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## **Articles & Other Documents:**

[Nuclear Proliferation Threatens Obama Policy](#)

[Nuclear Weapons Review Put Off](#)

[Obama's Nuclear Arms Pledge Hits Stumbling Block](#)

[U.S., British Might Share Firing Device to Update Nuclear Arms](#)

[China Rejects Iran UN Sanctions](#)

[Iran Shielding Its Nuclear Efforts In Maze of Tunnels](#)

[More Doubts Over Iran's 'Nuclear Trigger'](#)

[West Has Not Accepted Iran's Offer Yet](#)

[Iran Could Seek Ability To Quickly Produce Nuke, Blix Says](#)

[Iran Strike Could Destabilize Middle East: Pentagon](#)

[Kim Jong-Il Not Likely To Abandon Nukes Due To Heavy Investment: Expert](#)

[North Korea Started Uranium Program In 1990s, South Says](#)

[Taiwan Firm: China Got Iran Part With Nuke Uses](#)

[Burma To Execute Two Over Secret Tunnels Leak](#)

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## ***Nuclear Proliferation Threatens Obama Policy***

By Bill Sweetman

The coming year will see nuclear weapons higher on the political agenda than they have been in years, as President Barack Obama's ambition to move toward a nuclear-free future collides with the desire of other nations to join the nuclear club or keep their memberships current.

Developments to watch include U.S.-Russian discussions over a follow-on to the just-expired Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty and the 2003 Moscow Treaty, which expires in 2012. The Obama administration's goal is to negotiate further reductions. As for multilateral treaties, the U.S. is looking for worldwide acceptance of a comprehensive test ban treaty, and limitations on the production and transfer of fissile materials.

Domestically, the administration faces opposition on two main points. Critics warn of an over-hasty reduction in warhead counts, arguing that such a move could lower the bar for countries seeking "major nuclear power" status by acquiring a stockpile of comparable magnitude to those of the U.S. and Russia. There is also concern that the administration's unwillingness to consider a replacement nuclear warhead for current missiles—known as the Reliable Replacement Warhead—will, in the long run, make it expensive and difficult for the U.S. to maintain nuclear forces.

Today, U.S. policy is to task its national nuclear weapons laboratories with maintaining the weapons stockpile. However, new warheads are in production around the world: Russia is fielding a new generation of missiles, France just fielded the first nuclear warhead to be qualified without testing (on the ASMP-A air-launched missile), and China maintains its policy of concealing the type, number and status of nuclear programs.

A new British government, too, will face the decision whether or not to maintain its nuclear capability, after a great deal of recent investment in weapon development. U.K. plans to replace Vanguard-class SSBNs—probably with a smaller SSBN based on the Astute class—are linked with the U.S. Navy's SSBN-X replacement program.

Then there are the "new nuclear" countries. North Korea conducted its second nuclear test in May, and is persisting with the Taepodong-2 ICBM despite the failure of a launch in April. India continues to develop a range of nuclear missiles.

Iran's plans cause the deepest concern, following the discovery in September of the undisclosed Fordow enrichment plant near Qom. Israel's military intelligence chief, Maj. Gen. Amos Yadlin, stated in comments to the Knesset that (contrary to the assertions of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad) Israel's assessment is that the facility has no visible civilian purpose.

Working from satellite imagery, Yadlin's analysts consider that the fortified underground plant appears too small for a civilian program, but is large enough for military activities, with space for 3,000 advanced centrifuges.

Yadlin said the assessment is that Iran is interested in a "horizontal expansion" of its nuclear production capacity, so when Teheran decides to move to a nuclear capability, it will do so quickly. He emphasized that Iran is "competent in enrichment technology" and "intentionally advancing development in such a way so as not to cross any nuclear 'red lines.'" But operations can "quickly be adapted to weapons-grade uranium in such a short period of time that the process can't be sabotaged." Qom could be the tip of a "nuclear iceberg," sources close to Israeli intelligence warn. The secret underground facility at Natanz, revealed by Iranian dissidents in 2002, has grown to house 9,000 centrifuges and seems to have produced enough low-enriched uranium for two simple warheads.

Israeli analysts are also concerned about the reported discovery by international monitors of large quantities of heavy water at the Isfahan nuclear technology research center. Heavy water can be used to produce tritium, which intensifies the explosive force of warheads. Nuclear experts consider that Iran might be proceeding along a dual development track to build bombs using plutonium and highly enriched uranium.

To Israel, an Iranian bomb is an existential threat. For some U.S. and allied observers, though, the effects of proliferation may be spread across many levels of warfare. In the past year, U.S. military leaders have reported on war games where the presence of hostile nuclear weapons induced paralysis, because the intentions of adversaries could not be addressed. In an October report, Andrew Krepinevich, president of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, warned that "deterrence could play a much reduced role in a proliferated world, while the prospect of nuclear use, defenses against nuclear attack, war-termination strategies and post-war considerations assume greater importance in defense strategy and planning."

[http://www.aviationweek.com/aw/generic/story\\_channel.jsp?channel=defense&id=news/dti/2010/01/01/DT\\_01\\_01\\_2010\\_p37-191255.xml&headline=%20Nuclear%20Proliferation%20Threatens%20Obama%20Policy](http://www.aviationweek.com/aw/generic/story_channel.jsp?channel=defense&id=news/dti/2010/01/01/DT_01_01_2010_p37-191255.xml&headline=%20Nuclear%20Proliferation%20Threatens%20Obama%20Policy)

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Washington Times  
7 January 2010

## ***Nuclear Weapons Review Put Off***

Bill Gertz

The Pentagon has notified Congress that it is delaying a required report on the future of the U.S. nuclear weapons arsenal because of the "complexity" of issues being addressed.

James N. Miller, the principal deputy undersecretary of defense, stated in a letter to senior House and Senate leaders that the Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), required under 2008 legislation, will not be completed in time by the Feb. 1 deadline and instead will be completed by March 1.

The strategic review is being held up amid differences among President Obama's key White House advisers and national security officials at the Pentagon, and the state and energy departments, according to U.S. officials familiar with the process.

"There isn't even a draft of the NPR, that's really the problem," said one of the officials. "We're in the first week of January and we don't have a draft."

Mr. Miller, in his letters to Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Carl Levin, Michigan Democrat, and House Armed Services Committee Chairman Ike Skelton, Missouri Democrat, stated only that the delay is the result of "the complexity of issues" and he offered classified briefings on "analysis and conclusions" by early February.

It is the second delay for the review. A Pentagon fact sheet made public in June stated that the review would be submitted to Congress in December 2009.

The official said nuclear weapons opponents in the Obama administration are seeking to use the NPR to try to advance the president's goal of making radical cuts in nuclear weapons.

Defense and national security officials are advocating a review that will "defend the country," the official said.

"The problem has been getting the principals to focus on this," the official said.

The review will set U.S. nuclear deterrence policy, strategy and force structure for the next five to 10 years.

Asked about the latest delay, Pentagon spokesman Lt. Col. Jonathan Withington said the review is nearing completion and "we require additional time to appropriately address the range of issues under consideration in the NPR."

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates is heading up the review and officials said he has taken a position that U.S. nuclear weapons and support infrastructure are aging and in need of modernization.

Other officials, including Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr., are said to be opposing the review's expected call for major investments in the nuclear arsenal.

According to the officials, one concept being examined in the review is whether to abandon U.S. strategic plans for a nuclear first strike as a way to deter would-be nuclear aggressors.

A no-first-use declaration is thought by some arms control specialists as one way to safely reduce the numbers of deployed nuclear weapons.

However, other national security specialists think adopting a "no-first-use" policy is destabilizing because it undermines the decades-old policy of deterring attacks with a large arsenal.

