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Washington Post  
3 February 2010

## **US, Russia Nearing Nuclear Arms Control Agreement**

By ANGELA CHARLTON  
The Associated Press

PARIS -- The first major U.S.-Russian nuclear arms control treaty in nearly two decades should be ready for signing by the end of March, a senior Russian legislator said Wednesday.

President Barack Obama's top arms control official, U.S. Undersecretary of State Ellen Tauscher, said the talks toward a successor agreement to the now-expired 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty are "in the endgame."

U.S. and Russian officials said last year that they would sign a new treaty by the end of December, but talks have dragged on.

Moscow and Washington both want to reach a new accord as quickly as possible to give credibility to their efforts to persuade Iran and North Korea to abandon their nuclear programs.

START required each country to cut nuclear warheads by about one-fourth to about 6,000 and implement procedures for verifying the reductions. President Barack Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev agreed in July to cut the number of nuclear warheads each country has to between 1,500 and 1,675 under a new treaty.

One of the hang-ups has been including missile defense issues in a new accord. If completed, the new deal may arguably be the farthest-reaching arms control treaty since the original 1991 agreement. An interim deal reached in 2002 did not include its own rules on verifying nuclear reductions.

Speaking to The Associated Press during a nuclear disarmament conference in Paris, Mikhail Margelov, the Kremlin-connected head of the foreign affairs committee in Russia's upper house of parliament, said Obama and Medvedev would sign a new treaty "by the end of the first quarter."

"This is not a political question, it is a technical question," he said. "We are fine-tuning and polishing details."

In Moscow, Medvedev's foreign policy advisor Sergei Prikhodko said "March or April is a realistic target," according to Russian news agencies.

Both sides say they will abide by the old START treaty, which expired Dec. 5, until a new one is signed.

Tauscher showed no sign of readiness to abandon the U.S. nuclear deterrent.

"Nuclear disarmament is not the Holy Grail," she said. "As long as we see the rise of nuclear weapons in other countries we will maintain a deterrence that is second to none."

*Associated Press writer Vladimir Isachenkov in Moscow contributed to this report.*

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/02/03/AR2010020300357.html>

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency  
3 February 2010

## **Russia, U.S. May Sign New Arms Cuts Treaty In March-Apr. - Kremlin**

Russia and the United States may sign a nuclear arms reduction pact to replace the outdated START treaty in March or April, the Russian president's aide said on Wednesday.

"The wordings have been mainly agreed on, some minor disagreements remain," Sergei Prikhodko said.

Disagreements over verification and control procedures prevented Moscow and Washington from signing a new deal before the New Year break to replace the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START 1), which expired on December 5.

President Dmitry Medvedev and his U.S. counterpart Barack Obama ordered a speedy completion of the deal last week. A new round of talks on the treaty began on Monday.

Another Kremlin official said on condition of anonymity on Wednesday that U.S. experts close to the negotiations have named Prague as a possible venue for the signing of the deal.

"Moscow has not rejected the choice," he said. "The treaty is likely to be signed in a third country."

The Bush administration wanted to place a radar base in the Czech Republic as part of its controversial missile shield plans for Europe. Moscow considered the scheme a threat to its national security. The plans were abandoned by Obama last year.

Medvedev and Obama pledged at their first meeting in April 2009 to replace the START I treaty as part of broader efforts to "reset" bilateral ties strained in recent years.

The Kremlin official also said the new treaty will heed Moscow's concerns about the U.S. missile defense plans, but did not elaborate further.

The United States dropped an earlier plan for an antimissile defense system in Europe, which also included an interceptor missile base in Poland, earning a strong welcome from Moscow. But last month, Washington said it was dispatching Patriot missiles to Poland, the former Soviet-bloc state and now a NATO nation.

Russia has been alarmed by the growing NATO presence on its western borders and threatened to respond to any change in the military balance on the borders.

A senior Russian lawmaker, meanwhile, flew to the United States on Wednesday to prepare a coordinated ratification of a new strategic arms reduction treaty.

The new treaty's outline, as agreed on by the Russian and U.S. leaders, includes cutting nuclear arsenals to 1,500-1,675 operational warheads and delivery vehicles to 500-1,000.

MOSCOW, February 3 (RIA Novosti)

<http://en.rian.ru/russia/20100203/157762730.html>

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Wall Street Journal  
3 February 2010

## **U.S., Russia Agree To Nuclear-Arms Accord**

*First Such Pact in Nearly Two Decades Would Cut Number of Warheads, Limit Missiles and Bombers Delivering Them*

By JONATHAN WEISMAN

WASHINGTON—U.S. and Russian arms-control negotiators have reached an "agreement in principle" on the first nuclear-arms-reduction treaty in nearly two decades, administration and arms-control officials said Tuesday.

The deal, which was widely expected, would bring down deployed nuclear warheads and sharply limit the number of missiles and bombers that can deliver them.

Rose Gottemoeller, the Obama administration's lead negotiator, flew to Geneva Monday to help draft the final text and begin what could still be an arduous process of translating the agreement into treaty language, an administration official said.

"There may be finessing and fine-tuning, but the issues, from our perspective, are all addressed," the official added.

The deal would bring the ceiling for deployed nuclear weapons down to between 1,500 and 1,675 per side, from the 2,200 agreed to in 1991, but nuclear-delivery systems would fall more sharply, to between 700 and 800 each from the current limit of 1,600. In fact, both sides have already reduced their nuclear-armed bombers, submarines and missiles to below 1,000.

Daryl Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association, a Washington-based advocacy group, said the agreement is a milestone, the first arms-control treaty to not only set goals on warhead deployments but also to establish strict limits, with verification measures to hold each side to those limits.

After a series of foreign-policy setbacks, the White House hopes the accord will give President Barack Obama some momentum as he presses ahead with efforts to isolate Iran and North Korea. A Dec. 31 deadline for Tehran to come to the table on nuclear issues slipped, so far without consequence. Efforts to resume Israeli-Palestinian peace talks are stuck. But the president has wanted some success ahead of a nuclear-proliferation summit in Washington in April.

"At our Nuclear Security Summit in April, we will rally nations behind the goal of securing the world's vulnerable nuclear materials in four years," Mr. Obama said in a statement Tuesday that was read at a "Global Zero" nuclear-arms summit in Paris.

The breakthrough on a follow-on treaty to the now-lapsed Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty came two weeks ago when National Security Adviser James Jones and Adm. Michael Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, went to Moscow to work through two issues on verification, the sharing of data on missile flight tests and inspections at missile production facilities, White House officials said.

The deal was approved in principle last week during a phone conversation between Mr. Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev.

Under the agreement, the Russians will share flight-test data, something they had resisted as they develop more-modern ballistic missiles. But monitoring of a key ballistic-missile site in Russia, which ended in 2008, won't resume, according to officials familiar with the accord.

A senior Russian official said major issues are getting resolved and talks are "in the home stretch." The Kremlin is hopeful a deal could be finalized in a few weeks, the official said. The U.S. administration official cautioned that the final drafting could take a week to two months.

