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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

Lavrov, Clinton Discuss New Arms Cuts Pact

6 March 2010

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and U.S. Secretary of State Hilary Clinton have discussed the new arms cuts treaty and the upcoming Mideast quartet meeting in Moscow, the Foreign Ministry said on Saturday.

The two diplomats held a telephone conversation on Thursday.

"A number of vital issues regarding a new strategic arms reductions pact have been discussed during a bilateral dialogue," the ministry said.

Lavrov and Clinton also discussed the upcoming meeting of the Quartet of international mediators in Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, which will be held in Moscow on March 19, and Iran's controversial nuclear program.

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said on Monday during his official visit to France that Russia and the United States are close to completing negotiations on a new treaty on strategic arms cuts, and expressed the hope that the document could be signed soon.

The talks will continue on March 9 in Geneva.

Russia and the United States have been negotiating a replacement to the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty since the two countries' presidents met in April last year, but finalizing a document has dragged on, with U.S. plans for missile defense in Europe a particular sticking point. START 1, the cornerstone of post-Cold War arms control, expired on December 5.

Lavrov has repeatedly made statements suggesting that a new nuclear arms cuts deal should be linked to Washington's missile plans in Eastern Europe.

Many experts believe, however, that the Russian demand would probably not be satisfied as the U.S. Senate is unlikely to approve any document containing a formal linkage between the arms cuts and the missile shield.

Obama scrapped plans last year for interceptor missiles in Poland and a radar in the Czech Republic pursued by his predecessor as protection against possible Iranian strikes in an apparent move to ease Russian security concerns.

In February, however, Romania and Bulgaria said they were in talks with the Obama administration on deploying elements of the U.S. missile shield on their territories from 2015, triggering an angry reaction from Moscow.

MOSCOW, March 6 (RIA Novosti)

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20100306/158112776.html>

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

Moscow Blames U.S. Negotiators For Slow Progress On Arms Deal

9 March 2010

In a rare albeit implicit criticism of its U.S. counterparts, Moscow indicated on Tuesday that a new Russian-U.S. arms reduction deal could have been prepared earlier if negotiators had followed the principles laid out by the two sides.

"When everyone was saying that the presidents had issued instructions to prepare it [a new agreement] in December, that was feasible, had the negotiators followed the principles agreed upon by the presidents," Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told journalists on Tuesday.

"If they do this [now], this could be completed quite soon," he said replying to a question about when a new deal could be signed. "We believe that everything could be completed within the next two or three weeks."

Lavrov stressed that one of the key principles was the principle of parity.

He did not elaborate.

Presidents Dmitry Medvedev and Barack Obama have made replacing START 1, the cornerstone of post-Cold War arms control pact, part of their broader efforts to "reset" bilateral ties strained in recent years.

Officials have said an agreement between Russia and the United States to replace the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, which expired on December 5 last year, is nearly ready and could be struck in the next two or three weeks.

However, Moscow, which views U.S. plans to deploy elements of its missile defense system in Europe as a direct threat to its security, has said further cuts in offensive nuclear weapons will not be practical unless the sides put limits on nuclear defense projects, which could create an atmosphere of distrust.

Washington says the missile shield is needed to guard against potential Iranian strikes and would pose no threat to Russia, but in a clear move to ease Moscow's concerns, Obama last year scrapped plans to deploy interceptor missiles in Poland and a radar system in the Czech Republic.

In early February, however, Romania and Bulgaria said they were in talks with Obama's administration on deploying elements of the U.S. missile shield on their territories from 2015.

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

MOSCOW, March 9 (RIA Novosti)

<http://en.rian.ru/russia/20100309/158138098.html>

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San Francisco Chronicle

Russia Sees New Nuclear Arms Treaty By April

By DAVID NOWAK

Tuesday, March 9, 2010

MOSCOW, Russia (AP) -- A new treaty limiting U.S. and Russian strategic nuclear arsenals could be signed within two or three weeks, Russian news agencies cited Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov as saying Tuesday.

Lavrov spoke as U.S. and Russian negotiators resumed talks in Geneva on a successor to the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, which expired in December.

"We would push for a conclusion in two to three weeks," Lavrov was quoted as saying. "For this there is every chance."

Russian officials have said a main sticking point concerns U.S. plans to build a defensive missile shield in eastern Europe.

Russia has insisted that the new treaty acknowledge a link between defensive and offensive systems, and Lavrov was quoted as saying that a legally binding provision would be included.

The Russian and U.S. presidents agreed during their July summit that the new treaty would contain such a provision, but experts say negotiations had bogged down over the language on the linkage.

Romania agreed in January to install anti-ballistic missile interceptors as part of the revamped U.S. missile shield, replacing the Bush administration's plans for interceptors in Poland and radar in the Czech Republic.

President Barack Obama's decision to scrap the Bush-era missile defense sites was praised last year by the Kremlin, which had fiercely opposed the earlier plan as a threat.

But Russian officials have expressed irritation over what they see as U.S. flip-flopping on the missile plans.

Experts have said the new plan is less threatening to Russia because it would not initially involve interceptors capable of shooting down Russia's intercontinental ballistic missiles. But officials in Moscow have expressed concern that it is still designed against Russia.

Other problems in the talks are believed to concern monitoring and verification procedures. Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev agreed in July that warheads should be capped at 1,500 to 1,675 from about 2,200 each side has now.

Michael Parmly, spokesman for the U.S. diplomatic mission in Geneva, confirmed treaty talks had restarted but declined to speculate on expectations for a quick conclusion.

"We're committed to concluding negotiations," Parmly said.

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/n/a/2010/03/09/international/i033835S76.DTL&tsp=1>

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Washington Post

Obama Must Decide Degree To Which U.S. Swears Off Nuclear Weapons

By Mary Beth Sheridan and Walter Pincus, Washington Post Staff Writer

Saturday, March 6, 2010

President Obama's top national security advisers will within days present him with an agonizing choice on how to guide U.S. nuclear weapons policy for the rest of his term.

Does he substantially advance his bold pledge to seek a world free of nuclear weapons by declaring that the "sole purpose" of the U.S. arsenal is to deter other nations from using them? Or does he embrace a more modest option, supported by some senior military officials, that deterrence is the "primary purpose"?

The difference may seem semantic, but such words, which will be contained in a document known as the Nuclear Posture Review, have deep meaning and could dramatically shift nuclear policy in the United States and around the world. The first option would scale back the arsenal's war role, potentially leading to a smaller U.S. stockpile and taking weapons off alert. The second option would be less of a change, holding out the nuclear threat but still permitting a reduction in weapons. The president was briefed on the document this week and requested additional intermediate options, officials say.

Senior administration officials have indicated that the review is likely to roll back some George W. Bush policies, such as threatening the use of nuclear weapons to preempt or respond to chemical or biological attacks. The review will also point to new ways to cut the Pentagon's stockpile of roughly 5,000 active nuclear warheads, they say.

The review will "reduce the number and role of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy, even as we maintain a safe, secure and effective nuclear deterrent," Obama said in a statement Friday marking the 40th anniversary of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

But, officials say, after lengthy debate, Obama's aides have rejected some of the boldest ideas on the table, such as forswearing the option to use nuclear arms first in a conflict, or dropping one leg of the "triad" of bombers, submarines and land-based missiles that carry the deadly weapons.

