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Washington Post
January 20, 2010

Jones, Mullen To Russia To Work On Nuclear Deal

By MARK S. SMITH
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON -- In a sign that a new arms deal with Russia may be close, President Barack Obama is sending two top national security aides to Moscow to work on clearing the last obstacles.

National Security Adviser James Jones was heading to the Russian capital Wednesday, and Joint Chiefs Chairman Adm. Mike Mullen was also going, White House spokesman Mike Hammer said. He said the trip is "primarily to discuss the remaining issues left to conclude a new START treaty."

The 1991 treaty expired last month. But Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev agreed last July to seek a new one slashing the arsenals of both sides to between 1,500 and 1,675 warheads each.

Talks in Geneva broke for the holidays in December amid lingering differences over verification and missile defense. The talks are set to resume on Monday. Last week, Undersecretary of State for Arms Control Ellen Tauscher told reporters the two sides are "really close to an accord."

U.S. negotiators have resisted Russia's demand to include in the deal a plan for monitoring U.S. missile defense interceptors being deployed in Europe. But Moscow has also been loath to grant U.S. experts access to Russia's data on new missile tests.

A senior official couldn't say if progress had been made on either point. The official, speaking on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the nuclear talks, said it was unclear if the trip by Jones and Mullen "could do the trick."

Meantime, U.S. efforts to line up fresh sanctions against Iran were also expected to come up in Moscow.

Out of patience with Tehran's defiance of U.N. calls for it to stop enriching uranium, the administration has been pressing Russia and other key allies to agree to a package of additional punitive steps.

The administration has been seeking the new START accord as a major benefit from its "reset" of relations with Moscow.

But encryption of missile telemetry has proven one of the toughest issues to resolve. Current rules forbid encryption, so experts can freely monitor instructions sent from missile ground controllers. "The Russians were pushing to remove that," said James Collins, a former U.S. ambassador to Moscow who's now at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

"I would be pretty optimistic we're going to get it signed in the next number of weeks," Collins said. "The vast majority of the work is done."

Associated Press writer Steven R. Hurst contributed to this report.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/01/20/AR2010012002598.html>

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Bloomberg.com
January 20, 2010

Russian-U.S. Nuclear Accord May Be Ready By April, Envoy Says

By Lucian Kim

Jan. 20 (Bloomberg) -- Russian and U.S. negotiators may complete work on a new nuclear arms reduction treaty before April, John Beyrle, the U.S. ambassador to Russia, said today on Ekho Moskvyy radio.

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said last month that the two countries had agreed on nearly all issues related to the agreement, which will replace the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty that expired in December.

<http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=a15jS1tdIyv8>

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Washington Times
January 21, 2010

U.S. To Deploy Missiles Near Russia

By Nicholas Kralev

President Obama sent two of his top national security officials to Moscow on Wednesday to clear the last hurdles to a new nuclear pact, but a revelation that U.S. missiles will soon be deployed near Russian territory could complicate the talks.

The White House said that National Security Adviser James L. Jones and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Adm. Mike Mullen will meet with Russian officials "primarily to discuss the remaining issues left to conclude" a follow-on to the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), which the U.S. ambassador to Moscow predicted will be completed within weeks.

"It's only a question of when, and I think the finish line is approaching in the very near future," Ambassador John R. Beyrle said in an interview with the Echo of Moscow radio.

Washington and Moscow began negotiating a new treaty last spring but failed to work out all their differences by the time START expired on Dec. 5.

Verification has been one of the main problems. Russia has insisted on monitoring U.S. missile-defense interceptors being deployed in Europe but has refused U.S. inspectors access to its data on new missile tests.

In an attempt to "reset" their relationship after tensions during the Bush administration, Mr. Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev agreed in July to cut the number of deployed nuclear warheads on each side to between 1,500 and 1,675.

The missile defense issue is one of the most sensitive for the Russians, even after Mr. Obama decided in September to scrap plans by his predecessor, George W. Bush, to deploy a system in Eastern Europe to counter a growing threat from Iran.

In a consolation to Poland, which was to host one of the sites and was unhappy with Mr. Obama's decision, the administration agreed to deploy Patriot-type surface-to-air missiles in the country. On Dec. 11, the two NATO allies signed a prerequisite agreement on the status of U.S. troops in the former Soviet satellite ahead of the missile deployment.

However, the Patriot site was kept secret — until Wednesday, when Polish Defense Minister Bogdan Klich said it will be about 35 miles from a Russian enclave between Poland and Lithuania that includes the city of Kaliningrad.

"Morag was chosen as the location long ago, but we didn't make it public," Mr. Klich was quoted as saying by Poland's PAP news agency.

He insisted that the choice of the site had "no political or strategic meaning — its good infrastructure is the only reason." He also said the missiles could arrive as soon as late March or early April at Morag, which is home to a Polish military base.

Moscow, which is protective of Kaliningrad because it is surrounded by two NATO members, is likely to react angrily to the news about Morag. That could complicate the START negotiations, though U.S. officials said it should not threaten them seriously.

"We believe it will still be conducted in good faith, and I would not think that complication will come into it," State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley told reporters. "It is in the interest of Russia and the United States — and the world — to see the completion of and ratification of a follow-on START agreement."

Daryl Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association, said the Patriot missiles "should be a nonissue for Russia" because "this system poses no threat to Russian defense forces, and it is a symbolic gesture of the existing U.S. security commitment to Poland."

"Russia is not and should not be looking for excuses to blow up the new treaty," he said. "Russia's longer-term concern is all about potential future numbers and locations of the SM-3 interceptors in Eastern Europe that were outlined as the Obama administration's new missile defense approach."

Ellen Tauscher, undersecretary of state for arms control and international security, said last week that the outstanding issues in the START negotiations included sharing of telemetry data — electronic signals sent from missile flight tests — as well as Russian demands that missile defenses be included in the new treaty.

Mr. Jones and Adm. Mullen are visiting Moscow a week after a trip by another senior U.S. official, William J. Burns, undersecretary of state for political affairs. Mr. Burns represents the United States in international negotiations on Iran's nuclear program, which also was discussed in his meetings and is expected to be part of the talks this week.

Washington and its Western allies want new sanctions on Iran for rejecting a proposal that would lift suspicion that it is developing a nuclear weapon under the cover of a civilian program. Russia has not been as opposed to sanctions as it has in the past, but China is resisting them, so U.S. officials hope Moscow could influence its friends in Beijing.