When the U.S. and Russian presidents announced the arms-control talks last April, they set a deadline of Dec. 5 to complete them. That deadline slipped, and White House aides are hesitant to declare victory now.

—Gregory L. White in Moscow and Jay Solomon in Washington contributed to this article.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB20001424052748703338504575041562540396530.html>

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Financial Times – U.K.

3 February 2010

## **US Says It Cannot Force Iran To Shun Bomb**

By Daniel Dombey in Washington, Najmeh Bozorgmehr in Tehran and Andrew England in Abu Dhabi

The US said on Tuesday that it could not forcibly prevent Iran from developing nuclear arms, but that it still hoped to dissuade Tehran from building a bomb.

On a day when Washington sought to make sense of favourable comments from Mahmoud Ahmadi-Nejad, president of Iran, about a compromise previously spurned by Tehran, Dennis Blair, US national intelligence director, said the final decision about nuclear arms was Iran's to make.

Mr Blair said in Senate testimony that in spite of problems in enriching uranium, the progress of Iran's nuclear programme bolstered the US belief "that Iran is technically capable of producing enough highly enriched uranium for a weapon in the next few years if it chooses to do so".

Other US officials were seeking clarification on Mr Ahmadi-Nejad's remarks about a deal offered by the US and allies last year under which most of Tehran's low-enriched uranium would be sent abroad to be processed into fuel for a medical research reactor.

Mr Ahmadi-Nejad said on Tuesday that Iran would have "no problem" giving the west its low-enriched uranium and taking it back when it was enriched for use in the reactor. "We say, 'We will give you our 3.5 per cent enriched uranium and will get the fuel,' " Reuters news agency quoted him as saying. "It may take four to five months until we get the fuel."

Iran had previously balked at the idea of handing over uranium unless fuel was returned straight away.

Despite Iranian protests that its atomic programme is peaceful, the US thinks it is intended to keep a weapons option open. Washington says processing Iran's stockpile for use in the medical reactor would make it harder to turn into weapons-grade material.

"The real question is, 'Are they serious?'" said a state department official. "The deal is on the table and if Iran is prepared to say yes, all they need to do is to call the International Atomic Energy Agency."

Meanwhile, Ali Larijani, the speaker of Iran's parliament, denounced US plans to enhance missile defence systems in the Gulf.

“The regional countries should know that the US puppet show to safeguard and create security in the region is nothing but new political charlatanism to prepare the ground to increase their presence,” Mr Larijani told parliament.

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/936968f0-1063-11df-a8e8-00144feab49a.html>

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Bangkok Post – Thailand  
February 3, 2010

## **Ahmadinejad Says Iran Willing To Ship Out Uranium**

Agence France-Presse (AFP)

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said Iran is willing to send its uranium abroad, in comments cautiously welcomed Wednesday by world powers as a possible sign Tehran might accept a UN-brokered nuclear fuel deal.

Iran would have "no problem" sending out its stocks of low-enriched uranium (LEU) to be further purified into reactor fuel, Ahmadinejad said in a television interview late on Tuesday.

His comments came ahead of an expected meeting of world powers on possible new sanctions against Tehran and after the expiry of a January 31 ultimatum for the West to accept Iran's conditions for a nuclear fuel swap.

"There is really no problem. Some made a fuss for nothing. There is no problem. We sign a contract. We give them (world powers) 3.5 percent (enriched uranium) and it will take four or five months for them to give us the 20 percent (enriched uranium)," Ahmadinejad said in a live interview on state television.

Russia, Iran's main nuclear trader, welcomed Ahmadinejad's latest remarks.

"If Iran is ready to come back to the original agreement (UN-drafted deal) we can only welcome it," Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said in Moscow.

Britain, meanwhile, said it would be a "positive sign" by Iran if it were prepared to take up an International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) offer to ship some uranium abroad, but stressed talks remain "the crucial issue."

"If Iran is willing to take up the IAEA's proposed offer, it would be a positive sign of their willingness to engage with the international community on nuclear issues," the Foreign Office said.

But it "does not change" the need for Iran to hold further talks with three European Union countries and China, United States and Russia, it added.

The United States reacted cautiously, saying Tehran should submit a formal offer of the deal to international authorities.

"If Mr. Ahmadinejad's comments reflect an updated Iranian position, we look forward to Iran informing the IAEA," White House official Mike Hammer said.

Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi said on Wednesday that it was "urgent" to continue negotiations, while German government spokesman Ulrich Wilhelm said it was now up to Tehran to make a "concrete" offer to the IAEA.

Iran's atomic chief Ali Akbar Salehi stressed that talks were still "ongoing" and there was "no final agreement" regarding the deal.

And Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki, after meeting with Turkish counterpart Ahmet Davutoglu in Ankara, said: "My personal opinion on this is positive ... That is why the continuation of negotiations and consultations will help us reach a good formula" for a settlement.

Iran needs nuclear fuel to power its UN-monitored reactor in Tehran but the West fears its uranium enrichment programme is masking efforts to produce atomic weapons -- claims vehemently denied by the Islamic republic.

The IAEA has proposed, in a bid to allay Western fears, that Tehran ship its LEU to Russia and France to be further purified into reactor fuel.

Iran agreed in principle to the offer during talks with world powers in Geneva in October, but later appeared to reject the deal and said it preferred a gradual swap for fuel -- preferably on Iranian soil.

It gave the West until January 31 to respond to its counter-proposals.

Ahmadinejad's latest remarks reiterate his original support of the IAEA-brokered deal and which he repeated during a December interview with AFP.

However, his time-frame of four or five months appears to fall short of the period of about a year experts say is needed for 3.5 percent LEU to be enriched to 20 percent.

The United States had said on Tuesday it hopes to consult with China and four other powers in coming days about Iran's nuclear ambitions in a bid to narrow the gap with Beijing over the need for further sanctions.

China is a close ally of Iran with oil interests in the country and is a permanent member of the UN Security Council. It is reluctant to further isolate Iran, which is already under three sets of UN sanctions over its nuclear programme.

<http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/world/167391/ahmadinejad-says-iran-willing-to-ship-out-uranium>

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Washington Post  
3 February 2010

## **Ahmadinejad Backs Deal To Remove Bulk Of Enriched Uranium From Iran**

By Thomas Erdbrink and Glenn Kessler  
Washington Post Staff Writer

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TEHRAN -- A long-dormant proposal to remove the bulk of Iran's enriched uranium from the Islamic republic appeared to be revived Tuesday as President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said Iran had "no problem" with a deal initially brokered by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The deal, which Iran formally rejected weeks ago, would swap low-enriched uranium for fuel for a research reactor that produces medical isotopes. "If we allow them to take it, there is no problem," Ahmadinejad said on state TV. "We sign a contract to give 3.5 percent enriched uranium and receive 20 percent enriched ones after four or five months."

