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Global Security Newswire

January 13, 2010

Talks Hit "Sweet Spot" For Landing New START Agreement, U.S. Official Says

By Elaine M. Grossman

Global Security Newswire

WASHINGTON -- A new arms control treaty between the United States and Russia appears nearly within reach, despite continued tensions over verification provisions, a senior U.S. official said this morning (see *GSN*, Jan. 7).

Though Washington and Moscow had initially hoped to achieve a new agreement by Dec. 5 -- when the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty expired -- that deadline passed and the diplomatic effort continued. Negotiators will meet in Moscow this week and begin another formal round of talks in Geneva on Jan. 25.

With the dialogue taking place in secret bilateral meetings, outside observers have begun some amount of hand-wringing over the possibility that the talks have gotten off track or that an agreement might prove elusive.

Despite the delays, progress in the discussions has brought the two sides to a "sweet spot," making it seem feasible that U.S. President Barack Obama's schedule for nuclear-related achievements can be met, said Ellen Tauscher, undersecretary of state for arms control and international security.

The White House plan has been to complete the so-called "New START" agreement prior to a monthlong international review conference on the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, which begins May 3 in New York. U.S. officials have said that significant progress in further reducing the former Cold War rivals' large nuclear arsenals through arms control could help build global support for curbing the proliferation of atomic arms worldwide.

Next up on the White House agenda after the NPT review conference has been to submit the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty to the U.S. Senate for ratification, a process that the Obama team hopes could be completed before the November 2010 congressional election season ramps up.

Speaking with reporters at a Defense Writers Group breakfast, Tauscher stopped short of promising that a New START agreement could be signed and ratified by May. However, she said that she anticipates the two negotiating teams will soon submit to their respective political leaders a final treaty for possible approval.

"Our assumption always has been that we were going to do the best we can to get the best deal that we could get," said Tauscher, referring to the START successor accord. "And then [we would] make a decision on whether that was going to meet the test of the president's ambitions for the agenda and for ratification. And we think we're in a sweet spot right there. So we think that we're OK going forward."

Asked if Senate ratification of a START successor pact might be expected before May, Tauscher said, "I'm confident that we're doing everything we can to achieve the president's agenda, and the president has said that's what he wants."

Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev announced in July that under the forthcoming treaty each nation would reduce its deployed strategic nuclear arsenals to between 1,500 and 1,675 warheads, down from a 2,200-weapon limit the states are to meet by 2013 under another pact. The two presidents also agreed to limit strategic delivery vehicles on each side to between 500 and 1,100.

Tauscher confirmed reports that the deal is essentially complete but that some challenging treaty-verification issues remain unresolved.

"When do you declare yourself done?" she said. "We could actually say we are done with negotiating, but we have all these other things to do," said Tauscher, noting that complex details in the body of the treaty, technical annexes and protocols are not yet final.

"There's going to be a lag time between the time we say we're done and the time that it actually gets up to the Senate," Tauscher added. "I couldn't say that [we're done] now."

The State Department official, a former Democratic lawmaker from California, noted that disagreements over how the two sides will verify terms of the New START agreement continue to stand in the way of sealing the pact.

Specifically, Tauscher acknowledged, Moscow to date has not accepted a U.S. proposal for exchanging technical data on offensive-missile tests. Sharing such "telemetry" under the recently expired START accord has boosted confidence on both sides that they understand the capabilities of the other nation's nuclear-armed weapons, she said.

"Expectations have always been that telemetry -- which ... certainly is very valuable to the Pentagon and very valuable to the Russian [Defense Ministry] -- that these things are part of confidence-building and they are part of the ability to reassure that there is no break-out, that there is not going to be some kind of surprise," she said.

However, while negotiations over this particular verification provision were left for last, telemetry is not necessarily more important than other points of disagreement that have already been resolved, according to Tauscher.

"I wouldn't say that because it's one of the last things to be done, that it was a big issue or that it is the most important thing," she told reporters. "So don't get caught up in the timing of this."

Tauscher also played down international concerns that Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and some of his political allies in Moscow appear to be taking a harder line toward the negotiations. Last month, for example, the former Russian president warned that Washington must be more forthcoming about its missile defense plans or the new arms-reduction pact could be imperiled (see *GSN*, Jan. 4).

"There are no monoliths in foreign policy," Tauscher said. "Not everyone is on the same page at the same moment and perhaps saying the same thing."

Overall, the "tenor and performance" of Russian actions since Obama initiated a "reset" in the Washington-Moscow relationship "have been very consistent," she said. "I think that we have a much-improved relationship. We have many channels open."

Critics have said the Obama administration -- eager to begin implementing the president's sweeping vision, laid out in Prague last April, for reducing the global role of nuclear weapons -- put itself at a disadvantage in the negotiations by wanting a treaty more badly than Moscow does.

Rather, the White House might need a less-ambitious alternative to its arms control and nonproliferation agenda that does not hinge entirely on first attaining a START replacement deal, asserted one observer.

"Unfortunately, you can't negotiate successfully with the Russians or anyone else unless you are willing to walk away from the table," nuclear nonproliferation expert Henry Sokolski said this week. "In this case, you must have a more modest back-up plan that you can work, something more incremental, a Plan B."

However, Tauscher rejected the idea that a willingness to abandon the negotiations in the face of Russian intransigence would strengthen the U.S. hand.

"Some of the least-satisfying deals I've ever done were the deals where I was constantly getting up and walking out," she said, alluding to her early career as a Wall Street broker and her subsequent experience in Congress. "The key to doing START is, of course, the negotiation itself. It puts us in a better place on arms control [and] on the bilateral relationship. It sends a message of the proof of the president's Prague speech."

Moreover, "the measure of all deals is whether you want to do the next deal," Tauscher said. "And so what we're doing consciously -- and this is part of the reset -- is to use the START negotiation as a preamble to the future and the opportunity to continue to work together."

From that perspective, walking away from the talks would not advance U.S. interests, she said.

"We don't pitch a fit every two days and walk out, or say that we're going to walk out. That's not what we're doing," Tauscher said. "We're trying to get a good deal, but you can never get a good deal for yourself and have somebody across the table that thinks that they didn't get a good deal, and then think that you're going to do another deal."

Sokolski, who heads the Nonproliferation Policy Education Center, said the lack of a contingency plan -- usable in case it becomes impossible to reach a New START agreement that suits U.S. interests -- might put Obama's other nonproliferation objectives in jeopardy.

"That the administration lacks such a plan and instead has publicly placed nearly all its chips on reaching major agreements with Russia and getting the CTBT ratified by the Senate is a worry," he told *Global Security Newswire*.

http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20100113_6737.php

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Russia Today
14 January 2010

New Arms Treaty Is Practically Ready

Russia and the US are going back to the negotiating table on nuclear issues, as Under Secretary of State William Burns visits Moscow.

Iran's nuclear deadlock and the situation in North Korea are expected to be discussed.

Also coming into focus will be the details of a new nuclear arms reduction treaty, which is likely to be the subject of further talks later this month.

The previous arms treaty between the two countries, known as START, expired in December last year.

Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister, with whom William Burns has talks today, says the understanding between Moscow and Washington is better than it's ever been.

"I support the classic approach to any negotiations," said Sergey Ryabkov. *"Nothing is agreed upon until everything is agreed upon."*

"Almost everything that separated the sides at the time when the talks began has now been worked through. Our leaders say that these are more technical things that will be discussed, they can be solved in a very short period of time," Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister, told RT.

