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Reuters – U.S.

START Negotiator Sees Early Senate Ratification

By Stephanie Nebehay, GENEVA

Thursday, June 3, 2010

(Reuters) - The U.S. negotiator on the new START arms reduction treaty with Russia voiced optimism on Thursday that the Senate would ratify the pact by late September, before the White House's official year-end target.

"My view is we need to move as expeditiously as possible. My own goal is to look very hard this summer and see if we can get the treaty ratified sooner than the end of the year," Rose Gottemoeller, Assistant Secretary of State, told reporters.

Gottemoeller, speaking ahead of her appearance next week at a Senate hearing, said that she hoped START could be ratified this summer, which ends on September 21 in the United States.

U.S. President Barack Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev signed the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty in Prague in April but both sides need to ratify the deal, which will cut their deployed nuclear warheads by 30 percent within seven years.

Under the U.S. Constitution, treaties must secure two-thirds approval to win Senate ratification.

Obama has said he hopes the U.S. Senate will ratify the pact by November, before U.S. congressional elections set for November 2, but the administration's official deadline is the end of the year, according to Gottemoeller.

The Senate faces a large workload between now and the election, including tougher regulation of the financial industry and confirmation of a Supreme Court nominee.

"STEP IN RIGHT DIRECTION"

Gottemoeller said ratification was a priority in arms control, noting that verification mechanisms under the previous 1991 START pact had expired last December, leaving a vacuum.

Like the U.S. Senate, Russia's parliament, the Duma, is holding hearings and needs to approve the deal.

Gottemoeller led the U.S. delegation in the year-long negotiations, mainly conducted in Geneva, alongside her counterpart Anatoly Antonov, head of the foreign ministry's department of security and disarmament.

Gottemoeller and Antonov briefed the United Nations Conference on Disarmament on Thursday about the treaty.

"It is an important step in the right direction," Pakistan's ambassador Zamir Akram said, adding that much more needed to be done in the area of nuclear disarmament.

Pakistan has blocked agreement to launch global negotiations to halt production of nuclear bomb-making fissile material at the talks, which require consensus for all decisions. Pakistan argues this would put it at a permanent disadvantage to India, with which it has fought three wars since independence in 1947.

"We have the right to use the rule of consensus to ensure our security concerns are not compromised in any manner," Akram said on Thursday.

The five official nuclear powers -- Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States -- have all halted their production of plutonium and highly-enriched uranium through informal moratoriums, he said. This was because their fissile stocks were sufficient.

Gottemoeller said that efforts continued to try to persuade Pakistan to go along with fissile negotiations, but declined to give details on what inducements the United States or China may be offering Islamabad.

"A lot of serious discussions are going on behind the scenes. There is certainly an effort to recognize Pakistan's security concerns and at the same time find a way forward for negotiations to begin," she said.

(Editing by Jonathan Lynn)

<http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE6524JU20100603>

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Global Security Newswire

Medvedev Calls For Prompt Ratification Of "New START"

Friday, June 4, 2010

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev expressed hope Wednesday that lawmakers in Moscow and Washington would soon bring a new bilateral nuclear arms control pact into force, ITAR-Tass reported (see *GSN*, June 1).

Medvedev and U.S. President Barack Obama in April signed the replacement to the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty. The "New START" pact would obligate the nations to cap their fielded strategic nuclear weapons to 1,550 warheads, down from the maximum of 2,200 demanded of each by 2012 under the 2002 Moscow Treaty. The deal would also limit U.S. and Russian deployed nuclear delivery vehicles to 700, with another 100 platforms allowed in reserve. The pact has been submitted for ratification by legislative bodies in Russia and the United States.

"Just recently, in April, the Russian-U.S. treaty was signed in Prague on measures to further reduce and limit strategic offensive arms. By now the treaty has been presented for ratification in both countries. And, of course, I do hope very much that in the near future this ratification procedure will be over and the treaty will take effect," Medvedev said (ITAR-Tass I, March 6).

The pact would create momentum for talks on drawdowns by other nuclear-armed nations in and outside the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, according to delegates at the international Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, Switzerland.

"Disarmament for Russia, like I believe, for the U.S., too, is more expensive than gaining arms," ITAR-Tass today top Russian negotiator on the nuclear pact Anatoly Antonov as saying. Moscow "will fulfill all obligations under the treaty," he said (ITAR-Tass II, June 4).

Rose Gottemoeller, Antonov's U.S. counterpart, said the Russian-U.S. pact should prompt the multilateral disarmament forum to take up negotiations this summer of a fissile material cutoff treaty, the Associated Press reported (see *GSN*, April 21; Associated Press/Google News, June 3).

U.S. and Russian negotiators completed the new arms control treaty much more quickly than its predecessor, noted Hellmut Hoffmann, Germany's ambassador to the Conference on Disarmament.

"We managed to finalize the talks within one year against [the eight to nine] years that we needed earlier," Hoffmann said. "This makes it possible for us to hope that in [the] future we shall approach the nuclear-free world" (ITAR-Tass II).

http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20100604_7462.php

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Business Week

June 3, 2010

By The Associated Press

US Wants Global Action On Nuclear Bomb Material

GENEVA - The chief U.S. negotiator of the new U.S.-Russia nuclear arms treaty wants similar progress from global disarmament talks.

Rose Gottemoeller says she hopes the "New START" signed by Presidents Dmitry Medvedev and Barack Obama in April will spur the 65-nation Conference on Disarmament to begin talks this summer on banning the production of plutonium and highly enriched uranium needed for atomic bombs.

Pakistan opposes the negotiations unless rival India makes other concessions.

Gottemoeller says she will brief the Geneva-based body Thursday. It hasn't scored a success since the 1996 deal to ban nuclear weapons tests.

Gottemoeller says U.S. Senate approval for START could lead to the long-awaited U.S. ratification of the test ban treaty.

<http://www.businessweek.com/ap/financialnews/D9G3OQKG0.htm>

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People's Daily – China

Brazil To Abide By Any UN Sanctions Against Iran

June 2, 2010

Foreign Relations Minister Celso Amorim said Tuesday Brazil would have to respect any sanctions passed by the United Nations (UN) Security Council against Iran.

While briefing the Senate's Foreign Relations Commission on the nuclear fuel swap deal signed with Turkey and Iran in May, Amorim said that Brazil was against the sanctions move but would respect them as it always did.

"Brazil meticulously respects the sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council," Amorim said. "If there are sanctions, Brazil will respect them despite not agreeing with them."

He reaffirmed the government's stance that Iran had the right to a nuclear program, as long as it was only for peaceful purposes.

He also said Brazil had been encouraged by the United States government to try to negotiate with Iran and the first talks were during the visit of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to the country in March.

The minister, meanwhile, expressed his hope the UN Security Council would not make any "hasty decision" on the matter before the next G20 meeting, to be held in Canada later in June. At the meeting, Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva is expected to defend the three-way agreement between Brazil, Turkey and Iran.

Source: Xinhua

<http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90777/90852/7009026.html>

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Khaleej Times – U.A.E.

Iran Says Enriching To Higher Levels As Backup Plan

By Agence France-Presse (AFP)

2 June 2010

VIENNA - Iran is enriching nuclear material to higher levels as a backup plan because it fears it will not receive foreign fuel for a medical research reactor, Tehran's envoy to the U.N. atomic watchdog said on Wednesday.