<http://washingtontimes.com/news/2010/jan/21/missiles-threaten-nuclear-pact//print/>

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Malaysia Star
January 22, 2010

Russia Says Hopes For Prompt U.S. Nuclear Deal

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Friday he hoped that a landmark nuclear arms reduction treaty with the United States will be clinched soon after the official talks resume in early February.

"The remaining questions, I hope, will be resolved rather promptly when the negotiations resume, and they will resume at the very beginning of February, I think," Lavrov told reporters.

The two largest nuclear powers say they are close to agreement on a successor to the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START I), although U.S. President Barack Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev have yet to clinch a deal.

(Reporting by Conor Sweeney, writing by Amie Ferris-Rotman, editing by Guy Faulconbridge and Steve Gutterman)

http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2010/1/22/worldupdates/2010-01-22T153447Z_01_NOOTR_RTRMDNC_0_-456082-1&sec=Worldupdates

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Press TV – Iran
January 20, 2010

Powers 'Shifting To Sanctions' In Dealing With Iran

A senior US diplomat says the six major powers that are involved in nuclear talks with Iran are considering a transition from negotiation to new sanctions.

"At present, we are considering the possibility of a transition from dialogue to sanctions because we have always had two parallel ways," RIA Novosti quoted the US Ambassador to Russia John Beyrle as saying on Wednesday.

"The hope is always there that Iran could finally respond positively on IAEA proposals, but if not, we have to be prepared for something more serious," Beyrle added.

The remarks come as an IAEA spokeswoman, Gill Tudor, on Wednesday declared that a UN-brokered deal for nuclear swap between Iran and the West is "still on the table."

Political directors from the P5+1 group (the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany) met in New York on Saturday to discuss Iran's nuclear program.

Iran's Foreign Ministry Spokesman Ramin Mehman-Parast on Wednesday reiterated that Iran is ready to accept the nuclear swap deal if takes place in stages.

"Iran is ready to exchange fuel in stages. Should both sides accept the basis of the proposal, discussions may be held over the approach," Mehman-Parast said.

"We are still waiting for the response of the other party," he added.

Tehran has repeatedly declared that it will not give up the Iranian nation's nuclear rights under Western pressure.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail.aspx?id=116663§ionid=351020104>

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Iran 'Snubs Nuclear Fuel Deal'

Agence France-Presse (AFP)

VIENNA - Iran has responded to a UN-brokered nuclear fuel supply deal, rejecting some of the conditions called for by the West and insisting on a simultaneous exchange of fuel, diplomats here said Wednesday.

One western diplomat, speaking on condition on anonymity, told AFP that Iran gave its response at a meeting between the International Atomic Energy Agency's new chief Yukiya Amano and Iranian ambassador Ali Asghar Soltanieh earlier this month.

The IAEA refused to say whether the meeting took place or on its possible content.

Unacceptable demand

But, according to the diplomat, Soltanieh reiterated the Islamic republic's earlier position, including the demand for a simultaneous fuel swap, which the West has persistently ruled out as unacceptable.

The Iranians did not give their response in writing, however, the diplomat noted.

Instead, the IAEA drew up the minutes of the meeting and then asked Soltanieh to verify that the memo correctly reflected Iran's position.

"His response was 'yes'," the diplomat said.

Another diplomat also said it was unclear whether Iran had actually delivered a written response. But "certainly there was no agreement to the TRR (Tehran Research Reactor) proposal," the diplomat said.

Under the terms of a plan, hammered out under the IAEA's auspices last October, the Islamic Republic was to have shipped abroad most of its stockpile of enriched uranium for processing into fuel for a reactor that makes radio-isotopes for medical use.

The proposals, brokered by the IAEA's then chief Mohamed ElBaradei, were seen as a way of appeasing western fears that Iran was stockpiling uranium for a covert nuclear weapons programme, because it would have seen most of the Islamic Republic's uranium taken out of the country before any reactor fuel was dispatched in return.

'An inadequate response'

But Tehran, which insists its atomic programme is entirely peaceful, declined for months to give any formal response to the offer, with Iranian officials taking seemingly contradictory positions on it.

World powers gave Iran until the end of 2009 to accept the deal but the deadline was ignored, prompting talk of fresh sanctions against the Islamic republic.

In Washington on Tuesday, US State Department spokesman Philip Crowley commented: "I am not sure that they have delivered a formal response, but it is clearly an inadequate response."

On January 5, Iran repeated its counter-proposal for a staged fuel swap, but left the "details" open to discussion.

"If the other side expresses readiness for the gradual and staged swap, we will discuss the details," foreign ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast said.

The Iranian counter-proposal

Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki insisted that Tehran in fact had until the end of January to reach a uranium swap deal, stressing it will press on with plans to produce highly enriched nuclear fuel if there is no agreement.

Mottaki gave the West a one-month "ultimatum" to accept the Iranian counter-proposal.

Iran is already under three sets of UN Security Council sanctions over its defiance and refusal to suspend enrichment, which lies at the heart of international fears about its nuclear programme.

The process that makes nuclear fuel can also be used to make the fissile core of an atomic bomb.

The United States, Israel and other world powers suspect Tehran is making a nuclear bomb under the guise of a civilian programme, an allegation Iran vehemently denies. -- *AFP*

<http://www.malaysianmirror.com/foreigndetail/10-foreign/27043>

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Press TV – Iran
20 January 2010

'Bushehr Plant To Come On Stream By Late September'

Director of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization Ali Akbar Salehi says the Bushehr nuclear power plant will be operational within the next few months.

In an interview with Fars News Agency on Wednesday, Salehi said that the Bushehr nuclear plant would come online by late September.

He added that experts are conducting important and final tests and that there will be no delays on the part of the Russians in launching the plant.

“So far most of the tests at the Bushehr power plant have been successful. Currently the tests on the metal sphere are being conducted, which will not take more than a week or two,” Salehi stated.

The Iranian nuclear official added that analytical testing procedures for the plants cooling system will be carried out in the coming months before nuclear fuel is introduced into the 1,000-megawatt Bushehr plant's cycle.

Iran expects to generate 17.5 percent — 20,000 megawatts — of the country's electricity demand through nuclear energy over the next two decades.

Washington and its allies accuse the Islamic Republic of pursuing a military nuclear program. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), however, has repeatedly said that it has found no evidence supporting the allegation.

The IAEA has conducted numerous inspections of Iran's nuclear facilities, confirming the non-diversion of nuclear material in the country's functional and under-construction plants.