"The agreement that we are working on at the moment is the first agreement of that sort in the history of the Russian Federation. The old agreement was rooted in the Cold War, but now we have reached a completely different level of trust and a mutual understanding. Moscow and Washington are not suspicious of each other. All this is now being transferred into an agreement," he said.

"There is organic, not virtual, interrelationship between strategic offensive arms and strategic defensive arms and it was first brought to light by the American side while preparing the ABM treaty of 1972," political analyst Vladimir Kozin recalled.

"At the Moscow summit last July both presidents [Dmitry Medvedev and Barack Obama] once again reiterated their commitment and stressed the need to incorporate this linkage into the newly updated START treaty," Kozin said.

<http://rt.com/Politics/2010-01-14/start-arms-treaty-russia.html>

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Washington Post
14 January 2010

Predicting The 'End Of Time'

By Dan Zak

Man is the only creature that knows it's going to die, and atomic scientists are the only professionals who measure the amount of time before man annihilates himself. But there is good news from those scientists: Humanity inched away from Armageddon on Thursday morning. The Doomsday Clock was set back one minute, from 11:55 to 11:54, reversing a precipitous slide toward midnight, the zero hour, ultimate self-destruction.

The clock was reset to reflect a "more hopeful state of world affairs," the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists announced at the New York Academy of Sciences and over a live feed on the Internet. Forty policymakers, scientists and Nobel laureates on the board of the Bulletin -- an online magazine that covers threats to humanity -- decided to move the clock after spirited debates about current trends in science and politics.

"We are poised to bend the arc of history toward a world free of nuclear weapons," the board said in a statement. "For the first time since atomic bombs were dropped in 1945, leaders of nuclear weapons states are cooperating to vastly reduce their arsenals and secure all nuclear bomb-making material. And for the first time ever, industrialized and developing countries alike are pledging to limit climate-changing gas emissions that could render our planet nearly uninhabitable."

This is the 19th time the clock has moved in 63 years. The creators of the Manhattan Project wound up the symbolic device in 1947 to remind the world of the consequence of abusing nuclear power. Since then, the clock has moved forward 11 times and back eight times. It came closest to midnight in 1953, when the testing of hydrogen bombs nudged it to 11:58, and moved farthest away in 1991, when it slid to 11:43 after the Strategic Arms Reduction

Treaty. The clock has been steadily ticking toward midnight since the mid-'90s, as increased terrorism destabilized regions of the world and India and Pakistan tested nuclear bombs.

So, atomic scientists: Are they a nervous bunch?

"I actually think most of them are optimists," says Kennette Benedict, executive director of the Bulletin. "They think human beings can channel technology and have the capacity to cooperate and tackle these problems. That's why they bother to get word out. They're not on edge."

The Bulletin's statement also cited President Obama's "pragmatic, problem-solving approach," arms reduction talks with Russia, negotiations with Iran over its nuclear enrichment program and support for a fissile material cutoff treaty at the U.N. Security Council last September, though Obama has also endured partisan challenges to his leadership on national security over the past year.

The number of nuclear weapons in the world has decreased by 4,000 over the past three years, to 23,000, according to Benedict. Regardless, Hollywood still churns out apocalyptic movies ("The Road," "2012" and "Knowing" premiered over the past 10 months), and 50 million Americans still believe the world will end in their lifetimes, according to Nicholas Guyatt, author of "Have a Nice Doomsday: Why Millions of Americans Are Looking Forward to the End of the World."

"Continuing tensions with Iran, the bad weather in Europe and especially the earthquake in Haiti will all be taken as 'end times' indicators," Guyatt, a history professor at the University of York, writes in an e-mail. "My guess is that [apocalyptic Christians] would happily move the clock forwards by a couple of minutes. The irony, of course, is that these guys -- unlike the atomic scientists -- are actually rooting for doomsday."

On the eve of the massive quake in Haiti, the Rapture Index rose to its highest point since Sept. 11, 2001, on the Web site Rapture Ready, which describes itself as the largest prophecy site on the Internet, with 240,000 unique visitors a month.

"Scientists seem to be driven by what's going on politically," says the site's founder, Todd Strandberg, who lives in Benton, Ark., calls himself an end-time believer and recalculates the index every Sunday based on man-made, natural and allegedly supernatural phenomena. "I suppose we tend to be the eternal pessimists because the Bible says it's going to get worse. So any time they move [the Doomsday Clock] back, the general reaction is scorn."

Expect another crucial prognostication soon: Next month a groundhog will divine the probability of six weeks of winter, leaving nuclear winter to the scientists and the rapture to the prophets.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/01/14/AR2010011402487.html>

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VOA News.com (Voice of America)
12 January 2010

US Defense Spy Chief: Iran Undecided On Nuclear Bomb

By Gary Thomas, Washington

In an exclusive VOA interview, the Pentagon's top intelligence official says there is no evidence that Iran has made a final decision to build nuclear weapons. But the chief of the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) adds that much about Iran's inner workings remains murky.

Lieutenant General Ronald Burgess says the key finding that Iran has not yet committed itself to nuclear weapons, contained in a controversial 2007 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE), is still valid.

Lieutenant General Ronald L. Burgess, Jr., USA, director of the Defense Intelligence Agency

"The bottom line assessments of the NIE still hold true," he said. "We have not seen indication that the government has made the decision to move ahead with the program. But the fact still remains that we don't know what we don't know."

General Burgess says it is difficult to ascertain the intentions of Iran's leaders or the level of political infighting among the country's leadership. But he adds that Tehran's statements and behavior have only fueled suspicion in Western capitals.

"The fact is, Iran is not dealing straight up," he added. "So they can say whatever they would like. I'm an intelligence professional. My job is to verify. And so we continually work on trying to verify what it is the Iranians say. But they are engaged in use of words that is not moving this in a positive direction."

The 2007 NIE, a consensus judgment of all U.S. intelligence agencies, concluded that Iran halted nuclear weapons design work in 2003. The study sparked a fierce controversy with critics charging that the NIE was flawed and asserting that Iran is clearly on a path to become a nuclear power. Some recently published news reports quote unnamed sources as saying that many of U.S. President Barack Obama's advisors are skeptical of the intelligence estimate.

Iran has been pushing to enrich uranium, a critical step in building nuclear weapons, but continues to insist that it is for peaceful nuclear energy.

Talks with Iran on the nuclear issue have been frustrating for Western negotiators. In October, it appeared that an agreement had been reached for Iran to send its uranium to a third country for enrichment. But then Tehran backed away from the deal.

General Burgess likens Iran's behavior to bargaining in a bazaar, saying that by walking away, Tehran hopes to get a better deal.

"I think that there is always an idea in their head that they can either ultimately get what they've put on the table or move the ball further in their direction. And I think that's clearly one of their aims," he explained.

Given the hidden nature of decision-making in Tehran, it is difficult to say how protests by the country's reformist movement might be affecting the government's nuclear ambitions. But Burgess says the movement is resilient and will be difficult to suppress.

"There is a reform movement in Iran. It has legs," he said. "It is attempting to get its message out. I do not see indication that that movement has been stamped out or put totally under the direction of the government. They still have a voice. They are still attempting to get their message out. And so this will be an interesting dynamic for us to follow in that country."

The Obama administration has been careful in its support of the protestors so as not to compromise the activists' efforts in the eyes of the Iranian government. At the same time, the United States is considering new sanctions aimed specifically at the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps. The Revolutionary Guards has not only spearheaded the crackdown on the protestors, but also plays a critical role in Iran's nuclear program.

