



# **USAF COUNTERPROLIFERATION CENTER**

# **CPC OUTREACH JOURNAL**

**Maxwell AFB, Alabama**

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**Issue No. 783, 12 February 2010**

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Washington Times  
February 12, 2010

## ***U.S. Rules Out Missile-Defense Link To Treaty***

*Pact with Russia will not affect deployment of assets*

By Bill Gertz, The Washington Times

The State Department said Thursday there will be no direct link between missile defenses and U.S. and Russian offensive strategic weapons cuts in the language of the nearly finished successor to the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, or START.

State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley said the treaty and text of the final agreement are still being negotiated and reports that the U.S. side in the talks will link missile defenses to START are untrue.

U.S. Ambassador to Russia John Beyrle stated on his Russian-language blog that the new treaty will refer to missile defenses in the text. The comment prompted reports from Moscow that the U.S. had made a concession to Russia on the issue, reports Mr. Crowley said were untrue.

"As we have made clear to the Russians through this negotiation, there is no direct link between [missile defense and strategic offensive arms]," Mr. Crowley said.

"The START agreement will in no way affect our deployment of missile defense assets in Europe as our announcement last week with Romania underscores," he said. "The deployments under the phased adaptive approach will be done faster than previously planned and protect all of Europe."

A U.S. official close to the negotiations said adding missile defenses to the text of the treaty would be a concession to Russia. In the past, U.S. negotiators had said all mention of missile defense would be restricted to the treaty's opening passages.

U.S. officials have said frequently that missile defenses planned for Europe - currently made up of long-range, ground-based interceptors and ship-based missiles - are not aimed at Russia's large number of missiles.

Missile defenses have been a sticking point in the START treaty negotiations as Moscow has demanded that the treaty address missile defenses in the context of offensive arms reductions, a position so far rejected by U.S. negotiators.

The Obama administration, partly as a concession to Russia, agreed last year to scrap plans for a long-range missile-defense interceptor site in Poland and related radar in the Czech Republic. Instead, the administration will deploy shorter-range missile defenses, including the sea-based SM-3 interceptor and a future ground-based version of the SM-3 in Poland.

On Feb. 4, Romania's President Traian Basescu announced that the government there had agreed to deploy medium-range missile interceptors for the U.S. missile-defense system. The interceptors could be operational by 2015.

The announcement prompted official expressions of concern from Russia's Foreign Ministry. A spokesman said the government was seeking clarification on the Romanian plan.

Russian Gen. Nikolai Makarov, chief of the general staff, on Tuesday said in Moscow that U.S. plans to put missile defenses in Europe threatened Russian national security and undermined Moscow's offensive missile forces, despite U.S. claims that the defenses are aimed at rogue regimes such as Iran and North Korea.

Gen. Makarov said the Russians view missile defenses "very negatively, because it could weaken our missile forces."

The general also said the new treaty "must take into account the link between defensive and offensive strategic weapons.

"This link is very close; they are absolutely interdependent. It would be wrong not to take the missile defense into account," he said in a Russian television statement.

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2010/feb/12/us-rules-out-missile-defense-link-to-treaty/>

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Xinhua News – China  
10 February 2010

## ***Iran: Fuel Swap Still On The Table***

TEHRAN, Feb. 10 (Xinhua) -- Head of Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Ali Akbar Salehi said the door to talks on a nuclear swap deal with the West is still open, the local English language satellite Press TV reported Wednesday.

"We have the capability to enrich uranium to any percentage we wish, but we asked the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to ask other countries to supply the 20 percent (fuel) because we did not want to go beyond 5 percent, but they did not respond," Salehi told Press TV Tuesday.

Iran could not let its Tehran research reactor, which needs 20 percent enriched uranium, run out of fuel because it produces medical radioisotopes for about 850,000 patients in Iran, he said.

Salehi said that Iran is still ready to send its low enriched uranium abroad when it receives the 20 percent enriched nuclear fuel, the report said.

"So the deal is still on the table. If they come forward and supply the fuel, then we will stop the 20 percent enrichment," Salehi was quoted as saying.

On Tuesday, Press TV reported that Iran began enriching uranium to a level of 20 percent at its Natanz enrichment facility under the surveillance of inspectors from the IAEA.

On Monday, Iran handed over a letter to the IAEA, informing it about the Islamic Republic's plan to produce 20 percent enriched uranium, provoking fresh warnings from West of new sanctions.

[http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/world/2010-02/10/c\\_13171294.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/world/2010-02/10/c_13171294.htm)

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Washington Post  
February 10, 2010

## ***U.S. Unveils Offer To Help Iran Purchase Medical Isotopes***

By Glenn Kessler  
Washington Post Staff Writer

The United States and other nations seeking to restrain Iran's nuclear ambitions are offering to help the Islamic republic purchase medical isotopes on the international market, administration officials said Tuesday.

The offer, officials said, is meant to persuade Iran to halt its controversial push to produce fuel for a medical research reactor. U.S. officials say Tehran's enrichment plan -- it announced this week that it is producing higher-grade enriched uranium than ever before -- is evidence that it is pursuing fuel for a bomb.

The previously undisclosed proposal came as President Obama told reporters that his administration is "developing a significant regime of sanctions" to impose on Iran. He said that action at the U.N. Security Council, which is currently stymied by China's objections to a fourth round of sanctions on Iran, "will be one aspect of that broader effort."

U.N. sanctions do not prohibit Iran from obtaining the medical isotopes on the open market, which is how many nations -- including the United States -- get them for medical purposes.

"Rather than operate a reactor, this would be a more cost-effective and efficient approach," one U.S. official said, speaking on the condition of anonymity. There are a handful of key producers around the world, including Russia.

Obama, during a news conference at the White House, said Iran appeared to have spurned his offers of engagement, including a potential deal to convert some of Iran's low-enriched uranium into the fuel necessary to keep an aged research reactor producing medical isotopes for an estimated 850,000 patients.

"I think that we have bent over backwards to say to the Islamic Republic of Iran that we are willing to have a constructive conversation," he said. But, he added, "the door's still open."

Iran initially agreed in October to the fuel-swap proposal, but then for weeks sent conflicting signals about the proposed arrangement. The Americans had viewed the idea as both a confidence-building measure and an effort to remove the bulk of Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium from its soil.

"They rejected it, although one of the difficulties in dealing with Iran over the last several months is it's not always clear who's speaking on behalf of the government, and we get a lot of different mixed signals," Obama said.

Last week, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad suddenly announced that Iran was again interested in the swap concept, but days later he ordered Iranian scientists to begin production of the higher-enriched uranium. The conversion is taking place at a pilot facility, and Iran lacks the technical knowledge to convert the more highly enriched uranium into the specialized fuel rods needed for the reactor.

"That indicates to us that despite their posturing that their nuclear power is only for civilian use, that they, in fact, continue to pursue a course that would lead to weaponization," Obama said.

Iran has viewed production of its own isotopes as a source of pride, which might make it reluctant to buy them from abroad. Indeed, the Obama administration's new offer might be intended mostly to placate China that it is trying every diplomatic approach.

Some analysts faulted the administration for first pursuing the swap offer, arguing that it opened the door for Iran to go after higher levels of enrichment. "They should have started with isotopes," said Henry Sokolski, executive director of the Nonproliferation Policy Education Center in Washington. "Going to something sensible after you've promised something stupid and generous is a hard sell."

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/02/09/AR2010020903848.html>

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Business Week  
February 10, 2010

## ***Obama Pushes Sanctions to Block Iran's Path Toward Nuclear Bomb***

By Ladane Nasser and Indira A.R. Lakshmanan

Feb. 10 (Bloomberg) -- President Barack Obama said the U.S. is shifting toward sanctions pressure on Iran to prevent the development of a nuclear weapon, when asked about the Iranian regime's move to step up uranium enrichment.