U.S. officials reacted cautiously to Ahmadinejad's remarks, which came a day after France assumed the presidency of the U.N. Security Council. France, along with the United States, Britain and Germany, are pushing hard for additional Security Council sanctions against Tehran for failing to agree to talks on its nuclear ambitions; any sudden interest in diplomacy by Iran might be intended to persuade China, a skeptic of sanctions, to block them, diplomats said. U.S. officials had viewed the proposal involving the research reactor as a test of whether a broader diplomatic deal could be broached on Iran's nuclear programs.

"There is still a deal on the table. The question is: Is he prepared to say yes," said State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley. He noted that when Iranian diplomats met with U.S. officials in Geneva in October, "they said yes, and then they said no."

Crowley said he was "unaware of a formal response" by Iran to the International Atomic Energy Agency changing its stance. "If Mr. Ahmadinejad's comments reflect an updated Iranian position, we look forward to Iran informing the IAEA," said White House spokesman Mike Hammer.

Iran's shift in tone came as Vice President Biden escalated U.S. rhetoric against Iran after a year of outreach. Biden said Tuesday that Iran's leaders are "sowing the seeds of their own destruction" by cracking down harshly on political opponents.

Asked in an MSNBC interview whether it is time to think about regime change in Iran, Biden said that "the very people marching" in anti-government demonstrations are "thinking about regime change."

The United States has "moved in the right direction in a measured way" to impose sanctions on Iran over its nuclear program, Biden said. "We're going to end up much better off than we would have if we tried to go in there and just physically changed the regime."

Meanwhile, Iran responded angrily to U.S. moves to expand land- and sea-based missile defense systems in and around the Persian Gulf to deter any Iranian attack, calling the rationale "an excuse" to widen U.S. influence in the region. Iranian officials accused the United States of creating "Iran-phobia" in the region and emphasized Iran's good relations with neighboring countries.

Ahmadinejad has made positive remarks before about the nuclear swap, which was initially supported by Iranian nuclear negotiators -- who officially report to him as head of the Supreme National Security Council. In October, after the Geneva meeting, Ahmadinejad called the negotiations "positive" and "a step forward," according to Iranian state television's Web site.

After the proposal was made public, it was severely criticized by influential lawmakers, the leading pro-government newspaper and the former top nuclear negotiator, who said the West would keep the low-enriched nuclear material to sabotage Iran's atomic progress.

In response, the Foreign Ministry asked the United States, France and Russia -- the countries involved in the deal -- for more guarantees that the enriched fuel would be delivered. Iran first said it wanted to swap the material inside Iran. Later it proposed sending a smaller amount of low-enriched uranium in batches to third countries.

After the Security Council reprimanded Iran in November, saying it had been slow to report a second nuclear enrichment site, Ahmadinejad called the initial swap idea "a lost opportunity" and demanded a trade inside Iran. "We cannot trade the prestige of the Islamic Republic and squander it," Ahmadinejad said during a TV interview broadcast on state television.

The fuel is needed to operate a 40-year-old U.S.-supplied nuclear research reactor in Tehran that produces medical isotopes crucial for diagnosis and treatment for an estimated 850,000 kidney, heart and cancer patients. Doctors, nuclear scientists and officials in Iran warn that domestic production will dry up when the research reactor runs out of fuel, perhaps as soon as this spring.

*Kessler reported from Washington.*

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/02/02/AR2010020200640.html>

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Khaleej Times – U.A.E.

3 February 2010

## **US Says Iran Should Send Nuclear Offer To IAEA**

Agence France-Presse (AFP)

WASHINGTON - The United States reacted cautiously Wednesday to a statement by Iran's president accepting a swap of enriched uranium for nuclear fuel, saying Tehran should submit a formal offer of the deal to international authorities.

"If Mr. (Mahmoud) Ahmadinejad's comments reflect an updated Iranian position, we look forward to Iran informing the IAEA," White House official Mike Hammer said, referring to the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency.

Ahmadinejad said late Tuesday that Iran was willing to send its uranium abroad in exchange for processed nuclear fuel — seemingly accepting a deal put forward by nations who fear Tehran is trying to develop nuclear weapons.

Iran would have "no problem" sending out its stocks of low-enriched uranium (LEU) to be further purified into reactor fuel for use at a research facility, Ahmadinejad said in a television interview.

Hammer, spokesman for President Barack Obama's National Security Council, said the West had made a "good faith and balanced offer" that would provide Iran with fuel for a research reactor.

"We believe it makes sense for all parties," he said.

Iran needs nuclear fuel to power its UN-monitored reactor but the West fears its uranium enrichment programme is masking efforts to produce atomic weapons — claims vehemently denied by the Islamic republic.

The IAEA has proposed, in a bid to allay Western fears about Iran's atomic ambitions, that Tehran ship out its low-enriched uranium (LEU) to Russia and France to be further purified into reactor fuel.

Iran, which agreed in principle to the offer during talks with world powers in Geneva in October, later appeared to reject the deal and said it preferred a gradual swap of LEU with fuel — preferably on Iranian soil.

It gave the West until January 31 to respond to its counter-proposals.

[http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle09.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2010/February/middleeast\\_February86.xml&section=middleeast](http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle09.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2010/February/middleeast_February86.xml&section=middleeast)

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Boston Globe  
3 February 2010

## Europe Offers Skeptical Reaction To Iran Nuke Plan

By Elaine Ganley, Associated Press Writer

PARIS --European powers reacted skeptically Wednesday to Iran's offer to send uranium abroad for enrichment, questioning the sincerity of the bid to end Iran's showdown with the West.

French Foreign Ministry Bernard Kouchner said he saw the surprise Iranian gesture as stalling rather than responding to an international offer that, if rejected, could lead to a new round of sanctions.

"My (personal) interpretation is that they are buying us time and they are losing it" themselves, Kouchner said at a joint press briefing with China's foreign minister. "I am perplexed and even a bit pessimistic."

German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle told journalists that "Iran has to be measured by its actions, not by what it says."

"It is up to Iran to show an end to its refusal to negotiate," he said.

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said Tuesday that Iran was ready to send its uranium abroad for further enrichment as requested by the United Nations. An International Atomic Energy Agency proposal last year envisaged Iran sending low-enriched uranium to Russia and then to France for further enrichment and then processing into metal fuel rods for use in a research reactor in Tehran. It was aimed at lowering international tensions between Iran and the countries negotiating over its nuclear program -- the U.S., China, Russia, Britain, France and Germany.

Britain's Foreign office said Wednesday that: "We have always supported the proposal that the IAEA made in October. If Iran is now indicating that they will take it up we look forward to them making that clear to the IAEA."

Russia and China, which has taken over the presidency of the U.N. Security Council, have been reticent about voting a fourth round of sanctions on Iran. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said last week that she and others who support additional sanctions on Iran over its disputed nuclear program are lobbying China to back new U.N. penalties on the Iranian government.

Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jieche stressed the need to continue negotiations with Iran and come up with a quick diplomatic solution.

"We want a consensus as soon as possible," he said.

It was unclear how much of a concession the Ahmadinejad comments represented.