The New York Times, quoting senior Pentagon officials, reported Dec. 19 that the strategic review is expected to shift the focus of strategic nuclear policy toward stopping nuclear terrorism.

That goal is said to be more in line with Mr. Obama's announced goal of eliminating all nuclear weapons. The president also said nuclear weapons will be needed as long as other states pose a threat of nuclear attack.

[http://washingtontimes.com/news/2010/jan/07/nuclear-weapons-review-put-off/?feat=home\\_headlines](http://washingtontimes.com/news/2010/jan/07/nuclear-weapons-review-put-off/?feat=home_headlines)

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Time

7 January 2010

## ***Obama's Nuclear Arms Pledge Hits Stumbling Block***

By Eben Harrell

When President Barack Obama pledged to move toward the abolition of nuclear weapons in April 2009, replacing the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) was supposed to be the easy first step. But the 1991 agreement, which limits the number of long-range nuclear weapons in Russia and the U.S., expired on Dec. 5. And a replacement has yet to be agreed upon.

An intricate kind of mimicry must be choreographed in arms reduction, requiring all sides to resist the urge to twitch as guns are lowered simultaneously, with parity maintained throughout. Nothing is easy. Yet State Department spokesman Darby Holladay told TIME that negotiators are making "significant progress" toward a START replacement. There may still be hope for a swift resolution to outstanding problems.

The primary stumbling block to START negotiations has been a disagreement on how to even measure a reduction in nuclear weapons, arms-control experts say. Long-range nuclear missiles and bombers have the capacity to carry multiple, independently targeted weapons. So the question is, should a treaty limit the number of delivery vehicles available to each country, the number of actual warheads or both?

Recently, the U.S. reduced the number of warheads armed on top of missiles and on its bomber bases — but less so the number of bombers or missiles themselves. On the other hand, Russia — out of economic necessity — has reduced the number of missiles and bombers, while maintaining parity by keeping them more heavily armed.

As a result, the Russians would like to limit the number of delivery vehicles the two sides keep in their arsenals. The U.S. and Russia both have thousands of warheads in storage, which the START treaty (and likely its successor) will not touch. The Russians fear that if the U.S. is allowed a vast force of half-empty missiles and bombers, it could in times of conflict quickly arm these delivery vehicles with stockpiled weapons — and thus have the capacity for an overwhelming "first strike" that could take out the more heavily concentrated Russian nuclear forces. That concern could breed distrust, and prove dangerous.

"This is a very important issue and one, I suspect, that has been the biggest cause of delays," says Hans Kristensen of the Federation of American Scientists. "We don't want Russian war planners deciding to put as many warheads as possible on their delivery vehicles — that is not a crisis-stable situation. It provides an incentive to launch first."

The new START treaty will probably skirt this issue by leaving both countries with robust nuclear forces — about 1,600 deployed strategic warheads, down from the 2,200 of the previous treaty, which is still more than enough to wipe each other off the map. But in the Strangelovean world of nuclear deterrence, the slightest threat to parity is a cause for major problems. Early on in the START negotiations last summer, Kristensen says, the Russians balked at a provision that would allow the U.S. to inspect the production facilities of its new RS-24 ICBM because they would not be able to inspect American ICBM construction sites. Kristensen says that's because the U.S. isn't building any new missiles. "It may seem absurd, but both sides are very edgy about maintaining parity in all respects," he says. "That makes negotiations very difficult."

Last week, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin added another irritant to the disarmament talks by claiming that America's planned missile-defense system was holding up the new treaty. Russia has long claimed that the missile-defense system, components of which Obama agreed to remove from Europe last year, would force it to increase its nuclear capability. "There is a danger that our partners, by creating such an 'umbrella,' will feel completely secure and thus can allow themselves to do what they want, disrupting the balance, and aggressiveness will rise immediately," Putin said.

Steve Andreasen, a former director for arms control on the National Security Council, says that Putin's comments were likely a negotiating ploy and that Russia will probably raise its continuing concern about missile defense in later talks. "They are making clear that further reductions in offensive weapons cannot take place divorced from the issue of missile defense — a long-standing Russian position," he says.

Meanwhile, even if negotiators reach a START agreement, it will still require ratification in the U.S. Senate. And in a recent letter, 40 Republican Senators and independent Joe Lieberman suggested that they would not support the agreement unless Obama pledged to allocate money to "modernize" America's nuclear arsenal — that is to say, refurbish old warheads and potentially build new ones. That decision, in turn, hinges on the findings of Obama's

"Nuclear Posture Review," in which the President will decide the nuclear forces he feels the U.S. needs to maintain in order to remain secure.

Given his stated commitment to work toward the abolition of nuclear weapons, it's possible the review will call for aggressive cuts. That can't happen, however, without Russia's cooperation, and the current START negotiations are only the beginning. Until that happens, however, both sides will remain locked in a nightmarish anachronism, with nuclear annihilation of both sides always only minutes away. As Andreasen says, "Most experts agree: We will need to do more than the new START, with greater urgency and on a much broader front, to get ahead of the nuclear danger."

<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1951850,00.html>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Global Security Newswire

## ***U.S., British Might Share Firing Device To Update Nuclear Arms***

Thursday, January 7, 2010

By Elaine M. Grossman

*Global Security Newswire*

WASHINGTON -- The Obama administration is taking initial steps to develop a "common fuse" aimed at replacing aging firing devices in two different U.S. nuclear weapons, and could partner with the United Kingdom in developing the technology (see *GSN*, May 14, 2009).

The U.S. Defense Department's Nuclear Posture Review -- a broad assessment of strategy, forces and readiness -- could highlight the initiative as a potential collaborative and cost-saving measure, according to insiders. The major review is expected on Capitol Hill by March 1 (see *GSN*, Jan. 6).

A fuse is widely regarded as a critical feature on a nuclear weapon because it controls whether and when the warhead detonates, and that can affect how much damage is inflicted.

Under the new initiative, a single fuse could potentially replace three different devices in the U.S. and British nuclear arsenals.

One fuse that could be replaced is used on 350 W-78 warheads, which the U.S. Air Force deploys on its Minuteman ICBMs. Another fuse is used on roughly 400 W-88 warheads fielded atop U.S. Navy Trident D-5 submarine-launched ballistic missiles. The third fuse to possibly be replaced is found on fewer than 160 warheads that the United Kingdom deploys on its own Trident missiles, according to defense officials.

"The [Minuteman ICBM] fuse was built in the '70s, so that's 40 years ago," said a Pentagon official who asked not to be identified, pending administration policy and budget decisions on the matter. "They were never designed for 30- or 40-year lifetimes at all in mind. So we need to replace them, we really do."

The current version of the Minuteman W-78 warhead fuse was fielded in 1979, while the fuse for the Trident W-88 warhead was first deployed in 1990, according to data compiled by nuclear-weapon experts Robert Norris and Hans Kristensen.

Program proponents say aging potentially increases the risk that these fuses could malfunction or even fail to detonate a nuclear weapon. Though atomic arms might never be launched, ensuring that they remain effective bolsters strategic deterrence, defense officials say.

"Joint" projects can be politically popular as a means of streamlining production and maintenance costs. However, critics are already lining up to question the wisdom of undertaking such an approach to the nuclear devices.

Some worry that designing a new fuse to replace old ones could add new military capabilities to the weapons, potentially stoking international tensions at a time when U.S. President Barack Obama has committed the nation to working toward the global elimination of nuclear arms.

In addition, several observers speculate that a common fuse design would require an enormous research-and-development investment just to bridge the differences between operating systems on the Air Force, Navy and British warheads. A more economical option might be to simply repair, update or replace each of the aging fuses separately, critics say.

Defense experts estimate that the cost of a common fuse -- mostly in terms of research and development -- would top \$1 billion.