"We have bent over backwards" to try to initiate a "constructive conversation about how they can align themselves with international norms and rules," Obama said yesterday of the Iranian government. He was referring to diplomatic overtures last year designed to ensure that Iran would seek only civilian nuclear development with no military purpose.

Iran continues to "pursue a course that would lead to weaponization," Obama told reporters in Washington. He was echoing a concern of leaders in Europe and the Middle East that Iran's enrichment of uranium to a level it says is needed for a medical-research reactor would move the country closer to producing a concentration needed for a bomb.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called yesterday for "crippling sanctions" against Iran.

"Iran is racing forward to produce nuclear weapons in brazen defiance of the international community," Netanyahu told a group of European ambassadors at a meeting in Jerusalem. "The international community must decide if it is serious about neutralizing this threat to Israel, the region and the entire world."

While Obama said the U.S. and its partners are working "fairly quickly" to impose sanctions for Iran's failure to comply with international atomic energy inspections and rules, the president said the door for talks to resolve the impasse is "still open."

### **Possible Alternative**

The State Department said the U.S. is willing to negotiate with Iran on a possible alternative to an international offer made last year to ensure Iran has a supply of medical isotopes. The United Nations Security Council's permanent members proposed that Iran's low-enriched uranium be exported and returned as fuel rods suitable only for a Tehran research reactor, a plan aimed at ensuring the material isn't used for weapons.

Iranian negotiators were initially receptive to the offer, before Iran's leaders rejected any proposal that would involve shipping the country's uranium stockpile abroad.

### **'Willing to Engage'**

State Department spokesman Philip J. Crowley said in Washington that the U.S. understands that Iran mistrusts the West, and is "willing to engage constructively and try to identify ways in which the international community and potentially the United States can meet that need" for medical isotopes.

The offer made last year would have involved Russia or France enriching the uranium, and Crowley said yesterday the U.S. was willing to explore “with Iran the procurement of medical isotopes from third-party sources,” without specifying those parties.

Iran’s government, after announcing yesterday it had begun enriching uranium to 20 percent, said it was still willing to consider an agreement with Western countries to send the material abroad for processing.

“It’s not a contradiction; we are still ready for a fuel exchange,” Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast said in Tehran in comments aired on state television. “Anytime they say they are ready with the conditions that Iran has put forth, this can be done.”

Western countries have seen Iran’s new enrichment plan as a provocation, prompting calls to consider additional UN sanctions against the country.

Iran is already under three sets of international sanctions aimed at curbing resources for its nuclear effort.

### **China Factor**

France, Britain, Russia and the U.S. are trying to get the fifth permanent member of the Security Council, China, to agree on new sanctions, French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner told lawmakers in Paris.

Obama said yesterday that “we’re going to have to see” how China responds at the Security Council to the sanctions push. He praised Russia for being “forward leaning” on the issue. “I think they clearly have seen that Iran hasn’t been serious about solving what is a solvable dispute between Iran and the international community,” he said.

Iran’s decision to increase uranium enrichment violates Security Council resolutions and “raises doubts” about the purpose of the country’s nuclear program, Russia’s Foreign Ministry said on its Web site.

### **UN Inspectors**

Iran said the work to boost the uranium to the 20 percent level needed for the plant can be done under the supervision of UN inspectors.

The move followed a Feb. 7 instruction from President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to start processing low-enriched uranium to reactor grade.

The process that began yesterday is separate from work to enrich uranium at a plant in Natanz, in central Iran, where lower-grade fuel is already produced, said Ali Akbar Salehi, the head of the country’s Atomic Energy Organization. The production of the reactor fuel is “more on a lab scale,” he said.

While Ahmadinejad said on Feb. 3 he has “no problem” with the UN-backed plan for export of the material for processing into fuel for the reactor, he has yet to formally agree to it. Iranian authorities have proposed a simultaneous exchange instead, and disagreed on the volume to be shipped.

*--With assistance from Ali Sheikholeslami in London, Hans Nichols and Edwin Chen in Washington, Gregory Viscusi in Paris, Calev Ben-David in Jerusalem and Paul Abelsky in Moscow. Editors: Edward DeMarco, Don Frederick*

<http://www.businessweek.com/news/2010-02-10/obama-pushes-sanctions-to-block-iran-s-path-toward-nuclear-bomb.html>

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Washington Post

February 11, 2010

## ***Technical Setbacks Cause Iran To Falter In Push To Enrich Uranium, Report Says***

By Joby Warrick and Glenn Kessler

Iran is experiencing surprising setbacks in its efforts to enrich uranium, according to new assessments that suggest that equipment failures and other difficulties could undermine that nation's plans for dramatically scaling up its nuclear program.

Former U.S. officials and independent nuclear experts say continued technical problems could also delay -- though probably not halt -- Iran's march toward achieving nuclear-weapons capability, giving the United States and its allies more time to press for a diplomatic solution. In recent months, Israeli officials have been less vocal in their demands that Western nations curtail Iran's nuclear program.

Indications of Iran's diminished capacity to enrich uranium arise just as the Obama administration begins to take sterner action to compel Iran to abandon enrichment. On Wednesday, the Treasury Department announced new U.S. sanctions against companies it says are affiliated with Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps, a key player in the country's nuclear and missile programs.

While Iran says its nuclear program is entirely peaceful, Western nations suspect that the country is intent on developing an atomic bomb. The program prompts frequent international posturing, such as Iran's announcement last year that it would expand its nuclear facilities tenfold and more recent statements from Western leaders that the time has come to apply tougher international sanctions against the country.

Beneath this rhetoric, U.N. reports over the last year have shown a drop in production at Iran's main uranium enrichment plant, near the city of Natanz. Now a new assessment, based on three years of internal data from U.N. nuclear inspections, suggests that Iran's mechanical woes are deeper than previously known. At least through the end of 2009, the Natanz plant appears to have performed so poorly that sabotage cannot be ruled out as an explanation, according to a draft study by David Albright, president of the Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS). A copy of the report was provided to The Washington Post.

The ISIS study showed that more than half of the Natanz plant's 8,700 uranium-enriching machines, called centrifuges, were idle at the end of last year and that the number of working machines had steadily dropped -- from 5,000 in May to just over 3,900 in November. Moreover, output from the nominally functioning machines was about half of what was expected, said the report, drawing from data gathered by the International Atomic Energy Agency, the U.N. nuclear watchdog.

A separate, forthcoming analysis by the Federation of American Scientists also describes Iran's flagging performance and suggests that continued failures may increase Iran's appetite for a deal with the West. Ivan Oelrich, vice president of the federation's Strategic Security Program, said Iranian leaders appear to have raced into large-scale uranium production for political reasons.

"They are really struggling to reproduce what is literally half-century-old European technology and doing a really bad job of it," Oelrich said.

The findings are in line with assessments by numerous former U.S. and European officials and weapons analysts who say that Iran's centrifuges appear to be breaking down at a faster rate than expected, even after factoring in the notoriously unreliable, 1970s-vintage model the Iranians are using. According to several of the officials, the problems have prompted new thinking about the urgency of the Iranian nuclear threat, although the country has demonstrated a growing technical prowess, such as its expanding missile program.

"Whether Iran has deliberately slowed down or been forced to, either way that stretches out the time," said Patrick Clawson, deputy director for research at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, a nonpartisan think tank.