Tehran says as a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty it is entitled to the peaceful application of nuclear energy.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail.aspx?id=116636§ionid=351020104>

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SpaceDaily.com
January 20, 2010

Iran To Unveil Three New Home-Built Satellites: Report

TEHRAN, Agence France-Press (AFP)

Iran will unveil three new satellites in February, a report said Wednesday, amid Western concerns that Tehran is using its nuclear and space industries to develop atomic and ballistic weapons.

ISNA news agency quoted Communications Minister Reza Taghipour as saying that one of the three home-built communications satellites is still under construction.

Taghipour named the three satellites as Toloo (Dawn), Ya Mahdi and Mesbah-2, but did not elaborate on exactly when they would be launched.

Ya Mahdi, Taghipour said as quoted by ISNA, was an "experimental satellite" and the launch would be for testing camera and telecommunications equipment.

Mesbah-2, which is under construction, "is a low-orbit telecommunication satellite for storing and sending messages," he said.

"It can do different tasks, not as a 24-hour link, but it can be used for limited communication applications."

Iran's defence minister Ahmad Vahidi said Wednesday that Toloo is a "reconnaissance satellite," ISNA reported.

Vahidi had previously said Toloo would be unveiled during celebrations in early February marking the 31st anniversary of the Islamic revolution.

He said last month that Toloo was designed by Sa Iran, also known as Iran Electronics Industries, an affiliate company of the defence ministry.

"Needs of armed forces in operations are met with local and reliable equipment of the defence industries of this ministry," Vahidi was quoted as saying.

Iran's first home-built satellite, the Omid (Hope), was launched last February to coincide with the 30th anniversary of the Islamic revolution.

The launch sent alarm bells ringing in the international community, which voiced concern over Iran's development of technology that could be used for military purposes.

The West suspects Iran of secretly trying to build an atomic bomb and fears the technology used to launch space rockets could be diverted into developing long-range ballistic missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads.

Tehran denies having military goals for its space programme or its nuclear drive.

Iran had earlier announced it was building seven new satellites, including three for high orbit positions.

<http://www.spacedaily.com/afp/100120113753.xe3kopi1.html>

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Tehran Times – Iran

January 21, 2010

Iran Still Waiting For West's Response To Nuclear Proposal

Tehran Times Political Desk

TEHRAN -- Iran is still waiting for the West's response to Tehran's nuclear fuel swap proposal, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast said here on Wednesday.

He made the remarks in response to some reports issued by certain Western media outlets claiming that Iran has put forward a new proposal to receive 20 percent enriched nuclear fuel from the West.

Iran has not made any new proposal with regard to receiving nuclear fuel for its Tehran research reactor, Mehmanparast told the Mehr News Agency.

"Iran is ready to swap fuel in stages, and if the two sides agree on the principles of the proposal, the mechanism can be discussed," he noted.

Iran has offered to swap its low enriched nuclear fuel for 20 percent enriched nuclear fuel for its Tehran research reactor in stages on the southern Iranian island of Kish.

Mehmanparast also dismissed certain U.S. officials' claims that they have received intelligence that shows Iran is involved in activities related to the production of nuclear weapons.

Iran's peaceful nuclear activities are under International Atomic Energy Agency supervision, he told ISNA on Wednesday.

Such issues are brought up to pressure Iran, and certain countries that have failed to impose their will on the country are now trying to pressure Iran through political and media maneuvers, he said.

"We believe they have been on the wrong path, and they have tried to attain their goals through threats, pressure, and sanctions, but they have not been successful. Yet they are following this wrong path with a series of allegations," Mehmanparast added

http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=212660

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Malaysian Mirror – Malaysia

22 January 2010

Russian FM Regrets Iran's Rejection of Nuclear Deal

MOSCOW (AFP) -Russia regrets that Iran has apparently rejected a UN-brokered nuclear fuel exchange deal to ease the stand-off over its atomic programme, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Friday.

"We regret that Iran -- as far as we can see -- does not consider it possible to agree to the formula that it was offered," Lavrov told a news conference.

Under the plan, Iran would hand over most of its stocks of low-enriched uranium in return for the supply by France and Russia of nuclear fuel enriched to the higher level required for a Tehran research reactor.

Russia, a veto-wielding permanent UN Security Council member, is one of the few major powers to have close relations with Iran.

"Our aim is clear. We want that the international community does not have any doubt on the peaceful nature of the Iranian nuclear programme," added Lavrov.

He noted that the UN Security Council had the capacity to "study further measures on Iran" but once again did not come out explicitly in support of further UN sanctions against the country.

"Acting with a logic of punishing Iran... is not a sober approach," he said.

Western diplomats said this week that Iran had effectively rejected a proposal put forward by six major powers in talks in Vienna brokered by the International Atomic Energy Agency, the UN's nuclear watchdog.

However Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki insisted Iran did not reject "the principle" of the nuclear fuel deal.

Amid increasing international frustration with Tehran, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton vowed Thursday that the United States "will not be waited out" and "not back down" in the face of Iran's defiance.

Moscow's capacity to provide technical help for the Iranian nuclear drive is seen by some analysts as giving it an unmatched power of leverage in Tehran.

Russia is building Iran's first nuclear power plant in the southern city of Bushehr and the facility is due to finally come on line this year.

The West suspects Tehran is trying to develop a nuclear weapon under cover of its civilian nuclear energy programme. Russia has said there is no evidence to support these accusations.

<http://www.malaysianmirror.com/foreigndetail/10-foreign/27313>

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Yonhap News – South Korea
20 January 2010

S. Korea, U.S. Out To Break N. Korea's Pattern Of Belligerence: Official

By Byun Duk-kun

SEOUL, Jan. 19 (Yonhap) -- South Korea and the United States will not give in to North Korea's demands in order to resume negotiations on ending the North's nuclear ambition, saying that this time, they will try to "break" the communist nation's pattern of brinkmanship, a foreign ministry official said Tuesday.

The remarks came one day after North Korea said for the second time in a week it will not return to the six-nation nuclear talks until U.N.-imposed sanctions on the country are removed.

The talks were last held in December 2008. North Korea said in April that it will permanently quit the talks that also involve South Korea, the U.S., Japan, China and Russia.

The ministry official, who is well-informed on the six-party process, noted the North's demand for the removal of U.N. sanctions is one that could very well further stall the talks, noting the sanctions can only be removed by the U.N. Security Council when it sees progress in North Korea's denuclearization, as it said in its resolution that imposed the sanctions in the first place.

