if you were concerned in 2009 about America's increasing international vulnerability and its decreasing global influence, you will find little to celebrate in the coming year. Our adversaries sense weakness across the board in Washington, and they will not hesitate to take advantage of it.

Importantly, whatever national security decisions Mr. Obama makes in 2010 will undeniably be his, as the passage of time diminishes his ability to blame President Bush and the situation he inherited. Happy New Year, Mr. President.

*John R. Bolton, a former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, is a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and author of "Surrender Is Not an Option: Defending America at the United Nations and Abroad" (Simon & Schuster, 2007).*

<http://washingtontimes.com/news/2010/jan/04/global-threats/>

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New York Post-OPINION  
4 January 2010

## ***Bam's Iran Blunder***

By BENNY AVNI

The Obama administration's emerging "new" Iran policy, reportedly favoring "targeted" sanctions over the wider and more aggressive approach proposed by Congress, is *sooooo* 2009.

According to leaks from administration officials, Obama aides are now preparing a set of sanctions that would target "discrete elements" of the clerical regime, mostly commanders of the Revolutionary Guards. Those aides pooh-pooh wider sanctions, like imposing an embargo on refined petroleum, as the House of Representatives called for in a recent resolution.

There are two reasons for this approach, as The Washington Post explained the administration's thinking last week: to "avoid alienating the Iranian public -- while keeping the door ajar" for diplomatic negotiations with the mullahs over the nuclear issue.

Meet the new year; same as the old year. The fallacies of 2009 still rule.

Obama created an artificial year-end deadline for rethinking his Iran policy. This self-imposed delay of action was extremely costly. A complete misreading of Tehran's clerical mindset made 2009 a crucial year in which Iran collected and refined enough fissile material for at least one crude nuclear bomb.

But the people of Iran also rebelled against the regime in 2009, raising the prospect of a new revolution. And so, an administration hesitant to use military force now has an opportunity to fend off what may well turn out to be the biggest menace we face in the decades ahead. We can end the danger posed by apocalyptic religious fanatics armed with nuclear weapons by helping the Iranian people overthrow the mullahs.

Obama signaled a change in his own mindset when, interrupting his year-end golfing last Monday, he delivered his toughest rebuke to date of the mullah's crackdown on dissidents. Now he needs to get rid of some of the fallacies that underlay his policies last year.

The biggest fallacy is the thought that, if only the right American emissary would be found, if only a creative Western diplomatic formula would be proposed, Tehran's sane elements would emerge and reason would prevail -- the fallacy, presumably, behind the trial balloon of the proposed trip to Tehran by Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman John Kerry.

The plan, reportedly, was to travel to Tehran for a year-end, last-ditch effort at saving Obama's diplomatic initiatives, which Tehran has roundly rejected. Last week the Iranian press roundly reported that he had asked to visit the country. Kerry's camp has since denied those reports (and similar ones in America), and yesterday the Iranian Fars news agency reported that the Majlis, Iran's rubber-stamp parliament, denied Kerry an entry visa, anyway.

Here's why: Our diplomacy advocates may yearn to prevent a head-on collision with Iran by finding the right regime interlocutor. But escalating a confrontation with America is a strategic imperative of the clerics under Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.

No one in last week's well-organized pro-regime mass demonstrations carried a sign advocating diplomacy to defuse tensions with America (and anti-government demonstrators aren't itching for it either). A diplomatic solution exists only in our head.

Some (like Kerry) cling to last year's foolishness, but for others it's replaced by a new "boomerang" theory: If we sanction the Iranian people too heavily, they "will be fooled into thinking we are to blame," as an unnamed administration official told The Washington Post.

Nonsense, says Israel Radio's Farsi Service veteran Menashe Amir, whose broadcasts are often cited by Iranian media as instigating the antigovernment protesters.

"The anti-regime movement will be strengthened tremendously if more Iranians believe that the government can't deliver daily necessities and realize that it can't effectively govern," Amir says. (Creating gasoline shortages, as proposed by Congress, would hurt the well-connected upper-middle class, not the masses that can't afford to own a car, he adds.)