Obama's decision on the sensitive issue of U.S. "declaratory policy," officials and outside experts say, will help determine whether the document is regarded as a far-reaching shift from the Bush administration's version released in 2001. Lower-level officials trying to craft the language engaged in fierce discussions about how far and fast the administration could alter course without alarming allies.

The Nuclear Posture Review is done at the start of each administration, and it influences budgets, treaties and weapons deployment and retirement for five to 10 years. Expectations for this one have been raised because of Obama's pledge last year to "put an end to Cold War thinking" and move toward global disarmament -- a vision that helped win him a Nobel Peace Prize.

The review, more than a month overdue, reflects the tension in seeking to advance the president's sweeping agenda without unnerving allies dependent on the U.S. nuclear "umbrella." The Pentagon is also wary of losing options in a world with emerging nuclear threats from North Korea and Iran, officials say.

Until recently, Obama generally has not intervened in the Pentagon-led process, which also involves officials from the State Department, the Energy Department and other agencies. That has raised concerns among arms-control advocates that the final product will be a cautious bureaucratic compromise.

"This NPR will be sort of the bell toll," said Stephen Young of the Union of Concerned Scientists. "It will signal the direction. Will the president try to push that agenda?"

U.S. diplomats hope the final document will establish the Obama administration's credibility before a nuclear security summit in April and a crucial meeting in May on the fraying nonproliferation treaty. That treaty is at the heart of Obama's strategy to combat the most urgent threat today: the spread of nuclear weapons to unstable states and to terrorists. The last such session, in 2005, ended in failure, with many countries accusing the Bush administration of trying to scotch their nuclear programs while maintaining one of the world's most massive stockpiles.

"The United States can't go around and ask others to give up their nuclear weapons while we maintain a list of official purposes for our nuclear weapons" that necessitate a large arsenal, said Jan Lodal, a senior Defense Department official in the Clinton administration.

The review comes as the U.S. military's precision guided conventional weapons have gained such accuracy that they can handle many threats assigned to nuclear weapons in the past.

Allies are split

But U.S. allies are divided about Obama's vision. New governments in Germany and Japan have embraced it, but some nations are more skeptical. "A country like ours, with a very special experience with its own history, we are maybe more cautious than some other countries," said Petr Kolar, the Czech ambassador, referring to past Soviet domination.

Kolar said big policy changes such as promising not to use nuclear weapons first in a crisis could embolden other nuclear-armed powers. "My personal perspective is . . . we shouldn't actually lose the instruments we so far have," he said. "What's the change that would be gained by that?"

Another European ambassador said the nuclear review broke ground in even contemplating such a pledge. But he said it was unlikely while NATO was engaged in a major study of its strategy, due out this fall.

Pentagon officials worry that allies such as Japan or Turkey could decide to develop their own nuclear weapons if they thought U.S. protection wasn't assured. Skeptics -- both Democrats and Republicans -- also question whether pledges to limit the U.S. nuclear role would have the impact claimed by proponents, because foes probably wouldn't believe such assertions. "We're better off when we communicate that all options are on the table," said Thomas Mahnken, a senior Defense Department official in the Bush administration. "As a practical matter, they are."

More than two dozen Democrats, led by Sen. Dianne Feinstein (Calif.), chairman of the intelligence committee, have pressed Obama to adopt language saying the "sole" or "only" purpose of U.S. nuclear weapons is deterrence. It would not prevent the U.S. government from using a weapon first but would deemphasize that option in planning.

The Bush administration's 2001 Nuclear Posture Review pledged to reduce the Cold War role of nuclear weapons. But it discussed planning to build new types of "bunker-buster" warheads. It also proposed developing the U.S. nuclear stockpile based not on the current threat posed by potential enemies but on their future capability to carry out nuclear, chemical or biological attacks.

As part of his declaratory policy, Obama will have to consider whether to break with the Bush and Clinton administrations' studied ambiguity about whether the United States would use nuclear weapons to respond to chemical or biological attacks planned by non-nuclear countries.

The president is expected to adopt that change, but with an important caveat, officials said. The new policy would drop that threat only for countries in compliance with the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and thus not working on their own bomb.

Leading by example

The immediate effect of such a policy would be limited, because the potential aggressors that most concern the United States are nuclear powers or accused treaty violators such as Iran. But the move could encourage other countries to stick to the rules of that pact, officials said.

"It would be a significant pulling back of the reach of the nuclear sword," said Hans Kristensen of the Federation of American Scientists.

One senior official said the review will "point to dramatic reductions in the stockpile" in coming years.

In particular, the review will push for beefing up the deteriorating U.S. weapons complex and nuclear labs so that the Pentagon can be more certain of its weapons' effectiveness, officials said. That shift will allow the Defense Department to get rid of some of the roughly 2,000 nuclear warheads it keeps as backups to its nearly 3,000 deployed weapons, officials said. There are also more than 4,000 older, inactive warheads in line to be dismantled.

It is not clear whether such reductions would be part of a formal treaty with Russia.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/03/05/AR2010030502260.html?hpid=moreheadlines>

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Seattle Post Intelligencer
Saturday, March 6, 2010

Obama, Gates Not Always Eye-To-Eye On New Nukes

By POLITICO

President Barack Obama has been clear. He wants no new nukes.

Pentagon chief Robert Gates has been equally direct, advocating in recent years for a new generation of warheads.

And nearly 14 months into their bipartisan-tinged partnership, Obama and Gates haven't publicly reconciled their views. Some anti-nuclear activists suspect the pair still don't see completely eye-to-eye and that Gates has never fully abandoned his goal of refurbishing the American nuclear arsenal with new weapons.

Now, the administration is on the verge of releasing a major nuclear policy review that could call attention to this disagreement between the Democratic president and his holdover Defense Secretary – just in time for a nuclear safety summit Obama is hosting for heads of state next month in Washington.

"Quite clearly," said Hans Kristensen of the Federation of American Scientists, "the secretary has been stating he sees a need for replacement warheads and new designs, and I'm not sure those are the words the president would want to use at this stage in the process."

The Obama administration is acutely aware of perceptions that the Nuclear Posture Review has divided senior officials—with Vice President Joe Biden viewed as heading up an arms-control focused camp, and Gates perceived as speaking for a military and nuclear establishment that favors more funding and new weapons programs.

"This is the big challenge of the Obama administration, that it has to find some common ground for those two relatively, I wouldn't say contradictory, but what can be distant positions," Kristensen said.

When Obama asked Gates to stay on, the move was widely hailed for bringing continuity to the Pentagon at a time of two wars, and for avoiding the temptation any president faces to purge all of his predecessor's appointees.

But holding over a member of the Cabinet, especially one who served a president of the opposing party, inevitably means some awkward policy clashes.

It's not merely that a president and one of his senior advisers might diverge on an important policy question. It's that Obama's call to move toward a world without nuclear weapons is one of the signature tenets of his foreign policy.

And liberal arms control activists worry that Obama's 2011 budget – which would spend more on nuclear weapons labs and related activities than the United States did at the height of the Cold War, even adjusted for inflation—goes too far to assuage the concerns of the defense secretary and leaders of the nuclear weapons complex.

"Increasing funds for nuclear weapons appears to conflict with a vision of a world without them," former Office of Management and Budget analyst Robert Civiak said.

Asked directly about whether Obama and Gates had squared up their past differences, White House officials dismissed the question as premature ahead of the release of the policy review.