The official said neither the U.S. nor South Korea has the authority to remove the sanctions, but that they would not do so even if they had the means.

"Maintaining a distance from such practices of ours in the past is our current stance. What the leaders of South Korea and the U.S. said at their bilateral summit last year, too, was that they will stay away from such practices," the official told reporters.

The official was referring to an agreement between South Korean President Lee Myung-bak and his U.S. counterpart, Barack Obama, in June, in which they said the countries will work to "break a pattern" in which North Korea behaves in a belligerent fashion, and if it waits long enough, it is rewarded.

"That is to say we have always suffered from such a syndrome, but that it does not mean we always have to," the official said.

The official noted it will take some time before the countries can change the way North Korea behaves.

"We will need some time to reach a compromise with North Korea while the North is waging an international campaign on this issue (of removing the U.N. sanctions). And we do not know how much time will be needed," he said, asking not to be identified due to the sensitivity of the issue.

South Korea's top nuclear negotiator, Wi Sung-lac, is scheduled to visit Washington this week for discussions with his U.S. counterparts on ways to bring North Korea back to the nuclear negotiations, ministry officials said.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2010/01/19/31/0401000000AEN20100119008700315F.HTML>

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Korea Times – South Korea
January 20, 2010

Minister Vows Preemptive Strike Against NK Nuclear Attack

By Jung Sung-ki, Staff Reporter

Defense Minister Kim Tae-young said Wednesday the military could conduct a preemptive strike against North Korean nuclear facilities, should signs of a nuclear attack by the North emerge in the event of war.

"A significant amount of damage could be sustained if we were to respond after a nuclear attack by North Korea, so we would have to hit North Korean targets as soon as clear signs of such an attack are detected," Kim said in a defense forum in Seoul.

"There is a controversy over the legitimacy of preemptive raids, but we should be allowed to do so if North Korea were to launch a nuclear strike," he said.

The remarks came just days after North Korea threatened to break off all dialogue and negotiations with South Korea, attacking Seoul for drawing up a new contingency plan to cope with possible internal instability, such as a regime collapse, in the reclusive state.

In a statement carried by the North's Korean Central News Agency, its National Defense Commission warned that it would initiate a "sacred retaliatory battle" against the South, cut off all dialogue and exclude it from all negotiations related to the security of the Korean Peninsula. The commission, headed by North Korean leader Kim Jong-il, is the highest ruling agency in the Stalinist state.

In regards to North Korea's increased military exercises in recent weeks, Defense Minister Kim said South Korea and the United States had mobilized their intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets to closely monitor nuclear or missile activities in the North.

"If the North makes a provocative move, we'll thwart it on the spot as we did in the recent naval skirmish near the West Sea border," Kim said.

In November, a firefight between the navies of the two Koreas occurred near the Northern Limit Line (NLL), the de facto sea border. A North Korean sailor was reportedly killed and three others wounded in the skirmish, while there were no South Korean casualties.

It was the third naval confrontation between the two countries following ones in 1999 and 2002.

As for conservatives' demand for a readjustment of the timeline for the transition of wartime operational control from the United States to South Korea scheduled for 2012, the minister said both militaries have been fully preparing for the transition.

Kim said even if the security conditions will be bad in 2012, the South Korean military will make best efforts to exercise independent wartime operational control of its armed forces as agreed.

But he added that the leaders of the two allies could discuss readjustment of the timeline, if required.

Under the 2007 agreement on command arrangements, the ROK-U.S. Combined Forces Command will be disbanded and both militaries will instead establish separate theater commands here.

http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2010/01/205_59389.html

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Washington Times

January 21, 2010

Gates Wants Nuclear Talks With China

By Bill Gertz

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates discussed China's military buildup with Indian leaders in New Delhi on Wednesday and told reporters he wants talks with China on nuclear weapons, something Beijing has resisted.

Mr. Gates said after a meeting with Indian Defense Minister A.K. Antony that the two leaders discussed China's military modernization program and "what the intentions of that military buildup were."

"There was a discussion about China's military modernization program and what it meant," he said.

The defense secretary then said that while he did not speak for the Indians, the Pentagon wants to engage China in more routine, in-depth strategic talks "so as to avoid any miscalculations or misunderstandings down the road."

The Pentagon has held one meeting in recent months with China on its strategic nuclear weapons program, which remains shrouded in secrecy.

Efforts to hold more in-depth talks have been resisted by China, whose military views the Pentagon as its main potential enemy in a conflict over Taiwan. A defense official said Chinese military leaders fear that holding extensive nuclear talks would reveal secrets about its arms that could be used in nuclear targeting or cyberattacks.

China is building an array of new missile systems, including at least four systems that carry strategic nuclear warheads. They include the road-mobile DF-31 and DF-31A, the JL-2 submarine-launched missile and the long-range DH-10 land attack cruise missile.

U.S. intelligence officials have said little is known about the size of China's nuclear arsenal, the conditions under which it would be used and who controls it.

Mr. Gates said his discussions with Indian leaders on China were not extensive but focused generally on the "common interest in security of the Indian Ocean and security of the global commons, and the global commons meaning the air, sea, space, and if you're talking about the Internet, the ether, I suppose."

Tensions between India and China have heightened in recent weeks as a result of incursions by Chinese troops and aircraft near a disputed border between the two countries.

Mr. Gates was asked about concerns on China's cyberattack capabilities, which were highlighted recently by electronic strikes against Google and other U.S. companies in what many U.S. officials believe was a Chinese government-sanctioned strike.

On strategic nuclear talks with China, Mr. Gates said his past role in strategic nuclear talks with the Soviet Union were beneficial.

"I'm not sure those talks ever actually reduced any arms, but the dialogue over a long period of time with great candor about nuclear capabilities, thinking about nuclear options, thinking about how each side looked at nuclear weapons and at their military modernizations, I think played a significant role over time in preventing miscalculations and mistakes in the relationship between these two superpowers during the Cold War," he said.

"I think that kind of a dialogue with China would be most productive and frankly in the best interests of global stability."

Richard Fisher, a military affairs specialist with the International Assessment and Strategy Center, said Mr. Gates' comments are a sign the Obama administration is beginning to understand that China's nuclear buildup is undermining their arms control policies.