But analysts also warned that Iran remains capable of making enough enriched uranium for a small arsenal of nuclear weapons, if it decides to do so. Iran has announced plans to build 10 new uranium plants, and on Monday the government said it would begin increasing the enrichment level of some of its uranium, from a current maximum of 3.5 percent to 20 percent. Enrichment of 90 percent is considered weapons-grade.

Some officials suggested that the apparent drop in output could be a ruse, an attempt by Iran to disguise its true capability until it is ready to test a nuclear device. Iran acknowledged last year that it had built a secret enrichment facility inside a mountain bunker near the ancient city of Qom, leading to suspicions that there could be other hidden sites.

"The IAEA measurements at Natanz are very crude and easily subject to intentional manipulation," said a former U.S. official who has closely monitored Iran's nuclear progress. He predicted that the watchdog agency eventually "will see that Iran is hiding production and is underreporting their success."

The administration's announcement of new sanctions represents stepped-up enforcement of existing punitive measures against Iran as the White House prepares to push for concerted action by the U.N. Security Council, the European Union and a coalition of major trading partners in an effort to force Iran to address international concerns over its nuclear ambitions.

U.S. officials are considering additional sanctions against companies linked to the Revolutionary Guard Corps, as well as finance, insurance and other entities connected to the government elite, but Russian and Chinese acquiescence is not guaranteed.

Russia has warned that it probably would not support economic measures, although Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov told the Interfax news agency Wednesday that Iran's decision this week to begin producing



higher-enriched uranium has given "additional relevance" to a new sanctions resolution. China has remained cool to new sanctions.

This week's action freezes the assets of four companies that Treasury said are owned or controlled by, or act on behalf of, a major contractor known as Khatam al-Anbiya, which has channeled billions of dollars a year to the Guard from its activities in oil, construction, transportation and other industries. The action also targets Guard Gen. Rostam Qasemi, who is the commander of Khatam al-Anbiya Construction Headquarters.

The Guard has received at least \$6 billion worth of government contracts in two years, according to state-run media, but the total is likely much higher because many contracts are not disclosed. Working through its private-sector arm, the group operates Tehran's international airport, manages Iran's weapons manufacturing business and is involved in other industries.

"Today's action exposing Khatam al-Anbiya subsidiaries will help firms worldwide avoid business that ultimately benefits the IRGC and its dangerous activities," said Treasury Undersecretary Stuart A. Levey. The subsidiaries are: the Fater Engineering Institute, the Imensazen Consultant Engineers Institute, the Makin Institute and the Rahab Institute.

Also Wednesday, Iran rejected an offer from the United States to help provide it with a steady supply of medical isotopes, meaning that it will stay with its plan to produce uranium enriched to 20 percent in order to feed an aging U.S.-built research reactor that can make the isotopes.

Iranian officials have told the IAEA that the country will produce its first batch of higher-enriched uranium within a few days, but the officials also disclosed that the effort will be modest, involving a small amount of uranium feedstock and a fraction of Iran's capacities, according to a confidential U.N. document obtained by the Associated Press.

The enrichment program's troubles have been documented by IAEA inspectors who have visited the Natanz plant at scheduled intervals to collect samples and take measurements to ensure that Iran isn't diverting the enriched fuel for a clandestine weapons program.

As the ISIS study notes, the Natanz plant initially exceeded expectations, producing steadily higher amounts of low-enriched fuel. But sometime in late 2008 or early 2009, the output dropped from about 90 to 70 kilograms per month. Overall production improved slightly after that but struggled to return to 2008 levels, even as Iranian scientists installed more centrifuges, the report said. In late 2009, the 3,900 machines listed as functional were generating half the amount of enriched uranium expected, it said.

Neither Iran nor the U.N. watchdog have officially accounted for the slumping output, and U.S. officials have declined to speculate publicly about the reasons. The ISIS report identifies the likely cause as a combination of poor design and Iran's rush to put complex assemblages of centrifuges into production before working out the bugs. The report cites "daily attrition through breakage," as well as a failure to anticipate the difficulty of operating large numbers of machines simultaneously.

"Iran has moved too quickly to install centrifuges, at the expense of developing competence in operating them reliably," said the report, co-authored by Albright and Christina Walrond. "In the process it has made many mistakes."

Also, while there is no hard evidence pointing to sabotage, ISIS acknowledges the possibility that Natanz's problems were caused by outside sources. "It is well known that the United States and European intelligence agencies seek to place defective or bugged equipment into Iran's smuggling networks," it said.

*Researcher Julie Tate contributed to this report.*

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/02/10/AR2010021003988.html>

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London Daily Telegraph – U.K.

11 February 2010

## ***Iran: Mahmoud Ahmadinejad Defies World Over Uranium Enrichment***

*President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has announced that Iran is producing its first uranium enriched to 20 per cent, defying the world to stop him.*

By Richard Spencer, Middle East Correspondent

"I want to announce with a loud voice here that the first package of 20 per cent fuel was produced and provided to the scientists," he told a crowd of hundreds of thousands celebrating the 31st anniversary of the Islamic Republic in Tehran.

He said the uranium enrichment plant in the city of Natanz was capable of enriching to the much higher levels necessary to build a nuclear weapon and could triple its production of low-enriched uranium.

But he insisted that the country did not intend to construct a device.

"When we say we do not manufacture the bomb, we mean it, and we do not believe in manufacturing a bomb," he said. "If we wanted to manufacture a bomb, we would announce it. Our nation has the courage to explicitly say it and build it and not fear you."

He went to attack the West's attempts to curtail Iran's nuclear programme.

"We told them the Iranian nation will never give in to bullying and illogical remarks," he said.

Mr Ahmadinejad's decision to press ahead with enrichment would appear to put an end to a negotiated settlement put forward by the International Atomic Energy Agency to swap Iran's low-enriched uranium for prepared fuel rods for a medical research reactor in Tehran.

Iran says the 20 per cent enriched uranium it is making is intended for this reactor, though it is thought not to have the technology to make the specialised rods required.

Despite its decision to go ahead with enrichment, it is attempting to stay within the rules set by the IAEA, and inspectors were present at the Natanz plant when further enrichment started.

Their first report said production was limited to one "chain" of the centrifuges used in the process. If this rate were continued, it would take around three years to process the ton of uranium necessary to build a nuclear weapon to 20 per cent purity.

Further enrichment to 90 per cent would not take much longer.

The report said the first 20 per cent enriched uranium would be produced "within days". The process was begun on Tuesday morning.

The Natanz plant is reckoned by international nuclear scientists to have difficulties maintaining the centrifuges that carry out the enrichment.

Fewer than half the 8,000 in place are currently in operation.

They can produce just under a ton of low-grade uranium (LEU) a year, the amount needed to build a bomb. But the more centrifuges are diverted to enrich to higher levels, the fewer remain to create their basic stockpile of LEU.

The United States has said it wants a motion on further international sanctions to be put to the United Nations security council "within weeks".

In the meantime, it announced further unilateral sanctions, freezing the assets of a general in the Revolutionary Guard and those of subsidiaries of a construction company under his control.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iran/7213109/Iran-Mahmoud-Ahmadinejad-defies-world-over-uranium-enrichment.html>

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Reuters U.K.

February 11, 2010

## ***Iran Atom Bomb Seen Attainable Despite Snags-Study***

By Mark Heinrich

VIENNA (Reuters) - Iran is on course to produce enough highly enriched uranium to make nuclear weapons despite technical problems, a new study says.

But increased mechanical difficulties with centrifuges mean it is unlikely to be able to make enough lower-grade fuel for civilian nuclear power plants for a long time, if ever, the study by a think-tank tracking nuclear proliferation says.