"The NPR is still being worked," National Security Council Chief of Staff Denis McDonough said in response to questions from POLITICO.

Pentagon spokesman Geoff Morrell said the Obama administration's overall approach is in line with Gates' views. Gates "still believes in the fundamental goals of ensuring warhead safety, security, and reliability, and believes we need a modern infrastructure to support that. Those investments are in the budget," the spokesman said. "The RRW [Reliable Replacement Warhead] program was killed by Congress, and isn't coming back. Sec. Gates recognizes that fact."

However, Morrell said it was too soon to say how modernization of nuclear warhead stocks would be carried out. The Pentagon is "not going to say now what the policy will be on this issue," the spokesman said.

During the presidential campaign, Obama was unequivocal in his opposition to new designs. "I will not authorize the development of new nuclear weapons," he told Arms Control Today in September 2008.

About a month later, while still working for Bush, Gates delivered a speech calling for "urgent attention" to the Bush administration's call for a new Reliable Replacement Warhead and warning of a "bleak" outlook for the U.S. nuclear arsenal if the new devices weren't pursued.

"Sensitive parts do not last forever. We can and do re-engineer our current stockpile to extend its lifespan," Gates said. "With every adjustment we move farther away from the original design that was successfully tested when the weapon was first fielded...At a certain point it will become impossible to keep extending the life of our arsenal—especially in light of our testing moratorium."

Gates might have been expected to keep mum on the point after Obama was elected, at least in public. He didn't.

"It is clear, at least to me, that it is important for us to continue to make investments, and I think larger investments in modernizing our nuclear infrastructure, the labs and so on, the expertise in those places, to have the resources for

life extension programs and in one or two cases probably new designs that will be safer or more reliable," Gates said last September, fielding a question at an Air Force Association conference.

So it was no accident that when Biden delivered a policy address last month about nuclear disarmament and the need to boost funding for America's atomic labs, Gates introduced the vice president—who quickly downplayed any divisions.

"This speech was a collaborative document," Biden told the audience at the National Defense University, in an apparent ad lib. "Bob Gates could have delivered this speech."

Unsurprisingly, Obama's categorical opposition to any new nuclear weapons appears to have carried the day—at least on the surface. When the administration's 2011 budget plan emerged last month, there was no mention of any new atomic weapons programs.

But the question of whether Gates is still pushing for new designs isn't as clear-cut, despite Biden's 22-minute speech and the public budget proposal.

Analysts say squaring the previously stated positions of the president and the Pentagon chief depends on what the definition of the word 'new' is. And, as is so often the case with the federal government, the Obama budget's proposal for a huge injection of cash should help smooth over any hard feelings at the Pentagon and the nuclear labs.

"It comes down to what constitutes 'new,'" Kristensen added. "Even very new concepts can be proposed that are not necessarily considered 'new,' but as modifications of existing types of warheads. It's not a black and white thing."

"A big part of the nuclear review was to assure Secretary Gates and others that we would be investing in all the tools and programs necessary to keep the arsenal safe and effective for the indefinite future," said one longtime arms control advocate, Joseph Cirincione of the Ploughshares Fund. "I believe the Secretary's concerns have been met."

Some say Gates, a veteran government official who served as CIA director under Bush's father, also knows when he has to get on the team.

"My guess is that Gates's bureaucratic instincts are on autopilot," said John Bolton, former U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. under the Bush administration. He said the Defense Secretary may be trying to adjust to the "overwhelmingly pro-arms control" Obama team.

No matter how the Obama administration irons out its differences, Bolton contends that the U.S. needs new nuclear weapons, like bunker-busters and low-yield nuclear weapons. "It would be better, cleaner, safer and more reliable simply to design what are clean, new designs intended for that purpose, which is very necessary given countries like Iran and North Korea are doing to bury hardened targets," he said.

If Gates were to publicly renounce his call for new warheads, he would be able to cite a new study released last fall in which scientists concluded the current arsenal could last for decades without all-new warheads. In his public comments, Gates has consistently said his sole concern was reliability and safety, not trying to seek a military advantage.

"We have no desire for new capabilities. That's a red herring," Gates said last September. "This is about modernizing and keeping safe a capability that everyone acknowledges we will have to have for some considerable period into the future."

While the arms control community has generally been ecstatic about the repeated public calls from Obama and his administration to move towards a nuclear-free world, they are nervous that the large budget hike the White House proposed for nuclear programs pulls in the opposite direction, all but ensuring that the U.S. will have a large and growing nuclear weapons complex for the indefinite future.

Obama is proposing spending \$7.3 billion in nuclear weapons-related activities in fiscal 2011, up 14 percent from this year, according to Civiak. The total 2011 request is the largest ever, and 40 percent higher, adjusted for inflation, than during the Cold War.

"Future administrations could use this new capacity to produce new nuclear weapons," warned said Nickolas Roth of the Alliance for Nuclear Accountability.

Administration officials are scrambling to wrap up the delayed nuclear posture review in advance of Obama's nuclear safety summit in Washington and a Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty review conference set to take place in May at the United Nations.

Given Gates's earlier statements in favor of new warheads, arms control advocates will be reading the U.S. strategy paper closely to see whether programs purportedly aimed at refurbishing the current nuclear arsenal could amount to new weapons programs in disguise.

"That's a very fair concern," Cirincione said. "People will be taking a very close look at what the posture review says about the Life Extension Program for exactly this reason....I think this is mostly on the up and up."

Speaking to reporters earlier this year, Undersecretary of State for Arms Control Ellen Tauscher said she was keenly aware of suspicions that ramping up funding for the nuclear labs could be seen as undercutting disarmament efforts. She said the scientists have been given explicit instructions to avoid that. "You're not going to do things that are going to cause people to think that we're saying one thing and doing another. Because we don't have enough time in the day to unwind that monster," she said.

Tauscher also insisted that Gates was fully on board with the administration's approach—notwithstanding his past statements. "A lot of people have morphed to where we are right now," she said.

Jen DiMascio contributed to this report.

<http://www2.seattlepi.com/articles/416304.html>

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Russia Today – Russia

Moscow Conference On Nuclear Proliferation Generates Heated Debate

06 March, 2010

Moscow is hosting a three-day meeting to discuss nuclear proliferation in an effort to rally support for greater global recognition of this burning issue.

In May, the 189 signatory states of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) will gather in Washington to reaffirm their obligations to continue the fight against nuclear proliferation.

As a prelude to that conference, delegates have assembled in Moscow for a chance to review and discuss the issues of non-proliferation, disarmament and the peaceful use of the nuclear technology, which are sometimes referred to as the main pillars of the NPT.

The NPT was signed into force on March 5, 1970.

Four non-signatories to the treaty are known to possess nuclear weapons. India, Pakistan and North Korea have tested and declared that they possess nuclear weapons, while Israel, which refuses to go public with its nuclear status, is generally believed to have nuclear weapons.

"The conference that is going on now in Moscow is a non-governmental conference, but it has united a lot of important people who may influence decisions by governments and decisions by the conference in favor of non-proliferation and nuclear arms control," Roland Timerbaev, Former Russian and Soviet Ambassador who took part in drafting of the NPT, told RT.

According to Timerbaev, there is no need to draft a new proliferation treaty. The current treaty has been successfully updated to meet the new realities, but there are some new challenges that should be taken into account.

"Overall, the world has become a safer place, but there are very many challenges to security both global and regional," Timerbaev added.