The Sandia National Laboratory in New Mexico last month launched a feasibility study aimed at determining what it would take to design and manufacture a common fuse. The assessment is expected to be done by October.

"We're not ready to say it's a joint program. We're doing the study to see if we can," the Pentagon official said. "At the end of that study, we'll make a decision [about] whether or not it warrants going through a joint development program, or if there's just not enough synergy, maybe we'll just share technology."

Initial funds to develop a common fuse could appear in Obama's fiscal 2011 budget request, which is to be finalized this week and delivered to Congress in early February, according to administration-watchers. The process of designing, developing and fielding a new fuse could extend over a decade, the Pentagon official said.

"This'll probably be a 10-year effort," the official told *Global Security Newswire*. "You've got to develop it, you've got to test it, you've got to flight-test it. And so this is not, 'New fuse,' snap your fingers real quick. No."

If the Sandia-led study concludes that a common-fuse approach is warranted, the next step would be to formally vet the concept through a high-level Pentagon panel that reviews and approves military needs. The Joint Requirements Oversight Council is led by the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. James Cartwright -- a former combat commander for nuclear weapons -- and includes the vice chiefs of each military service.

Following that review process, the services would undertake an "analysis of alternatives" to determine how best to meet the particular military specifications they seek in the device.

A new fuse for the U.S. Navy's W-88 warhead is slated to be produced beginning in fiscal 2014 and installed beginning in fiscal 2018, according to Kristensen, who directs the Nuclear Information Project at the Federation of American Scientists. He said the target dates were included in a calendar prepared two years ago by the U.S. National Nuclear Security Administration, a semiautonomous arm of the Energy Department.

An NNSA schedule for the Air Force's W-78 warhead life-extension effort -- which Kristensen said is likely to include fuse replacement -- shows initial production in fiscal 2018 and installation beginning in fiscal 2023, the arms expert said.

It is too early to know whether the United Kingdom would help underwrite the cost of research and development, but London is participating in the Sandia study, the Pentagon official said.

This would be the second nuclear-warhead fuse procurement effort undertaken over the past few years by the British Atomic Weapons Establishment, which designs and maintains that nation's stockpile. Under the first effort, London has begun installing on its Trident warheads a U.S.-designed Mk-4A fuse that reportedly increased the weapon's accuracy and number of potential targets (see *GSN*, March 15, 2007).

That fuse was initially designed for the re-entry vehicle that carries the U.S. Navy's W-76 Trident warhead, a relatively small weapon believed to be similar to the warhead carried on the United Kingdom's submarine-launched missile fleet.

London's participation in the Sandia study, which could lead to a common fuse for significantly larger U.S. Navy and Air Force warheads -- the W-88 and W-78, respectively -- has some nuclear arms experts scratching their heads.

"I'm surprised if they have work on the way for a fuse for a W-88 size re-entry vehicle, because every indication so far has been that the Brits had a system that was closer to the W-76," the smaller U.S. Navy Trident warhead, Kristensen said in an interview this week.

Both of the U.S. warheads that would potentially receive the common fuse also pack a bigger punch -- 335 kilotons for the Air Force W-78 and 455 kilotons for the Navy W-88 -- than that attributed to W-76 or the British Trident warhead, which are believed to have an explosive yield of 100 kilotons.

The British government declined to say this week whether it might participate in a U.S. common fuse effort to complement its Mk-4A fuse procurement, or if instead the common fuse could fully replace the Mk-4A devices being installed on its Trident fleet. However, an official did note that the British interest in other fuse technologies might contribute toward future modernization.

"The U.K. does not currently have fuse plans for its current warhead design beyond the introduction of Mk-4A," said a British official, speaking on condition of not being named while discussing sensitive nuclear-weapon issues. "We continue to work on fuse technology as part of maintaining our nuclear weapon design and stewardship

capabilities, which are an integral part of our ability to maintain our nuclear deterrent capability. Work on a range of technologies will also support eventual decisions on whether and how to replace the current warhead design."

Like Washington, London is grappling with how it will keep its nuclear arsenal viable in the coming years.

"The U.K. is committed to maintaining its nuclear deterrent," the official said. "Decisions on whether and how we may need to replace the current warhead design are likely to be necessary in the next Parliament."

A national election in the United Kingdom is due by June.

The British official declined to discuss possible collaboration on a common fuse, but did note that the Mk-4A effort remains ongoing.

"As a routine part of our warhead stockpile stewardship program, the U.K. is currently introducing the Mk-4A arming, fusing and firing system into the U.K. stockpile to overcome obsolescence and ensure the existing warhead can remain in service until the 2020s," the official said.

"The advantage of the new [Mk-4A] fuse is that it gives them much more flexibility in setting the warhead's height of burst, which in turn gives the planners more targeting options," Kristensen said. In other words, a warhead could be optimized for attacking particular types of targets -- such as buildings, missile silos or deeply buried command centers -- by setting its fuse to detonate at a particular altitude or on the ground.

Critics have complained that the Mk-4A upgrade made the United Kingdom's Trident warhead a more intimidating weapon, potentially capable of inflicting a disarming strike against smaller nuclear powers. That dynamic could tempt an adversary nation to launch its weapons rather than lose them.

The prospect of a fresh effort to build new U.S. and British fuses is renewing similar objections.

"My principal concern with any new fuse is that it could lead to new military capabilities because, if it can control burst height more accurately, then a weapon's hard-target kill capability can be enhanced," said James Acton, an associate in the Nuclear Policy Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

As it stands, there should be no rush to replace the existing fuses on these warheads without fully examining options for repairing or refurbishing them, said one defense consultant who asked not to be named. There is no aging or maintenance crisis at this time forcing the United States to replace the fuses associated with its W-88 or W-78 warheads, this source said.

"A thorough requirements scrub could ... reduce costs and make [existing fuses] last longer," according to the consultant. "They're not worried about them not working."

Acton recommended a similar course.

"The labs regularly talk about the three options of refurbish, reuse and replace," he told *GSN*. "Before replacing, refurbishing and reusing should be seriously examined."

Kristensen said that if a common fuse effort can be shown to be cost-effective, the U.S. Congress might well support such an approach.

"I suspect that if they can save some money with a joint ... fuse and at the same time get a new fuse with more flexibility, then it will be a no-brainer for Congress," he said.

As anticipated arms control reductions shrink the size of the U.S. arsenal in the years to come, officials will probably seek wider targeting options for the few weapons that remain deployed, Kristensen said. Until the nation significantly curtails the missions for nuclear weapons -- a course that Kristensen advocates -- there will be pressure in Washington to procure new fuses with multiple features, he said.

Serious skepticism remains. A Pentagon inclination to replace existing fuses rather than maintain older systems might be driven more by parochial motivations than real cost savings, the defense consultant suggested. The two different approaches would likely come with widely divergent price tags, this source said.

"There are lots of officers out there that want to run a \$1 billion program instead of a \$50 million program," said the consultant.

[http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw\\_20100107\\_9797.php](http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20100107_9797.php)

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

BBC News – U.K.  
6 January 2010

## ***China Rejects Iran UN Sanctions***

**China's ambassador to the United Nations, Zhang Yesui, has said the time is not right to consider more sanctions against Iran.**

The UN Security Council, including China, has previously called for Iran to stop enriching uranium and has issued three sets of sanctions.

Iran's leaders insist their atomic programme is only meant for energy-generating purposes.

But the US and its allies fear Iran is trying to develop nuclear weapons.

China has the presidency of the UN Security Council during January, and is one of its five permanent veto-holders.

### **Timing tangle**

Mr Zhang told reporters at the UN that "more time and patience" was needed to find a diplomatic solution to the impasse.

The Chinese ambassador's comments come days after after Iran missed an end-of-year deadline set by the US to respond positively to offers of talks about its uranium enrichment programme.