<http://www1.voanews.com/english/news/middle-east/US-Defense-Spy-Chief-Iran-Undecided-on-Nuclear-Bomb-81256887.html>

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Washington Post
13 January 2010

Iran Blames U.S., Israel In Bombing Death Of Physicist Massoud Ali-Mohammadi

By Thomas Erdbrink and William Branigin
Washington Post Staff Writer

TEHRAN -- Iran vowed revenge Tuesday after a remote-controlled bomb planted on a motorcycle killed an Iranian scientist outside his home in an attack that authorities variously blamed on the United States, Israel and "anti-revolutionary" agents.

Massoud Ali-Mohammadi, 50, a physics professor at Tehran University, represented Iran on an unusual regional project in which its archenemy, Israel, also participates. No motive for the killing was immediately established, however, and it was not known whether his role in the project had any connection with the attack.

Ali-Mohammadi was killed as he left his house in north Tehran. A booby-trapped motorcycle exploded, shattering windows in nearby buildings.

"On one hand, spies and intelligence agents of the American government kidnap Iranian citizens in third countries and transfer them to America, and on the other hand, their treacherous agents inside Iran assassinate a citizen and scientist," the Iranian government said in a statement. "The criminal perpetrators of this crime should know that there is no escape from the claws of justice, and sooner or later the avenging hands of the children of the Iranian nation will clutch their throats."

The United States rejected the allegations. "Those accusations are absurd," White House spokesman Robert Gibbs told reporters. Said a U.S. official briefed on the incident: "Any suggestion that the CIA played a role here is flat wrong." The Israeli government had no immediate comment.

The bombing comes amid tensions between the Iranian government and a political opposition movement as well as international pressure over Iran's nuclear program. Tehran says the program is intended to produce energy, but the United States suspects its ultimate goal is to build nuclear weapons.

Iranian news media and officials described Ali-Mohammadi as a nuclear physicist, while academics in Iran and abroad said he specialized in particle and theoretical physics and had no apparent connection with nuclear physics. Tehran University listed him as a professor of elementary particle physics. The Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, which controls the country's nuclear program, said he was not affiliated with the agency.

The regional research project in which Ali-Mohammadi participated, along with other scientists from Iran, Israel and various Middle Eastern countries, is called Synchrotron-light for Experimental Science and Applications in the Middle East, or SESAME. It is based in Jordan and operates under United Nations auspices. Iranian and foreign scientists said the project has applications in industry, medicine, nanotechnology and other fields unrelated to nuclear power.

The Iranian and Israeli participation in the project is unusual because the two countries have had no ties since the 1979 Islamic revolution, and Iran refuses to recognize the Israeli government. Palestinian scientists also participate in the SESAME project, whose last meeting was held in November in Jordan.

An Israeli representative, Eliezer Rabinovici, director of the Institute for Advanced Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, said he talked to Ali-Mohammadi during an informal group meeting. "We did not discuss politics or nuclear issues, as our project is not connected to nuclear physics," Rabinovici said.

He said he had "no idea whatsoever" why Ali-Mohammadi was killed.

An Iranian scientist involved in the project strongly denied that there had been any direct meetings between his delegation and the Israelis. "They are present in the same room, but there are no direct meetings," said Javad Rahighi, a nuclear researcher who teaches experimental physics and serves as vice chairman of SESAME's international training program. "We are all shocked," he said in a telephone interview. "I couldn't imagine anybody wanting to kill him. He was a scientist, nothing more."

Colleagues who worked closely with Ali-Mohammadi said he was a serious scientist who had no interest in politics. Yet both the government and the opposition claimed him as a supporter. The pro-government Jahan News Web site described him as "a firm believer in the Islamic system," while a dissident site published a letter that Ali-Mohammadi and 419 other scientists signed last year in support of opposition leader Mir Hossein Mousavi.

Branigin reported from Washington. Staff writer Joby Warrick in Washington and special correspondents Kay Armin Serjoie in Tehran and Samuel Sockol in Jerusalem contributed to this report.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/01/12/AR2010011200300.html>

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Press TV – Iran
13 January 2010

New Tests Conducted At Bushehr Nuclear Plant

The Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) says the second circuit of units of the country's first nuclear power plant has been successfully tested.

The Russian reactor builder Atomstroyexport said on Tuesday that it had successfully carried out the test on the Bushehr nuclear power plant.

The test is a step toward the completion of the plant, and the hydraulic testing of second circuit equipment of the Bushehr nuclear power plant with pressure buildup to 110 kg/cm² was successfully completed, RIA Novosti reported on Tuesday.

In December, AEOI Director Ali Akbar Salehi said that the Bushehr nuclear plant, which is located on the Persian Gulf coast in southern Iran, would become operational after three more tests.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail.aspx?id=116012§ionid=351020104>

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Global Security Newswire

13 January 2010

Iran Proposals Seen Dividing World Powers

The five permanent U.N. Security Council member nations and Germany remain split over how to respond to Iran's disputed nuclear program as their delegates prepare to meet Saturday in New York to consider new economic penalties against the Middle Eastern state, a diplomat told Agence France-Presse (see *GSN*, Jan. 12).

The United States, France, Germany and the United Kingdom have indicated they would consider imposing a fourth round of U.N. Security Council sanctions on Iran for pursuing activities they worry could enable nuclear weapons development. China and Russia, which each wield veto power on the Security Council, have generally emphasized diplomatic efforts to engage Tehran, which insists that its atomic ambitions are strictly peaceful.

"Everybody will show up with different expectations: the Americans want targeted sanctions against Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps, the French want sanctions targeting Iran's insurance and banking sectors and the Chinese are against new sanctions," the diplomat said (Agence France-Presse I/Spacewar.com, Jan. 12).

Tehran will face additional punitive measures if it fails to alleviate international concerns about its nuclear work, U.S. Ambassador to the European Union William Kennard said today.

"You'll hear over the next six months a lot more about our efforts on sanctions" targeting Iran, Kennard said.

"Having put some serious offers on the table" aimed at providing "a pathway to a diplomatic solution, those offers can't be available forever," he said.

"We can't afford to let the situation fester." Kennard added (Agence France-Presse II/Spacewar.com, Jan. 13).

China, a major importer of unrefined Iranian petroleum, has generally been skeptical of Western suggestions that Iran's nuclear program is geared toward weapons development, one expert told *Deutsche Welle*.

"China does not share the international community's dramatic interpretation of Iran's nuclear program that has Iran building a nuclear bomb," said Udo Steinbach, former head of the GIGA Institute for Near Eastern Studies.

In addition, Beijing has generally opposed the use of punitive economic measures, another analyst said.

"China is traditionally very hesitant in this regard. They believe much more in a negotiated settlement," said Eberhard Sandschneider, head of the China program at the German Society for Foreign Policy (Jefferson Chase, *Deutsche Welle*, Jan. 12).

Iran yesterday cautioned the international community against imposing additional sanctions, United Press International reported.

"If they (Western countries) follow such an approach and try to deprive themselves of Iran's potential, they will harm themselves and nobody else. This approach is not an effective path. It is not the right thing to do, either," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast said (United Press International, Jan. 12).

Iran halted uranium enrichment operations for two months, state media indicated in an unconfirmed report this week. The process can produce nuclear fuel for civilian use as well as weapons material.