William Potter, from the James Martin Center for Non-proliferation Studies in the U.S, is also in Moscow as a participant in the conference. He believes that many countries have the potential to join the nuclear club, but the question is whether they have the will and the incentive to do it.

Potter stresses the importance of the NPT, which has proved to be a potent *"disincentive for countries to translate their potential into reality."*

In this respect, the upcoming 2010 NPT review conference in May is extremely important, he added, especially as the question of Iran possibly acquiring nuclear weapons is of growing concern.

"If... the states-parties are able to reinvigorate the treaty and to demonstrate practical steps toward disarmament, [and demonstrate] that we can address the problems in the Middle East, that we can deal with peaceful use and compliance, then the treaty will be strengthened, that it will be less likely for more countries to pursue nuclear weapons," Potter told RT.

Meanwhile, the greatest risk concerning nuclear technology comes from the danger of terrorists getting hold of the weapons, Potter adds.

In this respect, he sees two major threats. The first is that terrorists can acquire fissile material that can be converted into an improvised nuclear device; second, they may seize an operational nuclear weapon, such as a tactical nuclear weapon.

"It's imperative for all countries to take steps to secure fissile material, particularly in the civilian nuclear sector," Potter stresses. "But also for the nuclear weapon states, in particular for the US and Russia, to reduce their arsenals and particularly to make progress in reducing so-called tactical weapons, the smallest kinds of weapons that would be the nuclear weapons of choice for terrorists"

Finally, Potter concludes that the NPT has done a lot for global safety, but in order for it to continue to be successful requires will, commitment and flexibility on the part of all parties involved.

"The test of commitment and flexibility for states will come in May during the month-long MPT-review conference," he concludes.

Pakistan has nuclear weapons, but is not a signatory to the NPT, and this fuels international concern, especially taking into account Pakistan's long standoff with India.

In the opinion of Naeem Salik, advisor from Pakistan's National Defense University, the NPT regime has been generally successful in preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Naeem Salik says that Pakistan is fully aware of the consequences of nuclear war and there is absolutely no possibility of such a catastrophic event happening.

Salik told RT that fears from the international community that terrorists may seize nuclear weapons inside of Pakistan are "overblown and exaggerated" because all of the necessary security measures have been taken to prevent terrorists from getting hold of nuclear arms. He also said that people should not be afraid that the peaceful use of nuclear energy can pose any danger to the world's security.

"Nuclear energy is making a come-back especially after people got concerned about the environmental issues," Salik told RT. *"I think, we should not prevent countries from seeking nuclear energy, and particularly countries like Pakistan who have plans to multiply their nuclear energy potential about 10 to 12 times and would definitely be looking for cooperation from more advanced nuclear countries."*

In order to support the non proliferation of nuclear weapons, it is important US and Russia continue with their nuclear arms reduction, says Mark Smith, program director of Wilton Park conference forum.

"It is very important for two reasons," Smith says. *"The first reason is simply that there are more nuclear weapons in the United States and Russia than in the rest of the world put together and the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is...based on the fact that nuclear arms states will reduce and eliminate their nuclear arsenals."*

"Another reason is simply the technological verification techniques that are developed between them can be applied elsewhere so there is transferable knowledge developed between this two that could be applicable in other cases," Smith added.

Konstantin von Eggert, Royal Institute of International Relations agrees that the NPT played an important historic role during the Cold War, but now that it is possible to find the recipe for the nuclear bomb on-line, the NPT treaty needs to go further.

Indeed, the countries that present the greatest concern for the international community are outside of the non-proliferation regime. This is exactly the issue that is being discussed in Moscow with the Iranian representatives.

"Most experts here agree that it is probably the last chance to implement sanctions as an effective pressure tool," Von Eggert says. *"And probably after that we'll be looking into a very uncertain future that does not exclude military action against Iran on the part of some states."*

Speaking about the future of the NPT, he told RT that one of the main points being discussed is how to make the treaty more binding, how to make leaving it more difficult and providing incentive for countries to stay within the regime.

"NPT is something that is, strictly speaking, voluntary, and when countries' national interests perceive to clash with any treaty, countries leave the treaty and go their own way," says Konstantin von Eggert.

"It's always the question of national interests and national security that in the end prevails," he concluded.

http://rt.com/Top_News/2010-03-06/conference-nuclear-arms-proliferation.html

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March 6, 2010

West Softens Stance On Iran Nuclear Sanctions

Diplomats take aim at Iranian finances in Europe but drop call to blacklist Tehran central bank.

By Reuters

A Western proposal for fresh UN sanctions on Iran includes a call for restricting new Iranian banks abroad and urges "vigilance" against the Islamic Republic's central bank, diplomats said on Friday.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, Western diplomats familiar with negotiations on the draft proposal - which Washington worked on with Britain, France and Germany and then shared with Russia and China - said they were no longer pushing for an official UN blacklisting of the central bank.

The draft also calls for restrictions on new Iranian banks abroad, which would make it difficult for Tehran to skirt a global crackdown on transactions with existing Iranian financial institutions by setting up new ones.

"We will be looking for a tightening of restrictions of new Iranian bank activity overseas," one diplomat said.

The UN Security Council has imposed three rounds of sanctions on Iran for defying UN demands it halt nuclear enrichment. Tehran rejects Western charges that its nuclear program is aimed at developing bombs and says it will only be used to generate electricity.

Another diplomat said urging vigilance about Iran's central bank in the U.S.-drafted proposal should be more acceptable to Russia and China than blacklisting it, which would have made it difficult for anyone to invest in Iran.

"The idea is to call for strengthened vigilance regarding transactions linked to the Iranian central bank, which the European Union and United States and others can then use as the basis for implementing their own tougher restrictions on (such) transactions," a second diplomat said.

Only one Iranian bank -- Bank Sepah -- is blacklisted under an array of UN sanctions spelled out in three resolutions adopted by the Security Council in 2006, 2007 and 2008.

The council has issued warnings about two others -- Bank Melli and Bank Saderat -- but has not blacklisted them.

The new draft also targets Iranian shipping firms and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and firms linked to it. The measures would restrict insurance and reinsurance coverage of cargo shipments in and out of Iran, diplomats said.

It would also expand the restrictions on arms trade with Iran into a full arms embargo, including a global inspection regime similar to one in place against North Korea.

The diplomats said Russia's initial reaction was negative.

"Russia says the draft does not correspond to their idea of what the sanctions should be and they reject many of the measures in the latest draft," a diplomat said.

China has not reacted and has so far refused to engage in "substantive negotiations" on a fourth round of UN sanctions against Tehran. The four Western powers hope to organize a conference call with officials from all six countries to discuss the draft but have been unable to do so due to China.

Both Russia and China have lucrative trade ties to Tehran, though Moscow has indicated it could support new punitive steps against Iran provided they are not too severe. China has not ruled out backing new sanctions but has repeatedly said the issue should be resolved through dialogue, not punishment.

Moscow and Beijing reluctantly supported the three previous rounds of travel bans and frozen assets targeting individuals and firms tied to Iran's nuclear and missile industries. Russia and China, like the United States, Britain and France, have veto powers on the UN Security Council.

Western diplomats hope to present a formal draft resolution to the full 15-nation Security Council in the coming weeks so it can be adopted sometime next month at the latest.

Iran: Bushehr nuclear plant to be operational in spring

Iran's long-delayed Bushehr nuclear power plant will be launched within a few months, the Iranian nuclear energy agency chief said on Friday.