Plans on how to respond are apparently still up in the air, says the BBC's Tom Lane, at the UN in New York.

Diplomats at the UN say senior figures from Europe, the US, Russia and China will meet later this month to exchange opinions, our correspondent says.

US officials have previously called for "crippling" sanctions in the event of a diplomatic failure.

However, recent reports suggest they are currently thinking of "targeted sanctions" that focus on people and companies involved in Iran's nuclear programme, our correspondent adds.

Analysts say it could take Iran from between 18 months and three years to build a nuclear bomb.

With all this in the background, diplomats say it could be many weeks and even months before a deal is reached at the UN, our correspondent reports.

However, it is possible the US and its allies could roll out new sanctions of their own sooner.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/8442775.stm>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

New York Times  
6 January 2010

## ***Iran Shielding Its Nuclear Efforts in Maze of Tunnels***

By WILLIAM J. BROAD

Last September, when Iran's uranium enrichment plant buried inside a mountain near the holy city of Qum was revealed, the episode cast light on a wider pattern: Over the past decade, Iran has quietly hidden an increasingly large part of its atomic complex in networks of tunnels and bunkers across the country.

In doing so, American government and private experts say, Iran has achieved a double purpose. Not only has it shielded its infrastructure from military attack in warrens of dense rock, but it has further obscured the scale and nature of its notoriously opaque nuclear effort. The discovery of the Qum plant only heightened fears about other undeclared sites.

Now, with the passing of President Obama's year-end deadline for diplomatic progress, that cloak of invisibility has emerged as something of a stealth weapon, complicating the West's military and geopolitical calculus.

The Obama administration says it is hoping to take advantage of domestic political unrest and disarray in Iran's nuclear program to press for a regimen of strong and immediate new sanctions. But a crucial factor behind that push for nonmilitary solutions, some analysts say, is Iran's tunneling — what Tehran calls its strategy of "passive defense."



Indeed, Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates has repeatedly discounted the possibility of a military strike, saying that it would only slow Iran's nuclear ambitions by one to three years while driving the program further underground.

Some analysts say that Israel, which has taken the hardest line on Iran, may be especially hampered, given its less formidable military and intelligence abilities.

"It complicates your targeting," said Richard L. Russell, a former Central Intelligence Agency analyst now at the National Defense University. "We're used to facilities being above ground. Underground, it becomes literally a black hole. You can't be sure what's taking place."

Even the Israelis concede that solid rock can render bombs useless. Late last month, the Israeli defense minister, Ehud Barak, told Parliament that the Qum plant was "located in bunkers that cannot be destroyed through a conventional attack."

Heavily mountainous Iran has a long history of tunneling toward civilian as well as military ends, and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has played a recurring role — first as a transportation engineer and founder of the Iranian Tunneling Association and now as the nation's president.

There are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of big tunnels in Iran, according to American government and private experts, and the lines separating their uses can be fuzzy. Companies owned by the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps of Iran, for example, build civilian as well as military tunnels.

No one in the West knows how much, or exactly what part, of Iran's nuclear program lies hidden. Still, evidence of the downward atomic push is clear to the inquisitive.

Google Earth, for instance, shows that the original hub of the nuclear complex at Isfahan consists of scores of easily observed — and easy to attack — buildings. But government analysts say that in recent years Iran has honeycombed the nearby mountains with tunnels. Satellite photos show six entrances.

Iranian officials say years of veiled bombing threats prompted their country to exercise its "sovereign right" to protect its nuclear facilities by hiding them underground. That was their argument when they announced plans in November to build 10 uranium enrichment plants. Despite the improbability and bluster of the claim, Iran's tunneling history gave it a measure of credibility.

"They will be scattered in the mountains," the chief of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, Ali Akbar Salehi, told Iran's Press TV. "We will be using the passive defense so that we don't need to have active defense, which is very expensive."

Mr. Gates, along with other Western officials, has dismissed that line of argument as cover for a covert arms program.

"If they wanted it for peaceful purposes," he said of the Qum plant on CNN, "there's no reason to put it so deep underground, no reason to be deceptive about it, keep it a secret for a protracted period of time."

Iran denies that its nuclear efforts are for military purposes and insists that it wants to unlock the atom strictly for peaceful aims, like making electricity. It says it wants to build many enrichment plants to fuel up to 20 nuclear power plants, a plan many economists question because Iran ranks second globally in oil and natural gas reserves.

Ploy or not, any expansion seems unlikely to zoom ahead. After a decade of construction, Iran's main enrichment plant, at Natanz, operates at a tiny fraction of its capacity. The Qum plant is only half built. Nuclear experts say the new plants, if attempted, may not materialize for years or decades. Even so, they note that tunnels would be the easiest part of the plan and may get dug relatively soon.

Despite the questions about whether the West can credibly threaten to destroy Iran's nuclear program, analysts insist that the United States, Israel and their allies will never rule out that option. The Pentagon, in fact, is racing to develop a powerful new tunnel-busting bomb.

"Deeply buried targets have been a problem forever," said Greg Duckworth, a civilian scientist who recently led a Pentagon research effort to pinpoint enemy tunnels. "And it's getting worse."

#### A Tunnel Expert

Mr. Ahmadinejad began professional life as a transportation engineer with close ties to the Revolutionary Guards and an abiding interest in tunnels.

He helped found the Iranian Tunneling Association in 1998, according to the group's Web site. That year, the Tehran subway began a major expansion, and Iran, in secret, accelerated its nuclear program.

In early 2004, while mayor of Tehran, Mr. Ahmadinejad served as chairman of the Sixth Iranian Tunneling Conference. He praised the leaders of ancient Persia for creating networks of subterranean waterways and called for the creation of new "tunnels" between the government, universities and professional groups.

"I ask God to help us all," he said in a paper. Such tunneling conferences, held regularly in Tehran, draw global manufacturers of tunnel-boring machines — giant devices as big as locomotives that dig quickly through rocky strata. Terratec, an Australian maker, noted early last year that Iran had recently become "one of the most active markets in the world."

Many of the companies keep offices in Tehran. Herrenknecht, a German firm considered the market leader, lists three. Engineers say Iran has hundreds of miles of civilian tunneling projects under way, including subways in Tehran, Isfahan, and Shiraz, highway tunnels across the country and water tunnels to irrigate the dry interior.

By all accounts, the seeds of the downward military shift were planted during the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s, when Iraq hit Tehran and other Iranian cities with waves of missiles. Constructing shelters, bunkers and tunnels became a patriotic duty.

#### An Opposition Watchdog

In 2002, the National Council of Resistance of Iran, an opposition group, revealed that Iran was building a secret underground nuclear plant at Natanz that turned out to be for enriching uranium. Enrichment plants can make fuel for reactors or, with a little more effort, atom bombs.

Satellite photos showed the Iranians burying two cavernous halls roughly half the size of the Pentagon. Estimates put the thickness of overhead rock, dirt and concrete at 30 feet — enough to frustrate bombs but not to guarantee the plant's survival.

The disclosure of Natanz set off the West's confrontation with Iran. Two years later, the International Atomic Energy Agency found to its surprise that Iran was tunneling in the mountains by the Isfahan site, where uranium is readied for enrichment. "Iran failed to report to the agency in a timely manner," an I.A.E.A. paper said in diplomatic understatement.

Then, in late 2005, the Iranian opposition group held news conferences in Paris and London to announce that its spies had learned that Iran was digging tunnels for missile and atomic work at 14 sites, including an underground complex near Qum. The government, one council official said, was building the tunnels to conceal "its pursuit of nuclear weapons." The council further charged that Mr. Ahmadinejad and the tunneling association were providing civilian cover for military work and acquisitions.