"Engaging China in a strategic arms dialogue may seem logical but it is fraught with dangers," he said. "China's military abhors 'transparency,' especially regarding nuclear weapon issues."

http://washingtontimes.com/news/2010/jan/21/gates-wants-nuclear-talks-with-china/?feat=home_headlines

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Malaysia Star – Malaysia

January 22, 2010

South Wants N.Korea Back At Nuclear Talks Mid-Feb

SEOUL (Reuters) - South Korea's foreign minister said on Friday he wants to see dormant international talks on ending North Korea's nuclear arms programme resume in February without Pyongyang attaching conditions to its return.

North Korea has signalled it could end its year-long boycott of the six-nation talks with the South but muddied the waters recently by saying it first wanted U.N. sanctions lifted and direct discussions with Washington on a peace deal.

Analysts say the North is trying to win concessions to lure it back to the disarmament-for-aid talks by attaching conditions and making threats to rattle security in the economically vital North Asia region.

The talks include the United States, Japan, Russia and China.

"I expect that the six-party talks would resume around the time of Lunar New Year," Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan told a news briefing. The holiday falls in mid-February this year.

"I'm talking from the context that there is consensus between South Korea and China and between South Korea and Japan and with Russia. North Korea can probably feel it," Yu said.

North Korea's broken economy has been hit by fresh U.N. sanctions imposed after its second nuclear test in May, which may be forcing it to make conciliatory moves in the hopes of easing the strain on its already meagre finances, analysts said.

Pyongyang on Thursday repeated a call for talks with the United States to reach a peace treaty to replace the armistice that ended the 1950-53 Korean War, but Washington has said the North must first end its nuclear ambitions.

(Reporting by Jack Kim; Editing by Jon Herskovitz and Paul Tait)

http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2010/1/23/worldupdates/2010-01-22T135829Z_01_NOOTR_RTRMDNC_0_-456048-1&sec=Worldupdates

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Global Security Newswire
January 20, 2010

Pakistan Moves To Limit Khan's Permitted Activities

The Pakistani leadership wants to limit the permitted activities of former top nuclear scientist and proliferator Abdul Qadeer Khan out of fears that he constitutes a threat to the country's security interests, United Press International reported today (see *GSN*, Oct. 5, 2009).

Khan, who has confessed to providing nuclear technology to Iran, Libya and North Korea, was released from a five-year term of house arrest in 2009.

Islamabad told the Lahore High Court that should Khan retain the full rights of a normal citizen he could disclose to foreign news organizations information that would harm national interests, Dawn reported. Khan has already given away some information to news organizations, according to the government.

The government has requested that security guards be attached to Khan and that he continue to be closely monitored.

"Mr. Khan should be prevented from giving interviews, meeting people and moving around without security clearance," stated the government's petition, according to the Press Trust of India.

In recent weeks, the international media has carried stories alleging that Pakistan in the past collaborated with North Korea and China in the development of nuclear weapons. Those stories relied principally on documents alleged to have been shared by Khan (see *GSN*, Jan. 4, and Nov. 20, 2009).

Government lawyer Ahmer Bilal Soofi was reported to say that news reports in local and international media have shared sensitive details on Pakistan's nuclear efforts and that those stories were intended to harm the country's reputation.

Khan has until Monday to respond to the government's petition, the *Daily Times* reported (United Press International, Jan. 20).

The High Court has previously elected to not restrict Khan's movements and activities, the Xinhua News Agency reported (Xinhua News Agency/People's Daily Online, Jan. 19).

http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20100120_7171.php

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Press Trust of India

January 22, 2010

'US Has No Intention To Control Pakistan's N-Arsenal'

Staff Writer

Islamabad, Jan 22 (PTI) US has no intention to control or grab Pakistan's nuclear arsenal and was not seeking any military bases in the country, American defence secretary Robert Gates has said.

Rounding off his two day visit here, Gates who met Pakistan's civil and military leaders and addressed close door meetings with intelligence and army officers told them that US has no designs in Pakistan's nuclear weapons.

His assurances come in the wake of widespread fear in the West about Islamabad's nuclear arsenal falling into terrorist hands.

Gates in his meetings stressed that Pakistan would have to go whole hog to eliminate terrorist havens along its restive border with Afghanistan, But said "the Pakistani leadership will make its own decisions" about when and where to undertake military campaigns.

But he said that fighting terrorists along the Afghan border was as much in Pakistan's interest as in United States.

http://www.ptinews.com/news/480272_-US-has-no-intention-to-control-Pakistan-s-N-arsenal-

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Barent Observer – Norway

22 January 2010

Modernized Nuclear Sub Back In Service

The Russian strategic nuclear Delta-IV class submarine K-18 “Kareliya” is back in service in the Northern Fleet after five years of modernization.

The contract on delivery of the nuclear submarine was signed today at the Zvezdochka ship repair yard in Severodvinsk, the company's web site reads.

The modernization has prolonged the submarine’s lifetime with approximately ten years and improved its tactical and technical performance considerably. The work includes improved noise-reduction and detection systems.

The missile system has been modernized and the submarine’s main weapon system is now the Sineva ballistic missile. According to Wikipedia, it can carry ten 100kT warheads. In a test launch on 11 October 2008, an R-29RMU travelled 11,547 kilometers downrange.

K-18 “Kareliya” is one of seven Delta-IV class nuclear submarines built from 1985 to 1992. All are still in service in the Russian navy today. Five submarines have already gone through modernization at the Zvezdochka shipyard, according to Wikipedia.

<http://www.barentsobserver.com/modernized-nuclear-sub-back-in-service.4724023-116321.html>

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Fayetteville Observer – North Carolina

January 20, 2010

Duke To Develop Dirty Bomb Radiation Test

By Eric Ferreri

McClatchy Newspapers

RALEIGH - Duke University has received a \$3.7 million contract to develop a test for radiation exposure from a dirty bomb or nuclear attack.

The contract comes from the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority, and could be worth up to \$43.6 million to Duke if the government renews it in the future.

"Since 9/11, there has been national concern about the possibility of a terrorist attack in the U.S. involving radiological or nuclear materials. Such an attack could kill or injure hundreds of thousands of people," says John Chute, associate professor of medicine at Duke and principal investigator of the project, in a Duke news release.

"The problem is that right now, we don't have any way to rapidly screen thousands of people to determine their level of radiation exposure. Many people who suffer radiation injury can recover and survive if they are promptly and properly treated."

BARDA is part of the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It manages Project BioShield and the Public Health Emergency Medical Countermeasures Enterprise, two organizations charged with the development of medical response to pandemic disease and countermeasures for chemical, biological and nuclear attacks.