Iran started refining uranium to 20 percent purity in February saying it wanted to produce fuel for a reactor that makes isotopes for treating cancer after talks over a fuel swap deal proposal with big powers stalled.

The move sparked Western concerns because it brings the material closer to the level of refinement needed for atomic weapons.

"We have to do it since we have been facing a lack of any legally-binding assurance of supply," Ali Asghar Soltanieh told reporters. Iran says its nuclear work is for peaceful uses only.

Under a proposal drafted by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in October, Iran would part with 1,200 kg of its low-enriched uranium — enough for an atom bomb if enriched to higher levels — in return for the special fuel rods.

Last month Brazil and Turkey resurrected parts of the plan, seen as a possible way to ease nuclear tensions with the West, and Iran said it agreed to it.

But Western officials have voiced doubts over the new plan because of Iran's launch of higher scale enrichment and the growth in its low-enriched uranium stockpile.

Asked if Iran would stop 20 percent enrichment if the fuel swap took place, something analysts have suggested as a compromise to reassure the West, Soltanieh said: "We have to be very careful not to create precedents."

"They make conditions and conditions. As long as the fuel is not in the core of the reactor we will be short."

Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki on a trip to Brussels urged world powers on Wednesday to cooperate with Iran over its nuclear programme and said new sanctions would not persuade Tehran abandon it.

Soltanieh also denied a section in the IAEA's latest report on Iran which said inspectors had discovered nuclear equipment had been removed from a research laboratory in Tehran after the agency had asked for details about the work.

"Nothing has been removed," he said. "Whatever that is in this paragraph is wrong, we are writing to the director general and insisting that he corrects it."

According to the restricted report, Tehran told the agency in January it had started researching the production of uranium metal, raising Western concerns because this material has both weapons and civilian applications.

In a visit in April the agency noted that some of the equipment — an electrochemical cell — had been removed.

There was no explanation, but removal of any nuclear equipment without agency knowledge would also raise questions.

An official with knowledge of the Iran investigation said the missing part was the “outer vessel” of the equipment and that the main section had been left in place.

http://www.khaleejtimes.com/darticlen.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2010/June/middleeast_June102.xml§ion=middleeast

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San Francisco Chronicle

Iran Accuses Nuclear Agency Of False Reporting

By GEORGE JAHN, Associated Press Writer

Wednesday, June 2, 2010

VIENNA, Austria (AP) -- A senior Iranian envoy accused the International Atomic Energy Agency on Wednesday of false reporting in saying that agency inspectors probing a laboratory for suspected undeclared nuclear experiments found some equipment removed.

Ali Ashgar Soltanieh declined a direct answer when asked if he was blaming the agency for a mistake or if he was suggesting another reason for the alleged false finding. But Soltanieh, Iran's chief IAEA delegate, said his country would be asking for a formal correction in a letter to agency chief Yukiya Amano within the next week.

Soltanieh was referring to a finding published in the IAEA's quarterly report on Iran's nuclear activities that touched on experiments in pyroprocessing, a procedure that can be used to purify uranium metal used in nuclear warheads.

In January, Iran told the agency that it had carried out pyroprocessing experiments, prompting a request from the nuclear agency for more information — but then backtracked in March and denied conducting such activities.

IAEA experts last month revisited the site — the Jibr Ibn Jayan Multipurpose Research Laboratory in Tehran — only to establish “that the electrochemical cell had been removed” from the unit used in the experiments, according to the report.

While Iran often criticizes agency reporting on its activities, it rarely directly challenges its findings and says they are wrong. Soltanieh's focus on the topic — dealt with in only one paragraph in the nine-page IAEA report — thus appeared to reflect his country's sensitivity over the issue.

“Paragraph 28 is wrong,” Soltanieh told reporters. “Nothing has been removed.”

“Whatever is in this paragraph is not correct ... and we insist that the director general should correct it.”

The IAEA declined to issue a formal comment. But an agency official familiar with the Iran report said the agency stood by its findings. The official asked for anonymity, citing the IAEA's decision not to formally react to the Iranian assertion.

The report also confirmed that — beyond its well-established program that produces low enriched uranium — Iran continues to enrich to near 20 percent through a separate, small-scale program using low-enriched feedstock.

That program adds to concerns about Iran's nuclear activities. Although Tehran says all of its activities are geared solely toward producing nuclear fuel, it is much easier to produce weapons-grade uranium for use in nuclear warheads from 20 percent material than from low-enriched uranium.

Iran justified its decision to go to higher enrichment by saying it would be part of a process to create fuel for a research reactor producing medical isotopes after a deal meant to provide such fuel from abroad fell apart.

It now says it is ready to accept an offer similar to the original one floated seven months ago — fuel from abroad in exchange for shipping out much of its low-enriched uranium.

But Iranian officials have said their country would not stop higher-level enrichment even if the fuel swap deal is sealed — something Soltanieh repeated Wednesday.

“As long as the fuel is not in the core of the reactor” Iran cannot be sure that the promises of fuel deliveries will be kept, he told reporters, saying Iran has no trust in promises at a time of international tensions over its nuclear program.

He declined to say, however, if Iran was ready to stop higher enrichment once the fuel was delivered for the research reactor.

The U.S. and its allies view Tehran's insistence on continuing higher enrichment even as it offers to accept a swap deal with suspicion, arguing that its rationale to do so would disappear once a swap agreement was in place.

The U.S. and the four other permanent U.N. Security Council members — Russia, China, Britain and France — have tentatively backed a draft fourth set of U.N. sanctions against Iran over its refusal to stop enriching uranium and heed other council demands meant to reduce suspicions over its nuclear aims.

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/n/a/2010/06/02/international/i100754D45.DTL>

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Al Arabyia.net – U.A.E

June 3, 2010

US Seeks UN Vote On Iran Sanctions By June 21

WASHINGTON (AFP) - The United States said Thursday it hopes for a U.N. Security Council vote by June 21 on tough new sanctions against Iran over what it calls its continued failure to curb its nuclear ambitions.

"We are going to put forward this resolution in the coming days. And we expect all responsible members of the international community... to support the resolution," State Department spokesman Philip Crowley told reporters.

"The president (Barack Obama) has indicated he wants to see this accomplished by the end of spring," he said, later clarifying that he meant a vote on the resolution by June 20 or June 21.

A senior State Department official later told reporters on the condition of anonymity that "sometime between now and June 20 I expect that this issue will come to a vote before the Security Council."

He said a report Monday by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the U.N. nuclear watchdog, underscores what he called Iran's continued failure to comply with its international obligations over its disputed atomic program.

Last month the United States introduced a draft resolution to impose tough new sanctions on Iran, saying it had the support of the four other permanent veto-wielding Security Council members: Russia, China, Britain and France.

The draft would expand an arms embargo and measures against Iran's banking sector and ban Tehran from sensitive overseas activities like uranium mining and developing ballistic missiles.

Senior U.S. officials said Friday they were forging ahead with a resolution without Brazil and Turkey, two non-permanent Security Council members that brokered a nuclear fuel swap deal with Iran aimed at forestalling sanctions.

Western powers fear Iran's atomic program is a cover for a nuclear weapons drive. Tehran denies this, saying it is aimed at peaceful energy use, which it insists it has the right to pursue.

Iran is already subject to three sets of U.N. sanctions for its refusal to suspend uranium enrichment, one of the crucial steps towards the production of nuclear energy for civil or military use.

In a restricted report revealed on Monday, the IAEA said Iran is pressing ahead with its controversial atomic program, producing enriched uranium at higher levels of purification and installing more machinery.