The council's assertions got little notice. Some Western experts saw them as overstated. Some questioned the council's objectivity because it sought the government's overthrow. Perhaps the biggest impediment was a suspicion of defectors at a time when the American invasion of Iraq was proving to be based in part on Iraqi dissidents' false claims about Saddam Hussein's unconventional weapons.

United Nations atomic inspectors did check out a few of the tunnels at Isfahan, but not at Qum because the plant was on a military base and thus off limits for inspection without strong evidence of suspicious activity.

"We followed whatever they came up with," Mohamed ElBaradei, the recently departed head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, said of the council in an interview. "And a lot of it was bogus."

Frank Pabian, a senior adviser on nuclear nonproliferation at Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico, strongly disagreed. "They're right 90 percent of the time," he said of the council's disclosures about Iran's clandestine sites. "That doesn't mean they're perfect, but 90 percent is a pretty good record."

In 2007, the council announced that Iran was tunneling in the mountains near Natanz, the sprawling enrichment site. Satellite photos confirmed that.

And Qum became a vindication, though belatedly, in late September, when President Obama, flanked by the leaders of France and Britain, identified "a covert uranium enrichment facility" being constructed there.

#### Military Warrens

In December, the opposition group capitalized on its new stature to issue a report on Iranian military tunneling. It said Iran had dug tunnels and bunkers for research facilities, ammunition storage, military headquarters and

command and control centers. “A group of factories” in the mountains east of Tehran, it said, specialize in “the manufacturing of nuclear warheads.”

Over all, the report raised to 19, from 14, the number of locations where it said tunnels — often multiple tunnels — were hiding military bases and work on arms.

American war planners see Iran’s tunnels — whatever their exact number and contents — as a serious test of military abilities. Most say there is no easy way to wipe out a nuclear program that has been well hidden, widely dispersed and deeply buried.

Among the difficulties, military experts say, are decoy tunnels and false entrances, the identification of which requires good intelligence. The experts add that Iran’s announcement about new enrichment plants may simply produce a blur of activity meant to confuse Western war planners.

David A. Kay, a nuclear specialist who led the fruitless search for unconventional arms in Iraq, said the hiding of a plant or two among the rocky labyrinths could pose a particular challenge for Israel. “They have limited intelligence for targeting,” Dr. Kay said, adding that the United States was better equipped to map out Iran’s nuclear terrain.

Raymond Tanter, an Iran expert at Georgetown University who served in the Reagan White House, agreed. “So far, the tunneling has not succeeded to the point that the American technology couldn’t get to it,” he contended. “But it makes Israel’s options more problematic, because they have less of a military edge.”

Doubts notwithstanding, the Obama administration has been careful to leave the military option on the table, and the Pentagon is racing to develop a deadly tunnel weapon.

The device — 20 feet long and called the Massive Ordnance Penetrator — began as a 2004 recommendation from the Defense Science Board, a high-level advisory group to the Pentagon.

“A deep underground tunnel facility in a rock geology poses a significant challenge,” the board wrote. “Several thousand pounds of high explosives coupled to the tunnel are needed to blow down blast doors and propagate a lethal air blast.”

The bomb carries tons of explosives and is considered 10 times more powerful than its predecessor. It underwent preliminary testing in 2007, and its first deployments are expected next summer. Its carrier is to be the B-2 stealth bomber.

Bryan Whitman, a Pentagon spokesman, told reporters in October that budget problems had delayed the weapon but that it was now back on track. Military officials deny having a specific target in mind. Still, Mr. Whitman added, war planners consider it “an important capability.”

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/06/world/middleeast/06sanctions.html?pagewanted=all>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Asia Times – Hong Kong, China  
7 January 2010

## *More Doubts Over Iran's 'Nuclear Trigger'*

*By Gareth Porter*

WASHINGTON - New revelations about two documents leaked to The Times of London to show that Iran is working on a "nuclear trigger" mechanism have further undermined the credibility of the document the newspaper had presented as evidence of a continuing Iranian nuclear-weapons program.

A columnist for The Times has acknowledged that the two-page Farsi document published by the newspaper last month was not a photocopy but an expurgated and retyped version of the original document.

A translation of a second Farsi document also published by The Times, moreover, contradicts the newspaper’s claim that it shows the "nuclear trigger" document was written within an organization run by an Iranian military scientist.

Former Central Intelligence Agency official Philip Giraldi has said US intelligence judges the "nuclear trigger" document to be a forgery. Inter Press Service (IPS) has written that the document lacked both security markings and identification of either the issuing organization or the recipient.

The new revelations point to additional reasons intelligence analysts would have been suspicious of the document.

On December 14, The Times published what it explicitly represented as a photocopy of a complete Farsi document showing Iranian plans for testing a neutron initiator, a triggering device for a nuclear weapon, along with an English-language translation.

But in response to a reader who noted the absence of crucial information from the document, including security markings, Oliver Kamm, an online columnist for The Times, admitted on Sunday that the Farsi document published by the paper was "a retyped version of the relevant parts of that original document".

Kamm wrote that the original document had "contained a lot of classified information" and was not published "because of the danger that it would alert Iranian authorities to the source of the leak".

In offering the explanation of the intelligence agency that leaked the document to The Times, Kamm was also damaging the credibility of the document. A document that had been both edited and retyped could obviously have been doctored by adding material on a neutron initiator.

The reason for such editing could not have been to excise "classified information", because, if the document were genuine, the Iranian government would already have the information.

Furthermore, there would have been ways of avoiding disclosure of the source of the leak that would not have required the release of an expurgated version of the document. The number of the copy of the document could have been blacked out, for example.

The Times claimed in a separate story that the "nuclear trigger" document was written within the military technology development organization run by Iranian scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh.

A second document, also published in the Persian language by The Times, shows Fakhrizadeh's signature under the title "chief, Department of Development and Deployment of Advanced Technology", and includes a list of 12 "recipients" within that organization, and is dated the Persian equivalent of December 29, 2005, on the Western calendar, according to an English translation obtained by IPS.

The Times reporter, Catherine Philp, wrote that the neutron-initiator document "was drawn up within the Center for Preparedness at the Institute of Applied Physics", which she identified as "one of the organization's 12 departments".

But the reference to a "Center for Preparedness at the Institute of Applied Physics" is an obvious misreading of a chart given to The Times by the intelligence agency but not published by the newspaper.

The chart, which can be found on the website of the Institute for Science and International Security, shows what are clearly two separate organizations relating to neutronics - a "Center for Preparedness" and an "Institute of Applied Physics" - under what the intelligence agency translated as the "Field for Expansion of Advanced Technologies' Deployment".

But George Maschke, a Persian-language expert and former US military intelligence officer, provided IPS with a translation of the list of the 12 recipients on the cover page of the document showing that it includes a "Center for Preparedness and New Defense Technology" but not an "Institute of Applied Physics".

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reports have referred to the Institute of Applied Physics as a stand-alone institution rather than part of Fakhrizadeh's organization.

The English translation of the document shows that none of the other five centers and groups on the list of recipients is a plausible candidate to run a neutron-related experimentation program, either.

They include the chiefs of the Center for Explosives and Impact Technology, the Center for Manufacturing and Industrial Research, the Chemical and Metallurgical Groups of the Center for Advanced Materials Research and Technology, and the Center for New Aerospace Research and Design.

Contrary to The Times' story, moreover, the other five recipients on the list of 12 are not heads of "departments" but deputies to the director for various cross-cutting themes: finance and budget, plans and programs, science, administration and human resources and audits and legal affairs.

The absence of any organization with obvious expertise in atomic energy indicates that Fakhrizadeh's Department of Development and Deployment of Advanced Technology is not the locus of any clandestine nuclear-weapons program - if there is one.