The award builds upon Chute's previous collaborations at Duke with Joseph Nevins, and Nelson Chao, that identified a set of 25 genes in human peripheral blood that are activated in response to radiation. In the Duke news release, Chute says that radiation exposure causes a characteristic pattern of expression in those 25 genes and this "signature" can diagnose radiation status with better than 90 percent accuracy.

Chute's earlier work was supported by a \$25 million grant from the National Institutes of Allergy and Infectious Diseases that established the Duke Center for Medical Countermeasures Against Radiation, now in its fifth year of funding.

The new contract calls for Chute and his team at Duke to further validate the accuracy of the gene profile in animal and human testing. Collaborators at DxTeryt Diagnostics, a biotechnology company based in California, will utilize the Duke gene panel to develop a rapid gene expression test while colleagues at the University of Arizona and Invetech Corp. will design and develop the instrument in which the assay will be performed.

The end product will be a portable, 30-minute test for radiation injury that can be used to triage thousands of individuals in a short time following a radiological or nuclear attack.

<http://www.fayobserver.com/Articles/2010/01/20/969814>

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Asia Times
January 20, 2010

China Vents Anger With Missile Test

By Peter J Brown

China has conducted a successful "defensive" anti-missile test with the intent of sending the United States a stern message of disapproval over Washington's latest arms sales to Taiwan.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu described the January 11 event as a test of "ground-based midcourse missile interception technology" conducted "within its territory". It was defensive in nature and targeted at no country, she said.

The test "is just a game about the US sales of weapons to Taiwan; about the non-proliferation of missiles; and about the prevention of an arms race in outer space between the US and China." according to Li Shouping, professor in international law at the School of Law of Beijing Institute of Technology and director of the Institute of Space Law.

The test was a direct response to the US Department of Defense decision on January 6 to sell weapons, including the Patriot III anti-missile system, to Taiwan, Li said in a commentary at the Res Communis web site. Since the sale would integrate Taiwan into the Theater Missile Defense System (TMD) of the US, the Chinese government thought it harmed the sovereignty of China and violated the principle in international law, he wrote. Li declined to respond to questions from Asia Times Online.

Professor Tan Kaijia, of the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) National Defense University told Xinhua news agency "If the ballistic missile is regarded as a spear, now we have succeeded in building a shield for self-defense."

The test was conducted within China's territory, "so the missile that intercepted the incoming target would not fly or [fall into] another country's territory, China had no obligation to declare the missile test, but doing so revealed that the military was becoming more transparent," Tan said.

Many missile experts contend that what China really carried out was a test of anti-satellite capabilities without actually shooting down a satellite.

"We still do not know exactly what happened, but the current hypothesis is that China tested the same system that it used to destroy a satellite in 2007, this time in an anti-ballistic missile mode. The technology is essentially the same," said Jeffrey Lewis, director of the Nuclear Strategy and Non-proliferation Initiative at the Washington DC-based New America Foundation.

Brian Weeden, technical advisor with the Colorado-based Secure World Foundation, says that while none of the objectives for the test are "apparent due to the opaqueness of the PRC [People's Republic of China] decision-making process," the ultimate objective of the test was as a strategic communication to the US.

"First, the timing of the test - exactly three years after the successful 2007 Chinese ASAT [anti-satellite weapon] test - indicates that whatever motivated China to do the ASAT test has not gone away," said Weeden. "Some have argued that the Chinese ASAT test was an attempt to push the US towards serious negotiations on a space weapons treaty in the Conference on Disarmament. Others have argued that it was a demonstration of Chinese capability to disrupt and degrade US space capabilities in the event of a Taiwan Strait conflict. Whatever the real reason or reasons were, it can be said that they still apply."

China implemented a significant change in the way it communicated this most recent test to the public which indicates that they learned a great deal from the strategic communications failure that took place after the 2007 ASAT test, according to Weeden. "It has gone way beyond the stoic silence displayed in 2007," he said.

"An objective [in 2010] for China was to see if it could carry out this sort of coordinated communications strategy and what sort of geopolitical response it would engender," said Weeden. "A large part of this learning came from watching how the US did strategic communications for the 2008 destruction of USA 193. While the USA 193 destruction was in fact a test of an anti-satellite system, the US went to extraordinary lengths to communicate that it was no such thing and that it was all about public safety. The US was also ahead of the curve, bringing the issue to the public spotlight itself with a coordinated communications strategy."

This test also enabled China to communicate that it too can develop an ASAT capability as a side effect of working on kinetic kill missile defense interceptors.

"This just further cements the fact that hit-to-kill technologies for both missile defense and ASAT are really the same capability. However, in the current geopolitical climate testing a hit-to-kill missile defense system is politically acceptable while testing a hit-to-kill ASAT system is not," said Weeden.

It has long been US policy to continue to develop technology for anti-satellite weapons while not actually building an operational system. This "hedging" strategy was seen as a way for the US to publicly state it opposed weapons in space while still having an option to deploy them.

"This Chinese test and the recent Indian announcement both indicate the flaw in that strategy: it allows other states to use the same policy to develop weapon systems that pose a threat to US space capabilities," said Weeden. "This flaw is not new, in fact it has been pointed out by arms control advocates for decades. But this flaw was derided by the missile defense and space weapons advocates in the US as overblown."

While the US Department of Defense complained it was not notified, the US was well aware the test was about to take place. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton admitted that the US had not been caught by surprise and dismissed the theory that China carried out the test in order to send the US a message over Taiwan.

"We have followed the Chinese development of aerospace capacity for quite some time, and this had been foreshadowed some weeks ago," said Clinton.

Since the November PLA Air Force [PLAAF] anniversary celebration, officials have stated that missile defense is part of the PLAAF's new doctrine of "integrated air-space offense and defense".

"It is possible that this service eventually will control not just a ground-based strategic anti-ballistic missile [ABM] force, but also laser-armed large aircraft capable of anti-satellite strikes, and a range of unmanned or manned space platforms to attack deeper space targets, like US DPS early warning satellites," said Richard Fisher, senior fellow at the Washington, DC-based International Assessment and Strategy Center.

Fisher asserts that the Chinese Communist Party and PLA leadership purposefully engages in political intimidation and the not-so-subtle transmission of deterrent messages during all of its military activities, including this month's test.

"But what is important for Japan and other US allies is that China's combination of its building a larger and more capable nuclear delivery force with the fielding of an increasingly capable missile defense force, will more rapidly

undermine the extended US nuclear deterrent that undergirds strategic stability in Asia," he said. "Absent an overwhelming nuclear deterrent, US non-nuclear forces in Asia become as much liabilities as assets."