"This plant will be launched according to schedule at the end of the spring and will run the same as the other nuclear plants in the world," Ali Akbar Saleh, head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation said in quotes carried by news agency ILNA.

The Iranian spring ends in late June.

Russia said in January it would finish building a 1,000 megawatt nuclear power plant this year that it agreed to build 15 years ago. Delays have haunted the \$1 billion project and diplomats say Moscow has used it as a lever in relations with Tehran.

Russia says the Bushehr plant is purely civilian and cannot be used for any weapons program as it will come under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) supervision. Iran will have to return all spent fuel rods to Russia.

An IAEA review of Bushehr's safety regulation gave it good marks but assessed that Iran should pass legislation to make its nuclear regulatory authority a completely independent body, the agency said in a report this week.

The IAEA reviewers, who were from seven member states and visited Iran including Bushehr from Feb. 20 to March 2, also urged Tehran to join global conventions on nuclear safety, including one dealing with radioactive waste management.

<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1154412.html>

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Press TV – Iran

'World Powers Will Fail To Agree On Iran Sanctions'

Sunday, 07 March 2010

Iran says world powers will fail to reach a consensus on imposing new sanctions against Iran over the country's nuclear program.

"Since the principle of sanctions lacks the legal and logical basis regarding the Islamic Republic of Iran's basic right to peaceful nuclear activities; and since this policy is pursued under the political pressure of certain countries, it is natural that such a consensus [on sanctions] will not materialize," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast said on Sunday.

Washington is persuading members of the P5+1 group — the United States, Britain, France, Russia, China, which are the veto-wielding members of the UN Security Council, and Germany — to approve a new round of sanctions against Iran.

China and Russia have repeatedly opposed new punitive measures against Iran with Beijing repeatedly calling for more dialogue with Tehran to resolve the issue.

Despite the IAEA reports reaffirming that it continues to verify the non-diversion of Iran's nuclear work toward any military purposes, the US and its allies accuse Tehran of having military objective in its nuclear work.

Iran, a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), rejects the allegations as politically motivated and says its nuclear work is totally peaceful and within the framework of the NPT.

Mehmanparast said Iran was still ready to discuss a nuclear fuel swap deal with Western countries as long as Tehran's concerns regarding the delivery of the fuel are taken into consideration.

Under an IAEA-brokered deal, Iran is to send most of its domestically-produced low enriched uranium (LEU) abroad for conversion into the more refined fuel, required by the Tehran research reactor to produce medical isotopes.

"We cannot accept whatever terms they want [regarding the swap deal]. Our condition is that there should be a 100 percent guarantee," he said.

Based on the draft, Iran would receive a shipment of the nuclear fuel at a later time, while the Tehran research reactor is already running out of fuel.

After the powers ignored Tehran's concerns over the absence of necessary guarantees, Iran decided to domestically enrich uranium to a level of 20 percent.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail.aspx?id=120276§ionid=351020104>

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Tehran Times – Iran

Monday, 8 March 2010

Iran Says No Plan For U.S. Ties, Nuclear Fuel Swap Still On Table

Tehran Times Political Desk

TEHRAN – A senior Foreign Ministry official said on Sunday that Iran has no plan to establish relations with the United States and reiterated Tehran's position that the proposal for a simultaneous nuclear fuel swap is still on the table.

"There is no issue as (establishing) ties with this country," Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast said in an address to a number of students from Shahid Beheshti university.

As long as the U.S. does not respect Iran's rights and does not change its discriminatory approach, Tehran will not consider establishing ties with it, Mehmanparast stated.

He went on to say that Tehran will produce nuclear fuel enriched to 20 percent to power its nuclear research reactor if it does not receive the needed fuel.

However, he insisted the position that Tehran is still ready for a simultaneous swap of its low enriched uranium (LEU) with 20 percent enriched fuel on the Iranian soil.

Iran announced last week that it had sent a letter to International Atomic Energy Agency Director Chief, Yukiya Amano, urging the UN once again to provide the country with nuclear fuel for its research reactor, an offer widely seen as a confidence-building measure.

Iran has already started enriching uranium to higher degree for the medical reactor.

http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=215575

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Ha'aretz Daily – Israel
Monday, March 8, 2010

Biden: Nuclear Iran Would Threaten United States As Well As Israel

The Obama administration has boosted U.S. defense ties to Israel and will close ranks with its ally against any threat from a nuclear-armed Iran, U.S. Vice President Joe Biden said on Monday ahead of a trip to Israel.

Biden arrived on Monday afternoon in Israel, where he plans to deliver a message to the Israeli public about U.S.-Israel relations, the Iranian nuclear program and the Middle East peace process.

Biden, the most senior U.S. official to visit Israel since President Barack Obama took office in January 2009, is widely expected to caution his hosts not to attack Iran pre-emptively while world powers pursue fresh sanctions against Tehran.

In an interview with the Israeli newspaper Yedioth Ahronoth, Biden emphasized Washington's efforts to drum up greater international diplomatic pressure on the Iranians, as well as unilateral measures imposed by the U.S. Treasury.

Asked about the prospect of an Israeli attack, he said, "though I cannot answer the hypothetical questions you raised about Iran, I can promise the Israeli people that we will confront, as allies, any security challenge it will face. A nuclear-armed Iran would constitute a threat not only to Israel - it would also constitute a threat to the United States."

Meanwhile on Monday, Defense Minister Ehud Barak has said that Iran does not pose an existential threat to Israel.

"Iran isn't an existential threat to Israel at the moment, but it has the potential to develop into one, and we are working to prevent that," said Barak, speaking before the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee.

Biden, however, emphasized the Iranian threat and reiterated the United States' commitment to Israel.

"[The Obama administration] gives Israel annual military aid worth \$3 billion. We revived defense consultations between the two countries, doubled our efforts to ensure Israel preserves its qualitative military edge in the region, expanded our joint exercises and cooperation on missile-defense systems."

Israel, which is believed to have the region's only atomic arsenal, bombed Iraq's nuclear reactor in 1981 and, in 2007, launched a similar sortie against Syria.

Those tactical challenges, and U.S. reluctance to see a new regional war, has led some analysts to predict Israel will eventually come round to a strategy of "containing" Iran - which denies its controversial uranium enrichment is for bombs.

Biden, who arrives in Jerusalem on Monday and departs Israel on Thursday, was not expected to take part in indirect Israeli-Palestinian talks that would be spearheaded by Obama's special envoy, George Mitchell, and could be announced during his visit, although he will be briefed on them.

U.S.-Israeli tensions flared over Obama's early push for a complete freeze on settlement construction in the West Bank.

Obama has since embraced a more limited, 10-month moratorium on new building announced by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in November.

Obama's has been trying to reach out to the Muslim world, a priority he highlighted with high-profile visits to Egypt and Saudi Arabia, and, later this month, to Indonesia.

"We certainly believe that when the United States effectively builds bridges with Muslim communities, this allows us to promote our interests, including interests that Israel benefits from," Biden told Yedioth.

"The construction freeze was a unilateral decision by the Israeli government, and it is not part of an agreement with the American administration or with the Palestinians," he said.

"It is not everything that we wanted, but it is an important action that has significant impact on the ground," said Biden.