Iran framed the enrichment slowdown as a diplomatic nod to Washington and other Western governments, but the move could also have been forced by mechanical problems or clandestine interference with the nation's enrichment centrifuges, according to *Haaretz*. In 2009, Tehran reportedly suspended expansion of uranium enrichment work at its primary enrichment facility (see *GSN*, Sept. 30, 2009; Yossi Melman, *Haaretz* I, Jan. 11).

Meanwhile, Tehran reaffirmed that an Iranian nuclear physics professor killed in a bombing yesterday was not employed by the country's Atomic Energy Organization, *Haaretz* reported.

Iran received indications before the bombing that the United States and Israel were plotting attacks inside the country, said Ali Larijani, a former top Iranian nuclear negotiator.

"An American-based monarchy group ... claimed responsibility for this terrorist act. Maybe the CIA and the Zionist regime (Israel) thought they can mislead us with such an absurd statement," state media quoted Larijani, now Iran's parliament speaker, as saying (Melman/Ravid, *Haaretz* II, Jan. 13).

One U.S. intelligence official denied any CIA involvement in the killing of Massoud Ali Mohammadi, while the State Department called the Iranian claim "absurd," Reuters reported yesterday (Adam Entous, Reuters, Jan. 12). Neither the Israeli Foreign Ministry nor the office of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has issued a public statement on the incident (Melman/Ravid, *Haaretz* II).

http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20100113_4819.php

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Tehran Times - Iran

14 January 2010

Larijani: Iran Determined To Safeguard Nuclear Achievements

Tehran Times Political Desk

TEHRAN – Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani said that Iranian nation will safeguard its nuclear achievements with a stronger determination.

He made the remarks during the on-the-record meeting of the Majlis on Wednesday.

Pointing to the recent terrorist act in Tehran on Tuesday in which an Iranian nuclear physicist was killed, he said the enemies will not benefit from assassination of Iranian scientists.

"Within several hours, an unknown monarchist group, which has been under complete control of the U.S. intelligence services, issues a statement and claims responsibility for this terrorist act. Apparently the Zionist regime and the CIA have imagined that they can hide the real cause of this incident by this sloppy statement," he stated.

A "hasty" move by the U.S. and the Zionist regime to attribute the terrorist act to such a group in order to cover up their involvement in the action came as a "new scandal for Mr. Obama," Larijani opined.

He went on to say even if the U.S. claims that the Iran Monarchist Association was behind the terror act then Washington comes under question that why it has hosted such a terrorist group.

He added clear information had been received before the incident that the Zionist intelligence service Mossad in cooperation with the CIA were planning to carry out a terrorist act in Tehran.

"Perhaps they had thought that they could take advantage of the opportunity created by internal disputes to conduct such acts in order to worry the university professors with the aim of damaging the country's nuclear researches," he noted.

But their actions are to no avail, he added.

Assassination shows the weakness of the U.S.

On Wednesday, Iran's Supreme National Security Council Secretary Saeed Jalili also commented on the terrorist incident, saying the assassination was a sign of U.S. weakness and failure in confronting the Iranian nation.

"Islamic Republic of Iran is seriously determined to make progress, and this approach of the United States cannot affect this path. Iranian nation has firmly and vitally prepared itself for progress in various areas," he said in a meeting with the visiting Omani Foreign Minister Youssef bin Alawi bin Abdullah.

Behaviors such as resorting to military actions and imposing sanctions have seriously undermined all claims of change made by the U.S. administration, he stated

http://www.tehrantimes.com/Index_view.asp?code=212137

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Press TV – Iran

14 January 2010

Iran Will Take Revenge On US Over Its Crimes

A senior Iranian military commander says Iran will take its revenge on the US over the "recent crimes" it has committed in Iran.

"People are angry at those who paved the ground for the recent incidents and assassinations," Brig. Gen. Mohammad-Reza Naqdi, commander of Basij forces said on Wednesday.

"The revenge for these crimes should be taken on the US and with the support of God we will do so," Fars news agency quoted Naqdi as saying.

He noted that the assassination of an Iranian scientist and university professor on Tuesday showed that the West is against Iran's scientific and technological progress.

Dr. Massoud Ali-Mohammadi, a lecturer at the University of Tehran, was killed when a booby-trapped motorbike exploded in front of his home in Tehran.

Iran's Foreign Ministry on Tuesday said that Iran has found clues of the US and Israel's involvement in the assassination of Ali-Mohammadi.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail.aspx?id=116103§ionid=351020101>

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Los Angeles Times

14 January 2010

Parts Sent To Iran Could Be Used For Nuclear Weapons Development

A Glendale resident and two others are charged with shipping sophisticated components to Iran and lying on customs forms about their contents and value, U.S. officials say.

By Scott Glover

Three men, including an Iranian-born chemical engineer living in Glendale, have been charged in an alleged scheme to smuggle sophisticated industrial components into Iran that could be used in the development of a nuclear weapon, authorities said Wednesday.

The case, which comes as the U.S. is rallying allies to block Iran's nuclear ambitions, has drawn interest at the highest levels of government, an official with Immigration and Customs Enforcement told The Times.

Authorities allege the men were attempting to smuggle high-grade vacuum pumps and other items into Iran in violation of federal trade laws regulating the export of some technology to unfriendly nations and U.S. sanctions against Iran. Investigators' suspicions were heightened by the great care the defendants took to hide their alleged activities.

"These were educated men," said Louis Rodi, a top supervisor in the Los Angeles customs office. "These individuals knew what they were doing."

According to an indictment filed in U.S. District Court in Los Angeles, Jirair Avanesian, 56, of Glendale was paid several hundred thousand dollars to ship "high-dollar vacuum pumps and pump-related" equipment to Iran.

The parts, which were mislabeled and significantly devalued on shipping manifests, were initially sent to the United Arab Emirates, federal authorities said. A co-defendant would then forward the items to a third defendant in Tehran, according to court papers.

Rodi stressed that investigators do not know what the vacuums, valves and other components were ultimately going to be used for, but said he had been briefed by scientists on their potential uses, which include "development of nuclear capabilities."

Avanesian was indicted Dec. 30, along with Farhad Masoumian, 42, of Tehran following a joint investigation by the customs agency, the FBI and the IRS. The pair are charged with smuggling and money laundering. A third man, Amirhossein Sairafi, also of Iran, was charged separately in a criminal complaint filed last week. He was arrested this week in Frankfurt, Germany, according to authorities. None of the defendants could be immediately reached for comment.

Authorities said Masoumian, based in Iran, would place orders with Avanesian, who owns an import-export company called XVAC on Winchester Avenue in Glendale. Avanesian would ship the material to the United Arab Emirates, where Sairafi would send them on to Iran, the indictment alleges.

The defendants would "relabel the contents of the shipments in order to mask the true contents and to avoid interception by U.S. customs officials," according to the indictment. In most cases, Avanesian described the material on airway bills as "spare parts" and falsely declared that their value was under \$2,500, the threshold for filing requirements that would have drawn greater scrutiny from customs officials.

Throughout the alleged conspiracy, which authorities said began in June 2005 and lasted until April 2009, Masoumian transferred several hundred thousand dollars into Avanesian's U.S. bank accounts, authorities allege.

The investigation was launched in February when customs officials inspected four wooden crates bound for Dubai via LAX, according to a search warrant affidavit filed by an FBI agent working the case. The shipment, sent by XVAC, was described as containing "spare parts" and had a declared value of \$2,318. But it weighed more than 1,300 pounds.

Based on the generic description and apparent discrepancy between the weight and declared monetary value, authorities opened the crates, court documents state. Inside they discovered vacuum pumps and related equipment valued at nearly \$190,000. The shipment was immediately seized by authorities.