The atomic watchdog said Iran had produced at least 5.7 kilos (12.5 pounds) of higher-enriched uranium, adding that it remained concerned about the true nature of the nuclear activities.

<http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2010/06/03/110322.html>

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The Daily Star – Lebanon

Iran: New UN Nuclear Sanctions Could Mean Confrontation

Mottaki stresses country has no intention of halting enrichment

By Agence France-Presse (AFP)

Thursday, June 3, 2010

BRUSSELS: Fresh international sanctions against Iran over its nuclear program could lead to confrontation, Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki warned in Brussels on Wednesday.

"There are two options," to resolve the problem, he told an audience at the European Policy Center think-tank.

“The first is based on cooperation, the other is based on confrontation,” he said on the second and last day of his visit to the Belgian capital.

“The resolution” at the United Nations Security Council on imposing new sanctions against Iran “is a basis for confrontation,” he warned.

“That is not our preferred option but that’s up to other parties who would like to move in that direction,” Mottaki added.

Last month the United States introduced a draft resolution at the UN to impose tough new sanctions on Iran.

The draft resolution would expand an arms embargo and measures against Iran’s banking sector and ban it from sensitive overseas activities like uranium mining and developing ballistic missiles, a US official said.

Western powers fear that Iran’s atomic program is a cover for a nuclear weapons drive. Tehran denies this, saying the program is aimed at peaceful energy use, which it insists it has the right to pursue.

Iran is already subject to three sets of UN sanctions for its refusal to suspend uranium enrichment, one of the crucial steps toward the production of nuclear energy for civil or military use.

Mottaki stressed that Iran has no intention of giving up its plans of enriching uranium to 20 percent.

Enrichment lies at the center of international fears about Iran’s nuclear program as the process can make the core of an atom bomb in highly purified forms of over 90 percent.

“It’s not against the law,” said Mottaki, warning that a new UN resolution would “kill” a recent initiative with Brazil and Turkey.

The two countries brokered a deal with Tehran last month under which Iran has committed to deposit 1,200 kilograms of low-enriched uranium in Turkey in return for reactor fuel.

But the deal drew a cool reaction from world powers led by the US, which is pushing for the new sanctions to be agreed.

Western governments say the deal fails to address concerns about Iran’s nuclear program.

However Mottaki warned that without that deal “definitely we’ll continue our production of 20 percent.”

On the other hand “if we do not need the 20 percent we won’t move into that direction.”

Mottaki also played down the possibility that the Security Council will adopt the US-backed resolution calling for further sanctions against Iran.

He said its chances of passage were “very, very small,” and that Russia and other Security Council members were already working to modify it.

During the news conference, Mottaki also dismissed accusations by the top US and NATO commander in Afghanistan General Stanley McChrystal that Tehran has helped train and arm Taliban insurgents.

“Those kinds of lies are designed to conceal the failures of the [NATO forces] in Afghanistan,” he said.

On Sunday, McChrystal told reporters in Kabul that Iran – Afghanistan’s western neighbor – has generally assisted the Afghan government in fighting the insurgent group.

“There is, however, clear evidence of Iranian activity – in some cases providing weaponry and training to the Taliban – that is inappropriate,” he said. McChrystal did not provide details on how many fighters allegedly were trained in Iran.

Mottaki dismissed the accusations, saying that “in Afghanistan, Iran has always been part of the solution,” and that Tehran was cooperating with the government in Kabul to stabilize the war-torn nation.

He further lambasted “erroneous” US policies, blaming them for the ongoing conflict.

“When they arrived in Afghanistan eight years ago, the Americans said they would bring stability, destroy the drug trade and eliminate extremists and terrorists.” Instead, the extremists are still there today, drugs production is at record levels, and instability has engulfed the entire country, he said.

“The result is that ... extremism and fundamentalism have spread throughout the region,” Mottaki said.

Finally, Mottaki denounced Europe’s “intolerance” toward the Islamic veil, as France and Belgium move toward banning the burqa in public.

“We think this is an example of the intolerance that exists in Europe” regarding Muslims, Mottaki told a press conference during a visit to Brussels.

“We hope that European leaders will reflect on the subject, we attach great importance to the rights of religious minorities,” he stressed, adding “we consider the moves in some Western countries as worrying for Muslim nations.”

Last month the French Cabinet approved a draft law to ban the Muslim full-face veil from public spaces, opening the way for the text to go before parliament in July.

Meanwhile in Belgium MPs have backed a draft law banning the wearing of the Muslim veil in all public places, including on the streets. That text must still be adopted by the upper house Senate before it can come into effect.

http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition_id=10&categ_id=2&article_id=115487#axzz0ptkQIP7Y

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People’s Daily – China

Iran Says IAEA "Misunderstands" Nature Of Its Lab Experiments: Atomic Chief

June 4, 2010

Iran's atomic chief had rejected the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) report that Iran intends to use depleted fuel rods for pyroprocessing experiments, local satellite Press TV reported on Thursday.

Ali-Akbar Salehi, head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) said IAEA has misunderstood the nature of the experiments which the AEOI would like to conduct in the future, adding that Iran had explained the situation to the UN nuclear watchdog in a letter, the report said.

Pyroprocessing is a procedure which is used to purify materials, including uranium metal, in order to bring about a chemical or physical change. The purified uranium metal can be used in nuclear warheads.

Salehi told local ISNA news agency on Thursday that the laboratory tests to produce uranium metal from depleted uranium is an effective way against harmful radiations.

Salehi also rejected claims that a nuclear gear has been displaced in Iran's Jabr Ibn Hayan Multipurpose Research Laboratory and said "We will provide the agency (IAEA) with necessary documents in this regard ... and we hope the agency does not repeat such mistakes in future as it will only damage its reputation," according to Press TV.

The IAEA said in a recent report that an important piece of lab equipment which could be used to extract plutonium has been displaced in the Jabr Ibn Hayan Multipurpose Research Laboratory in Tehran.

The IAEA report also said that Iran has started to enrich growing amounts of uranium up to 20 percent and has installed new centrifuges for that purpose which can take Iran closer to the production of nuclear weapons.

The United States and its allies are accusing Iran of taking steps toward making nuclear weapons under the guise of civilian program, a charge which has always been denied by Tehran.

Source: Xinhua

<http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90777/90854/7012012.html>

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Times of India – India

Pak's New Nuclear Reactors Will Increase Weapon Production 7-Fold: SIPRI

By Press Trust of India (PTI)

June 2, 2010

LONDON: Pakistan has 60 nuclear warheads and with two new plutonium reactors nearing completion in Khusab, its weapons grade plutonium production will jump seven-fold, according to latest figures released by Swedish institute SIPRI.

"Our conservative estimates are that Pakistan has sixty warheads and could produce 100 nuclear weapons at short notice," the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) said in its latest annual report.

SIPRI also said that Islamabad was developing an air launched cruise missile Ra'ad and had also carried out four tests of its land launched sub-sonic cruise missile Babur. But said it was not clear whether these missiles would be developed to carry nuclear warheads.

The Swedish think-tank said that Pakistan's Khusab I reactor was giving the country 10 to 12 kgs of weapons grade plutonium.

Islamabad had earmarked 32 US supplied F-16 fighters along with short-range Ghaznavi I and Shaheen I missiles as the delivery systems for its nuclear weapons, it said.