Its report came out as Iran adjusted some centrifuges to enrich uranium to a higher grade from that needed to generate electricity, stoking Western concern over its intentions.



Citing U.N. inspection and intelligence findings, the report said Iran's main Natanz enrichment plant was dogged by centrifuge breakdowns and maintenance outages, with the machines refining uranium at only about half their nominal capacity.

It noted a 20 percent fall in numbers of operating machines in the year to last November, after a headlong expansion pursued for political purposes in a stand-off with world powers trying to curb Iran's programme and throw it open to U.N. scrutiny.

A senior diplomat close to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said on Thursday there had been "no big changes" in active centrifuge capacity since November, suggesting technical woes were still hindering growth.

"Iran's problems in its centrifuge programme are greater than expected a year ago," said the report by David Albright and Christian Walrond of the Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS), based in Washington.

"Iran is unlikely to deploy enough gas centrifuges to make enriched uranium for commercial nuclear power reactors (Iran's stated nuclear goal) for a long time, if ever, particularly if (U.N.) sanctions remain in force," the report said.

#### ATOM BOMB CAPACITY IN REACH

"As such, one of the most striking lessons of reviewing Iran's accomplishments at Natanz is just how unachievable a commercial enrichment programme remains, while how little is required to create a nuclear weapons capability.

"While Iran may take longer than expected to make sufficient weapons-grade uranium, few believe it will fail in that effort."

The U.S. intelligence community has estimated Iran will not be technically capable of weaponising enrichment before 2013.

Iran denies having mechanical problems at Natanz. It says it is proceeding with enrichment according to plan and the goal of enriching uranium to 20 percent purity is to replenish the fuel reserve of a Tehran reactor that makes medical isotopes.

But more than half of its roughly 8,500 installed centrifuges were idle as of late last year -- an update will come in a fresh IAEA report due next week -- and ISIS said the plant suffered "a daily attrition of centrifuges from breakage."

But, ISIS said, Iran had established enough capacity to make fissile material for one atom bomb within six months if it drew from its current stock of low-enriched (3.5 percent) enriched uranium (LEU), estimated to be close to two tonnes.

Iran's LEU stockpile is subject to IAEA surveillance to deter diversions of the material for military purposes.

However, "given Iran's announced plans to build 10 more enrichment plants without notifying the IAEA about their location or status until six months before it introduces nuclear material, Iran's capability to make weapons-grade uranium either in a secret parallel programme or in a 'breakout' is likely to grow with time," the ISIS report said.

For its ostensible civilian energy purpose, Natanz could only be classified as a development facility, not a production plant, since Iran was still struggling to master the operation of many thousands of centrifuges in unison, ISIS said.

It noted that Iran's centrifuges were a 30-year-old vintage, sanctions made it hard for Iran to import top-quality components and domestically-made substitutes were probably inferior.

Another possible explanation for problems, ISIS said, was that Western secret services had apparently slipped defective hardware into the nuclear black market plied by Tehran.

(Editing by Charles Dick)

<http://uk.reuters.com/article/idUKTRE61A43V20100211?sp=true>

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New York Times  
February 12, 2010

## ***Atomic Agency Views Iran's Stepped-Up Enrichment Of Uranium As A Violation***

By William J. Broad

Iran's surprise move this week to begin enriching its uranium to a level closer to weapons-grade violated an agreement with atomic inspectors in Vienna, diplomats said, very likely providing the United States with another piece of evidence that Iran is not living up to its international commitments on its nuclear program.

The breach involved Iran's starting the enrichment process in the absence of atomic inspectors — something that the International Atomic Energy Agency had specifically asked Iran not to do. Narrowly, the violation was viewed as technical in nature. But it caused resentment at the atomic agency's headquarters in Vienna because Iran had acted so quickly and with such apparent contempt of the agreement.

"There's a feeling of pique and annoyance," said a European diplomat who works with the agency and spoke on condition of anonymity, because he was not authorized to speak with reporters.

On Wednesday, the agency issued a report on the matter to its member states. The diplomat called the report an expression of the agency's umbrage.

The episode began Monday when Iran informed the agency that it planned to raise its level of uranium enrichment to 20 percent from 4 percent in an effort to make fuel for a medical reactor.

According to the report, the agency asked Iran in a letter on Monday to refrain from feeding low-enriched uranium into centrifuges at its Natanz enrichment plant until the agency "was able to adjust its existing safeguards procedures." The report cited Article 45 of Iran's agreement with the agency, which calls for notice of major changes "sufficiently in advance for the safeguards procedures to be adjusted."

The inspectors arrived Tuesday at Natanz, the report said, and monitored the Iranians as they moved 22 pounds of the low-enriched uranium from the main plant to a smaller facility known as the pilot plant. On Wednesday, when the inspectors returned, they were told that Iran had begun feeding uranium into the centrifuges the previous evening.

"That's unacceptable," the diplomat said. "They have to let the agency monitor the process." The odds that Iran did something worse than break its word were slim, the diplomat added, saying the act nonetheless angered the agency because of its patent disregard of the rules.

The diplomat called the report — issued in Vienna the same day the inspectors in Iran discovered the violation — highly unusual.

The amount of uranium now undergoing higher enrichment is minuscule compared with what Iran needs to fuel a reactor or, with greater enrichment, a bomb.

But nuclear experts see the escalation as significant because the United Nations has called on Iran, instead of showing new proficiencies in enrichment, to halt its program altogether.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/12/world/middleeast/12enrich.html>

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Press TV – Iran  
12 February 2010

## ***Iran Will 'Quicken Nuclear Work If US Threats Continue'***

Iran's Parliament Speaker says his country will 'speed up' its nuclear work if the Obama administration continues to threaten the country with a new round of sanctions.

"Even if US President Barack Obama dares to repeat threats of tougher sanction against us as much as ten times, we will still be determined to pursue our enrichment program, but with a much faster pace," said Ali Larijani on Thursday.

Only hours after Iran announced a decision to domestically produce higher-enriched uranium under the supervision of the UN nuclear watchdog, Obama warned that the US is preparing a "significant regime of sanctions" against the Tehran government.

The US president, who was speaking to reporters on Tuesday, went on to accuse Iran of spurning his offer of engagement in order to continue what he called Iran's nuclear weapons program.

Larijani responded to the US allegations, warning that if continued, the threats will have heavy consequences in both Iran and the US.

"Whenever we make a significant breakthrough, whether it is launching a satellite into space or any other technological or scientific achievement, they quickly demonize it and claim that it is aimed at military or spying purposes," said Larijani.

"But their problem really lies with the fact that our status in the international scene is changing for the better," added the Iranian Parliament Speaker. "They can not bear to see our progress, which is why they want to keep us as an underdeveloped country."

Larijani noted that Western superpowers have ceaselessly sought to sow discord among Iranians in order to "fish in troubled waters."

The Iranian official made the comments in a large crowd marking the 31st anniversary of the Islamic Revolution.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail.aspx?id=118461&sectionid=351020104>

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Washington Post

February 12, 2010

## ***France Does Not Believe Iran's Nuclear Claim***

The Associated Press

PARIS -- France does not believe Iran's claim that it is capable of enriching uranium to near weapons-grade levels, the country's foreign minister said Friday.

Bernard Kouchner told Europe 1 radio that the "Americans don't believe, not any more than us, that Iran is currently capable of enriching uranium to 80 percent."

But Iran's claim "adds to the dangerousness" of the situation, he said.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said this week that Iran has the capacity "to enrich uranium more than 20 percent or 80 percent" but that it doesn't intend to build a bomb. A 90 percent-plus level is needed for a weapon.