Investigators began looking into Avanesian's past shipments and found 16 between 2006 and 2008 that, on paper, were "strikingly similar" to the seized shipment. In a search of Avanesian's house, agents found a laptop computer hidden underneath a dresser in his bedroom. The computer contained an e-mail to Sairafi regarding one of the shipments, court papers state.

Virginia Kice, a customs agency spokeswoman, said the investigation is ongoing and involves multiple federal agencies in addition to the FBI and IRS.

"It's a very significant case for a variety of reasons," Kice said. "These guys weren't exporting sewing machines, after all."

<http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-iran-weapons14-2010jan14.0.6559423.story>

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China Daily – China
15 January 2010

Russia Says Chances Remain For Iran Nuclear Talks

MOSCOW, Jan. 15 (Xinhua) -- Russia has urged relevant parties to exert more efforts in a search for mutually acceptable solutions to the Iranian nuclear issue, while eyeing on possible negotiation, said a spokesman for Russian Foreign Ministry on Friday.

"We believe that there is still some room for maneuvering on the negotiating track," Andrei Nesterenko told a press briefing.

"Iran stated more than once that the country would launch the additional enrichment of its low-enriched uranium to 20 percent independently," said Nesterenko, "We believe that at the current stage it is important to focus efforts on the search for mutually acceptable solutions."

Under a draft deal brokered by the International Atomic Energy Agency, most of Iran's existing low-grade enriched uranium should be shipped to Russia and France, where it would be processed into fuel rods with the purity of 20 percent. The higher-level enriched uranium will then be transported back to Iran.

However, Tehran rejected a Dec. 31 deadline imposed by the U.S. administration to accept the deal and posed its own ultimatum earlier this month.

The West shall either sell nuclear fuel to Iran, or swap nuclear fuel for Iran's enriched uranium in smaller batches instead of at once as the U.N. plan requires, said Tehran.

The United States and its Western allies have been accusing Iran of secretly developing nuclear weapons under the disguise of civilian nuclear power. Iran has denied the accusation and stressed its nuclear program is only for peaceful purposes.

Negotiators from Iran, five permanent members of U.N. Security Council and Germany are scheduled to hold another round of talks soon on the Iranian nuclear issue.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2010-01/15/content_12817992.htm

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Chosun Ilbo – South Korea
14 January 2010

Russia Willing To Build Railways If N.Korea Gives Up Nukes

Russia is willing to construct gas pipes, electrical power networks and railways that could bridge the two Koreas and Russia if North Korea gives up its nuclear weapons.

This is according to Russian Ambassador to South Korea Konstantin Vnukov, who told Yonhap News that the proposal could be included in the idea of the "grand bargain," which was proposed by President Lee Myung-bak as a comprehensive rewards package for North Korea if it abandons its nuclear program.

The South Korean government responded positively to Russia's overture, saying the deal can be reviewed when the six-party talks resume.

http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2010/01/14/2010011400628.html

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Global Security Newswire
14 January 2010

North Korea Must Rejoin Nuke Talks To Escape Sanctions, U.S. Envoy Says

U.S. special envoy Stephen Bosworth said yesterday that Pyongyang must resume its march toward denuclearization before the international community will weigh ending sanctions against the regime, the Yonhap News Agency reported (see *GSN*, Jan. 13).

"When North Korea comes back to six-party talks and resumes making progress for the goal of denuclearization, the Security Council will examine the appropriateness of a revision of the sanctions resolution," Bosworth said in Washington.

The six-party talks involve China, Japan, the two Koreas, Russia and the United States and were last held more than a year ago. In May, Pyongyang conducted its second nuclear test explosion, for which it was punished with heightened U.N. Security Council sanctions. In December, Bosworth traveled to Pyongyang to try to persuade the Stalinist regime to return to stalled nuclear negotiations.

"We did not reach an agreement on when and how the six-party process might in fact recommence," Bosworth said. "That remains the immediate objective of the Obama administration."

Administration officials have said they are prepared for a second round of senior-level U.S.-North Korea discussions, potentially with the purpose of talking about the coordination of denuclearization operations and a peace agreement ending the Korean War.

"I think we recognize merely reconvening talks, while important, only creates the opportunity for further challenge, and we will have to begin seriously dealing with the substance of the problems," Bosworth said. "I have no misgivings, no misunderstandings of about how difficult that might be," he added (Hwang Doo-hyong, Yonhap News Agency, Jan. 13).

http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20100114_4226.php

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New York Times
16 January 2010

N. Korea Threatens To Halt All Talks With Seoul

By CHOE SANG-HUN

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea, denouncing South Korea for drawing up a contingency plan to deal with the potential collapse of the North's government, warned Friday that it would cut off all dialogue with the South and exclude it from all negotiations concerning the security of the Korean Peninsula. North Korea will also wage a "pan-national holy war of retaliation to blow away" the South Korean government, said a statement from the North's highest ruling agency, the National Defense Commission, which is headed by the national leader, Kim Jong-il.

The threat was surprising less for its stridency, which is not unusual in diatribes against the South and the United States, than for its timing. On Thursday, North Korea had proposed holding talks with the South on reviving joint tour programs, which have been stalled for more than a year over the shooting death of a southern tourist and the North's anger over Seoul's policies.

And only minutes before North Korea's official news agency broadcast the statement, South Korea had announced that the North Korean Red Cross had accepted 10,000 tons of food aid offered by its South Korean counterpart.

The two gestures from the North fit within a recent series of conciliatory signs from the North — until Mr. Kim's National Defense Commission waded in with its denunciation.

The commission apparently was angered by news reports this week of a South Korean contingency plan for North Korea. According to the newspapers Munhwa and Chosun, South Korea recently dusted off and revised the plan, apparently in the belief that Mr. Kim's uncertain health and the North's deepening economic woes under international sanctions have made the country more unstable .

The news reports, which quoted unidentified officials in Seoul, said that the plan addresses five possibilities: the death of Mr. Kim; a coup; a popular uprising; a huge outflow of refugees; and more sanctions or military attacks from the outside. It also envisions South Korea establishing on territory in the North an "administrative headquarters to liberate the North."

South Korea said that it and the United States had a contingency plan for unrest in North Korea but refused to reveal its details.

"This is a plan to topple our republic," the North Korean statement said on Friday.

"We will start a pan-national holy war of retaliation to blow away the den of South Korean authorities, including the presidential Blue House, who have led and supported the drawing up of this plan," it said.

North Korea did not elaborate on what a "holy war" might entail, but said it would involve "all our revolutionary military power and all Korean compatriots both in the North and the South and abroad."

The North also demanded that South Korea apologize. Otherwise, it said, it would exclude the South from "all talks on improving ties between the North and the South and negotiations on securing peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula."

On Monday, North Korea proposed new talks to negotiate a peace treaty with the United States that would formally conclude the 1950-53 Korean War, which ended in a truce and left the peninsula technically in a state of war. Seoul and Washington rejected the proposal, insisting that they can start such talks only after the North returns to six-nation nuclear disarmament negotiations and begins dismantling its nuclear weapons programs.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/16/world/asia/16korea.html?ref=world>

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Times of India
13 January 2010

Pakistan Concerned Over "Massive" Indian Arms Buildup

REUTERS

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan expressed concern on Wednesday about a "massive" buildup of arms by old rival India, warning that it could jeopardise a regional balance.