SIPRI said while 400-km range Ghaznavi I and 1,200-km Shaheen I missiles were operational, Pakistan's other two potent missiles — medium range ballistic missile Ghauri I and Shaheen II were still in development stage.

In comparison India had also 60 to 70 nuclear warheads, the think-tank said.

New Delhi had only short-range surface to surface Prithvi I (with the range of up to 500 kms) and medium-range Agni I (upto 700 kms) missiles deployed as nuclear weapon delivery system, it said.

The Swedish institute said India's two other missiles Agni II (with the range of 1,200 kms) and Agni III (3,000 kms) were still under development, though Agni II had been handed over to the Army for user trial.

SIPRI also said that New Delhi was also developing a 1,000-km range sub-sonic cruise missile Nirbhay and had also test fired land-based version of the undersea missile K-15 which is being called Shourya.

It said that the deployment of warship-based Dhanush missile was underway.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/pakistan/Paks-new-nuclear-reactors-will-increase-weapon-production-7-fold/articleshow/6003825.cms>

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency
2 June 2010

Russia To Transfer Its Nerpa Nuclear Sub To India In Autumn 2010

Russia will transfer its Nerpa nuclear-powered attack submarine for a 10 year-lease to India in the autumn, the head of the Russian Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation has said.

"The training of the crew has been concluded, most of the tests have been carried out — everything is almost at the finish line," Mikhail Dmitriyev told journalists in New Delhi after a meeting of the Russian-Indian high-level supervisory committee on military and technical cooperation on Tuesday.

He said India would receive the K-152 Nerpa submarine in October or November 2010.

The lease follows an agreement inked between New Delhi and Moscow in January 2004, with India funding part of the Nerpa's construction at the Komsomolsk-on-Amur shipyard in the Russian Far East with an initial \$650 million.

The Nerpa, the Akula-II class nuclear submarine, was scheduled to be inducted in the Indian Navy as INS Chakra by mid-2008 but technical problems delayed the process. After that, just as it began its sea trials in November 2008, 20 sailors and technical workers were killed on it due to a toxic gas leak when the automatic fire extinguishing system malfunctioned.

After repairs, which cost an estimated 1.9 billion rubles (\$65 million), the Nerpa is now fully operational.

Akula II class vessels are considered the quietest and deadliest of all Russian nuclear-powered attack submarines.

Dmitriyev also expressed hope that Russia and India would sign a contract on the joint development of a new fifth-generation fighter within the next three months.

The sides earlier agreed to develop both a single-seat and a two-seat versions of the aircraft, which would be most likely based on Russia's T-50 prototype fifth-generation fighter, by 2016.

Russia has been developing its fifth-generation fighter since the 1990s. The T-50 aircraft was designed by the Sukhoi design bureau and built at a plant in Komsomolsk-on-Amur, in Russia's Far East.

Russian officials have already hailed the fighter as "a unique warplane" that combines the capabilities of an air superiority fighter and attack aircraft.

NEW DELHI, June 2 (RIA Novosti)

http://en.rian.ru/military_news/20100602/159262563.html

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Times of India – India

Pakistan's Nuke Arsenal Bigger Than India's

By Rajat Pandit, TNN

June 3, 2010

NEW DELHI: After racing ahead of India in ballistic and cruise missiles, with covert help from China and North Korea, Pakistan seems to be surging ahead on the nuclear front too.

A series of recent estimates by international nuclear watchdogs and reputed thinktanks hold that Pakistan has a total of 70 to 90 warheads compared to India's 60 to 80. China, in comparison, has around 240 warheads.

Even as global fears about the possibility of jihadis gaining access to Pakistan's nuclear arsenal, enriched uranium or technical know-how continue, its deadly inventory is only going to expand in the coming years.

Pakistan, after all, is supplementing its ongoing enriched uranium-based nuke programme with a weapons-grade plutonium one. Its two new heavy-water reactors being built at Khushab nuclear facility, with China's help, are clearly geared towards producing weapons-grade plutonium, as reported by TOI earlier.

In its latest annual world military expenditure report released on Wednesday, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) said Pakistan's weapons-grade plutonium production would jump seven-fold with the two new reactors at Khushab nearing completion.

"Our conservative estimates are that Pakistan has 60 warheads and could produce 100 nuclear weapons at short notice," said SIPRI, adding that Islamabad had earmarked its US-supplied F-16 fighters, Ghaznavi and Shaheen missiles as its nuke delivery systems.

India's nuclear weapons programme, in turn, has largely been plutonium-based, basically centred around the Pu-239 produced in research reactors like Cirus and Dhruva at Bhabha Atomic Research Centre.

Nuclear arsenals of India, Pakistan, and even China, pale in comparison to the gigantic ones of the two former Cold War foes, US and Russia. SIPRI estimates there are a whopping 22,600 active, inactive and stored nuclear warheads around the globe, enough to destroy it several times over.

While Russia has 12,000 warheads, 4,630 of them "deployed" ones, US has 9,600, which includes 2,468 of them operational. The two have, however, recently decided to slash their inventories by nearly one-third.

France comes third with 300, followed by UK with 225. Israel, which like India and Pakistan is not a signatory of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, completes the list of the eight countries with nuclear weapons, with an arsenal of 80 warheads. Then, there is also North Korea, which has produced "enough plutonium for a small number of warheads", SIPRI said.

All these figures are not exact because countries keep their nuclear weapons programmes in thick cloaks of secrecy, which is only now being lifted by countries like US and UK.

India has been concerned about Pakistan's drive to bolster its nuclear arsenal over the past few years. While India has a clear and declared 'no-first use' nuclear weapons doctrine, Pakistan has kept it vague to use as a tool to offset India's conventional military superiority.

Moreover, there is continuing controversy in India over whether the country has a credible thermonuclear or hydrogen bomb, given that a few experts contend the 45-kiloton thermonuclear device tested under the Pokhran-II tests in 1998 was "a fizzle".

The armed forces also remain quite worried about the lack of SLBMs (submarine-launched ballistic missiles) and ICBMs (intercontinental ballistic missiles) in their armoury, which are needed for a credible deterrent and for robust second-strike capabilities against both Pakistan and China.

At present, only the short-range Prithvi missile (150-350km) and the 700km range Agni-I have been fully operationalized till now. Agni-II (over 2,000km) and Agni-III (3,500km) are still in the process of being inducted by the Strategic Forces Command. India's most ambitious strategic missile Agni-V, with a 5,000km range, in turn, will be tested for the first time only by early-2011 or so.

Nuclear Warheads (Source: SIPRI)

Russia: 12,000
US: 9,600
France: 300
UK: 225
China: 240
Pakistan: 70-90
Israel: 80
India: 60-80

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/India/Pakistans-nuke-arsenal-bigger-than-Indias/articleshow/6005178.cms>

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London Guardian

Burma's Nuclear Weapons Intent 'Clear And Disturbing'

Information gained from a former army officer renews concerns over the nation's military ambitions

By Richard Norton-Taylor

Friday, 4 June 2010

Fresh claims that Burma is trying to acquire the know-how and material to build a nuclear weapon, based on information provided by a former army officer, are published today, renewing concern about the extent of the junta's military ambitions.

Unrealistic experiments and crude engineering suggest that success may be beyond Burma's reach, say researchers for an opposition Burmese media group. They base their claims on information provided by Sai Thein Win, a former major in the Burmese army, who is said to have been trained in Russia in missile technology. He has since defected from Burma.