Biden's meetings in Jerusalem will begin Tuesday morning, when he will meet with President Shimon Peres at the President's Residence in Jerusalem. He will then continue on to the prime minister's Jerusalem residence to meet with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and advisers. Following a private session, the two leaders will hold a joint press conference.

Biden will address the Israeli public at Tel Aviv University on Thursday, during which time he will discuss U.S.-Israel ties and U.S. President Barack Obama's vision for the peace process and dealing with the Iranian nuclear threat.

<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1154892.html>

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Xinhua News – China
9 March 2010

U.S. Determined To Prevent Iran From Nuclear Weapons: Biden

JERUSALEM, March 9 (Xinhua) -- The United States is determined to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons, visiting U.S. Vice President Joe Biden said on Tuesday.

"We're determined to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. And we're working with many countries around the world to convince Teheran to meet international obligations and cease and desist," Biden told a joint news conference with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu shortly after their meeting.

"Addressing Iran's nuclear program has been one of our administration's priorities," the vice president added.

Biden, the highest level U.S. official till now visiting the Jewish state, iterated U.S. commitment to the security of its long- time ally.

"The cornerstone of the relationship is our absolute and unvarnished commitment to Israel's security," Biden asserted, adding that "there is no space between the United States and Israel when it comes to Israel's security."

Both Israel and the United States believe that Tehran may obtain the uranium fuel needed for nuclear weapons by the same process to purify uranium. But Iran insists its nuclear program is for peaceful purpose.

Israel has long labeled Iran's nuclear program as a threat to its security, and refuses to rule out the possibility of launching unilateral military strike on Iran's nuclear facilities.

Regarding the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, Biden welcomed the coming indirect talks between Israel and the Palestinians, and encouraged the two sides to make further moves.

The vice president arrived in the region Monday afternoon, kicking off a five-day visit to the Middle East. Hours after his arrival, U.S. special envoy George Mitchell announced that Israel and the Palestinians agreed to begin

indirect talks brokered by the United States, which put the two sides back into an unwieldy process to end the decades-old Mideast feud after a 15-month hiatus.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/world/2010-03/09/c_13203832.htm

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BBC News – U.K.

Tuesday, March 9, 2010

Israel And Syria In Nuclear Bids

Israel and Syria have both told a conference in Paris they want to use nuclear power to generate electricity.

Israeli Infrastructure Minister Uzi Landau told delegates his country wanted to build new nuclear plants to reduce its dependence on coal.

Syria's deputy foreign minister said the peaceful application of nuclear energy should not be monopolised.

Israel has a research reactor open to international inspection, and another said to have produced nuclear weapons.

In 2007, Israeli jets destroyed a site in Syria which the US alleged was a covert nuclear reactor under construction - something Damascus has strenuously denied.

'Energy independence'

In a speech to a conference organised by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Mr Landau said Israel imported significant quantities of coal to generate electricity and wanted to find an alternative.

"Israel is interested in being part of the circle of countries producing electricity from nuclear energy," he said.

"In a region like the Middle East, we can only depend on ourselves. Building a nuclear reactor to produce electricity will allow Israel to develop energy independence."

Environmental objections have also so far prevented the building of another coal-fired power plant.

Mr Landau said a site had already been chosen for a reactor in the northern Negev desert, and that he hoped the project would be a joint venture between Israel and one of its Arab neighbours - possibly Jordan - under the supervision of a Western nation such as France.

Israel, while a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), has never signed the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and is widely thought to have an arsenal of nuclear weapons. It practices a policy of "ambiguity".

Until recently it would have been unthinkable for any outside country to help it to develop nuclear power under these circumstances, says BBC diplomatic correspondent Jonathan Marcus.

But a civilian nuclear deal between the US and India has changed the whole context, our correspondent says.

Israel may now also believe that such a facility would be less vulnerable to attack given the improvements in its anti-missile capabilities over recent years, he adds.

Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister Faysal Mekdad told the conference that his country was also looking to develop alternative energy sources, including nuclear power.

"The peaceful application of nuclear energy should not be monopolised by the few that own this technology but should be available equally for all," he said.

However, Syria is still seen by the IAEA as failing to co-operate fully with its investigations into the alleged nuclear facility destroyed two years ago.

IAEA investigators found unexplained traces of uranium at the site, as well as at a nuclear research reactor in Damascus.

When asked about Syria's proposal, Mr Landau said any country generating nuclear power needed to have "responsible leadership that is also following all the measures and all the precautions... to ensure that all power plants that are built are used for peaceful means".

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8558160.stm

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Dong-A Ilbo – South Korea

US Proposes `Regional Missile Defense` To Seoul

March 06, 2010

A leading U.S. defense official yesterday said Washington will invest in establishing a “regional missile defense” against North Korean nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles.

Deputy Assistant Defense Secretary Michael Schiffer made the statement in his op-ed piece “Quadrennial Defense Report and the Korean Peninsula” sent to The Dong-A Ilbo.

He said the threat of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles aimed at South Korea and the U.S. exists and is growing.

Schiffer is seen indirectly inviting Seoul, which has declined to join the U.S. missile defense system, to participate in a new “regional” system.

On the regional missile system, he said the measure will allow a more flexible and convenient deployment and is tailored to the unique needs of Asia.

Unlike the strategic missile defense designed to cope with intercontinental ballistic missiles, the regional system is geared to cope with short-range and mid-range ballistic missiles, he said.

A South Korean government official said, “At the 2+2 meeting of director-generals, or Pol-Mil council between Korea and the U.S., held in Washington in December last year, Washington explained its plan to invest in the regional missile defense.”

“The U.S. said it had a plan for a tailored and phased approach, but stopped short of submitting details.”

http://english.donga.com/srv/service.php3?biid=2010030676788&path_dir=20100306

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Khaleej Times – U.A.E

N.Korea Slams US War Games, Pledges Nuclear Defence

Agence France-Presse (AFP)

7 March 2010

SEOUL - North Korea said on Sunday it was abandoning efforts towards nuclear disarmament in response to US-South Korean military exercises and would be free to build up its nuclear forces.

The announcement, carried by the official KCNA news agency, came from a spokesman for the North's army mission at the inter-Korean border on the eve of the US-South Korean exercises, titled Key Resolve/Foal Eagle.

It said all military talks with the United States and South Korea would be suspended during the exercises, which involve 10,000 US troops stationed in South Korea plus 8,000 from abroad and last from March 8-18.

“It is illogical to sit face to face with the dialogue partner who brings dark clouds of a nuclear war while levelling its gun at the other party, and discuss ‘peace’ and ‘cooperation’ with him.

“The process for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula will naturally come to a standstill and the DPRK (North Korea) will bolster its nuclear deterrent for self-defence,” the statement said, alleging that the exercises were actually “nuclear war exercises”.

The North is entitled “to counter with powerful nuclear deterrent,” it added.

The North already warned on March 2 that the annual US-South Korean exercise would torpedo efforts to rid the peninsula of nuclear weapons and vowed to beef up its arsenal if necessary.

The North, which tested its first atomic bomb in 2006, conducted a second nuclear test last May, triggering harsh UN sanctions.

In recent weeks diplomatic efforts have intensified to revive six-nation nuclear disarmament negotiations that the North abandoned last April.

But the North demands UN sanctions be lifted before it returns to the six-party dialogue. It also wants a US commitment to discuss a peace pact to replace the armistice that ended the 1950-1953 war.