The nuclear-weapons programs of Israel, India and Pakistan before testing of an atomic bomb were all within their respective atomic energy commissions. That organizational pattern reflects the fact that scientific expertise in nuclear physics and the different stages through which uranium must pass before being converted into a weapon is located overwhelmingly in the national atomic commissions.

The Times story claimed a consensus among "Western intelligence agencies" that Fakhrizadeh's "Advanced Technology Development and Deployment Department" has inherited the same components as were present in the "Physics Research Center" of the 1990s. It also asserts that the same components were present in the alleged nuclear-weapons research program that the mysterious cache of intelligence documents now called the "alleged studies" documents portrayed as being under Fakhrizadeh's control.

Those claims were taken from the chart given to The Times by the unidentified intelligence agency.

But the idea that Fakhrizadeh has been in charge of a covert nuclear-weapons project can be traced directly to the fact that he helped procure or sought to procure dual-use items when he was head of the Physics Resource Center in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The items included vacuum equipment, magnets, a balancing machine, and a mass spectrometer, all of which might be used either in a nuclear program or for non-nuclear and non-military purposes.

The IAEA suggested in reports beginning in 2004 that Fakhrizadeh's interest in these dual-use items indicated a possible role in Iran's nuclear program.

That same year, someone concocted a collection of documents - later dubbed "the alleged studies" documents - showing a purported Iranian nuclear-weapons project, based on the premise that Fakhrizadeh was its chief.

Iran insisted, however, that Fakhrizadeh had procured the technologies in question for non-military uses by various components of Imam Hussein University, where he was a lecturer.

After reviewing documentation submitted by Iran and verifying some of its assertions by inspection on the spot, the IAEA concluded in its February 22, 2008, report that Iran's explanation for Fakhrizadeh's role in obtaining the items had been truthful after all.

But instead of questioning the authenticity of the "alleged studies" documents, IAEA deputy director for safeguards Olli Heinonen highlighted Fakhrizadeh's role in Iran's alleged nuclear-weapons work in a briefing for member states just three days after the publication of that correction.

*Gareth Porter is an investigative historian and journalist specializing in US national-security policy. The paperback edition of his latest book, Perils of Dominance: Imbalance of Power and the Road to War in Vietnam, was published in 2006.*

(Inter Press Service)

[http://atimes.com/atimes/Middle\\_East/LA07Ak04.html](http://atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/LA07Ak04.html)

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Press TV – Iran

6 January 2010

## ***West Has Not Accepted Iran's Offer Yet***

A senior Iranian lawmaker says that Western powers have not yet agreed with Iran's terms for a nuclear swap deal.

The head of the Iranian parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee said that Tehran will resume its enrichment activity to produce 20-percent enriched uranium, if the West refuses to reply to Iran's proposal for the nuclear swap deal within one month.

Hossein Ebrahimi said that Iran has voiced its readiness for a staged nuclear swap deal in Japan, Brazil, Turkey or the Kish Island in southern Iran but the West has not yet replied to the proposal.

"Iran proposed a rational way for fulfilling its needs to supply the nuclear fuel required for the Tehran Research Reactor and if they (Western powers) are rational they will give a positive response to the proposal," Mehr news agency quoted Ebrahimi as saying.

He stated that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has also agreed with Iran's proposal and has asked the US, France and Russia to act on that.

"Iran has proposed three countries and an island as the location of the nuclear swap but the West has not yet accepted that. So the only option that remains for Iran is to begin production of nuclear fuel for the Tehran Research Reactor after the set deadline," Ebrahimi concluded.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail.aspx?id=115530&sectionid=351020104>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Global Security Newswire  
7 January 2010

## ***Iran Could Seek Ability To Quickly Produce Nuke, Blix Says***

Iran's uranium enrichment and suspected missile activities suggest the country wants the ability to rapidly construct nuclear weapons if it chose to do so, former International Atomic Energy Agency chief Hans Blix stated in remarks published today (see *GSN*, Jan. 6).

Iran has steadfastly denied U.S. and European allegations that its nuclear activities are aimed at producing weapons.

"There has been some evidence, but not confirmed by the IAEA, that [the Iranians] were building missiles or sketching missiles which could hold nuclear weapons. It's quite possible that they simply want to place themselves close to the capability to build nuclear weapons," Russia Today quoted Blix as saying.

Tehran recently indicated it could further refine uranium from its stockpile and announced plans to build 10 new uranium enrichment plants (see *GSN*, Nov. 30, 2009). The uranium enrichment process can generate material for peaceful applications as well as nuclear weapons.

"The latest information about the 10 new enrichment plants is puzzling. Even big countries don't have 10 enrichment plants," Blix said.

"The world is worried that the enrichment capability that they are now building (raises) tensions in the Middle East. So it would be rational to persuade them to stay away from it," he added (Russia Today, Jan. 7).

[http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw\\_20100107\\_8832.php](http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20100107_8832.php)

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

New York Times  
7 January 2010

## ***Iran Strike Could Destabilize Middle East: Pentagon***

By REUTERS

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - A strike on Iran could be "very, very destabilizing" and have unintended consequences for the Middle East, the top U.S. military officer said on Thursday, stressing that diplomacy was crucial.

Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the U.S. military was prepared for any eventuality in Iran, despite being stretched by wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. He pointed to potential resources in the Navy and Air Force.

"We have certainly focused on Iran for a long time and recognize ... what the potential could be," Mullen said, adding he was "very comfortable" with U.S. capabilities.

Mullen said authorities in Tehran were "on a path that has strategic intent to develop nuclear weapons and have been for some time" -- a charge Iran denies.

"I think that outcome (of a nuclear Iran) is potentially a very, very destabilizing outcome ... on the other hand, when asked about striking Iran, specifically, that also has a very, very destabilizing outcome," Mullen told a gathering at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, a think-tank.

Mullen said he worried about "unintended consequences" of either scenario, adding "that part of the world could become much more unstable, which is a dangerous global outcome."

Tehran already has been hit with three rounds of U.N. sanctions for refusing to comply with demands that it halt sensitive nuclear activities. The United States and its allies have said it is time for a fourth round of sanctions, but diplomats say Russia and China are resisting.

MORE UNREST

Mullen said he was closely following recent events in Iran and added that he was sure incidents of unrest will continue.

In the bloodiest unrest since the aftermath of a disputed June presidential poll, eight people were killed on December 27 and over 40 reformists, including advisers to opposition leader Mirhossein Mousavi, have been arrested since.

"I think we just need to be mindful obviously of those events, of what's going on there, and clearly the need to continue to, I think, aggressively address the potential nuclear weapons issue," he said.

President Barack Obama has offered Iran the possibility of deeper engagement with the United States if it cooperates on removing fears about its nuclear program and on other issues. This reversed the policy of Obama's predecessor George W. Bush, who had advocated isolating and punishing Iran.

Obama had given Iran until the end of 2009 to respond to his overtures and to an offer from six major powers of economic and political incentives in exchange for a suspension of Iran's nuclear enrichment program. Iran ignored the deadline.

The powers negotiating with Iran are U.N. Security Council permanent members United States, Russia, China, France and Britain, plus Germany.

"One of the things that I think is so important is that we continue internationally, diplomatically, politically -- not just 'we' the United States but the international community, continue to focus on this to prevent those two outcomes," Mullen said.

He added that it was important "to continue, where possible, to engage and have a dialogue."

U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates has similarly expressed support for diplomacy, saying military action would only delay the country's nuclear progress temporarily.

Tehran has had years to build underground facilities aimed at hiding and protecting the program in the event of attack from either the United States or Israel, experts say.