"The intent is clear and that is a very disturbing matter for international agreements," said the researchers, Robert Kelley and Ali Fowle, of the Democratic Voice of Burma. "Burma is trying to build pieces of a nuclear programme, specifically a nuclear reactor to make plutonium and a uranium enrichment programme".

A report, *Burma's Nuclear Ambitions*, is being broadcast on the Arabic satellite television channel al-Jazeera today. "What we have uncovered is the very beginnings of a nuclear weapons programme," Evan Williams, the programme's reporter, said last night.

In a related development, Jim Webb, chairman of the US Senate foreign relations subcommittee on east Asia and Pacific affairs, said he had put off a visit to Burma because of new, albeit unsubstantiated, allegations that its military regime was collaborating with North Korea to develop a nuclear programme.

"Until there is further clarification on these matters, I believe it would be unwise and potentially counterproductive for me to visit Burma," Webb said.

Kelley and Fowle's report, *Nuclear Related Activities in Burma*, contains a copy of what they say is a secret document from the country's "nuclear battalion", instructing a factory to build a "bomb reactor".

According to a translation, the letter requests the production of material to make a bomb reactor needed for research "for the use of special substance production". It is signed by Lieutenant Colonel Win Ko. The request came from the No 1 Science and Technology Regiment, Thabeikkyin, and is dated 4 February 2010. It is colloquially referred to as the nuclear battalion, Kelley and Fowle say in their report. They say that the term "bomb reactor" was "simply a very strong vessel to contain a violent chemical reaction".

Kelley and Fowle compare their source, Sai Thein Win, to Mordechai Vanunu, the technician who blew the whistle on Israel's nuclear weapons reactor at Dimona. Referring to hundreds of photographs they say he has smuggled out of Burma, they say: "Photographs could be faked but there are so many and they are so consistent with other information and within themselves that they lead to a high degree of confidence that Burma is pursuing nuclear technology".

Despite their view that Burmese scientists are far from acquiring the technology or building anything dangerous, they say their analysis "leads to only one conclusion; this technology is only for nuclear weapons and not civilian use or nuclear power".

They say the country's nuclear programme is headed by Dr Ko Ko Oo who has openly expressed his interests in "nuclear matters".

They add that Sai Thein Win provided photographs of machinery that could be used for making uranium compounds, including uranium hexafluoride gas used in uranium enrichment. He is also said to have described "nozzles used in advanced lasers that separate uranium isotopes into materials used for bombs".

Sai Thein Win's whereabouts have not been revealed.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jun/04/burma-nuclear-weapons>

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Miami Herald

Friday, June 4, 2010

Report: Myanmar Seeking Nuclear Weapons

By DENIS D. GRAY, Associated Press Writer

BANGKOK -- Documents smuggled out of Myanmar by an army defector indicate its military regime is trying to develop nuclear weapons and long-range missiles, and North Korea is probably assisting the program, an expatriate media group said Friday.

The Norway-based Democratic Voice of Burma said the defector had been involved in the nuclear program and smuggled out extensive files and photographs describing experiments with uranium and specialized equipment needed to build a nuclear reactor and develop enrichment capabilities.

But the group concluded in a report that Myanmar is still far from producing a nuclear weapon.

On Thursday, U.S. Sen. Jim Webb announced he was postponing a trip to Myanmar because of new allegations that it was collaborating with North Korea to develop a nuclear program.

Webb, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on East Asia and Pacific Affairs, referred to documents provided by a Myanmar army defector.

Myanmar's military government has denied similar allegations in the past, but suspicions have mounted recently that the impoverished Southeast Asian nation has embarked on a nuclear program.

Myanmar's junta, which has been condemned worldwide for its human rights abuses, has no hostile neighbors. The military's prime concern is suppressing dissidents at home and battling several small-scaled insurgencies.

Last month, U.N. experts monitoring sanctions imposed against North Korea over its nuclear and missile tests said their research indicated it was involved in banned nuclear and ballistic missile activities in Iran, Syria and Myanmar, which is also called Burma.

The DVB report said Russia has also trained Myanmar technicians in nuclear and missile technology.

The group, which operates Oslo-based television and radio stations, said the defector, Sai Thein Win, was an army major who was trained in Myanmar as a defense engineer and later in Russia as a missile expert. It said he had access to secret Myanmar nuclear facilities including a nuclear battalion north of Mandalay "charged with building up a nuclear weapons capability."

It said the documents it obtained were examined by Robert Kelley, an American nuclear scientist and former director in the International Atomic Energy Agency who concluded that Myanmar "is probably mining uranium and exploring nuclear technology that is only useful for weapons."

The group said its report was based on a five-year study that indicated that North Korea was involved in assisting the program.

Documents obtained earlier showed that North Korea was helping Myanmar dig a series of underground facilities and develop missiles with a range of up to 3,000 kilometers (1,860 miles).

The group said the documents obtained from the defector show a number of components used in nuclear weapons and missile technology, including a missile fuel pump impeller, chemical engineering equipment that can be used to make compounds used in uranium enrichment, and nozzles used to separate uranium isotopes into bomb materials.

"The total picture is very compelling. Burma is trying to build pieces of a nuclear program, specifically a nuclear reactor to make plutonium and a uranium enrichment program," the report said.

<http://www.miamiherald.com/2010/06/04/1662859/report-myanmar-seeking-nuclear.html>

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The Star – Malaysia
Wednesday June 2, 2010

Russia Says Terrorists Seeking Nuclear Materials

MOSCOW (Reuters) - The chief of Russia's state security service said on Wednesday that terrorists were seeking access to nuclear materials across the former Soviet Union, Russian news agencies reported.

Alexander Bortnikov, the chief of the FSB, the main successor to the Soviet-era KGB, gave no further details about the attempts or which groups had sought the materials.

"We have information which indicates that terrorists are continuing to attempt to get access to nuclear materials (and) biological and chemical components," he was quoted as saying by Interfax and Itar-Tass.

"We are paying constant attention to this issue," Bortnikov said, referring to concerns that terrorists could get their hands on nuclear materials.

Nuclear experts say there is no sign that terrorists have acquired weapons-grade nuclear material but there have been at least 18 documented cases of theft or loss of plutonium or highly enriched uranium, several in the ex-Soviet Union.

Despite major, heavily U.S.-funded security improvements at Russian facilities containing nuclear materials since the 1991 Soviet collapse, experts say the risk of theft remains.

Among concerns are the potential for theft by insiders -- particularly in a country plagued by corruption -- as well as imperfect accounting for the materials and inexperienced guards, according to Harvard University nuclear expert Matthew Bunn.

A recent report by Bunn commissioned by the U.S.-based Nuclear Threat Initiative said the highest risks of nuclear theft today were in Pakistan and Russia, which has the largest stockpiles.

(Reporting by Guy Faulconbridge and Steve Gutterman; editing by Dmitry Solovyov and Elizabeth Fullerton)

http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2010/6/3/worldupdates/2010-06-02T213537Z_01_NOOTR_RTRMDNC_0_-490001-1&sec=Worldupdates

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Science Daily

New Automated Tool 'Debugs' Nuclear Weapon Simulations

June 2, 2010

Science Daily - Purdue University researchers, working with high-performance computing experts at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, have created an automated program to "debug" simulations used to more efficiently certify the nation's nuclear weapons.

The program, called AutomaDeD (pronounced like automated), finds errors in computer code for complex "parallel" programs.