Fisher sees broad and unwelcome implications in the test and warns about what is unfolding in the region as a whole. Should China elect to arm its new land and sea-based nuclear missiles with multiple warheads, it could easily achieve warhead numbers approaching the 500 to 1,000 that the Obama administration is reportedly considering as a second round of nuclear reductions with Russia.

"The likelihood that China could combine such a nuclear force with an ABM system means that Japan, South Korea, Australia and others are facing the surreal in 2010. If the Barack Obama administration remains committed to deep US warhead reductions then PLA missile defenses will erase the viability of extended US nuclear deterrent commitments twice as fast," said Fisher.

According to Gregory Kulacki, senior analyst and China project manager for the Global Security Program under the Union of Concerned Scientists, as US officials prepare the new US Space Posture Review to update US national security space policy and strategy, China's test this month will be closely scrutinized.

"[It] will drive home the importance of talking to China about missile defense and [anti-satellite] technologies before China completes the development of these interceptors and moves towards deployment," Kulacki told the Associated Press.

Dean Cheng, research fellow at the Washington, DC-based Heritage Foundation's Asian Studies Center, stated recently, "It would seem that Chinese concerns about US missile defense developments are more a reflection of concerns about being outpaced by American technological capability than foregoing a capability. Moreover, like the ASAT test, the anti-missile test reflects a steady, ongoing program that has reached a development milestone suitable for testing systems."

Cheng considers the test "a potential diplomatic opportunity for the US" and recommends "the US should make it clear that it will not object to the development and deployment of missile defense systems by China if China also adopts (a) broader defensive, non-threatening posture. It might signal this through, for example, a reduction in the number of missiles aimed at Taiwan as proposed by President Ma Ying-jeou."

Cheng also sees danger in what lies ahead: "On the other hand, Chinese interest in anti-missile systems should give pause to [US] efforts at eliminating global nuclear arms, because the Chinese continue to pursue a nuclear modernization program. If such a goal were to be seriously pursued, then at some point, the level of US nuclear forces would decline to such an extent that even a moderately effective anti-missile system could seriously affect deterrence and advance China's position to threaten others. Beijing, it would seem, is responding in deeds to the president's [Barack Obama's] words.

While it has not yet been confirmed that China used a mobile launch system to conduct its test, should that prove the case, it represents a very significant dimension.

"If a mobile launcher was used, it is certainly important since pre-launch targeting would be nearly impossible if this technology was used for missile defense or anti-satellite purposes," said Eric Hagt, China program director at the Washington, DC-based World Security Institute.

Among other things, this mobile defense capability would make US surveillance satellites increasingly vulnerable on flight paths over China.

"[It means that China's anti-missile systems are] not fixed targets that we could identify and either have our satellites avoid flying over or take measures before coming into the threat envelope," said Weeden of the Secure World Foundation.

In terms of missile defense, "If you are protecting against [inbound missiles] that are only covering several hundred kilometers, it is beneficial to be able to move your interceptors into the right position depending on which country you think the threat is coming from," said Weeden. "From China's perspective, if it was building a system to potentially defend against an Indian or Russian short to medium range ballistic missile attack, mobile interceptors could be useful."

If China's ICBMs and ABMs can be placed in concealed underground bases and rapidly deployed for attack and defense missions, it severely reduces the response time of the opposing national command authority, according to the International Assessment and Strategy Center's Fisher.

"China's development of a large number of 'HQ-19' ABMs may signal that China's heretofore 'defensive' and 'retaliatory' nuclear doctrine has evolved to include a range of offensive nuclear attack operations," said Fisher. "The

implication of such a PLA evolution is that in order to deter China and meet other security requirements, the US and Russia may require a much higher nuclear warhead inventory than the Obama administration may seeking as part of a second round of nuclear weapons reductions."

Beyond that, Fisher sees a much grander strategy unfolding in outer space.

"It should also be expected that the PLA will soon build on China's early Chang'e unmanned moon missions by placing a range of unmanned sensors or even weapons on the moon to better enable attacks against US deep space assets," said Fisher.

That may seem a bit far-fetched to many readers.

However, China is not backing off, while the US is intent on maintaining the security of Taiwan. Tensions are not going to subside especially when China is so determined to build increasingly sophisticated weapons systems to counter the US in particular.

Is China's anti-missile system as good or as reliable as the systems now deployed by the US - both on land and at sea? Probably not, but it is a significant development nonetheless. China wants the world to know that this is an impressive achievement, and that there will be many more in the years to come.

Peter J Brown is a satellite journalist from the US state of Maine.

<http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/LA20Ad01.html>

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Reuters India
ANALYSIS
January 20, 2010

China's Support for More Iran Sanctions In Doubt

By Louis Charbonneau

UNITED NATIONS (Reuters) - Underneath the declarations that six key world powers are united in their push for new U.N. sanctions against Iran over its nuclear program, Western capitals fear that China may be breaking ranks.

But the United States and its Western allies hope Russia's support for ratcheting up the pressure on Iran will help to persuade China, a veto-wielding permanent member of the U.N. Security Council, not to block new measures against Tehran.

Representatives from the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China met in New York on Saturday to discuss prospects for further punitive steps against Iran, but China made clear it opposed more punitive action for now.

Five members of the group and the European Union sent senior officials -- so-called "political directors" -- to the meeting. But China sent a low-level diplomat from its U.N. mission, which Western diplomats said was a virtual snub.

No decisions were taken at the meeting which Russian delegate Sergei Ryabkov described as "inconclusive."

After Saturday's three-hour meeting, senior EU official Robert Cooper summarized the discussions.

"The group remains united and underlines its unity and remains committed to the two-track approach," Cooper said. "We will continue to seek a negotiated solution, but consideration of appropriate further measures has also begun."

Cooper's statement implied that China, too, remained committed to the "two-track approach" -- a combination of engaging Iran while pursuing sanctions to pressure it to halt sensitive atomic activities, such as uranium enrichment.

Iran refuses to halt its enrichment work, which Western nations fear is at the heart of a secret atomic weapons program. Tehran says its nuclear ambitions are limited to the peaceful generation of electricity.

But several participants in the meeting said it was no longer clear that Beijing would vote for a new sanctions resolution if it was put to a vote at the Security Council.

CHINA PLAYS "HARD TO GET"

Western diplomats and analysts, however, said that China's willingness to continue to participate in discussions on Iran sanctions meant that Beijing was eager to stay with the group and might be persuaded not to veto any new measures.