(Reporting by Phil Stewart, editing by Anthony Boadle)

<http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2010/01/07/world/international-us-iran-usa-mullen.html>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Yonhap News – South Korea  
5 January 2010

## ***Kim Jong-Il Not Likely To Abandon Nukes Due To Heavy Investment: Expert***

By Hwang Doo-hyong

WASHINGTON, Jan. 5 (Yonhap) -- The current North Korean leadership will not be inclined to abandon its nuclear weapons programs because the impoverished communist state has invested so heavily in the project, a scholar says.

Edwin Feulner, president of the Heritage Foundation, told Yonhap News Agency in an interview that he does not expect the Kim Jong-il regime to dismantle its nuclear arsenal and terminate its nuclear weapons programs under the six-party talks involving the two Koreas, the U.S., China, Japan and Russia.

"The current leadership has invested so much in a belligerent attitude," Feulner said. "It is the one piece on the very complicated chess board they have that gives them real influence in terms of the outcome of the chess match. So they are not going to give it up."

Feulner's remarks come as North Korea said in a New Year's message last week that it will work toward a peace regime and denuclearization through dialogue and negotiations. That brought a positive response from the U.S. State Department, which said Monday "there's reason to be more hopeful now than certainly a few months ago" for the reopening of the nuclear talks.

North Korea conducted its second nuclear test last year, after one in 2006, spawning speculation the reclusive state has manufactured several nuclear warheads.

Diplomacy is under way to persuade the North back to the six-party talks, which Pyongyang has boycotted due to U.N. sanctions over its nuclear and missile tests.

Stephen Bosworth, U.S. special representative for North Korea policy, visited Pyongyang last month to meet with Kang Sok-ju, first vice foreign minister, and other officials, and conveyed U.S. President Barack Obama's personal letter to call for an early resumption of the multilateral nuclear talks.

The meeting was the first high-level bilateral contact since Obama's inauguration in January 2009.

The U.S. point man on North Korea failed to get the North's commitment to reopen the talks, although he said Pyongyang has "indicated they would like to resume the six-party process," and "agreed on the essential nature of the joint statement of 2005."

The 2005 six-party deal calls for North Korea's nuclear dismantlement in return for massive economic aid, diplomatic recognition by Washington and Tokyo and establishment of a peace regime to replace the armistice that ended the 1950-53 Korean War.

U.S. officials have said they were ready to have another high-level, face-to-face meeting with the North to pave the way for reopening the multilateral nuclear talks even as skeptics predict North Korea will continue dragging its feet even if it returns.

Washington has said it will not reward the North just for returning to the table, and reiterated the U.S. will continue sanctions on the North until it takes substantial steps toward its denuclearization.

"I don't see the prospect for resumption of the six-party talks soon," Feulner said. "The statement Bosworth issued was a kind of diplomatic, almost double talk. Pyongyang likes parts of the agreement, we like parts of the agreement. We like North Korea's denuclearization and North Korea likes incentives. So we like different parts. It did not change anything in North Korea's action."

The scholar expressed concerns over a possible military conflict on the Korean Peninsula on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the breakout of the Korean War in 1950 next year.

"I worry also, frankly, with the anniversary of the start of the Korean war, whether there will be bellicose talk and the military shows off for the North, etc., as that anniversary comes up," he said. "They are always looking for how they can be respected in the world community. They are unpredictable actors."

A North Korean patrol ship intruded into South Korean waters in the Yellow Sea last month, which led to an exchange of gunfire that left at least one North Korean seaman dead and several others injured.

The clash is the third in some 10 years on the western maritime border, a line drawn unilaterally by the United Nations Command at the end of the war. The North has consistently tried to redraw the line farther south.

North Korea has also designated the disputed area as a firing range, and warned South Korean naval vessels and fishing boats to stay out, heightening tensions.

On the free trade agreement with South Korea, stalled since it was signed in 2007, Feulner urged Obama to present the pact to Congress early next year.

"I hope President Obama will push forward in the early new session," he said. "If it gets too late, it will be too close to election time again. That's not helpful."

The foreign affairs and trade committee of the South Korean National Assembly has approved the pact, and the ruling Grand National Party is set to bring it to the full Assembly for ratification once Congress moves.

But there has been rising protectionist sentiment among Democrats in Congress over possible job losses during the worst recession in decades.

Obama has also been focusing on other priorities, including health-care reform and the wars in Afghanistan and Iran.

U.S. trade officials have said they want to address U.S. concerns over an imbalance in auto trade and restricted shipments of beef, possibly in side agreements without revising the text of the deal.

U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk said recently, "We're working through all of that, both with Congress and (relevant government agencies) and then we'll sit down with (South Korean Trade) Minister Kim (Jong-hoon)," noting Obama "has made plain we've got to get it right."

Feulner sees it differently.

"Concessions were already made to the American auto industry," he said. "Our Korean friends have problems with some American exports, particularly beef. But these questions were all addressed when we ended our bilateral negotiations."

He said he is concerned that any further delay may lead to American products losing competitiveness in South Korea, the seventh largest trading partner for the U.S.

"The rest of the world is not standing still, waiting," he said, noting South Korea's active negotiations with China and other major trade partners for free trade deals "could easily leave the U.S. behind."



"All we need is appropriate presidential push, and I hope President Obama will indicate that when he gives the State of the Union message to the Congress and that it will then come up quickly," he said. "I think there are still enough sensible people in both the House and Senate. They will vote yes."

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2010/01/06/39/0301000000AEN20100106000300315F.HTML>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

New York Times

7 January 2010

## ***North Korea Started Uranium Program in 1990s, South Says***

By CHOE SANG-HUN

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea apparently began pursuing a uranium enrichment program in 1996 at the latest, the South Korean foreign minister said Wednesday, bolstering fears that the North's second route to building a nuclear bomb could be well on its way.

The North's nuclear program has long focused on a plutonium-making complex in Yongbyon, north of its capital. The country acknowledged for the first time last April that it intended to enrich uranium as well.

In June, it said its enrichment program was in an "experimental stage" while bitterly denouncing the United Nations for tightening sanctions after its nuclear test in May. In September, North Korea said its "experimental uranium enrichment" had entered a "completion phase."

But the South Korean minister, Yu Myung-hwan, said Wednesday, "It appears that North Korea started its uranium enrichment program at least in 1996." Speaking to the Yonhap news agency, in comments confirmed by his office, he said, "What's clear is that the North began enriched uranium development quite early."

Mr. Yu said many things remained unclear: "how far the program has advanced, how much enriched uranium and how many nuclear weapons they have." He did not elaborate beyond saying that Seoul was in close consultation with Washington and other allies.

For years before North Korea officially announced the uranium program, American and South Korean officials had urged it to come clean on suspicions that it was pursuing uranium enrichment with technological help from Pakistani nuclear scientists.

North Korea said last year that it began the uranium enrichment to make fuel for nuclear power plants it hopes to build in the future. Both enriched uranium and plutonium can also be turned into fuel for atomic bombs.

In 1994, North Korea agreed to freeze and then dismantle the complex in Yongbyon. That facility, the only nuclear arms program the North has acknowledged, produced enough plutonium for at least half a dozen bombs, according to American estimates.

The 1994 deal collapsed in 2002 when North Korea rejected American demands that it respond to allegations that it was violating the accord by secretly pursuing uranium enrichment. Even after six-nation talks began in 2003 to try to produce a new agreement under which North Korea would give up its weapons program, the North tried to keep the talks focused on its Yongbyon program.

Its refusal to discuss enrichment eventually helped scuttle the six-nation talks in late 2008.

By then, North Korea had already demolished part of the Yongbyon facilities in return for Washington's agreement to remove it from its list of state sponsors of terrorism. During most of last year, North Korea pursued confrontation, conducting a nuclear test in May and test-firing a series of ballistic missiles. Last autumn, it began sending signals for talks.