The statement by the National Command Authority (NCA), which oversees Pakistan's nuclear weapons, came a day after Russian and Indian officials announced that Russia would lease its new Nerpa nuclear-powered submarine to India this year.

Relations between nuclear-armed India and Pakistan have been strained since Pakistan-based militants raided Mumbai in November 2008, killing 166 people.

Recent reported remarks by India's army chief General Deepak Kapoor that his country was capable of fighting Pakistan and China at the same time, raised alarm in Pakistan.

The NCA said while Pakistan wanted to avoid an arms race, it would not compromise on its security interests and the imperative of maintaining a credible minimum nuclear deterrence.

"Massive inductions of advanced weapon systems including installation of ABMs (anti-ballistic missiles), build-up of nuclear arsenal and delivery systems ... tend to destabilise the regional balance," the NCA said in a statement.

"This relentless pursuit of military preponderance will have severe consequences for peace and security in South Asia as well as for the Indian Ocean region. Pakistan cannot be oblivious to these developments," it said.

The Indian army chief was also reported to have said in his recent remarks that India was capable of conducting conventional military strikes "under a nuclear umbrella".

"Such irresponsible statements reflected a hegemonic mindset, oblivious of dangerous implications of adventurism in a nuclearised context," said the NCA, which is headed by Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani.

Pakistan tested nuclear devices in 1998 in response to tests by India.

Pakistan and India have fought three wars, two of them over the disputed Himalayan region of Kashmir, since their independence from British rule in 1947.

Their relations improved after they launched a peace process in early 2004. But India suspended the peace process after the Mumbai assault.

Pakistan and Indian leaders and senior officials have met several times on the sidelines of international gatherings but New Delhi insists Pakistan must take forceful action against militants before talks are resumed.

Analysts say al-Qaida and its Islamist militant allies want to provoke confrontation between India and Pakistan which would force Pakistan to withdraw troops from its western border and deploy them on the eastern frontier with India.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Pakistan-concerned-over-massive-Indian-arms-buildup/articleshow/5441681.cms>

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Daily Times – Pakistan
14 January 2010

Indian Arms Buildup Could Jeopardise Regional Balance: NCA

Statements to conduct military strikes under nuclear umbrella reflect 'hegemonic mindset'

By Irfan Ghauri

ISLAMABAD: The National Command Authority (NCA) on Wednesday expressed concern over a "massive" build up of arms by India, warning that it could jeopardise the regional balance.

The warning came at an NCA meeting – the first to be presided over by Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani after command of the authority was transferred from the president to the prime minister.

The meeting took notice of developments detrimental to objectives of strategic stability in the region, and observed that instead of responding positively to Pakistan's proposal for a strategic restraint regime in South Asia, India had continued to pursue an ambitious militarisation programme and offensive military doctrines.

A press statement issued after the meeting said India's "massive inductions of advanced weapon systems ... build up of nuclear arsenal and delivery systems ... tend to destabilise the regional balance".

"This relentless pursuit of military preponderance will have severe consequences for peace and security in South Asia, as well as for the Indian Ocean region. Pakistan cannot be oblivious to these developments," it said.

The NCA also took serious notice of recent Indian statements on its capability to conduct conventional military strikes under a nuclear umbrella. It said that such irresponsible statements reflected a “hegemonic mindset, oblivious of dangerous implications of adventurism in a nuclearised context”.

The NCA said that while Pakistan would continue to act with responsibility and make efforts to prevent an arms race, it would not compromise on its security interests and the imperative of maintaining credible minimum deterrence.

The meeting also reviewed plans for civil nuclear power generation, and expressed satisfaction over the steps taken for nuclear safety and security.

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2010%5C01%5C14%5Cstory_14-1-2010_pg1_5

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Jamestown Foundation

12 January 2010

Russian Nuclear First Use: A Case of Self-Defeating Exaggeration?

Publication: Eurasia Daily Monitor Volume: 7 Issue: 7

By: Jacob W. Kipp

In mid-October 2009, Nikolai Patrushev, the Secretary of the Security Council, used an interview to discuss Russia’s draft military doctrine and highlighted one aspect: the first-use of nuclear weapons in a “preventive nuclear strike against the aggressor” (Izvestiya, October 14). This was not the first such declaration regarding first use by the Russia, but it came in the aftermath of the conflict with Georgia in 2008. In early December, the Russian mass media published several leaks and commentaries concerning the draft military doctrine, which, reportedly President Dmitry Medvedev would soon sign. This addressed the rationale underlying a declaratory policy of nuclear first-use in the current international environment.

The first article was critical of the declaratory policy on nuclear first use. Its author, Aleksandr Konovalov, criticized the evolution of Russian nuclear policy over the past two decades and used Patrushev’s remarks in October and those by Army-General Nikolai Makarov, the Chief of the General Staff, to foreign military attaches in December to question the utility and even the rationality of such a policy. Konovalov, the Director of the Institute of Strategic Assessments, warned that such a declaratory policy was a disaster for Russia’s position in the international community and made no political or military sense. He asserted that this element of the draft military doctrine revealed Russia to be “a power with a complex,” acknowledging the decline in Russian conventional military capabilities and the appearance of precision-strike means in the United States against which Russia has no conventional defense, and linked the ensuing declaration of nuclear first use to the military doctrine of the transition period, (the end of the twentieth century). However, the doctrinal expansion of nuclear first-use to even local conflicts amounts to an admission of an inability to find other means to deal with Russia’s security challenges. Like the hero of Chekhov’s short story, Peresolil, Russia has achieved the capacity to frighten others while harming its own interest. Declaring first use in local conflicts undermines the basic tenants of traditional nuclear deterrence as an instrument of military policy under conditions of globalization. Konovalov juxtaposed the declaration of the Federation of American Scientists on the need to adopt a minimal nuclear deterrence posture with the draft military doctrine’s attempt to expand the utility of such weapons, and called it shortsighted and counter-productive (Ogonek, December 11).

At the heart of the debate over nuclear first-use in the draft military doctrine is the contemporary threat environment confronting the Russian state. As media attention grew in December, the Academy of Military Sciences conducted its scheduled assembly. Army-General Makhmut Gareev, the President of the Academy, spoke on the trends studied by its researchers. The threat environment had shifted its center of gravity in world politics and economics to the east, and NATO’s intent to expand into the South Caucasus and Central Asian region, redirected research toward the prevention of threats. Gareev proposed moderating national interests, avoiding a “maximalist posture” because it was self-defeating. Moreover, he noted the difficulties in forecasting the military-political situation, owing to the growing dynamic of world development and that “nuclear Russia” has no declared opponents. Rather, the “adversary stays ‘in the wings’ or pretends there is a partnership” (Krasnaya Zvezda, December 16).

Two days later, Vladimir Mukhin announced the publication of a new book, addressing aspects of military threats to Russia: “Russia’s Security-2010.” The book was tied to the anticipated announcement of a new Russian military doctrine. Mukhin highlighted Gareev’s chapter, devoted to the lessons learned from the Russia-Georgia war in 2008 and specifically addressed the criticism of some experts that Russian forces were unable to conduct sixth generation warfare. Gareev identified this capability with the air campaign NATO conducted against Yugoslavia in 1999. He

said that critics of the Russian military compared its capabilities unfavorably with the “democratic” warfare conducted by NATO. He asserted that strikes against national infrastructure were, in fact, barbaric due to the damage that it inflicted upon “power stations, hospitals, bridges and other infrastructure of the country.” Such warfare was designed to force the surrender of the enemy country without using ground forces. “If the Russian army had followed such an example and fought in a strictly ‘democratic’ fashion, it would have bombed Tbilisi, Batumi, Kataisi, Poti, and the country’s infrastructure and compelled Georgia to surrender. But that is not a ‘democratic’ method of conducting warfare but a barbaric one,” he observed. His passion on this point deserves mention in the context of his earlier comments about the threat environment in which “nuclear Russia” operates. There is no explicit threat, but there are potential adversaries who possess military and non-military means to threaten Russian national interests, the most explicit being a US-led NATO with interests in the South Caucasus and Central Asia (Nezavisimoe Voennoe Obozrenie, December 18).