White House spokesman Robert Gibbs said Thursday that Iran's leadership has made a series of statements about its nuclear prowess based on politics, not physics. "We do not believe they have the capability to enrich to the degree to which they now say they are enriching," he said in Washington.

Still, the Obama administration said such claims were still disturbing and fed fears that Iran's long-term goal is to make nuclear weapons.

Iran says its nuclear program is for energy and medical isotopes.

France has joined the United States in pushing for a new, fourth round of sanctions against Iran for defying U.N. demands to suspend uranium enrichment. Kouchner said France is working now to persuade China, Brazil and other U.N. Security Council members to back new measures.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/02/12/AR2010021200587.html>

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International Business Times – U.S. Edition

11 February 2010

## ***Sanctions Stay Until North Korea Talks: South, Japan***

By Jack Kim

SEOUL - Sanctions on North Korea will not be removed until Pyongyang returns to disarmament talks and takes serious steps toward scrapping its nuclear arms program, the foreign ministers of South Korea and Japan said on Thursday.

The comments come as the North's top nuclear envoy is in Beijing in a sign the destitute state may soon end its year-long boycott of six-country disarmament-for-aid nuclear talks hosted by its key ally, China.

North Korea has come under increasing pressure to return to the forum where it can win rewards for rolling back its nuclear program as U.N. sanctions imposed after a nuclear test last year dry up its coffers and a currency revaluation in late 2009 adds to its economic woes.

"We shared the view that North Korea needs to take denuclearization steps in order for there to be peace treaty talks and the lifting of sanctions," Japanese Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada told a briefing in Seoul.

North Korea has called for a peace treaty with United States to replace the armistice that ended the 1950-53 Korean War as a condition to returning to the disarmament deal that it signed in 2005 in return for massive economic aid.

South Korean Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan said the five countries in negotiations with the North aimed to keep up the pressure through sanctions while continuing to pursue dialogue to prod it back to the talks.

The talks involve the two Koreas, the United States, Japan, Russia and China and began in 2003.

Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama's new government has no plans to contribute financially to the disarmament-for-aid deal until North Korea resolves the issue of Japanese nationals it kidnapped decades ago, a Japanese official said.

"The issue of abduction is as important as the nuclear or missile issues for Japan," Kazuo Kodama, director general for press relations for the Foreign Ministry, told reporters.

South Korea has criticized Japan for not joining other partners in providing aid to the North to reward it for reducing the security threat it poses to the region while Pyongyang has said Japan should be removed entirely from the talks.

North Korean leader Kim Jong-il told a visiting Chinese envoy this week that his country was willing to talk about how to restart the stalled international process.

Some analysts said the dispatch of Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kye-gwan, who represents the North at the six-way forum, to Beijing indicated that the two countries were working out a face-saving measure for Pyongyang to return to dialogue.

(Additional reporting by Jon Herskovitz; Editing by Sanjeev Miglani)

<http://www.ibtimes.com/articles/20100211/sanctions-stay-until-north-korea-talks-south-japan.htm>

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Yonhap News – South Korea  
11 February 2010

## ***Lasting Peace Regime Possible Only When N. Korea Denuclearizes: Minister*** ***By Sam Kim***

SEOUL, Feb. 11 (Yonhap) -- North Korea must rejoin international talks on its nuclear arms programs and allow irreversible progress in its denuclearization if it wants a lasting peace regime on the Korean Peninsula, South Korea's Unification Minister said Thursday.

"To establish a durable peace regime, the starting point should be the time when North Korea returns to the six-party talks and makes progress in achieving irreversible denuclearization," Hyun In-taek told a forum in Seoul.

In a flurry of diplomatic activities aimed at restarting the talks that include the two Koreas, the United States, Russia, China and Japan, a U.N. special envoy has flown into Pyongyang this week, while a top North Korean nuclear envoy is staying in Beijing.

North Korea demands that U.N. sanctions imposed on it for its nuclear and missile testing be lifted while separate talks aimed at replacing the 1950-53 Korean War truce with a peace treaty be launched before it returns to the talks, last held in late 2008.

Hyun said the proposal for peace talks does not immediately bode well for international efforts to strip North Korea of its nuclear arms programs, and warned that a failure to bring about denuclearization in the country "will be a tragedy."

"North Korea's proposal for a peace treaty is not a positive signal geared toward making progress in denuclearization," he said. "If we fail to create a breakthrough in resolving the North Korean nuclear conundrum in the near future, the political situations on the Korean Peninsula will become extremely unstable."

Hyun reiterated the stance of his government that it will not agree to resume cross-border tours to North Korea unless the communist neighbor makes concessions on South Korea demands.

The sides held talks earlier this week for discussions on the tours that were suspended in 2008 after the shooting death of a South Korean housewife at Mount Kumgang. South Korea says North Korea must allow a joint on-site investigation into the death and implement measures to guarantee the safety of tourists if the sides are to make progress in the talks.

"The South's meeting with the North alone will not guarantee the resumption of the tours" to the scenic mountain on the east coast and the historic border town of Kaesong on the west, Hyun said.

Hyun added "nothing" is under way between the sides concerning a possible inter-Korean summit, calling on North Korea to open dialogue on its nuclear arms programs with South Korea.

"Making progress on the nuclear issue through inter-Korean dialogue at this moment will substantially contribute to the six-party efforts to move the denuclearization process forward," he said.

"If no progress is made on denuclearization and inter-Korean relations, it would be practically impossible for North Korea to gain support or assistance from the international community," he said.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2010/02/11/38/0401000000AEN20100211002600315F.HTML>

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Times of India  
12 February 2010

## ***North Korea 'Not Eager' To Resume Six-Party Talks: UN Envoy***

Agence France-Presse (AFP)

BEIJING: UN special envoy Lynn Pascoe said Friday, after a visit to Pyongyang, that North Korea was "not eager" to return to six-nation nuclear disarmament talks.

"They certainly are not happy with the sanctions and they certainly were not eager -- not ruling out but not eager -- to return to the six-party talks," Pascoe told a news conference in Beijing.

He visited communist North Korea as intense diplomatic efforts are made to persuade the North's leadership to resume nuclear talks that it broke off last April.

North Korea's envoy to the talks, Kim Kye-Gwan, has also been in Beijing to meet Chinese officials. China, South Korea, Japan, Russia and the United States have been trying to persuade the North to disarm.

After quitting the disarmament forum last April, North Korea defiantly staged its second atomic weapons test the following month, resulting in tougher UN sanctions.

It insists these should be lifted before talks resume, and also wants a US commitment to hold discussions about a permanent peace treaty between the two sides.

The 1950-53 Korean War, in which the United States led the international force under the UN flag, has never been officially ended.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/rest-of-world/North-Korea-not-eager-to-resume-six-party-talks-UN-envoy-/articleshow/5565602.cms>

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Boston Globe  
February 12, 2010

## ***Report: NKorea's Top Nuclear Envoy To visit US***

By Kwang-Tae Kim, Associated Press Writer

SEOUL, South Korea --A top North Korean nuclear envoy will visit the United States for rare bilateral talks next month, a news report said Friday as diplomats pushed to revive negotiations on ending Pyongyang's nuclear program.

Plans call for North Korea's Kim Kye Gwan to travel to the U.S. in March, South Korea's Yonhap news agency reported from Beijing, citing an unidentified source. In Washington, State Department spokesman Fred Lash said late Thursday that he had not seen the report.

U.N. political chief, B. Lynn Pascoe, said after concluding a four-day trip to North Korea on Friday that he was unaware of plans for Kim to travel to the U.S.

North Korea, believed to have enough weaponized plutonium for at least half a dozen atomic bombs, walked away from disarmament-for-aid negotiations last year during a standoff over its nuclear and missile programs.