He appeared to be saying for the first time that Iran was willing to ship out its enriched uranium and wait for it to be returned in the form of fuel for its Tehran research reactor. But his time frame of four or five months appeared to fall short of the year that Western officials say it would take for Iran's enriched fuel to be turned into fuel rods for the reactor.

"If Iran is willing to revert to the plan agreed upon earlier, we will only welcome this," Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said at a news conference: "We want to verify this information now."

Iran's foreign minister said the plan to send its uranium abroad was aimed at building confidence in the country's nuclear program.

Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said in Turkey that swapping low-enriched uranium with uranium enriched by 20 percent was "a formula which could build confidence."

*Associated Press Writer Juergen Baetz in Berlin contributed to this report.*

[http://www.boston.com/news/world/europe/articles/2010/02/03/europe\\_offers\\_skeptical\\_reaction\\_to\\_iran\\_nuke\\_plan/](http://www.boston.com/news/world/europe/articles/2010/02/03/europe_offers_skeptical_reaction_to_iran_nuke_plan/)

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London Times – U.K.  
3 February 2010

## Mixed Signals As Iran Launches Rocket Into Space

By Philippe Naughton

Iran successfully launched a can of worms into space today, prompting a jubilant President Ahmadinejad to brag that the Islamic Republic would soon be sending its own astronauts to orbit Earth.

About a dozen worms joined a rat and two turtles in a research capsule aboard a Kavoshgar-3 satellite-carrying rocket launched this morning as part of an ambitious Iranian space programme that has worried Western experts who fear the same technology could be used to deliver atomic warheads.

France reacted to the rocket launch with "great concern". A Foreign Ministry spokesman said: "This announcement can only reinforce the concerns of the international community as Iran in parallel develops a nuclear programme that has no identifiable civil aims."

Paradoxically, the launch came only a few hours after Mr Ahmadinejad suggested that Iran would be willing to go back to a UN-brokered deal it rejected last year and send its low-enriched uranium for processing abroad. The proposal was given a cautious welcome in Western capitals.

Iranian state television showed footage of the Kavoshgar rocket being fired from a desert launchpad. A few minutes later the grainy images showed the capsule detaching from the rocket and spinning off into orbit – although there were no details of its fate after that. The station reported that the rocket had "the ability to send back empirical data".

State television also carried pictures of Mr Ahmadinejad unveiling another home-built rocket dubbed the *Simorgh* (phoenix). The milk-bottle shaped rocket, emblazoned in blue with the words "Satellite Carrier Simorgh", is equipped to carry a 100kg (220lb) satellite 500km (310 miles) into orbit.

At the ceremony, at which he also unveiled three home-built satellites, Mr Ahmadinejad hailed the progress Iran was making in its space programme and said that it was only through science that it could "break the global domineering system".

"It is a great job that living organisms can be sent into space – we do experiments on them and they return to Earth," the President said. "We are going to send a satellite 500km up."

"The next steps are 700km and 1,000km. Everyone knows that reaching the 1,000km orbit allows you to reach all orbits."

"This was a huge breakthrough... and we hope we can send our own astronauts into space soon."

Iran launched its first home-built satellite, *Omid* (hope), in February last year to coincide with the 30th anniversary of the Islamic revolution. The previous year it launched two rockets – *Kavoshgar* (Explorer) and *Kavoshgar 2*, although neither was carrying any payload.

Tehran has said that it wants to put satellites into orbit to monitor natural disasters in the earthquake-prone nation and improve its telecommunications, but it is already locked in a stand-off with the West over its nuclear programme – which it insists is for the generation of electricity – and its technological advances have set alarm bells ringing.

Mr Ahmadinejad did not mention the nuclear issue at today's ceremony, but in a television interview last night he confirmed that Iran was willing to ship some uranium abroad for enrichment.

"There is really no problem. Some made a fuss for nothing. There is no problem. We sign a contract," he said.

But Mr Ahmadinejad set a timeframe of four or five months for that further enrichment – far less than the year that Western officials say it would take for Iran's enriched uranium to be turned into fuel.

Mr Ahmadinejad did not address whether his country was ready to ship out most of its stockpile in one batch – another condition set by the six world powers endorsing the fuel swap. If Iran were to agree to export most of its enriched uranium in one shipment, it would delay its ability to make a nuclear weapon by stripping it of the material it needs to make the fissile core of a warhead.

The United States has been trying to persuade its partners, including China, to agree to the imposition of sanctions against Iran over its nuclear stance.

At the White House, the National Security Council spokesman Mike Hammer said that the United States had made "a good faith and balanced offer regarding the Tehran research reactor".

He added: "If Mr Ahmadinejad's comments reflect an updated Iranian position, we look forward to Iran informing the IAEA."

The Foreign Office welcomed Mr Ahmadinejad's comment as potentially a "positive sign", but said that Iran must return to talks with the "E3+3" group, which includes representatives from Britain, France, Germany, Russia, China and the US.

"That remains the crucial issue in terms of addressing serious international concern about their nuclear programme," a spokesman said.

[http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/middle\\_east/article7013280.ece](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/middle_east/article7013280.ece)

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New York Times  
5 February 2010

## **China Renews Opposition To Iran Sanctions**

By ALAN COWELL

PARIS — Reflecting a growing catalog of disputes between Washington and Beijing, a senior Chinese official said Thursday that pressure for tighter sanctions against Iran over its nuclear program could block chances of a diplomatic settlement to the dispute.

The official, Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi, was speaking in Paris less than a week after Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton rebuked China over its opposition to stronger measures against Tehran, saying Beijing's position was shortsighted.

Since then, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran has been reported to be reiterating support for a deal under which Iran would allow its low-enriched nuclear fuel to be exported for processing into nuclear fuel rods — prompting some skepticism in Europe and the United States about his motives.

"Iran has to be measured by its actions, not by what it says," Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle of Germany said Wednesday.

The issue also arose during a visit to Paris by Mr. Yang, who was quoted on Thursday as telling reporters, "To talk about sanctions at the moment will complicate the situation and might stand in the way of finding a diplomatic solution."

His remarks, quoted by Reuters, seemed a direct rebuff of efforts by the United States to secure broad international support for tougher penalties against Iran's Revolutionary Guards, accused by the West of running a covert nuclear arms program. Tehran says the program is for peaceful civilian purposes only.

"China firmly supports the international nuclear nonproliferation regime," Mr. Yang said. "All countries, Iran included if they obey I.A.E.A. rules, have a right to a peaceful use of nuclear energy." The I.A.E.A. — the International Atomic Energy Agency — is the United Nations' nuclear watchdog, based in Vienna.

The differences over Iran coincide with a plethora of other disputes.

In recent days, China has objected to plans by President Obama to meet with the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan spiritual leader, and to American weapons sales to Taiwan. Mrs. Clinton has also criticized China for censoring the Internet and the United States has challenged China on trade and financial issues.

The latest Iranian moves in the nuclear dispute have puzzled some of the Western countries — the United States, Britain, France and Germany — who form a group of countries along with China and Russia seeking to end the standoff.