"The simulations take several weeks to run, and then they have to be debugged to correct errors in the code," said Saurabh Bagchi, an associate professor in Purdue's School of Electrical and Computer Engineering. "The error might have occurred in the first hour of operation, and if you had known about it you could have stopped it then."

Because international treaties forbid the detonation of nuclear test weapons, certification is done using complex simulations. The simulations, which may contain as many as 100,000 lines of computer code, must accurately show reactions taking place on the scale of milliseconds, or thousandths of a second.

"Many times an error in a simulation code may not become evident until long after it occurs," said Bronis R. de Supinski, co-leader of the ASC Application Development Environment Performance Team at the U.S. Department of Energy's Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. "These delays are challenging since they make the actual location of the bug unclear."

In parallel operations used for powerful simulation tools, a highly complex job is split into numerous smaller and more manageable processes that are handled by separate machines in large computer clusters. After the computers complete their individual processes, all of the parallel results are combined.

Conventional debugging programs, however, must be operated manually, with engineers navigating through a large number of processes.

"Debuggers have worked well for sequential applications," Bagchi said. "But when we extend these to large parallel applications, application developers are not very happy because it's very time consuming and difficult to do the manual debugging. It is just difficult for human cognitive abilities to keep track of what is going on simultaneously in many processes and determine what is anomalous."

So, to enable the automatic debugging of the simulations, the researchers created AutomaDeD, which stands for automata-based debugging for dissimilar parallel tasks.

"The idea is to use AutomaDeD as the simulation is running to automatically monitor what's happening," Bagchi said. "If things start going wrong, AutomaDeD would stop and flag which process and which part of the code in the process is likely anomalous."

Errors in software code cause "stalls" and "hangs" that slow or halt simulations or give incorrect results. Another problem with parallel programs is interference from software that previously ran on the same computer clusters but were not properly expunged before the new job started running.

Recent research findings show AutomataDeD was 90 percent accurate in identifying the time "phase" when stalls and hangs occurred; 80 percent accurate in identifying the specific tasks that were the sources for stalls and hangs; and 70 percent accurate in identifying the interference faults.

The findings will be detailed in a research paper to be presented on June 30 during the 40th Annual IEEE/IFIP International Conference on Dependable Systems and Networks in Chicago. The paper was written by Purdue doctoral student Ignacio Laguna, Bagchi, and Lawrence Livermore scientists Greg Bronevetsky, de Supinski, Dong H. Ahn and Martin Schulz. The primary developers of the program are Bronevetsky and Laguna.

The same debugging approach could be used to find errors in other parallel applications, such as those used in climate modeling and high-energy particle physics.

AutomaDeD works first by grouping the large number of processes into a smaller number of "equivalence classes" with similar traits. Grouping the processes into equivalence classes keeps the analysis simple enough that it can be done while the simulation is running.

AutomataDeD also works by splitting a simulation into numerous windows of time, called phases.

"So our tool lets you know if the error occurs for task 1 and task 5 in phase 153 and allows you to zoom in and find the specific part of the code that is problematic," Bagchi said.

Large computer clusters operated by Lawrence Livermore containing thousands of processors have been used for the debugging operations.

Purdue researchers did not work with the actual classified nuclear weapons software code but instead used generic "NAS parallel benchmarks," a set of programs designed to help evaluate the performance of parallel supercomputers developed by the NASA Advanced Supercomputing division.

The work began a year ago, and the new debugging program is currently being used by the federal lab to detect certain types of errors. The researchers are continuing to improve the program. The work is funded by the Department of Energy.

Also involved in the ongoing work is Karu Sankaralingam, an assistant professor of computer sciences and electrical and computer engineering at the University of Wisconsin at Madison.

(The above story is reprinted (with editorial adaptations by *ScienceDaily* staff) from materials provided by **Purdue University**. The original article was written by Emil Venere.)

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/06/100601171725.htm>

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Federal Bureau of Investigation
Press Release
June 3, 2010

FBI And Savannah River National Laboratory Put Science To Work to Protect the Nation

AIKEN, SC—The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Department of Energy's Savannah River National Laboratory (SRNL) today announced the opening of a major expansion of the FBI's facilities for the forensic examination of radiological material and associated evidence. The FBI's newly expanded Radiological Evidence

Examination Facility (REEF), located at the Savannah River National Laboratory near Aiken, South Carolina, provides a major enhancement in the FBI's ability to protect the nation from crimes involving radiological material and bring to justice those who would use these materials to harm the nation's citizens.

The first phase of the REEF opened at SRNL in 2006, providing facilities and equipment where trained FBI personnel can safely perform forensic examination on radiologically contaminated evidence. The new facility expands that original suite to about six times its original size and provides the capabilities for many more kinds of forensic examination. The new radiological forensic laboratory takes advantage of the long-standing security, safety and radiological protection capabilities already in place at SRNL while allowing the FBI to focus on forensic examination, in consultation with SRNL experts.

The expanded facility offers the FBI the ability to conduct the full spectrum of traditional forensic analysis on contaminated evidence. Working together, FBI and SRNL personnel have developed innovative solutions to adapt existing DNA, latent fingerprints, trace hairs and fiber, document exams, and forensic photography techniques for safe use in a radiation-controlled environment. For example, new microscope slide holders, as well as digital photography and x-ray capabilities have been developed. Digital fingerprint comparisons can now be conducted using secure computer terminals linked to the FBI's national fingerprint database. The REEF includes a fully functional FBI satellite office, where forensic examiners can securely share information via voice, data, or video with any other FBI office. The facility has a dedicated evidence storage room, where radiological evidence can be safely and securely stored to maintain its integrity for judicial proceedings.

At the FBI Laboratory in Quantico Virginia, traditional forensic examinations of non-hazardous evidence are conducted in support of law enforcement investigations. The new FBI Laboratory facility at SRNL provides FBI forensic examiners with the ability to perform these examinations on radiologically contaminated evidence in a fully equipped, safe, secure forensic laboratory setting.

"We at SRNL are particularly proud of our partnership with the FBI, putting science to work to give the FBI the ability to conduct investigations that help keep our nation safe from nuclear terrorism," says SRNL Acting Director Dr. Paul Deason. As host to the FBI's radiological evidence laboratory, SRNL conducted several years of research and development to adapt existing FBI forensic methods for application to radiological evidence, using their expertise in the safe handling of radiological materials. This successful partnership is continuing; future developments already under way include the ability to use remote manipulators and "hot cells" to collect and analyze evidence from items containing sources of neutron or gamma radiation.

In addition, SRNL provides radiological crime scene training to FBI agents from around the country, and has developed special evidence packaging to allow investigators to collect and deliver radiological evidence to the laboratory.

SRNL is the Department of Energy's applied research and development national laboratory at the Savannah River Site (SRS). SRNL puts science to work to support DOE and the nation in the areas of environmental management, national and homeland security, and energy security. The management and operating contractor for SRS and SRNL is Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, LLC.

<http://www.fbi.gov/pressrel/pressrel10/reef060310.htm>

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Wall Street Journal
OPINION EUROPE
June 3, 2010

End Iran's Nuclear Charade

Time is no longer on our side in keeping the atom bomb away from Tehran.

By CON COUGHLIN

Nuclear experts working for Western intelligence agencies have identified a number of glaring discrepancies in Iran's submissions to the IAEA, which suggest Tehran is making little effort to build the facilities and infrastructure that are normally required for a civilian program. Instead, Western officials have concluded that its civilian program is nothing more than a cover designed to conceal its attempts to build nuclear weapons.