However, after tightened sanctions and financial isolation, the impoverished nation has reached out to Washington, Seoul and Beijing in recent months.

Pascoe, the highest-ranking U.N. diplomat to visit North Korea since 2004, said he met with North Korea's president and foreign minister and "argued strongly that the six-party talks should be resumed without preconditions or further delay."

However, the North Korean side did not seem prepared to immediately return to the international disarmament talks, he said.

"The attitude right now as I said is that certainly they were not happy with the sanctions and they were certainly not eager, not ruling out but not eager, to return to the six-party talks," said Pascoe.

Pascoe said he was reluctant to describe the North Korean position in any more detail because the U.N. is not directly involved with the negotiations.

The disarmament talks involve the two Koreas, the U.S., Japan, Russia and host China.

A bilateral meeting between the North Korean envoy and U.S. officials would be a strong sign that the push to get the disarmament talks back on track was gaining traction. It would also confirm a warming in relations between the U.S. and North Korea, wartime rivals that do not have diplomatic relations.

Earlier, spokesman P.J. Crowley said U.S. officials haven't ruled out future meetings with the North Koreans, but "we believe firmly that the next meeting that U.S. representatives and others should have with North Korea is through a formal six-party meeting."

North Korea wants sanctions eased and a peace treaty with the U.S. formally ending the 1950-53 Korean War if it returns to the six-party talks. Seoul, Tokyo and Washington have all urged Pyongyang to return to the disarmament talks and show progress on denuclearization before any discussions on a peace treaty or sanctions.

*Associated Press writers Hyung-jin Kim in Seoul, Alexa Olesen in Beijing and Edith M. Lederer at the United Nations contributed to this report.*

[http://www.boston.com/news/world/asia/articles/2010/02/12/report\\_nkoreas\\_top\\_nuclear\\_envoy\\_to\\_visit\\_us/](http://www.boston.com/news/world/asia/articles/2010/02/12/report_nkoreas_top_nuclear_envoy_to_visit_us/)

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Bangkok Post – Thailand  
10 February 2010

## ***India Announces Long-Range Nuclear-Capable Missile Test***

By Agence France-Presse (AFP)

India will test a nuclear-capable missile with a range of over 5,000 kilometres (3,000 miles) within a year, its top military scientist said Wednesday, risking a rise in regional tensions.

"The next series of missiles is Agni-V, which has left the drawing board and is moving toward the first flight trial within the year," the country's chief military scientist, V.K. Saraswat, told a news conference in New Delhi.

India's current longest-range nuclear-capable missile, Agni-III, can travel a maximum of 3,500 kilometres and is now ready for use by the military, Saraswat said.

"The missile system will be fully inducted into the armed forces," Saraswat said. "It is the full deterrence that the country needs."

The Indian-built Agni-III -- Agni means fire in Sanskrit -- was first tested in 2006 and brings major Chinese cities, such as Shanghai, within striking distance, defence analysts say.

India kicked off its guided missile project in 1983 and has developed an array of weapons systems, including the Prithvi, which means "earth" and Agni-I, which is meant for possible use against neighbouring Pakistan.

Nuclear-armed Pakistan, with which India has fought three wars since their partition and independence six decades ago, has said India's missile development programme could trigger a new arms race in the region.

India, which fought a brief, bloody war with China in 1962, has unresolved border issues with its giant neighbour.

The Agni-III is "a real mobile system and hence it has a strategic advantage," Saraswat said.

Avinash Chander, who heads India's Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme, said both Agni-III and Agni-V would be able to carry 1.5-ton conventional or nuclear warheads.

The government scientists said Agni-III was declared operational after three flight tests and numerous computer-simulated trials.



The most recent test was held Sunday, when the missile was fired from Wheeler Island, off the coast of the eastern Indian state of Orissa.

Chander said the Agni-III, which he called a "100-percent indigenous system," hit its "target with pinpoint accuracy and met all mission objectives".

<http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/asia/168077/india-announces-long-range-nuclear-capable-missile-test>

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Deccan Herald – India

February 11, 2010

## ***Pakistan Is My Greatest Concern: Biden***

Washington, Feb 11 (PTI); US Vice President Joe Biden has said that his greatest concern was not Afghanistan nor threat of Iran turning nuclear but Pakistan, which he said had a significant radicalised population and only a "functional democracy".

"I think its a big country that has nuclear weapons that are able to be deployed. It has a real significant minority of radicalised population", Biden said in an interview to CNN.

Pakistan is not "a completely functional democracy in the sense we think about it, and so that is my greatest concern" the US Vice President said.

Biden's comments come as US and NATO troops are all set to undertake their biggest offensive on Marjah to retake the Helmand Valley from the Taliban and pressure being exerted by the Obama Administration on Pakistan to widen its crackdown on the Taliban, Al Qaeda and other militant groups.

It also comes as US officials have long expressed concerns and apprehensions that elements in the Pakistani establishment support extremists, despite a military campaign against Taliban in border areas.

The remarks by Biden also come in the backdrop of recent testimony by US military and intelligence chief before the Congress that "vulnerabilities exist" in safety of Pakistan's nuclear weapons.

In the interview Biden also said that there is unlikely to be another 9/11 type attack on the US now, but acknowledged that new terror attacks could be made similar to the abortive Christmas Day bombing where a Nigerian terror suspect tried to blow up a plane.

"If you see what's happening, particularly with al Qaeda and Arabian Peninsula, they have decided to move in the direction of much more small bore but devastatingly frightening attacks," he said.

"I think what you're seeing morphing here – and it's a concern to us – is somebody like a shoe bomber or the underpants bomber, the Christmas attack or someone just strapping a backpack on them with weapons that are indigenous and blowing up, you know, walking into in airport," he said., adding that there are going to be more attempts.

On Iran, Biden said the country's attempt to acquire a nuclear weapon though a real threat, is not of immediate concern in the sense that something could happen tomorrow or in the very near term, he said.

"What I worry most about Iran is if they continue on the path of nuclear weapons and were able to gain even a modicum of the capability, then you know the Middle East...Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey, etc. would be under pressure to acquire nuclear weapons," Biden said.

<http://www.deccanherald.com/content/52040/pakistan-my-greatest-concern-biden.html>

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Los Angeles Times

February 10, 2010

## ***Squadron That Handles Nuclear Warheads At New Mexico Base Is Decertified By Air Force***

By TIM KORTE, Associated Press Writer

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — The Air Force has decertified a unit responsible for maintaining an estimated 2,000 nuclear warheads at Kirtland Air Force Base in New Mexico, but top military officials won't discuss specifics of the decision.

Decertification means members of the 898th Munitions Squadron cannot perform their usual duties with nuclear weapons.

Air Force officials declined to specify what that means.

Air Force officials also declined to disclose what concerns prompted the action, but Ron Fry, a spokesman for the Air Force Materiel Command at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio, said Wednesday the move wasn't prompted by any risk to the public.

"There is no risk to security, safety or health," he said.

The New Mexico unit will be re-inspected and could be recertified by June, Fry said. Until then, he said qualified individuals from Air Force units based elsewhere will monitor nuclear weapons stored at Kirtland, located on Albuquerque's south side.

Fry said security and stewardship of nuclear weapons remains an Air Force priority, and squadrons assigned to handle nuclear assets are evaluated using rigid criteria.

"This is a business where, as part of the mission, you can't get a score of 99 out of 100 and pass. It's got to be 100 percent," Fry said.

According to an estimate by the nonpartisan Federation of American Scientists, an underground storage complex at Kirtland houses more than 2,000 nuclear warheads.