"I am perplexed and even a little pessimistic," the French foreign minister, Bernard Kouchner, said on Wednesday, referring to Mr. Ahmadinejad's reported offer to meet the demand for low-enriched uranium to be exported for processing.

News reports quoted the Iranian leader as saying on Tuesday: "There is really no problem. Some made a fuss for nothing. There is no problem." But, while Western experts say it would take a year to complete the process, Mr. Ahmadinejad said it would take "four or five months."

Some Western officials said Mr. Ahmadinejad may be trying to buy time or dilute pressure for tougher penalties imposed by the United Nations. His remarks seemed to contradict earlier Iranian statements rejecting the deal to

send low-enriched uranium abroad, and they did not address a dispute over how it should be sent — either in a single batch, as international powers want, or in several, smaller batches, as Iran wishes.

In Vienna the atomic agency said it would not comment on Mr. Ahmadinejad's offer. Diplomats with knowledge of the situation said Iran had not formally confirmed its position to the agency, apparently preferring to make its views known through public channels such as interviews and statements to the state-run media.

*Steven Erlanger and Nadim Audi contributed reporting.*

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/05/world/middleeast/05iran.html>

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Washington Post  
5 February 2010

## **Iran Using Tricks On Nuclear Program: German For Min**

Reuters

BERLIN (Reuters) - Iran has been using delaying tactics instead of taking action to resolve the dispute over its nuclear program, German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle said on Friday.

Westerwelle told Deutschlandfunk radio that Iran would be judged by its actions and not by its words, and that only a serious return to negotiations would prevent further measures such as sanctions being imposed on the Islamic Republic.

"For the past two years Iran has repeatedly bluffed and played tricks," Westerwelle said.

"It has played for time and of course we in the international community cannot accept a nuclear-armed Iran."

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said on Tuesday his country was ready to send low-enriched uranium (LEU) abroad to be converted into fuel for a Tehran nuclear medicine reactor to show its nuclear aims were purely peaceful.

On Thursday, China said this signaled a shift in Iran's position which meant it was worth continuing negotiations rather than discussing broader sanctions against Tehran.

But diplomats said Iran had not conveyed any change in its stance to the U.N.'s International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

"A nuclear armed Iran would not only be a threat for the countries in the region, it would above all preoccupy the international community and threaten stability with a nuclear arms race," Westerwelle said.

Westerwelle will meet his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov later on Friday, before heading to the three-day Munich Security Conference where he will join top European and U.S. diplomats discussing global defense and security issues.

"Of course we will talk about this in Munich, and if Iran brings new proposals to the table, then we will also talk about them. But actions must follow," he said.

(Reporting by Brian Rohan, Michael Nienaber; editing by Philippa Fletcher)

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/02/05/AR2010020500507.html>

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency  
5 February 2010

## **Russia Urges Iran To Respond To Uranium Enrichment Compromise**

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov sent a tough warning to Iran on Friday, saying its nuclear program could be discussed at the UN Security Council if Tehran fails to respond to Western compromises.

"We reaffirmed that if we see no constructive response from Iran, we will have to discuss the issue at the UN Security Council," Lavrov said following talks in Berlin with his German counterpart Guido Westerwelle.

Iran may face a fourth set of Security Council sanctions over its uranium enrichment activities, which Western powers fear are aimed at building nuclear weapons. Tehran insists its nuclear program is designed for peaceful power generation.

Lavrov said on Friday he will meet with Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki later in the day in Munich. Lavrov said he will press for "steps to make sure Iran's nuclear program is purely civilian."

Westerwelle said Iran must show willingness for transparency.

Mottaki is to attend the Munich Security Conference, which starts on Friday and involves senior world politicians and officials.

Russia, a veto-wielding Security Council member, has been involved in the long-running nuclear dispute with Iran. Another crucial player, China, has been reluctant to back tougher sanctions.

Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi said on Thursday discussions on sanctions would "complicate the situation and might stand in the way of finding a diplomatic solution."

The United States and France have spearheaded the six international mediators' drive for new sanctions against Iran, which missed a deadline to accept a deal proposed by the UN nuclear watchdog.

Iranian leader Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, however, indicated on Tuesday a possible change in Tehran's position saying Iran has "no problem" with shipping out its low enriched uranium abroad for further enrichment into 20% fuel for its nuclear research reactor.

BERLIN, February 5 (RIA Novosti)

<http://en.rian.ru/russia/20100205/157782815.html>

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Daily NK – South Korea

3 February 2010

## **Kim Seeks Nuclear Status, Says U.S. Intelligence Chief**

By Chris Green

Faced with low soldier morale, obsolete equipment, weak command and control systems and a gaping chasm between the North Korean People's Army and its South Korean equivalent, Kim Jong Il has become reliant on North Korea's nuclear program for deterrence, while his main goal is to get that nuclear capacity recognized by the international community, according to an annual report from Dennis C. Blair, the Director of National Intelligence in the U.S.

"Although there are other reasons for the North to pursue its nuclear program," the report claims, "redressing conventional weaknesses is a major factor and one that Kim and his likely successors will not easily dismiss."

According to the report, "Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community for the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence," Kim Jong Il wishes to gain recognition as a nuclear power and, to that end, Pyongyang's current willingness to engage in discussion with the international community has come about as a result of Pyongyang's perception that its nuclear and missile tests have given it an "enhanced negotiating position," which it is seeking to take advantage of.

An official intelligence assessment of this sort represents a blow to diplomatic efforts to negotiate away Kim's nuclear capacity, which are currently stalled as North Korea vacillates over the details of any return to the Six-Party Talks.

The report also reveals the scale of U.S. concerns over North Korea's proliferation efforts, noting that North Korea represents a "serious threat to the security environment in East Asia." Citing missile exports to both Iran and Pakistan and the probable building of a small nuclear reactor in Syria which was destroyed by Israeli aircraft in 2007, the report says that the U.S. intelligence community remains "alert to the possibility North Korea could again export nuclear technology," and casts serious doubt on whether the North's Six-Party Talks non-proliferation commitment of 2007 would hinder Pyongyang's willingness to do so.

<http://www.dailynk.com/english/read.php?cataId=nk00100&num=5979>

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Yonhap News – South Korea  
3 February 2010

## **U.S. Not To Accept N. Korea As Nuclear Weapons State: Blair**

By Hwang Doo-hyong

WASHINGTON, Feb. 2 (Yonhap) -- The United States Tuesday said it will not accept North Korea as a nuclear weapons status, although it is seeking that status through demonstration of its nuclear and missile capabilities.

"We judge Kim Jong-il seeks recognition of North Korea as a nuclear weapons power by the U.S. and the international community," Dennis Blair, director of National Intelligence, told a Senate Select Committee on Intelligence hearing. "Pyongyang's intent in pursuing dialogue at time time is to take advantage of what it perceives as an enhanced negotiating position, having demonstrated its nuclear and missile capabilities."