The North routinely criticises war games in South Korea as a rehearsal for invasion, while Seoul and its ally Washington say they are purely defensive.

http://www.khaleejtimes.com/displayarticle.asp?xfile=data/international/2010/March/international_March270.xml§ion=international&col=

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Yonhap News – South Korea
9 March 2010

N. Korea Ready For Dialogue, But Will Bolster Nuclear Arms If U.S. Threats Remain

SEOUL, March 9 (Yonhap) -- North Korea said Tuesday it is ready for both dialogue and war, vowing to enlarge its nuclear arsenal to counter what it calls U.S. "military threats and provocations" against the communist nation.

The statement from the North's foreign ministry was the latest in a series of harsh rhetoric against an annual joint exercise that South Korea and the United States launched Monday. The 10-day drill mobilizes tens of thousands of troops from both sides.

North Korea says the drill amounts to a rehearsal for a preemptive nuclear attack on the country and has vowed to suspend all military dialogue with the U.S. and the South during the period.

"The DPRK is fully ready for dialogue and war. It will continue bolstering up its nuclear deterrent as long as the U.S. military threats and provocations go on," an unidentified foreign ministry spokesman said, according to the North's official Korean Central News Agency.

DPRK stands for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the North's official name.

South Korea and the U.S. dismiss the North Korean accusation as rhetoric, defending the Key Resolve and Foal Eagle drill as purely defensive and tailored to only deal with North Korean aggression.

The allies remain technically at war with North Korea after the 1950-53 Korean War ended in a truce. The North said Monday it placed its 1.2 million troops in a combat-ready posture in response to the start of the South Korean-U.S. war games.

The North said the launch of the exercise "cannot be interpreted otherwise than a grave provocation," and argued that it attests to the need to forge a peace treaty to defuse tension on the Korean Peninsula.

"Without a peace treaty it is impossible to defuse the military confrontation on the Korean Peninsula," it said, adding efforts toward its denuclearization would also remain in limbo.

The March 8-18 exercise by South and the U.S. "is an act of chilling the efforts to realize the denuclearization of the peninsula," it said.

This year's war games, the largest between South Korea and the U.S., comes amid a flurry of diplomacy aimed at bringing North Korea back to six-party talks on its nuclear ambitions.

North Korea says it will not return to the talks unless the U.S. agrees on separate negotiations toward a peace treaty to replace the truce that ended the 1950-53 Korean War. Pyongyang also demands the removal of U.N. sanctions imposed on it for its nuclear test in May last year.

The talks, which include the two Koreas, the U.S., Japan, Russia and China, have not been held since late 2008.

Inter-Korean traffic, which came to a near halt last year during the Key Resolve and Foal Eagle exercise, remains normal this week despite North Korean threats, the Seoul government says.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2010/03/09/99/0401000000AEN20100309002300315F.HTML>

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Mainichi News – Japan
March 9, 2010

Japan-U.S. Secret Pacts Confirmed, Gov't Policy Shift Expected

TOKYO (Kyodo) -- A Foreign Ministry panel concluded Tuesday that secret pacts on nuclear arms and other issues were reached by Japan and the United States in the Cold War era, leading the Japanese government to end its decades-long official denial of their existence.

While such pacts have already been exposed through declassified U.S. documents and other sources, the panel investigation, launched following the historic change of government in Japan last year, made clear that previous governments were "dishonest" over the issue and raised questions over the management and disclosure of diplomatic documents.

The expert panel, headed by University of Tokyo professor Shinichi Kitaoka, looked into four alleged secret pacts, including the nuclear weapons deal, and recognized three as secretly reached agreements.

Among the secret pacts acknowledged by the panel was "a tacit agreement" that emerged during the revision of the Japan-U.S. security treaty in 1960, which led to Japan effectively allowing port calls by U.S. vessels carrying nuclear weapons without prior consultation.

The prior consultation system required Washington to consult with Tokyo in advance on the "introduction" of nuclear weapons, given strong the antinuclear sentiment among the Japanese public following the U.S. atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.

With the murky aspects of the bilateral security arrangements finally brought to light from the Japanese side, with about 330 documents newly declassified, the report revealed that the country's non-nuclear principles of not possessing, producing or allowing nuclear weapons on its territory were a mere facade.

Japan had so far said that as prior consultations had never taken place, no nuclear weapons had been brought into Japan.

After receiving the report, Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada told a press conference, "It is regrettable that the (secret pact) issue has not been open to the public for such a long time."

He said the introduction of nuclear weapons into Japan could not be ruled out, while adding that the probe into the secret pacts will not affect Japan-U.S. security arrangements.

He also told reporters that he expects the report "will contribute to restoring public trust over diplomacy" and that Japan will stick to the three non-nuclear principles, first declared in 1967 by then Prime Minister Eisaku Sato.

In the report, the panel looked into both narrowly and broadly defined secret pacts. Those in a narrow sense are documented, while those in a broad sense, not necessarily backed by papers, were agreed tacitly and have important content differing from official agreements.

Of the remaining three pacts, the panel acknowledged that there was a secret pact that allowed Washington to use U.S. military bases in Japan without prior consultation in the event of a contingency on the Korean Peninsula as well as one covering cost burdens for the 1972 reversion of Okinawa to Japan from U.S. control.

But it said another alleged pact to allow Washington to bring nuclear weapons into Okinawa in times of emergency does not fit the definitions of a secret pact as it is unlikely to go far beyond the content of the 1969 Japan-U.S. statement on the Okinawa reversion.

As for the secret nuclear deal, the panel concluded that, at the time of revising their security treaty, Japan and United States "intentionally" avoided further pursuing whether the entry of U.S. vessels into Japanese ports would be subject to prior consultations so as not to disrupt their alliance.

"By leaving the issue ambiguous, (U.S.) ships carrying nuclear weapons could stop at Japanese ports without prior consultation, while Japan, as its official stance, could deny such a development. But neither side would make a protest," the report noted.

Such a tacit agreement, or "secret pact in a broad sense," became fixed after U.S. Ambassador to Japan Edwin Reischauer told Foreign Minister Masayoshi Ohira in 1963 that Washington did not consider the port calls as subject to prior consultation.

While aware of the high probability that U.S. nuclear-armed ships might visit its ports, Japan did not make any protests and continued to explain to the Diet that port calls would be subject to prior consultation, according to the report.

"The Japanese government offered dishonest explanations, including lies, from beginning to end. This attitude should not have been allowed under the principle of democracy," the panel said.

But the panel also pointed out it was not easy in those days to achieve a balance "between a nuclear deterrence strategy under the Cold War era and the Japanese people's antinuclear sentiments."

The report noted that following U.S. President George H.W. Bush's announcement in 1991, after the Cold War ended, that the United States would withdraw tactical nuclear weapons from its vessels, the port call issue no longer troubles Japan-U.S. ties.

On an agreement that allowed Washington to use U.S. military bases in Japan in the event of a contingency on the Korean Peninsula, the panel said that while it found a document proving such a secret pact existed, it is no longer effective.

On the cost burden related to the Okinawa reversion, the panel said a secret pact in a broad sense can be confirmed, under which Tokyo gave consent to shouldering \$4 million in costs the United States was supposed to pay to restore back to their original state Okinawa land plots that U.S. forces had used.

Meanwhile, the panel proposed that the ministry consider ways to ensure its basic policy of disclosing 30-year-old diplomatic documents is followed by, for example, increasing staff handling such tasks. It also said it is undesirable that for a long period Japan's diplomatic history is described mainly in the records of other countries.