On December 22, Rossiyskaya Gazeta clarified the announcement that the doctrine would overtly express Russia’s intent to use nuclear weapons in a first strike in defense of its statehood. These remarks were attributed to General Makarov, during a meeting of foreign military attaches. Makarov suggested that the formulation was based upon an assessment of Russia’s current threat environment and the latest developments in military art (Rossiyskaya Gazeta, December 22). The following day, a second article sought to clarify the nature of a nuclear first strike as “defensive.” Makarov provided the context, stating that those drafting the new military doctrine had taken into account contemporary threats and challenges. He described the use of nuclear weapons for self-defense against enemies threatening Russia or its allies with nuclear weapons, and when a threat to Russian statehood emerged. Makarov affirmed that Russian military leaders had no intention of waving the nuclear club around, adding “in extreme circumstances, when there are no other means to save the country, then nuclear weapons will be used” (Rossiyskaya Gazeta, December 23).

On December 30 Nezavisimaya Gazeta examined the status of the draft military doctrine and proclaimed that despite all the leaks, its final content remained unknown and there was no rush to secure the president’s signature. The article noted “Russia’s National Security Strategy” for the period to 2020, adopted on May 12, 2009 and questioned the relationship between its principles and the various pronouncements by Patrushev and Makarov on nuclear first use to protect Russian statehood. As the writer observed, “the authors of this work (the draft military doctrine) continue to keep it locked in their safes” (Nezavisimaya Gazeta, December 30).

[http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=35902&tx_ttnews\[backPid\]=7&cHash=0e0ab64d97](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=35902&tx_ttnews[backPid]=7&cHash=0e0ab64d97)

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency
12 January 2010

Design Flaw Caused Latest Test Failure Of Bulava Missile - Source

Investigators have established that the latest test failure of the troubled Bulava ballistic missile was caused by a design flaw, rather than a faulty component, a Russian defense industry source said Tuesday.

"An investigation commission established in December that a design flaw in the device which controls the separation of the third stage had caused the latest failure of the Bulava missile," the source said.

It is the first time the Russian industry officials admit that there are problems with the original design of the submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM), which Russia hopes will be a key element of its nuclear forces.

The latest launch of the missile from the Dmitry Donskoy nuclear submarine in the White Sea ended in failure in early December 2009. Only five of 12 Bulava launches have been officially reported as being successful.

Earlier official statements cited a number of reasons for the failures of Bulava tests, including faulty components, attempts to replace specific materials with cheaper substitutes and obsolete manufacturing equipment.

The further development of the Bulava has been questioned by some lawmakers and defense industry experts, who have suggested that all efforts should be focused on the existing Sineva SLBM.

But the military has insisted there is no alternative to the Bulava and said the tests of the missile would continue until it is ready to enter service with the Russian Navy.

Another defense industry source said on Tuesday that Russia could increase the number of Bulava tests in 2010 starting in May-June, and "drastically change the approach to testing procedures."

The Bulava (SS-NX-30) SLBM carries up to 10 MIRV warheads and has a range of over 8,000 kilometers (5,000 miles). The three-stage liquid and solid-propellant ballistic missile is designed for deployment on Borey class nuclear-powered submarines.

MOSCOW, January 12 (RIA Novosti)

http://en.rian.ru/military_news/20100112/157520043.html

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Reuters

13 January 2010

U.S. Uses CT Scans To Check Out Nuclear Stockpile

By Julie Steenhuisen

CHICAGO (Reuters) - The same type of scanner used to peer into the body to detect cancers will be put to an even more delicate use -- checking on the viability of the nation's aging nuclear stockpile, the National Nuclear Security Administration said on Wednesday.

The agency, part of the U.S. Department of Energy, said it has begun using computed tomography or CT scans -- an advanced type of X-ray -- to detect aging defects on critical components in the nation's nuclear weapons arsenal.

Technically, the scanners work exactly the same on nuclear weapons as they do on people.

"In the medical world, someone lays on the table and either the body moves through the scanner or it goes over the person," Geoffrey Beausoleil, deputy site manager at the NNSA's Pantex Plant near Amarillo, Texas, said in a telephone interview.

"For us, it's the same kind of thing. We put a component on a table and the table moves through the scanner unit," said Beausoleil, who is charged with maintaining the security and reliability of the nation's nuclear weapons stockpile.

The major difference between a medical CT scan is the radiation, Beausoleil said.

"Because we are not scanning body tissue, we are scanning metals, the energy level is a lot greater. You would hurt somebody from a radiation dose if you put them through our scanner," he said.

The high-resolution scanner, called the CoLOSSIS (Confined Large Optical Scintillator Screen and Imaging System), was built by scientists at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory.

It is used to scan weapons components to look for signs that nuclear weapons have degraded in the past 30 to 40 years since they were first built.

"There are up to 6,000 components in a nuclear warhead. Those can be anywhere from very small to relatively large. I don't think we are talking about passing the whole thing to the scanner," said Damien LaVera, director of public affairs at the National Nuclear Security Administration.

LaVera said the work is typically done at the Pantex Plant, where the NNSA assembles and disassembles nuclear weapons as part of its stockpile stewardship mission.

"It's not done on the top of a missile silo by any means," LaVera said.

INSPECT A WEAPON

Before the scanner, the team at Pantex would take a weapon out of service and inspect it.

"We would have to cut it, take it apart completely and make everything completely useless. You couldn't re-weld them back together," Beausoleil said.

"What this allows us to do is take a component and without damaging it -- find out what's inside and outside."

Beausoleil said the scanner allows the team to see down into the less than 1,000th of an inch.

"Think about a pipe that is rusting. The metal flakes off. We're looking for things like that," Beausoleil said.

The first user of the CoLOSSIS will be Los Alamos National Laboratory, which will test the Air Force's B61 gravity bomb, checking components for signs of aging or manufacturing defects.

"We can better ensure the reliability of all of the components we put into a weapon," Beausoleil said.

"If we are not going to build and test new weapons -- or any old weapons for that matter -- we need to assure our customer, the Department of Defense, that the product we give them is reliable," he said.

In October, President Barack Obama signed into law a \$33.5 billion spending bill to fund government energy and water programs for the 2010 budget year, including \$6.4 billion to maintain the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile.

(Editing by Philip Barbara)

<http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE60C6N220100113>

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Washington Times

EDITORIAL

13 January 2010

War With Iran Nears

Massoud Ali-Mohammadi, an important Iranian nuclear scientist, was killed yesterday by a bomb planted outside his home. Iran has accused Israel and the United States of assassinating Mr. Ali-Mohammadi in an attempt to disrupt Tehran's nuclear program. If true, such short-of-war methods could be seen as a means of preventing a larger conflict or paving the way for more deadly operations.