North Korea has boycotted the six-party talks on ending its nuclear ambitions citing U.N. sanctions for its nuclear and missile tests early last year, but recently reached out to the U.S. and South Korea, hinting at the possibility of returning to the nuclear talks.

Pyongyang, however, demanded that sanctions be lifted and a peace treaty be signed to replace a an armistice that ended the 1950-53 Korean War.

North Korea's second nuclear test in May last year is widely seen as having demonstrated its nuclear capability unlike one in 2006, which is seen as a partial failure.

"We judge North Korea has tested two nuclear devices, and while we do not know whether the North has produced nuclear weapons, we asses it has the capability to do so," Blair said. "It remains our policy that we will not accept North Korea as a nuclear weapons state, and we assess that other countries in the region remain committed to the denuclearization of North Korea as has been reflected in the six-party talks."

The chief U.S. intelligence officer said that "The North's October 2006 nuclear test was consistent with our long-standing assessment that it had produced a nuclear device, although we judge the test itself to have been a partial failure based on its less-than-one-kiloton TNT equivalent yield."

On the second nuclear test, Blair said, it "supports its claim that it has been seeking to develop weapons, and with a yield of roughly a few kilotons TNT equivalent, was apparently more successful than the 2006 test."

Turning to the North's claim that it has "entered the final stage" of enriching uranium as an another way to produce nuclear weapons than the plutonium produced in its only operating reactor in Yongbyon, north of its capital Pyongyang, Blair said, "The intelligence community continues to assess with high confidence North Korea has pursued a uranium enrichment capability in the past, which we assess was for weapons."

He also said that the North's poor conventional weapons capability led Pyongyang to resort to the nuclear weapons.

"Because the conventional military capabilities gap between North and South Korea has become so overwhelmingly great and prospects for reversal of this gap so remote, Pyongyang relies on its nuclear program to deter external attacks on the state and to its regime," he said.

"The KPA's capabilities are limited by an aging weapons inventory, low production of military combat systems, deteriorating physical condition of soldiers, reduced training and increasing diversion of the military to infrastructure support," he said. KPA is an acronym for the Korean People's Army, North Korea's military.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2010/02/03/30/0301000000AEN20100203001000315F.HTML>

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Xinhua News - China  
3 February 2010

## **Peace Treaty The Best Route To Denuclearization: DPRK State Media**

PYONGYANG, Feb. 3 (Xinhua) -- The conclusion of a peace treaty would push forward the Korean peninsula's denuclearization process, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) official KCNA news agency said Wednesday.

In a commentary, KCNA said a peace treaty would help build confidence between the DPRK and the United States to end hostile relations and give strong impetus to the denuclearization process.

It was illogical to assert that the establishment of the peacekeeping regime was a matter to be taken up after the nuclear issue was settled. "This was nothing but an artifice to dodge the proposal," KCNA said.

It said denuclearization talks had been held for years without addressing the issue of peace, which proved anything that started without confidence could never gain good results.

The DPRK's proposal was to put an end to the vicious cycle of distrust and to build confidence to advance the denuclearization course, it added.

The country's official newspaper, Rodong Simun, on Tuesday also called for giving priority to a peace treaty, saying the most "realistic way" of preventing another war in the Korean Peninsula was to replace the outdated Armistice Agreement with a peace treaty as soon as possible.

On Jan. 18, Pyongyang renewed its demands of negotiating a peace treaty and lifting sanctions before it would return to the six-party talks, saying failure of the discussion on concluding a peace treaty would consequently "push back the process of denuclearization."

But the U.S. later dismissed the proposal, reiterating that Pyongyang must first return to the six-party talks.

[http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/world/2010-02/03/c\\_13162375.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/world/2010-02/03/c_13162375.htm)

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Washington Post

3 February 2010

## **US Official: NKorea Must Return To Nuke Talks**

By JEAN H. LEE

The Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea -- North Korea's return to the nuclear disarmament process is an essential next step before any discussions about political and economic concessions can begin, a senior U.S. official said Wednesday.

The American's remarks were a response to nuclear-armed North Korea's repeated call for a peace treaty to formally end the Korean War as well as diplomatic relations with the U.S. before it agrees to return to the disarmament negotiations it walked away from the last year.

Pyongyang cites the U.S. military presence in South Korea as its main reason for building a nuclear weapons program. North Korea is believed to have enough weaponized plutonium for at least half a dozen nuclear bombs, and last year revealed it has a uranium enrichment program that would give it a second way to make atomic weapons.

Assistant Secretary of State Kurt Campbell told reporters in Seoul that getting the talks back on track is a top priority. The talks involve six nations: the two Koreas, the U.S., Japan, Russia and China.

"It is essential ... to make very clear to our North Korean interlocutors that the essential next step is really the six-party talks, not discussions on other matters," he said. "It's possible to have discussions on other matters within the six-party framework. But that six-party framework is essential going forward."

No discussion about easing sanctions, a peace treaty or diplomatic relations can take place before the disarmament talks are back on track. North Korea must also prove it will honor previous commitments to disarm, he told South Korean reporters earlier Wednesday, according to the Yonhap news agency.

Communist North Korea has twice tested nuclear bombs, in 2006 and last May, and test-fired long-range missile in defiance of U.N. Security Council resolutions barring the regime from developing its nuclear and missile programs.

President Barack Obama's top intelligence official said Tuesday that North Korea relies on its nuclear weapons program because of a crumbling military that cannot compete with South Korea.

Director of National Intelligence Dennis Blair, in congressional testimony Tuesday, described a North Korean army that struggles with aging weapons; poorly trained, out-of-shape soldiers; inflexible leaders; corruption; low morale and problems with command and control.

North Korea, Blair said, has little chance of reversing a huge gap in military capabilities with South Korea and so "relies on its nuclear program to deter external attacks on the state and to its regime."

A military fracas off the west coast last week underlined the precarious security situation in the region.

The North Korean military fired rounds of artillery toward the two Koreas' maritime border, prompting the South Koreans to fire warning shots. No injuries or damage were reported.

Pyongyang also has designated two new "naval firing zones" off the west coast, effective Feb. 5-8, Seoul's Joint Chiefs of Staff said Wednesday. Two other no-sail zones, off the west coast, remain in place through March 29.

Despite the recent flare-up, Pyongyang agreed to hold talks on restarting joint tour programs in North Korea that had been suspended since tensions rose in 2008, Unification Ministry spokesman Chun Hae-sung said Wednesday.

The tours to Diamond Mountain and the ancient city of Kaesong had been seen as promising examples of reconciliation between the two Koreas.

*Associated Press writers Hongkeun Jeon in Seoul and Foster Klug in Washington contributed to this report.*

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/02/03/AR2010020300317.html>

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Yonhap News – South Korea  
5 February 2010

## **Chinese Official To Visit N. Korea On Mission To Resume Nuclear Talks**

BEIJING, Feb. 5 (Yonhap) -- A senior official of China's Community Party is set to visit North Korea next week on an apparent mission to help resume stalled negotiations on ending the North's nuclear programs, informed sources here said Friday.