Neither Fry nor Jill Speake, spokeswoman for Kirtland's 377th Air Base Wing, would confirm the estimate.

Fry said commanders will develop and implement a plan aimed at bringing the New Mexico squadron up to Air Force standards.

"The decision to decertify was not made lightly," he said. "In this case, it was the right action to take to give the unit time to identify and implement necessary changes."

The decertification was requested by Brig. Gen. Everett Thomas, commander of the Nuclear Weapons Center at the New Mexico base.

Speake said Thomas had no public comment.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/wire/sns-ap-us-air-force-nuclear-unit.0,7440440.story>

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Seattle Pilot

February 11, 2010

## ***Official: Nuclear Problems Were Administrative***

By TIM KORTE AND ROBERT BURNS, ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITERS

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. -- The Air Force on Thursday blamed administrative problems for the decision to remove an Air Force squadron overseeing an underground nuclear weapons cache, detailing another instance of questionable oversight even after the military took steps to correct similar issues.

Ron Fry, spokesman for the Air Force Materiel Command, said the problems were related to a failed inspection. But a nuclear expert suggested it appears the problems ran deeper, based on the Air Force's decision to reassign five non-commissioned officers.

The Air Force on Jan. 27 decertified the 898th Munitions Squadron at Kirtland Air Force Base, which maintains an estimated 2,000 nuclear warheads inside a bunkered storage facility.

Fry said the 898th Munitions Squadron was included in a regularly scheduled nuclear surety inspection in November involving its parent unit, the 498th Nuclear Systems Wing, as well as the 377th Air Base Wing - all based at Kirtland.

The two wings and the unit all failed the inspection, Fry said, but initially it was decided that the squadron wouldn't be decertified. Fry said the problems were mainly administrative, such as handling of paperwork and documentation. He declined to elaborate.

A reinspection was scheduled for mid-February. But late last month Brig. Gen. Everett Thomas, commander of Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center - the overseer of Air Force nuclear surety - recommended the squadron be decertified to allow time to identify the root cause of its problems.

As part of the action, five senior non-commissioned officers were reassigned to other duties, but Fry wouldn't disclose details. A senior NCO, such as a senior master sergeant or chief master sergeant, acts as a supervisor.

Hans Kristensen, a longtime watcher of nuclear weapons issues at the Federation of American Scientists, based in Washington, said the removal of the NCOs is a likely indication the squadron's problems ran deeper than one failed surety inspection.

Another inspection is planned in June, the earliest the 898th could be recertified. Fry said members of another squadron based elsewhere have arrived at Kirtland to take over the 898th's duties.

Kirtland is one of two major storage areas for Air Force nuclear weapons. The other is Nellis Air Force Base, Nev.

The New Mexico unit was the military's third since 2003 to be temporarily stripped of its duties over concerns about how the weapons were handled or documented.

In August 2007, nuclear cruise missiles at Minot Air Force Base, N.D., were mistakenly loaded onto a B-52 bomber and flown to a Louisiana base. The foul-up cost a colonel his command and was cited by Defense Secretary Robert Gates as contributing to his decision to fire Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Michael Moseley and Air Force Secretary Michael Wynne.

In November 2003, the Navy said a weapons facility in Bremerton, Wash., was decertified after a ladder was mistakenly left inside a missile tube on the Trident submarine USS Georgia while a nuclear missile was being lifted from the tube.

And in March 2008, the embarrassment grew after the United States mistakenly shipped to Taiwan four electrical fuses designed for use on intercontinental nuclear ballistic missiles. The items, which were returned to the U.S., were not nuclear materials.

Two months later, Gates fired Moseley and Wynne, and the Air Force began a rigorous effort to strengthen its system of ensuring proper handling of nuclear weapons and related items.

*Burns reported from Washington. Associated Press Writer Susan Montoya Bryan in Albuquerque contributed.*

[http://www.seattlepi.com/national/1110ap\\_us\\_air\\_force\\_nuclear\\_concerns.html](http://www.seattlepi.com/national/1110ap_us_air_force_nuclear_concerns.html)

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Missile Defense Agency News Release  
February 11, 2010

## ***Airborne Laser Testbed Successful in Lethal Intercept Experiment***

The Missile Defense Agency demonstrated the potential use of directed energy to defend against ballistic missiles when the Airborne Laser Testbed (ALTB) successfully destroyed a boosting ballistic missile. The experiment, conducted at Point Mugu Naval Air Warfare Center-Weapons Division Sea Range off the central California coast, serves as a proof-of-concept demonstration for directed energy technology. The ALTb is a pathfinder for the nation's directed energy program and its potential application for missile defense technology.

At 8:44 p.m. (PST), February 11, 2010, a short-range threat-representative ballistic missile was launched from an at-sea mobile launch platform. Within seconds, the ALTb used onboard sensors to detect the boosting missile and used a low-energy laser to track the target. The ALTb then fired a second low-energy laser to measure and compensate for atmospheric disturbance. Finally, the ALTb fired its megawatt-class High Energy Laser, heating the boosting ballistic missile to critical structural failure. The entire engagement occurred within two minutes of the target missile launch, while its rocket motors were still thrusting.

This was the first directed energy lethal intercept demonstration against a liquid-fuel boosting ballistic missile target from an airborne platform. The revolutionary use of directed energy is very attractive for missile defense, with the potential to attack multiple targets at the speed of light, at a range of hundreds of kilometers, and at a low cost per intercept attempt compared to current technologies.

Less than one hour later, a second solid fuel short-range missile was launched from a ground location on San Nicolas Island, Calif. and the ALTb successfully engaged the boosting target with its High Energy Laser, met all its test criteria, and terminated lasing prior to destroying the second target. The ALTb destroyed a solid fuel missile, identical to the second target, in flight on February 3, 2010.

<http://www.mda.mil/news/10news0002.html>

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Washington Post  
EDITORIAL  
February 11, 2010

## ***Showdown In Tehran***

Thursday will be a crucial day in the Obama administration's attempt to stop Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. No negotiations are scheduled, and the "crippling sanctions" President Obama promised in the absence of diplomatic progress are a ways from approval by the U.N. Security Council. But Feb. 11, the day when Iranians celebrate the 1979 overthrow of the shah, has emerged as another test of strength between the regime of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and the opposition Green movement. The government has been trying to crush the rebellion with brute force. If it once again fails to stop thousands of protesters from taking to the streets of Tehran and other cities, the West will know that the extremist group that stands behind Iran's drive for the bomb is one step closer to collapse.

Ever since its manipulation of last June's presidential election touched off a popular uprising, the extremist clique around Mr. Khamenei and President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has been entirely preoccupied with the domestic power struggle. Its confusing posturings on the nuclear program -- one day appearing to embrace a deal, the next taking a provocative step toward nuclear capability-- are calculated with the Green movement foremost in mind. The regime would like to avoid new sanctions that could deepen the popular unrest and so tries, successfully so far, to drive a wedge between Western governments and China. But it also wants to look as if it is defying the outside world -- and so in the days before Feb. 11 there have been a stream of missile tests and announcements of new weapons.

This week the government said that it had begun enriching uranium to a higher level, another step toward producing bomb-grade material. It claimed its purpose was to produce fuel for a reactor that creates medical products. But Iran does not have the capacity to manufacture the necessary fuel rods, so the increased enrichment serves little purpose other than moving part of its stockpile closer to the quality needed for a weapon. Tehran has meanwhile refused an international offer to exchange enriched uranium for the rods, a deal that really could serve a medical purpose.