"The closer you examine Iran's declarations, the more you realize that they do not have a workable civilian nuclear program," said a senior Western counter-proliferation official who has assessed Iran's IAEA declarations.

The controversial 2007 U.S. National Intelligence Estimate that concluded "with high confidence" that Iran had halted its nuclear weapons program in 2003 can now be safely put to rest. "There is only one program in Iran, and

that is the military program. There is nothing that indicates the suspension Iran undertook of its nuclear weapons program in 2003 was anything other than temporary."

For example, while Iran has made rapid progress at developing its uranium-enrichment capability, it has, to date, no capacity to adapt the two-and-a-half tons of enriched material it has so far produced for use in a nuclear reactor. In a civilian program, the enriched uranium would be processed to produce uranium dioxide, which is used in the fuel rods required for nuclear power stations. But Western nuclear experts have concluded that Iran has no such facility, nor any current plans to develop one.

The current set-up at Iran's main uranium enrichment facility at Natanz is another cause for concern. The Natanz plant, located in a bomb-proof underground bunker, was originally designed to house 54,000 centrifuges. That would give it the capacity to provide fuel for nuclear power reactors such as Bushehr, which has been built by Russian technicians on the Gulf coast. But to date only 9,000 centrifuges have been assembled, of which only 4,000 are operational. U.N. inspectors who regularly monitor the plant on behalf of the IAEA report that the Iranians appear to have no intention of building the remaining 45,000 centrifuges.

"Natanz is nowhere close to producing enough power for a nuclear plant," explained a senior counter-proliferation official with access to Iran's submissions to the IAEA on its nuclear program. "The only capacity Natanz has at present is to provide enriched uranium for nuclear weapons."

The absence of any nuclear reactors that could use the enriched material produced at Natanz also undermines Iran's insistence that its program is designed solely for civilian use. Russia has agreed to provide the Bushehr reactor with fuel for a 10-year period once it becomes operational, which means the material currently being produced at Natanz is surplus to requirements. Even though Iran has said it wants to build a network of nuclear reactors by 2030, there is little evidence of any development work. Iran claims work has started on building a nuclear power plant at Darkhovin, in Khuzestan province. But Western officials say the pace of development at the site, which was originally ear-marked for a nuclear power plant during the Shah's era in the 1970s, is "glacial," and amounts to little more than "a few pegs in the sand."

"If Iran was serious about developing its civilian program, you would expect it to devote as much energy to the construction of nuclear power plants as it does to the enrichment of uranium," the counter-proliferation official explained. "But the basic fact of the matter is that the civilian part of Iran's civilian nuclear program is missing. So the only logical conclusion that can be drawn from this is that all Iran's activities are designed for a military program."

As a consequence, senior Western intelligence officials on both sides of the Atlantic are now convinced that there has been no change of thinking in Iran's ultimate ambitions since 2003. "It only imposed a suspension of the military program because it feared the Bush administration would launch military action if it continued with its proliferation activities," said the counter-proliferation official. "Now that fear has subsided it has no reason to maintain the suspension."

There is now growing concern among Western negotiators that the Obama administration is not giving sufficient credence to the latest assessment of Iran's nuclear capability. Washington has opposed Iran's recent offer to ship 1,200 kilos of enriched uranium to Turkey, which amounts to less than half of its known stockpile of two-and-a-half tons. Nuclear experts estimate that Iran needs about 1,200 kilos to build a nuclear warhead, so it would still have enough material for an atom bomb even if it went ahead with the shipment to Turkey.

But the Obama administration appears to be more concerned about building international consensus on the Iran issue than tackling the actual threat posed by the Iranian nuclear program. The White House is particularly pleased by its apparent success in securing Russian support for a new U.N. Security Council resolution against Tehran. But to do so U.S. negotiators have had to water down the strength of the sanctions, as well as make significant concessions to Moscow, such as allowing it to sell sophisticated S-300 anti-aircraft missile systems to Iran.

For every month that Iran continues with its uranium enrichment program, it produces another 100 kilos of material that can be used to build atom bombs. "This new assessment of Iran's nuclear program shows that time is no longer on our side," said a senior Western official. "If we are to stop Iran acquiring nuclear weapons we need to take urgent action, and we need to take it now."

Mr. Coughlin is executive foreign editor of London's Daily Telegraph and the author of "Khomeini's Ghost" (Pan Macmillan).

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704596504575272594229049742.html?mod=WSJ_Opinion_LEFT_TopBucket

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Wall Street Journal
OPINION
Review & Outlook
June 3, 2010

Iran's Nuclear Progress

Even the U.N. now says Iran has enough fuel for two weapons.

Any day now, the U.N. Security Council will take up sanctions on Iran, which the Obama Administration considers a culmination of its year-plus-long diplomatic game plan. Alas in the real world beyond Turtle Bay, Iran moves ever closer to building an atomic bomb, and neither the U.S. nor its allies appear to possess any ideas, much less a serious strategy, to stop it.

Iran's nuclear progress comes through clearly in the latest report by the International Atomic Energy Agency. Released Monday ahead of the sanctions vote, the U.N. agency reports that Iran now has produced enough nuclear fuel to make two atomic weapons. As the U.S. was trying to extend a hand to Tehran and engage in talks in the past year, the Iranians nearly doubled their stock of 5%-enriched uranium to 5,300 pounds. The IAEA also says Iran has started to enrich small but growing amounts of uranium up to 20%, installing new centrifuges for that purpose.

These steps take Iran closer to the nuclear brink. Enriching fuel from 20% to the 90% or so needed for a Hiroshima-style atomic bomb would take only a few weeks. Based on these numbers, some analysts estimate Iran could get the bomb in as little as 18 months. So much for that infamous December 2007 U.S. intelligence estimate that Iran had ceased work on an atomic weapon.

The IAEA reports that an important piece of lab equipment which could be used to extract plutonium for a bomb went missing from a research facility. The Iranians were conducting so-called pyro-processing experiments to remove impurities from uranium metal, thus opening another route for the mullahs to build a nuclear device. The IAEA complains as well that Iran blocked access to scientists and files and didn't provide information about plans to build 10 new enrichment plants. As if Iran has ever made a good-faith effort to come clean about its intentions.

According to a certain sort of conventional wisdom, the IAEA report will "bolster" the Obama Administration's case for sanctions at the U.N. To us, this is merely the latest indictment of years of diplomatic half-measures by the U.S. and Europe that has provided Iran with the cover to press ahead with its illicit program without fear of grave repercussions.

The coming sanctions are the fourth set put before the Security Council. During the Bush Administration, the previous three passed without any opposition but also with little impact. The Iranians refused to suspend enrichment, which was—before George W. Bush changed policy at the urging of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice toward the end of his second term—the prerequisite even for any direct talks with Tehran.

The latest sanctions would ban Iran from pursuing "any activity related to ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons," freeze the assets of Iran's Revolutionary Guard and other companies related to the program, and prohibit Iran from buying several categories of heavy weapons—except, notably, the surface-to-air S-300 missiles Iran bought from Russia, and still wants to have delivered. Washington threw in this bribe to win over Moscow.

The U.S. also watered down provisions on financial and energy-related sanctions to win over the Russians and Chinese. But Turkey and Brazil, which are pushing their own nuclear deal with Iran struck last month, oppose the measure, as does Lebanon. Their dissent will deprive the U.S. of the image of diplomatic unity on Iran, which had been so central to the Obama strategy.