"It looks like the Chinese are playing hard to get," said Mark Fitzpatrick of the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London. "They are strutting their newfound role of global kingmaker, and they are peeved at the coming U.S. arms sales to Taiwan."

"They also sincerely believe that sanctions won't help resolve the nuclear crisis with Iran and they worry that moving further down the sanctions path could harm China's energy security interests," he said.

Fitzpatrick said all depends on Russia. If Moscow backs a new sanctions resolution, China will not veto it. Even if China decides not to vote in favour of new sanctions, it could abstain and allow the Security Council to adopt new measures

German Chancellor Angela Merkel left open the possibility that the push for a new package of U.N. sanctions would not be successful, making clear that Berlin was ready to join in non-U.N. sanctions against the Islamic Republic if necessary.

"Germany will take part in sanctions (outside the U.N.) with other countries that are pursuing the same goal," Merkel told reporters in Berlin at a joint briefing with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Russia and China have strong commercial ties to Iran, which analysts and diplomats say is one of the reasons they worked hard to dilute proposed measures in three previous sanctions resolutions before the Security Council approved them.

After softening the proposed measures, Russia and China voted in favour of all three resolutions.

Unlike China, Russia has made clear that it will support a fourth round of sanctions against Iran, albeit not tough ones.

Diplomats said Tehran's rejection of a U.N. proposal that Russia take Iran's low-enriched uranium and enrich it further for use in a Tehran research reactor that makes medical isotopes deeply annoyed Russia, as did revelations about a new enrichment site near Qom that Iran hid from U.N. inspectors.

"The Russians used to be the ones slowing down the sanctions process," said one Western diplomat familiar with the outcome of Saturday's meeting. "Now it's the Chinese."

Diplomats who attended Saturday's meeting said they had not given up hope on the Chinese. Much will depend, they said, on whom Beijing chooses to replace Vice Foreign Minister He Yafei, who is being transferred to Geneva.

"We'll know more about China's position on Iran when we know who'll be its new political director," said one diplomat. "And we hope they don't take a long time to appoint one."

Delegates at Saturday's meeting said they hoped to continue their sanctions discussions by telephone later this month. They said negotiating a new resolution would take months.

But several Western diplomats said they wanted the process of negotiating a new sanctions resolution to be over by May, when signatories of the 1970 nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty gather at U.N. headquarters to discuss ways of upgrading the treaty to deal with threats like Iran and North Korea.

Key to maintaining the pressure on Iran, diplomats say, is keeping the six-power coalition on Iran intact. Since Saturday's meeting, Iran has already begun contacting some of the six powers to assure them that it is ready to talk.

That, some diplomats say, is proof that the six powers have the ability to influence decision-makers in Iran.

<http://in.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idINIndia-45542620100120?sp=true>

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

OPINION & ANALYSIS

January 21, 2010

Cold Spell In Russian-Iranian Relations

By Vladimir Yevseyev for RIA Novosti

MOSCOW - On January 19 of this year Iran's government prohibited a Russian plane carrying a Su-27SKM fighter (a modernized export version of the basic model) from flying over its territory to Bahrain, which was hosting the Bahrain International Airshow (BIAS-2010). Although permission was granted by the end of the day, this indicates a cooling, rather than merely an annoying misunderstanding, in Russian-Iranian steadily developing relations.

The first signs of deterioration appeared in the middle of last June when blatant electoral fraud sparked widespread unrest in the Islamic Republic. Several days later Yekaterinburg played host to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit, at which Iran has observer status. At the summit Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad put Russia in an awkward position by forcing it to recognize his victory in the elections. This in turn drew fierce criticism of Moscow from the Iranian opposition. However, Russia supported Ahmadinejad with a view to developing a relationship of trust, particularly in such sensitive areas as the arms trade and the nuclear power industry.

Another event indicating that a chill was in the air took place in late September when President Dmitry Medvedev learned, from his American counterpart, about the secret construction of a new uranium-enrichment plant near Qom, a Shiite holy city in Iran. Russia started to doubt the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program. For a long time Russia had not only saved Iran from tough Security Council sanctions but also continued cooperating with Iran in the nuclear power industry, despite strong Western pressure. As a consequence, Medvedev had to agree to the potential imposition of sanctions on Iran.

An opportunity to improve bilateral relations appeared at the first seven-party talks (the five permanent members of the Security Council plus Germany and Iran) that took place in Geneva on October 1, 2009. Tehran agreed to the inspection of the facility under construction in Qom and that took place in late October.

Furthermore, a package of proposals on enriching Iran's low enriched uranium (LEU) abroad was drafted by representatives of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Iran, France, Russia and the United States in Vienna on October 21.

This package satisfies Iran's national interests because the relevant Security Council resolutions prevent Iran from buying nuclear fuel abroad. In addition, in October Moscow hoped to step up its military technical cooperation with Iran, in particular, to supply it with five battalions of S-300 PMU1 medium- and long-range air defense missiles. A contract to this effect was signed several years ago but politics impeded its implementation.

When Tehran agreed to export considerable amounts of stockpiled nuclear materials, the mood throughout the international community lightened. This proved essential for Russia. However, Iran started undermining the deal with a view to keeping LEU on its territory. After enriching the LEU Iran could produce more than 60 kg of weapons-grade uranium (25 kg are enough for one nuclear bomb).

Moreover, Tehran expressed its obvious mistrust of Moscow by agreeing that its LEU under IAEA control should go to Turkey rather than Russia. It started adding new terms to the deal, making its implementation increasingly difficult.

These tensions in Russian-Iranian relations were further exacerbated in December when Ahmadinejad instructed his administration to assess the damage done to his country in the 1940s by the members of the anti-Nazi coalition: the Soviet Union, the United States and Britain. No doubt, this was done with a view to making financial claims to these three countries.

The future for bilateral relations does not look bright. Before long, IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano is likely to publish a tougher report on Iran. Tehran continues to support such radical Islamic groups as Lebanon's Hezbollah, the Palestinian Hamas and Islamic Jihad, and rarely plays a positive role in resolving Iraqi, Afghan, Lebanese and Yemeni problems. The absence of strong economic contacts and the Iranian opposition's negative attitude to Moscow make the prospect of better relations even more unlikely.

Vladimir Yevseyev is a research fellow with the International Security Center at the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of World Economy and International Relations

The opinions expressed in this article are the author's and do not necessarily represent those of RIA Novosti.

<http://en.rian.ru/analysis/20100121/157638216.html>

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