It also expressed regret that many key documents were found missing and called for further investigations amid a media report that there was an internal order at the ministry to discard some documents related to the secret nuclear pact.

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/news/20100309p2g00m0dm033000c.html>

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Pakistan Nation – Pakistan

Saturday, March 6, 2010

US Decide To Include Pak In The List Of Nuclear Countries On The Basis Of Doctrine Of Necessity: Mushahid

PML-Q secretary general Mushahid Hussain Sayyed has said US has decided to include Pakistan in the list of nuclear countries under the doctrine of necessity, as Pakistan has become its necessity to achieve success in Afghanistan.

Mushahid Hussain Sayyed said this while addressing protest demonstration of contract employees and later talking to a private TV channel here Saturday.

Change to some extent was coming in the US policy under the presidency of Obama, he held. US wanted to give Pakistan and India equal status in the Washington conference taking place on April, 12 while US trust on Pakistan military security establishment and nuclear weapons had been restored, he added. This all had occurred due to Pakistan role in war on terror and in Afghanistan, he remarked.

US double standard on nuclear issue with reference to Pakistan and India had been changed and its policy to include Pakistan in nuclear countries list would lower the scale of criticism against US in terms of its double standards, he added. Without cooperation from Pakistan US strategy in Afghanistan could not work therefore, Obama administration had to accept to Pakistan long outstanding demand, he underlined.

Pakistan should pursue the very stance in the upcoming Washington conference that there should be no double standards on nuclear issue, he urged. Whatever stance was adopted, it should be principled and equal for all, he added.

India raised hue and cry over military aid to Pakistan and on the other hand India had voiced its trust over Pakistan nuclear program, as the former knew it well that the same apprehension could be expressed about its nuclear program what it was having about Pakistan.

"We strongly condemn Sindh government for adopting double standards and reject it. Those talking about rights of people of Sindh address their problems only when their pockets are filled with bribery, he maintained. The incumbent Sindh government is running the affairs of province on the basis of corruption, he accused.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Islamabad/06-Mar-2010/US-decide-to-include-Pak-in-the-list-of-nuclear-countries-on-the-basis-of-doctrine-of-necessity-Mushahid>

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Washington Post

OPINION

A Sober Approach To Sanctioning Iran

By David Ignatius

Sunday, March 7, 2010

Page - A15

The cynical (and usually correct) critique of economic sanctions was summed up this way by a retired U.S. diplomat named Douglas Paal: "Sanctions always accomplish their principal objective, which is to make those who impose them feel good." The Obama administration is struggling to craft a new round of U.N. sanctions against Iran that

achieves more than this feel-good impact. The ambitious goal is "to cut off the revenues that fund Iran's nuclear and missile programs," says a senior administration official.

"We are going to put as tight a squeeze on Iran as we possibly can," adds a diplomat from one of the members of the U.S.-led coalition that is beginning to discuss a new sanctions resolution at the U.N Security Council. The resolution will target the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and its vast network of companies, which the U.S. estimates may include up to one-third of Iran's total economy.

One focus of the proposed sanctions may be the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines, a 115-vessel fleet that analysts believe has carried cargo for the country's nuclear program. Another target might be the IRGC-owned construction company [Khatam al-Anbiya](#), and its network of subsidiaries, which are said to build some of Iran's strategic infrastructure.

To provide economic muscle for the push against Iran, the Obama administration is working closely with Gulf oil exporters, such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited Saudi Arabia last month to enlist its help in the sanctions campaign -- and, in particular, to lobby China to back the U.N. sanctions resolution.

China is vulnerable to Iranian oil pressure because it imports about 540,000 barrels per day from Iran. So the Saudis and Emiratis have been assuring Beijing that they would be prepared to offset any shortfall in Iranian crude shipments.

The UAE has already boosted its oil exports to China as part of this pressure campaign. Shipments have increased from about 50,000 barrels per day last year to 120,000 now, with a goal by year-end of up to 200,000 barrels. Over the next few years, the UAE is offering to increase that export volume to China to about 500,000 barrels per day, which would nearly equal the current Iranian total.

Prince Saud al-Faisal, the Saudi foreign minister, traveled to China late last week to enlist its support against Iran. The Saudi message to Beijing, according to one U.S. official, is: "If you don't help us against Iran, you will see a less stable and dependable Middle East." Meanwhile, a high-level Israeli group also visited China last weekend, according to the Financial Times. The delegation included Stanley Fischer, the governor of Israel's central bank. Fischer, an eminent economist who is respected by Chinese officials, would be able to explain the impact of the planned sanctions regime.

The Israeli visit led one prominent energy expert to speculate privately that if sanctions fail to alter Iranian behavior, the Israelis might use military means to halt Iran's oil exports.

The campaign against Iran was the central topic during a recent visit to Washington by the UAE's foreign minister, Sheik Abdullah bin Zayed al-Nahyan. He urged administration officials to include Iran's vulnerable neighbors in the Gulf Cooperation Council -- Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman and others -- in their planning for dealing with Iran. "We will find ways to do more with them," said the senior administration official.

The trick for the Obama administration is to craft a sanctions plan that hurts the Iranian government without causing too much pain for the Iranian people. That's one reason the administration is wary of a congressional proposal for sanctions against Iran's imports of refined petroleum products -- a step that would probably harm the public more than the regime.

Officials talk about "targeted" sanctions that focus on the Revolutionary Guard Corps and its military-industrial complex of companies. But this effort is the diplomatic equivalent of "precision bombing" -- in practice, some collateral damage is inevitable, which could help President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad rally support for his hard-line government.

What's certain is that the Iranian nuclear issue is heading into a more intense phase of confrontation -- starting with the push for tougher U.N. sanctions. The Gulf countries have been asking what the administration plans to do if the sanctions don't work: That's the big foreign policy question of 2010, and Washington is beginning now to think about the answer.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/03/05/AR2010030502970.html>

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New York Times

OPINION

March 7, 2010

LETTERS

Nuclear Policy In A Changed World

To the Editor:

“New Think and Old Weapons” (editorial, Feb. 28) suggests that “getting the nuclear posture review right is essential” for fulfilling the president’s vision of a world without nuclear weapons and moving ahead with Senate ratification of the Start follow-on treaty and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. But if getting it right means adopting the advice outlined in your editorial, then it’s unlikely that these treaties will be approved by the Senate.

United States nuclear weapons must continue to deter not only nuclear attacks but also chemical and biological attacks against the United States and its allies. While some reduction in our nuclear arsenals may be warranted, deep cuts would be destabilizing and would encourage other countries to enter the nuclear competition.

If “today’s greatest nuclear danger is that terrorists will steal or build a weapon,” then United States-Russian nuclear disarmament is at best a distraction from what really needs to be done.

You recommend that the review “make clear that there is no need for a new [nuclear] weapon.” If by new weapon you mean to suggest that the United States should not update its remaining stockpile of nuclear weapons to make them safer and reliable, then again, the likelihood of Senate ratification of any arms control treaty will be in doubt.

The path President Obama is taking to achieve his vision of a world without nuclear weapons fails to address the real nuclear threats, those posed by terrorists, Iran and North Korea.

James M. Inhofe
Washington, March 3, 2010

The writer, a Republican of Oklahoma, is a senior member of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/07/opinion/107nuclear.html>

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