Once again, the ideas underlying Washington's new policy miss the target. At this late date, sanctions can only be helpful if they facilitate regime change, which should be the top objective of the new strategy. Targeting for sanctions only a handful of evil regime operators would hardly impress the Iranian masses (although it will be widely applauded in Washington and the United Nations).

Obama started out his presidency by giving Iran the benefit of the doubt while promising to conduct a "re-evaluation" by the end of the year. Now, some aides evidently are pushing him to merely fine tune old policies, rather than rethink the false premises behind them. Let's hope that, as in other cases, reality will quickly force Obama to rely on more realistic advice.

[http://www.nypost.com/p/news/opinion/opedcolumnists/bam\\_iran\\_blunder\\_yoIMh3WykR7m24x7NTIsWM](http://www.nypost.com/p/news/opinion/opedcolumnists/bam_iran_blunder_yoIMh3WykR7m24x7NTIsWM)

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Korea Herald – South Korea

EDITORIAL

4 January 2010

## ***Sudden Olive Branch***

Economic recovery will top the Republic of Korea's national agenda in the new year, which will also include the complicated Sejong City plan, the four-river development and the debate on constitutional amendment to change the presidential tenure and government structure. These items are already too heavy but there is a very likely addition involving inter-Korean relations.

Pyongyang's New Year message was devoted largely to assurances of economic advancement to achieve a powerful, prosperous state by 2012, but shared several paragraphs for external affairs. The mentioning on relations with the United States and South Korea was made in surprisingly moderate language devoid of the usual propaganda harangues.

"An end to hostile relations" was the core message to Washington. Regarding South Korea, the policy keynote said the North's "position of seeking to improve relations with the South is firm and unchangeable." Just a year ago, the message in the form of a joint editorial of three official dailies, had described Seoul's conservative government as a "group of lunatics" bent on confrontation with the North.

Already the talk of a possible inter-Korean summit is heard from some corners of Seoul's political community. Even officials of the Ministry of Unification are adding to the speculation by stating that a "grand bargain" with the North is one of its policy goals for the New Year. President Lee Myung-bak used the term in his call for simultaneous settlement of the North's denuclearization and diplomatic normalization with Pyongyang.

More than a coincidence, the North Korean message manifested its dual pursuit for "a stable peace regime and denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula through dialogue and negotiation." Pyongyang's policy keynote unequivocally stated its intent to deal with the two issues in a package through the just-started dialogue with the United States and the existing six-party talks.

If we are to give due credence to Pyongyang's New Year message this time, despite the record of the North's state-level deceptiveness, it could indicate the regime was becoming more realistic in the face of continuing economic adversity. Washington's dispatch of a special envoy to Pyongyang late last year carrying a message from President Obama offered it a long-awaited opportunity to expedite a normalization process through direct dialogue.

Yet, it could also signify the North's self-confidence as a nuclear power, having "successfully" staged nuclear tests twice at a three-year interval. Kim Jong-il's olive branches, held out to Washington and Seoul, no doubt reflected his country's dire economic situation, which led to the recent disorderly currency reform. But he must have reassured himself that he had accumulated enough bargaining chips, perhaps counting on Washington's fear of arms proliferation to terror groups.

In Seoul, the administration, from President Lee on down, is ushering in the new year with certain signs of euphoria from a faster-than-expected recovery from the global economic crisis. The conservative ruling force must also be entering its third year in power encouraged by the visible receding of the leftist backlash on the political and social fronts. This perceived position of strength must be pushing them toward reopening dialogue with the North.

Inter-Korean dialogue is necessary for peace on the peninsula. But cooperation with the North from 2010 should be different from the mode of the earlier round of exchanges under the previous progressive administrations, which was characterized by the receiver's initiative rather than the giver's. Any form and amount of economic aid should be linked to assured progress in the denuclearization process along the two tracks of the six-way talks and the direct U.S.-North dialogue.