The Obama administration's diplomatic outreach effort is dead, too. The mullahs met President Obama's outstretched hand with an extended middle finger. Iran announced in November that it planned to construct 10 new uranium enrichment facilities, a development former International Atomic Energy Agency chief Hans Blix called "puzzling" because "even big countries don't have ten enrichment plants." Last month, top-secret technical notes from Iran's nuclear program were leaked that detailed research on a neutron initiator, the triggering mechanism for an atomic bomb.

It is increasingly difficult to claim that Iran's nuclear effort is intended for peaceful civilian purposes. The Dec. 31 deadline for Iran to reply to a proposed nuclear deal passed with no response. The debate in Washington has shifted toward how best to target sanctions and whether they should - or can - be crafted in a way to support the reform movement in the country.

But time is running out. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu gave the Obama White House a year to make progress with Iran, and instead, the situation has grown worse. Israel repeatedly has stated that it will not tolerate a nuclear Iran, and the Jewish state is receiving significant behind-the-scenes encouragement from Sunni Arab states wary of the possibility of Iranian regional hegemony.

Preparation for possible conflict is ongoing. This week, a biological-warfare-preparedness exercise is being held in Tel Aviv and other cities. Starting late next month, gas masks will begin to be distributed to every Israeli citizen; similar measures were undertaken before the first and second Gulf wars.

On Sunday, Gen. David H. Petraeus, head of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), said in a clear signal to Tehran that it would be "irresponsible if CENTCOM were not to have been thinking about the various 'what ifs' and to make plans for a whole variety of different contingencies" with respect to Iran. The next day, it was reported that America was doubling the value of emergency military equipment stockpiled in Israel, which would be available for Israeli use in the event of an emergency. Perhaps this is a signal to Iran as well.

The coming conflict will not be an overnight air strike followed by bellicose language, like the Israeli attack on the Syrian nuclear site in September 2007. Disrupting Iran's nuclear program will require Israel to undertake a sustained campaign. Iran will launch reprisal attacks through its proxies in Gaza and Lebanon, encourage Syria to respond, foment chaos in Iraq and Afghanistan and potentially order terror attacks on Western targets.

U.S. policymakers are mealy-mouthed about the possibility of conflict with Iran. Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, summed up the conventional view when he said that Iran developing a nuclear weapon is "potentially a very, very destabilizing outcome" but taking military action to prevent it "also has a very, very destabilizing outcome." Washington prefers the third way, a mix of sanctions and diplomacy, in the hope of somehow preserving stability. But soon, the choice will be made by others, and the real question is what role the United States will play when war comes.

http://washingtontimes.com/news/2010/jan/13/war-with-iran-nears/?feat=home_top5_shared

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UPI Asia.com (United Press International)

OPINION

13 January 2010

Why Nuclear Sharing Is Unsuitable In Asia

By Mitsuo Takai
Guest Commentary

Tokyo, Japan — Facing potential nuclear threats from China and North Korea, a growing number of Japanese are in favor of a nuclear sharing policy along the lines of the one implemented by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The concept envisages that Japan and some other Asian nations would stockpile nuclear warheads provided by the United States, arrange their delivery systems and jointly operate the nuclear weapons under combined operation plans.

Its advocates claim that with this policy Asian nations would be spared the very sophisticated nuclear development programs that require enormous costs and effort, while the United States could save on forward deployed forces.

However, this policy, devised during the Cold War era, may turn out to be anachronistic if it is to be adopted in Asia, where circumstances are different from the West and which may in the future have weapon systems far superior to existing nuclear arms.

Even in NATO, as precision-guided munitions have begun to replace tactical nuclear weapons, the nuclear sharing policy is losing its relevance. This is because PGMs, which are capable of precision strikes with much less collateral damage, have reduced the military merits of nuclear arms. Nuclear weapons can have strong negative political and psychological impact due to their horrendous and tremendous power, in addition to their disastrous environmental damage and pollution.

Besides, thanks to further progress in military technology, emerging means such as directed energy, electronic attacks and cyber attacks may substitute for nuclear strikes in future warfare.

During the Cold War period, the nuclear sharing policy was implemented by seven nations – Canada, Belgium, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands and Turkey – but two of them, Canada and Greece, left the ranks after the year 2000.

Also, during the Cold War more than ten types of nuclear arms systems were jointly operated, including Pershing medium-range ballistic missile systems, Honest John tactical missile systems, and nuclear artillery.

But now, only fighter-bombers that can load nuclear bombs are in the sharing scheme. All of the Pershing systems were destroyed and disposed of after the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty was signed, while other systems were retired as they gradually became outdated, as they were too costly to maintain.

At the height of the Cold War, out of over 7,000 U.S. nuclear warheads deployed in Europe, the sharing was applied to 300 Pershing missiles alone. In comparison, among the 480 U.S. nuclear bombs currently deployed in Europe, 150 to 240 are jointly operated by the above five Western nations.

Incidentally, the United States will continue to deploy nuclear bombs suitable for specific objectives for the next 20 years after improving them through life extension programs. On the other hand, Western Europe will not have a nuclear delivery system that would replace the Tornado fighter bombers that are expected to be retired in ten years. This, too, explains the gradual disappearance of the nuclear sharing policy.

In addition to the above-mentioned technological reasons, Asian nations will face major challenges in forging an extensive and reliable military alliance similar to NATO because of Asia's diverse history, traditions, cultures, ideas, political factors and peoples' sentiments. It could be difficult to build transnational consensus on a nuclear sharing concept, which would involve sensitive political and psychological issues.

Accordingly, Japan should first develop advanced military technology and innovative tactics independently in order to nullify the nuclear arms deployed on the continent.

In retrospect, NATO did not win the Cold War merely by virtue of its nuclear superiority. Rather, on top of the West's politically and economically superior positions, the Soviet socialist system collapsed on its own due to its essential drawbacks, having been unable to realize the utopia for workers and peasants promised ever since the October Revolution in 1917.

Mitsuo Takai is a retired colonel and former researcher in the military science faculty of the Staff College for Japan's Ground Self Defense Force. ©Copyright Mitsuo Takai.)

http://www.upiasia.com/Security/2010/01/13/why_nuclear_sharing_is_unsuitable_in_asia/6474/

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EDITORIAL

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India Secretly Counters Chinese Successful Anti Ballistic Missile Test

Sonia Joshi

Indian defense research organizations are smiling with ease as Pravda announces that Americans are now scared of recent Chinese ABM test. Pakistan wants Chinese missile defense by 2012. But Islamabad does not know what waits its fate.

According to Pravda, China performed a successful launch of an ABM interceptor missile. The test became an important link in the creation of the nation's missile defense system, news agencies reported January 11. Pravda further says, it was a Chinese act to scare the Americans and the Government of Taiwan.

Interestingly, according to sources close to Indian military defense research institute (it is no longer DRDO at Pune, the secret advanced organization is fully classified), India is ahead of Chinese missile technologies in stealth, target precision management, and algorithmic evasion.

The recent ABM test in China was closely followed by Indian top military space scientists. It actually exposed China's weakness and vulnerability. It also brought smiles among the Indian scientists and engineers because if this is what Chinese could perform to scare the Americans, then China has really to worry about Indian capabilities. India has two sets of program. One is open and the other is secret. The open specs are far behind the real specs. The open program boasts Prithvi Air Defense anti-ballistic missile interceptor. Last year, India showed the world how Prithvi Air Defense anti-ballistic missile interceptor achieved all the mission objectives. The two-stage interceptor missile fitted with advanced systems hit the target enemy missile at 75 kilometers (47 miles) altitude. But India does not talk about its secret program that far exceeds Prithvi's capabilities.

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