The Obama administration is rightly working on the sanctions resolution, and the Treasury Wednesday imposed new sanctions on several Iranian companies. The State Department is also suggesting that it still would support a deal on a fuel exchange -- though any further discussions will only delay sanctions. Meanwhile, the United States has the opportunity to weaken the regime by doing that which it fears most: providing moral and material aid to the opposition. The administration took a useful step in that direction Monday by issuing a joint statement with the European Union calling on Iran to "end its abuses against its own people" and expressing concern about "the potential for further violence and repression during the coming days."

More measures should be ready in the event Thursday witnesses an extension of the regime's crackdown. In addition to condemnations, the United States could join with European allies in applying sanctions to those engaging in repression, including commanders of the Revolutionary Guard. Legislation due to be introduced Thursday by Sens. Joseph I. Lieberman (I-Conn.) and John McCain (R-Ariz.) would require the White House to submit a list of Iranian human rights abusers to Congress; their names would be made public and they would be subject to sanctions, including a freeze on assets and financial transactions.

Mr. Obama would have the flexibility to waive this sanctions mechanism, but it's a tool he could well use. By targeting those who are using violence to keep the Khamenei regime in power, the United States could send a powerful message to the majority of Iranians who have rejected such tyranny -- and not coincidentally, further weaken the faction most intent on producing nuclear weapons.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/02/10/AR2010021003372.html>

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Khaleej Times – U.A.E.  
EDITORIAL  
11 February 2010

## ***Sanctions No Solution To Iran***

If one is to believe in US President Barack Obama's words, the world seems to be moving fairly quickly against Iran. The root of the discord is Teheran's controversial nuclear programme and the well-entrenched misunderstanding that major powers have developed against it.

In contemplating harsher sanctions to penalise Iran for deciding to enrich Uranium up to 20 per cent, apparently for use in a medical research reactor, the West is pushing the embattled regime of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Syed Ali Khamenei to the brink. Such a policy will only raise the stakes and unnecessarily distract from the option of settling

the dispute through dialogue. Fresh sanctions, however punitive, would not serve the purpose. Rather, they will act as a blessing in disguise for the orthodox establishment, which will make use of West's coercive diplomacy as a ploy to crush the infant democratic movement in Iran. By exercising restraint, both the parties can help make the difference, thereby creating enough space for an amicable settlement of the dispute at hand.

It is, however, disturbing to see that Washington and its allies are stretching the canvas. Putting a cap on Iran's nuclear programme is not their only intention. Rather, they want to see the regime in Teheran destabilised. Targeting Iran's Revolutionary Guards and the organisation's vast network of companies, banks and other entities, is part of West's strategy to realise its vested objectives. This is a blatant interference in Iran's domestic affairs. The issue becomes all the more controversial as Israel seems to be in the driving seat in compelling major powers to move against Iran. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's desire to see immediate action against Teheran is despicable. Such meddling from Israel and the West's eagerness to oblige the Jewish state makes the format of dealing with Iran suspicious. Teheran, which has expressed its eagerness to return to the negotiating table, deserves a better deal. Intimidation tactics will only lead to worsening of an already strained relationship, which may compound the equation to the point of no return.

Teheran, which is celebrating its 31<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, needs to be won over with a sustained process of dialogue. The tendency of jumping over the gun needs to be done away with. It's high time the International Atomic Energy Agency got back to business in Teheran, and saw to it that the mistrust that had set in after the atomic fuel swap deal was reached in October is addressed adequately. It is encouraging to learn that Iran still believes a nuclear fuel exchange with the West is possible. That belief needs to be harnessed for ensuring peace and security in the region. The option of isolating and crippling Teheran with sanctions has neither worked nor will it work in the times to come. Engaging it is the only way out. President Obama can make his leadership felt by discouraging hawkish trends, and making room for a quid pro quo in diplomatic spheres.

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Wall Street Journal

OPINION

February 12, 2010

## ***The Case For Striking Iran Grows***

By John Bolton

Iran's Islamic Revolution had a busy week preceding its 31st birthday yesterday. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad announced on Sunday that Iran would enrich uranium to 19.75% purity for Tehran's research reactor. Yesterday he claimed to have done just that, making Iran "a nuclear state."

Earlier, Tehran boasted of making advances in radar-evading drone aircraft. Its ambassador to Moscow said that Russia promised imminent delivery of S-300 air-defense systems that could preclude Israel from attacking Iran's nuclear program. And to intimidate protesters, the regime disrupted communications networks, made widespread arrests, and executed dissidents. Antiregime demonstrations yesterday were met with force.

Unfortunately, President Obama is not affording these provocations the seriousness they deserve. On Feb. 9, he struck pre-emptively in the White House pressroom by saying that the Iran nuclear issue was well in hand despite what National Security Adviser James Jones earlier this week called Iran's "puzzling defiance." Advocating a "regime of sanctions" against Iran, Mr. Obama stressed that his purpose was to "indicate to them how isolated they are from the international community as a whole."

That raises the question of why being isolated would bother Iran. The regime's leaders believe they are implementing God's will, so why should they fear being isolated from mere mortals—even Barack Obama?

Mr. Obama also said "the door is still open" for Iran to negotiate, and a State Department spokesman added "If Iran didn't trust the proposal we put on the table last fall [to enrich uranium outside Iran] . . . we're willing to explore . . . alternatives."

Mr. Obama's open-handed, open-doored, two-track approach just won't die, despite Secretary of State Hillary Clinton conceding last week that Iran has not "unclenched its fist" as Mr. Obama called for in his inaugural address. And Defense Secretary Robert Gates has said, "the only path that is left to us at this point . . . is that pressure track." Perhaps the president and his national-security cabinet should talk more often.

In the White House pressroom, Mr. Obama said that he is "confident . . . that the international community is unified around Iran's misbehavior." But his very next sentence offered this contradictory statement: "How China operates in the Security Council as we pursue sanctions is something we're going to have to see." Despite the lack of support from China, a veto-wielding permanent council member, Mr. Obama argued that his outreach to Iran had strengthened the campaign for more sanctions. He said he was "pleased . . . to see how forward leaning the Russians have been on this issue."

Moscow seems to be telling Washington what it knows Mr. Obama wants to hear, but that has little to do with how it behaves privately. We can predict that Russia will obstruct the drive toward sanctions. After all, it did just that for all five of the existing Security Council resolutions sanctioning Iran's nuclear program. As for China, Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi has been unusually public in saying "to talk about sanctions at the moment will complicate the situation and might stand in the way of finding a diplomatic solution."

So is Mr. Obama's real objective to pressure Iran back to negotiations, force it to give up nuclear weapons altogether, or undermine the regime's authority and capacity to govern? And how long does Mr. Obama think reaching any of these objectives will take?

It is true that we stand a much better chance at getting Iran to give up its nuclear programs if the regime is replaced with a democratically elected government. But it is entirely possible that even a democratic Iran would retain any nuclear weapons program it inherits upon the collapse of the current regime. If so, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and others will likely continue to see a nuclear Iran as a threat and seek to acquire their own nuclear weapons. Democracy in Iran will not calm their fears.

America's central focus must be to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons in the first place. Doing so requires decisive, and likely military, action now, since there is essentially no likelihood that an Obama-inspired "regime of sanctions" will achieve that objective. The U.S. must rigorously avoid "sanctions" or "pro-democracy" rhetoric becoming excuses for American nonaction.

Incompetence, sabotage and other factors can still slow Iran down, but not forever. Mr. Obama's fascination with negotiations and gestures like sanctions is something Tehran fully understands and is happily exploiting. Iran's nuclear progress and the potential delivery of the S-300s all suggest a crisis point sooner rather than later. We ignore this reality at our peril.

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

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