The enrichment issue has added new urgency to resuming the six-nation talks, according to experts. North Korea is believed to be months, if not years, away from restarting its plutonium-producing reactor in Yongbyon.

Mr. Yu said he expected North Korea to return to the six-nation talks. But he denounced the North's latest demand that the United States negotiate a peace treaty to formally end the 1950-53 Korean War before it considers giving up its nuclear weapons.

"That's like saying it will never give up its nuclear programs, or it is a delaying tactic" to buy time to further its nuclear programs, he said.

Mr. Yu, who has expressed doubts in the past that North Korea will give up its nuclear arms, called for continued enforcement of United Nations sanctions.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/07/world/asia/07korea.html>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

New York Times  
8 January 2010

## ***Taiwan Firm: China Got Iran Part with Nuke Uses***

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) -- A Taiwanese company agreed to a request from a firm in China to procure sensitive components with nuclear uses, then shipped them to Iran, the firm's head said Friday. Such transactions violate U.N. sanctions imposed on the Middle Eastern nation.

The admission by Steven Lin of Hsinchu-based Heli-Ocean Technology Co. Ltd. comes amid an international effort led by the United States to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons. While Lin said he didn't know whether the parts -- a vital component in the production of weapons-grade uranium -- were eventually used by Iran militarily, he did acknowledge that they have nuclear applications.

U.N. sanctions to prevent Iran from expanding its uranium enrichment program have led it to the black market to obtain sophisticated nuclear-related equipment. Aided by these illegal purchases, the program has grown to the stage where thousands of centrifuges are churning out enriched material, which can be used both for fuel and as the fissile core of nuclear warheads.

Iran insists that it wants to enrich uranium to generate nuclear power, but its attempts to evade probes by the International Atomic Energy Agency and its refusal to stop enrichment are increasing suspicions it actually seeks weapons capabilities.

In a telephone interview with The Associated Press, Lin said he received an Internet order from a Chinese firm in January or February 2008 to obtain an unspecified number of pressure transducers, which convert pressure into analog electrical signals.

While pressure transducers have many commercial uses, they furnish the precise measurements needed in the production of weapons-grade uranium.

Nuclear proliferation expert David Albright of the Washington-based Institute for Science and International Security told the AP that Iran tried hard to procure the transducers in Europe and Canada, but was thwarted by a concerted international effort.

However, he said, the existence of the Taiwanese-Chinese connection shows that Iran still has the ability to get what it needs by tapping alternative sources.

"This equipment is likely for its gas centrifuge program," he said.

Lin did not identify the Chinese company that placed the transducer order, except to say that it was involved in the manufacture of pipeline for the oil industry.

He said that he obtained the transducers from a Swiss company, which he declined to name.

Lin said that when he contacted the Swiss firm he had no idea where the transducers were heading.

"It was only at the last minute that the Chinese told me to send them to Iran," he said.

Lin arranged for their direct transportation from Taiwan to the Middle East, he said, rather than sending them to the Chinese company first.

Lin said that he didn't know what happened to the transducers after they arrived in Iran, though he acknowledged that they have an important role in the nuclear industry.

"I know that the (peaceful) nuclear research units in Taiwan use these things," he said. "The equipment has multiple uses from semiconductors to solar energy to nuclear work."

A Taiwanese government official told the AP on Friday that an official probe of the Taiwanese-Iranian transducer connection confirmed that 108 of the transducers had been sent from Taiwan to Iran at a Chinese request, but that the equipment was not precise enough to be placed on the island's export control list.

The official, who was in charge of the probe, spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the information.

Lin apparently felt free to talk because the official investigation, launched last March, did not implicate him in any wrongdoing.

Besides being prohibited by the U.N. from pressure transducer purchases, Iran is also banned from buying them on the open market by the Nuclear Suppliers Group, an international body established to limit nuclear proliferation by controlling the export of materials that can be used in building atomic weapons.

Asked about the circuitous route of the transducer transaction -- from China to Taiwan to Switzerland, then back to Taiwan and finally to Iran -- the Taiwanese official said that such deals were common in international trade.

"It is fairly common to do business through third parties," he said. He did not elaborate.

The U.S. and its allies accuse Iran of trying to develop nuclear weapons secretly under the guise of a civilian atomic energy program, but Tehran insists its efforts are aimed only at generating electricity.

Washington has been pressing both China and Russia to agree to stepped up sanctions to pressure Iran into stopping its alleged nuclear program, but so far without result.

Over the past several years China has been accused of directly aiding the alleged Iranian nuclear weapons development on a number of occasions. Washington has enacted sanctions against several Chinese companies. China has denied involvement in Iran's nuclear programs.

At the same time, Beijing has courted close relations with Iran, with Chinese state companies purchasing Iranian oil and investing in Iran's energy industry.

<http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2010/01/08/world/AP-Iran-Nuclear.html>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

London Times – U.K.  
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## ***Burma to Execute Two Over Secret Tunnels Leak***

By Richard Lloyd Parry

A Burmese court has sentenced to death two men and imprisoned at least three others for leaking military information, including photographs of a secret visit to North Korea by one of the military junta's most senior generals.

The three men, one of them a major in the Burmese army, were also convicted of distributing photographs of a secret network of military tunnels which, together with the evidence of high-level contacts with North Korea, raised suspicions that Burma might be developing its own nuclear weapons.

The photographs and documents were published last summer after being obtained by exiled media and foreign reporters in Bangkok. They showed a visit to North Korea and to China by the third-ranking figure in the Burmese junta, General Thura Shwe Mann.

According to journalists based in Rangoon, the Northern Yangon District Court sentenced to death Major Win Naing Kyaw and an employee of the foreign ministry named Thura Kyaw under the Emergency Provision Act. Major Win Naing Kyaw was also convicted of holding illegal foreign currency and of offences under the Electronic Act, which bans the transmission via the Internet of data, photos or video judged to be damaging to the Government.

Three other civilians, including one named Byan Sein, also received prison sentences of up to 15 years. According to exiled Burmese journalists, dozens of other people were also arrested in connection with the leaks.

The trial was held in secret in Rangoon's notorious Insein Prison. It has not so far been reported in Burma's strictly censored state media, and few details of the alleged offences or perpetrators are known. But according to journalists in Rangoon, a man named Win Naing Kyaw used to be the private secretary of General Tin Oo, the country's fourth most powerful man, responsible for defence procurement, who died in a helicopter crash in 2001.

The publication of the photographs prompted the US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, to say that she was “very concerned at the possibility of nuclear co-operation between Pyongyang and Rangoon”.

“We know that there are also growing concerns about military co-operation between North Korea and Burma, which we take seriously,” she said. “It would be destabilising for the region. It would pose a direct threat to Burma's neighbours.”

The photographs, taken between 2003 and 2006, did not in themselves prove anything definitive about Burma's nuclear ambitions. But they did show that the regime and its military have done a great deal of tunneling, with the help of the world's great military moles, the North Koreans.

The tunnels, believed to be close to the regime's purpose-built new capital, Naypyidaw, are more likely to be designed for the storage of weapons, ammunition and personnel as they are to be nuclear sites.

Some tunnels and subterranean meeting halls have been built near Taunggyi, in the northeast of Burma, where insurgent armies are fighting decades-old independence struggles. Pictures dating from 2006 show a group of technicians with East Asian features emerging from a hotel in Naypyidaw area — these have been identified as North Koreans, whose own million-strong army is hunkered down in massive tunnel complexes along the border with its enemy, South Korea.

As repressive and isolated military dictatorships, Burma and North Korea might appear to have much in common. In fact, relations were frozen for years after an incident in 1983 when 18 South Korean officials, including four cabinet ministers, were blown up by North Korean agents during a visit to Rangoon.

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article6980654.ece>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)