[http://www.koreaherald.co.kr/NEWKHSITE/data/html\\_dir/2010/01/05/201001050049.asp](http://www.koreaherald.co.kr/NEWKHSITE/data/html_dir/2010/01/05/201001050049.asp)

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Wall Street Journal-EDITORIAL

5 January 2010

## *A False Nuclear Start*

The Obama Administration continues to negotiate with the Russians over a new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (Start), but one big question is whether it can get the result through the U.S. Senate. A group of Senators is telling the White House that it will have little or no chance of success unless it also moves ahead with nuclear-warhead modernization.

The warning comes in a recent letter from 40 Republican Senators and Independent-Democrat Joe Lieberman reminding the President of his legal responsibility under the National Defense Authorization Act of 2010 to present budget estimates for modernizing U.S. nuclear forces along with any new Start pact.

The Senators are following the suggestions of the important, but too little publicized, recommendations of last year's Perry-Schlesinger commission on the safety and operations of the U.S. nuclear arsenal. The bipartisan report noted, among other things, that the U.S. needs new warheads and nuclear research facilities. President Obama, in his utopian antinuclear mode, has opposed a new warhead despite widespread support for it at the Pentagon, from Defense Secretary Robert Gates on down.

Mr. Obama would be wise to take the warning seriously because he'll need 67 Senate votes to approve any arms-control treaty. Without modernization, it's unlikely that Senators will vote for the significant and probably unwise reductions in U.S. nuclear delivery vehicles that Mr. Obama is negotiating with the Russians.

However, we're not surprised to hear that the President is getting contrary political advice from his Vice President, Joe Biden, who is arguing that the White House should try to get the 67 votes on Start's merits alone. He wants to delay any nuclear modernization decision, holding it out as a carrot to offer Senators in return for ratifying the separate Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. The Senate rejected the test ban pact when Bill Clinton submitted it in 1999, but Mr. Obama hopes to do better with 60 Senate Democrats backed by his global disarmament agenda.

This wouldn't be the first time Mr. Biden has misjudged a vital security issue—recall his proposal to split Iraq into three parts. The deteriorating U.S. nuclear arsenal is emerging as a big security problem, and Start won't be an easy sell even with the money for warhead upgrades. Mr. Obama could have simply renewed the 1991 Start treaty and pocketed an early diplomatic victory. Instead, he has sought something more ambitious in support of his larger disarmament dreams, and the Russians are demanding a hard bargain in return.

The U.S. has already agreed to steep cuts in its military arsenal, even before the Administration has come out with its Nuclear Posture Review and weapons modernization plan. Last week, Russian strongman Vladimir Putin raised the ante by saying he now wants the U.S. to abandon missile defenses as part of a new Start pact. The Obama Administration's decision to downsize missile defense sites in Poland and the Czech Republic seems to have only emboldened the Russians to push for bigger concessions.

Another issue is verification. With Start's expiration December 5, Russia has pulled inspectors from a factory that's building the next generation of Russian ICBMs and scaled back electronic monitoring—called telemetry—of missile production and movements. The U.S. is trying to undo some of this in negotiations, but Senators will want to make sure that any fix isn't merely cosmetic. If the U.S. is going to reduce its missile and warhead numbers, we need to know what the Russians have in their arsenal.

The stakes here aren't merely whether Mr. Obama can get his treaties ratified; they concern the credibility of the U.S. nuclear umbrella. Mr. Obama says he wants to stop nuclear proliferation but he will only encourage it if our allies begin to believe that the U.S. arsenal is either too small or too unreliable to protect them. Japan has already raised concerns, and with Mr. Obama unable or unwilling to stop either North Korean or Iranian nuclear ambitions, such worry will only spread.

Grand speeches about a world without nuclear weapons are crowd-pleasers at the U.N., but the U.S. Senate has an obligation to inspect the fine print before it ratifies any reduction in U.S. defenses. Senators shouldn't begin to consider a smaller arsenal until the Obama Administration takes the steps to ensure that our remaining weapons will work if we need them.

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