Wang Jiarui, the head of the party's international department, is expected to visit Pyongyang and meet with the North Korean leader next week, the sources said.

"Wang's trip to Pyongyang can be seen as part of a regular exchange of visits for New Year's greetings, but it may bring significant changes to the six-party talks," a source said, asking not to be identified.

The Chinese official visited North Korea in January last year as part of that regular exchange of visits.

Wang's expected meeting with Kim will be closely watched because it may lead to the North's announcement of its return to the nuclear negotiations, also attended by South Korea, the U.S., Japan, China and Russia.

Wang may also speak with Kim about the possibility of the North Korean leader visiting China.

North Korea has boycotted the nuclear negotiations since late 2008, but the North Korean leader told China's visiting Premier Wen Jiabao last year that his country may return to the talks following its bilateral dialogue with the United States.

A special U.S. representative for North Korea policy, Stephen Bosworth, visited Pyongyang in December, but Pyongyang has yet to declare its return to the six-party talks.

Observers believed Pyongyang will do so following Kim's anticipated trip to China to win economic concessions from its communist ally.

The North Korean leader was widely expected to visit China at the beginning of the year, but the sources said a trip is only possible after an invitation from the Chinese Communist Party as Kim, head of the National Defense Commission, does not hold any official title in the North's Cabinet.

Wang, said to be tasked with delivering such invitations, was on a 12-day trip to Africa late last month.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2010/02/05/8/0401000000AEN20100205001600315F.HTML>

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Itar-Tass – Russia  
3 February 2010

## **Russia Ready For Dialogue With EU Over Tactical Nukes, But That It Cannot Get Through To Its Partners – Lavrov**

MOSCOW, February 3 (Itar-Tass) - Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Moscow is ready for any dialogue over security issues, such as tactical nuclear weapons in Europe, but that it cannot get through to its partners.

Lavrov made the statement as he was fielding reporters' questions after Wednesday's meeting with his Norwegian counterpart Jonas Gahr Store.

The Russian diplomat was asked to comment on the call upon Moscow by the Polish and Swedish foreign ministers to take away the nuclear weapons from the districts bordering on the European Union, including the Kaliningrad region and the Kola Peninsula.

Radek Sikorski and Carl Bildt also suggested that Russia and the USA take measures aimed at considerable reduction of this kind of armaments in Europe.

"As part of efforts to further reduce nuclear weapons in general, as well as to build confidence in a better order of security in Europe, we today call on the leaders of the United States and Russia to commit themselves to early measures to greatly reduce so-called tactical nuclear weapons in Europe. These measures could be the result of negotiations, but there is also room for substantial unilateral confidence building efforts," they said in the article carried by the New York Times and the International Herald Tribune.

<http://www.itar-tass.com/eng/level2.html?NewsID=14784479&PageNum=0>

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency  
5 February 2010

## **Russian President Approves New Military Doctrine**

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev has approved the country's new military doctrine which allows preventive nuclear strikes against potential aggressors.

"The president informed the members of Russia's Security Council on Friday that he has approved two documents - the military doctrine and the Fundamentals of the state policy on nuclear deterrence until 2020," said presidential press secretary Natalia Timakova.

According to Russian officials, the adjustment of the country's military doctrine was prompted by real threats and challenges faced by Russia.

Russia's nuclear triad comprises land-based ballistic missile systems, nuclear-powered submarines equipped with sea-based ballistic missiles, and strategic bombers carrying nuclear bombs and nuclear-capable cruise missiles.

Under the new doctrine, Russia will continue developing and modernizing its nuclear triad, increasing its capability to overcome missile defenses of a potential enemy.

The new military doctrine also aims to transform the Armed Forces into a more effective and mobile military force. Their structures will be "optimized" through the use of combined arms units performing similar tasks.

The previous document was adopted in 2000. It outlined the role of the Russian military in ensuring the defense of the country and, if necessary, preparing for and waging war, although it stressed that the Russian military doctrine is strictly defensive.

Russia's military expenditure has of late been steadily growing, and the country reportedly plans to increase the current defense budget of \$40 billion by 50% in the next three years.

MOSCOW, February 5 (RIA Novosti)

[http://en.rian.ru/military\\_news/20100205/157785368.html](http://en.rian.ru/military_news/20100205/157785368.html)

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## What Could Help The New START Treaty?

MOSCOW. (Andrei Fedyashin, RIA Novosti political commentator) - Russian sources in Geneva expect the new START Treaty to be ready by February 27. The two countries have been trying since last May to find a mutually acceptable arrangement to legally document a limit on the number of U.S. and Russian nuclear delivery vehicles and warheads.

The Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, a bilateral treaty between the United States and the Soviet Union was signed on 31 July 1991 and expired on December 5, 2009. It remained in force pending agreement on a successor, since Russia and the United States failed to agree on a new pact before the deadline.

The talks that resumed in Geneva after the holidays on February 1 indeed seem to have moved into the final stage, with the agreement only requiring the final touches to be put to its terminology and technical details. In any case, negotiators on both sides are unanimous that the document is 95%-97% ready.

The scale of the reductions planned is already known. The United States and Russia agreed to keep the number of nuclear delivery vehicles between 500 and 1,100, and the number of warheads between 1,500 and 1,675. These figures may still be altered, for example increasing the number of delivery vehicles allowed while decreasing the number of warheads, or the reverse. In any case the ceiling to be set by the pact will easily allow both sides "to project military power" while having a "strong deterrence factor," using the Pentagon's terminology. The two countries must have already agreed verification procedures and resolved the issue of "return potential": the removed and stockpiled warheads, mainly in the United States, that can be returned to operation at short notice.

Unfortunately, there is a long way between "giving birth" to this new agreement and "teaching it to walk and talk." In this sense, today is not the best moment for the new START Treaty to appear. A host of outraged Republicans in the U.S. Senate still stand between the signing of the pact and its ratification, and are likely to impose requirements on President Barack Obama in return for his nuclear deal with Moscow. Another obstacle on the path to ratification will be November's Congressional elections, which will see a complete change in the composition of the lower house and one-third of the Senate.

According to the U.S. Constitution, the Senate has to ratify all international agreements signed by the United States. Obama will have to come up with really strong arguments to persuade the Republican Senators to support the new START Treaty: stronger than his eloquent rhetoric.

Pushing the pact through the Senate will require at least two-thirds of the vote (67). Democrats currently have 59 votes (including two independent members), while Republicans have 41. This is not sufficient today and will be even more problematic after November. It is commonplace in America to "counterbalance" a Democratic president with Republicans in the Congress, and vice versa. Since ever more voters are becoming discontented with the country's domestic economic and social policies, even more Republicans are likely to win seats in November. Even if they fail to win a parliamentary majority, there will certainly be more of them. Theoretically, the START Treaty could slow down this trend, if it is generally seen as Obama's success, but for one proviso.