If passed, the sanctions may bite the bottom lines of some Revolutionary Guard brass and force Iran to be even more creative about developing its atomic bomb and the missiles needed to deliver it. But Iran has gotten around similarly toothless U.N. measures in the past decade without much trouble, and nothing suggests this time will be different.

From Bush to Obama, the U.S. strategy toward Iran has oscillated between naive and unserious. We now stand months from Iran reaching a nuclear breakout capability. Unless credible options to stop Iran are put on the table, the risk of violent confrontation with Tehran—instigated by Israel or not—rises with each day.

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704875604575280783424640448.html?mod=googlenews_wsj

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The Brookings Institution
OPINION
Friday, June 4, 2010

New START—No Killer Flaws Emerge

By Steven Pifer, Senior Fellow, Foreign Policy, Center on the United States and Europe

In the two months since the New START Treaty (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty) was signed by Presidents Obama and Medvedev, critics have raised a number of questions about its terms and impact. So far, however, they have raised no substantive objection that could sink the treaty's ratification prospects.

New START will reduce U.S. and Russian strategic warheads to a level of 1550—a cut of about 30 percent from what the sides were previously allowed. The treaty also sets limits on intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) and nuclear-capable bombers. These limits will bring U.S. and Russian strategic nuclear forces to their lowest levels in 40 years.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee opened Senate review of the treaty on May 18. In the weeks since the treaty text was released in April, we have already seen the principal questions of treaty critics. What are the objections? What are the responses?

First, New START will limit missile defense and/or weaken the U.S. commitment to missile defense. The treaty's preamble notes the interrelationship between offense and defense, simply stating the reality that one side's missile defense can affect the other side's offensive forces. As for hard limits, the treaty contains only one regarding missile defense: the United States would be barred from placing missile defense interceptors in ICBM silos or SLBM launchers. That's a constraint, but not one that will affect the U.S. missile defense program. The Pentagon has no plans to put missile interceptors in ICBM or SLBM launchers; it would be cheaper to build new silos for missile defense interceptors than convert existing ICBM silos.

In connection with New START's signature, the Russians issued a unilateral statement suggesting that Moscow would consider withdrawing from the treaty if a U.S. missile defense build-up were to threaten Russia's strategic offensive forces, something that the treaty allows Russia (and the United States) to do on three months' notice. Some critics worry this could be used to blackmail the administration into scaling back its missile defense plans. The Russians made a similar statement when signing the START I Treaty in 1991, but they did not withdraw from that treaty—even when the Bush administration withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 2002.

Second, conventional warheads on ICBMs and SLBMs will count under New START's limit of 1550 strategic warheads. At present the United States deploys nuclear warheads on its strategic missiles. It has considered a program—Precision Global Strike—to put conventional warheads on its ICBMs or SLBMs. Were that program to go forward, those conventional warheads would count. But the number of such warheads would be small; the Bush administration plan envisaged less than 30, just a tiny fraction of the 1550 permitted warheads. Why would the number of conventional warheads be so small? An ICBM or SLBM is an awfully expensive way to deliver a conventional warhead to a target—Trident D-5 SLBMs, for example, cost 130 million dollars each—and scenarios where other, more cost-effective means would not suffice are limited.

Third, New START counts heavy bombers as carrying only one warhead each. Neither the U.S. nor Russian air forces normally maintain nuclear weapons on bombers. The negotiators thus agreed that each nuclear-capable bomber would count as carrying one weapon, even though they can carry more (this is in contrast to the counting rule for ICBMs and SLBMs, which will count the actual number of warheads on those missiles). The one weapon-per-bomber rule is not a limit; it is a counting device. Moreover, the U.S. Air Force has nearly three times as many bombers as Russia. Although many U.S. bombers have been converted to conventional-only roles, the Pentagon plans to maintain 60 nuclear-capable bombers—about equal to the entire Russian bomber inventory.

Securing preferential treatment for bombers has been a central goal of U.S. arms control policy for 40 years. For example, the Reagan administration's original START proposal contained *no* limits on bombers. The rationale is that bombers, due to their long flight times (as much as eight-twelve hours), cannot be used in a surprise attack.

Fourth, New START does not reduce tactical nuclear weapons, where Russia has a significant numerical advantage. That is correct, but the Obama administration has stated that it will address tactical nuclear weapons in the next round of negotiations. A failure to ratify New START would not make securing Russian agreement to reductions in tactical nuclear weapons any easier. The countries most exposed to Russia's tactical nuclear arsenal—NATO allies in Europe—support New START.

Fifth, New START streamlines or weakens the verification provisions from START I, particularly with regard to telemetry and monitoring mobile ICBMs. Telemetry is the information a ballistic missile broadcasts during a test flight. START I required that all telemetry be shared with the other side. New START provides that the sides exchange telemetry on up to five tests per year, but it views telemetry as a transparency measure rather than a verification provision. The United States does not need access to any telemetry in order to monitor Russian treaty compliance. That's because New START does not contain the START I limits that required telemetry for verification.

The more serious question has to do with monitoring mobile ICBMs on trucks. Under START I, U.S. inspectors were located at the Votkinsk missile production plant, where Russia builds its mobile ICBMs, and could count missiles as they emerged. The Bush administration agreed to forgo monitoring at Votkinsk and, in the New START talks, the Russians rejected such monitoring. New START's combination of data exchange, data updates, unique identifiers on missiles and associated launchers, movement notifications and inspections, coupled with use of U.S. national technical means of verification such as imagery satellites, should allow the United States to monitor the Russian mobile ICBM force and detect any significant violation before it could jeopardize U.S. security.

Sixth, the Russians fooled U.S. negotiators by not defining a rail-mobile ICBM launcher, thereby creating a loophole for future exploitation . The Russians retired their rail-mobile ICBMs—which had been manufactured in Ukraine when it was still a part of the Soviet Union—several years ago. In the unlikely event that they choose to revive the program and build rail-mobile ICBMs in Russia, New START defines and limits both ICBMs and ICBM launchers. So the Russian systems would be captured, even without a specific definition of a rail-mobile ICBM launcher.

Seventh, U.S. strategic forces could atrophy under New START . New START does not inhibit the U.S. ability to modernize its strategic nuclear forces within the treaty's numerical limits. The administration announced on May 13 a plan over the next ten years to devote 80 billion dollars to the nuclear weapons complex in order to maintain the nuclear stockpile, and 100 billion dollars to sustain and modernize strategic delivery systems. The United States plans to retain a very robust strategic nuclear deterrent.

Those who criticize New START have failed so far to make a substantive case against its ratification. That may be one reason why Republican senators have raised questions about the treaty, but only one has declared that he will outright oppose it. Some critics appear to be grasping for reasons to say no. For example, former Under Secretary of State Bolton criticized New START for not limiting tactical nuclear weapons, for “confusingly” mixing counting rules, and for giving up some of START I's verification measures. When in the Bush administration, Mr. Bolton was the chief negotiator of the 2002 Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty. That agreement did not limit tactical nuclear weapons, had no counting rules, and had no verification measures.

Should New START become a political football, subject to the kind of partisan fighting that characterized the health care debate, all bets on ratification are off. But the Senate thus far appears to be approaching the treaty in the spirit of weighing what is in the national interest. If that spirit holds and the Senate judges the treaty on its merits, we should expect Senate consent to New START's ratification.

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