Obama has made too many commitments early in his presidency, such as: "resetting" U.S.-Russian relations, achieving a nuclear-free world, peace in the Middle East and resolving the Iran and North Korea nuclear problems. Therefore, it is now crucial that he attains at least one important foreign-policy result: something he has not had, to date. None of his earlier pledges have been realized, so the START Treaty could be his first real achievement.

The START Treaty is listed as one of Obama's major projects, next to the small note "May." Although the U.S. administration claims that no deadlines whatsoever have been set, May 2010 sounds like a meaningful date. First, a regular UN NPT Review Conference, held once a decade, will take place in May. NPT stands for the 1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Israel, India, Pakistan and North Korea, which are not parties to the NPT, have since become nuclear powers. Failure by major nuclear powers to agree reductions to their nuclear arsenals will be used by minor ones to justify their continued nuclear programs. If that happens, the decline of the Non-Proliferation Treaty will reach a critical point.

Second, Obama needs to see ratification before November so that he has concrete results to show to Congress and to enable him to check the impending inflow of Republicans. The latter, on the contrary, do not need or want to see Obama praised as a great peacemaker at election time.

Admittedly, the White House has just pleased Republican Senators by releasing the Quadrennial Defense Review, which is completed once every four years, and the defense budget for the 2011 financial year. If the Nobel Peace Committee had had any idea of what the U.S. defense budget and the country's military program for the next four years would be, Obama would never have been awarded the Peace Prize.

Contrary to his own vows to continue his drive to eliminate unnecessary, wasteful defense budget spending, the military program calls for a 3.4% increase in the Pentagon's defense budget to an unheard-of \$708 billion. However, counting all the hidden outlays and redistributed costs, the real figure will probably be closer to \$900 billion, which is more than the total military spending of the 15 leading nations including China and Russia.

Allocations to the Department of Energy, responsible for maintenance of nuclear weapons, weapon development and nuclear tests, will grow by \$11.2 billion (up 13.4%).

A careful reading of the latest Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR, initiated by the Congress in the mid-1990s to have an idea of the government's military policies for the next four years) reveals that the United States will shift from "wholesale" war to "retail" conflicts. The QDR states that America will now prepare its forces for multiple conflicts in any region, that it will start modernizing and increasing the number of vehicles for personnel transportation, fighting cyber-terrorism and nuclear terrorism, as well as protecting U.S. military bases and personnel abroad.

It is wrong to assert that the United States has fully renounced the concept of waging two major regional wars in favor of multiple regional conflicts. The QDR suggests only a shift of emphasis, as Defense Secretary Robert Gates said.

The Republicans liked the new program and the new defense budget. This may help the new START Treaty go through, or this may not.

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

<http://en.rian.ru/analysis/20100202/157755995.html>

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San Francisco Chronicle  
3 February 2010  
ANALYSIS

## **Analysis: China Unlikely To Block Iran Sanctions**

By STEVEN R. HURST, Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON, (AP) -- The United States opens a critical international campaign this month to punish Iran for its nuclear program, and U.S. officials and China experts believe Beijing — despite heated anti-U.S. rhetoric of recent days — won't stand in the way.

China has pledged to retaliate for U.S. arms sales to Taiwan and warns Sino-U.S. ties will suffer further when President Barack Obama and the Dalai Lama meet — as expected — later this month.

Furthermore, Beijing has a history of opposing sanctions of any kind and has been particularly vocal in opposing those on Iran.

So, the logic flowing from the strident anti-U.S. language from Beijing would create the natural expectation that China also would retaliate by vetoing the new American-led effort against Iran in the United Nations Security Council. Not so, say China watchers inside and outside the U.S. government.

Obama has made ending Iran's nuclear weapons program a central issue on his foreign policy agenda. After initiating a fresh attempt to negotiate with Iran and winning no nibbles on that carrot by a 2009 year-end deadline, his administration promised to apply the stick — a fresh round of sanctions.

Iran denies it wants to build a nuclear weapon, claiming instead that it is enriching uranium for a web of reactors to generate electricity. And suddenly on Tuesday Iran said it was willing to send its enriched uranium out of the country — to Russia and France — to be converted into fuel rods for a civilian reactor that makes medical isotopes.

But Iran already agreed to that once before pulling out of a deal.

The White House said Tehran should take its new position to the U.N. nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency.

"We made a good faith and balanced offer regarding the Tehran research reactor. We believe it makes sense for all parties," responded National Security Council spokesman Mike Hammer. "If Mr. Ahmadinejad's comments reflect an updated Iranian position, we look forward to Iran informing the IAEA."

China — with the U.S., Britain, France and Russia — holds a permanent seat on the council and a veto by any one of them would kill the fresh American bid to punish Iran. Germany, while not a veto-holding council member, is deeply involved in the campaign to close off Tehran's nuclear ambitions.

The U.S. already has support from Britain, France and Germany for imposing more and deeply painful sanctions against Tehran. Russia, which had joined China in insisting the teeth be removed from three previous rounds of U.N. sanctions, now appears to have grown frustrated with Iran and ready to support stiff penalties.

That would leave the Chinese standing alone in any effort to shoot down further sanctions, and that's a position the Chinese usually scurry from.

"I expect a very tough set of negotiations behind closed doors," said Kenneth Lieberthal, of the Brookings Institution. "They are reluctant players but not unmovable."

That is the view, as well, of Douglas Paal at the Carnegie Endowment, who said the Chinese will do their utmost to weaken a new sanctions regime but won't resort to a veto.

While Beijing depends heavily on Iran for oil and has major investments in the country, it also is aware that it is dependent on other Middle East oil states for energy. Those sources, like Saudi Arabia, are deeply concerned about Iran's nuclear weapons ambitions.

Regardless of angry Chinese rhetoric, Paal said the Chinese "don't have many diplomatic tools" that would allow them to use a U.N. veto in reaction to the U.S. arms sales to Taiwan or Obama's coming meeting with the Dalai Lama.

China claims Taiwan — a perennial sore point in relations with the U.S. — as its own territory and regards arms sales to the self-governing island democracy as a violation of its sovereignty. China said Saturday it was suspending military exchanges in response to the sale and could take further unspecified action, including its own sanctions on American companies.

On Tuesday, Zhu Weiqun, a Chinese participant in weekend talks with the Dalai Lama's representatives, warned that an Obama meeting with the Dalai Lama would "seriously undermine the political foundation" of China-U.S. relations.

Chinese officials are keen to avoid an Obama-Dalai Lama meeting before President Hu Jintao travels to Washington, possibly in April.

Beijing demonizes the Dalai Lama and says he seeks to destroy China's sovereignty by pushing independence for Tibet. The Dalai Lama has maintained for decades he wants some form of autonomy that would allow Tibetans to freely practice their culture, language and religion under China's rule, not independence.

The sound and fury from Beijing, thus, is to be expected and in line with past Chinese anger on those issues. And viewed from the U.S. side, it is seen as a blaze of rhetoric soon to cool.

*EDITOR'S NOTE — Steven R. Hurst reports from the White House for The Associated Press and has covered international relations for 30 years.*

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/n/a/2010/02/03/national/w000920S66.DTL&type=business>

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