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Articles & Other Documents:

[Russia's Opposition Lawmakers Rally Against "New START"](#)

[Kosachev Hopes US Senate Will Ratify New START](#)

[White House Hopes For START Ratification In Autumn](#)

[Lawmaker Calls UNSC Resolution Declaration Of War Against Iran](#)

["Irrational" Iran Can't Get Nuclear Arms – Netanyahu](#)

[Iran Nearing Nuclear Bombs' Russia Warns](#)

[Iran Vows To Increase Enriched Uranium Stock Sixfold By 2011](#)

[Revolutionary Guards Profiting From Iran Sanctions - Karroubi](#)

[81% Of Arab World Opposed To Iran Sanctions, Opinion Poll Shows](#)

[Iran Scientist Turns Up At Washington Mission](#)

[N.K. Apology, Denuclearization Pledge Key To Nuclear Talks: Official](#)

[ANALYSIS - N.Korea's Call For Talks Hardly Welcome By South, US](#)

[CCS Nod For Project On Nuclear, Biological, Chemical Defence](#)

[4 Arrested In S Africa With Low Radiation Device](#)

[Britain Should Rethink Nuclear Weapons Renewal – Poll](#)

[Liam Fox: Britain Could Cut Nuclear Submarines](#)

[Russia Against Placing Weapons In Space – Medvedev](#)

[Russia's New Generation S-500 Missile Defense System To Enter Service](#)

[Fidel Castro Returns To TV With Dire Warning Of Nuclear Conflict](#)

[U.S. Details Planned Nuclear Stockpile Cut, Funding Priorities](#)

[Worldview: Keeping All The Options Open On A Nuclear Iran](#)

[The New START Treaty Deserves To Be Ratified](#)

[National Review: Romney Had It Right At The START](#)

[Comment: Cost Of Attacking Iran Underplayed](#)

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Russia's Opposition Lawmakers Rally Against "New START"

Monday, July 12, 2010

Lawmakers in two Russian opposition parties are expected to vote against ratification of their nation's new nuclear arms control treaty with the United States, Russia Today reported Friday (see **GSN**, July 9).

U.S. President Barack Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev in April signed the replacement to the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty. The "New START" pact would obligate both nations to cap their fielded strategic nuclear weapons to 1,550 warheads, down from the maximum of 2,200 allowed each country 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 must be approved by the U.S. Senate and by Russia's legislature.

The Defense Committee of the State Duma, the lower house of parliament, has endorsed the pact's ratification, but the body's International Affairs Committee has continued discussion of the document. Russian lawmakers were set this week to slow the ratification process in order to evaluate steps by their U.S. counterparts to bring the pact into force.

Medvedev's United Russia party, which controls the nation's parliament, has indicated it would support the treaty. Delegates for the Fair Russia party have also expressed support for ratification.

The Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, though, "did not vote for ratification of the previous treaty and now it will not vote as well," Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, the party's leader and deputy speaker of the Russian Duma, said last week. By adopting the pact, Moscow "reduces its warheads and becomes weaker," he said.

The United States "did not fulfill the provisions of the previous treaty," Zhirinovskiy said, adding that Russia was obligated under the deal to "cut and destroy nuclear warheads and scrap missiles" while the United States simply placed its own weapons in storage. The new agreement would also give Washington an unfair advantage, he suggested.

Referring to the Duma politicians who belong to his party, the lawmaker pledged to "push all 40 buttons" in opposing the pact. The party would boot any member who votes for the treaty, he said.

Russia's Communist Party, which has said the treaty would undermine Moscow's defenses, indicated it would oppose the pact's ratification unless a nuclear weapons modernization initiative is first established and funded.

Fears shared by the treaty's opponents are "to a certain extent justified," said Lt. Gen. Alexander Burutin, first deputy chief of the Russian Armed Forces General Staff.

Although the treaty was "a product of certain compromises," it is a balanced pact that would not unfairly benefit either signatory, Burutin said. The official noted that both nations would retain the right to stop participating in the pact.

Russian lawmakers are expected ultimately to sign off on the treaty, though they are concerned about voting for ratification only to see the agreement fail in the U.S. Senate.

"It is necessary to ratify the document, but not to hasten, because the chances for the ratification in the Senate have deteriorated," said Sergei Rogov, head of the Moscow-based Institute for the U.S. and Canada Studies.

A total of 226 Duma members must approve the treaty; United Russia has 315 lawmakers in the body (Russia Today, July 9).

Russia's experimental Bulava submarine-launched ballistic missile would count toward the treaty's ceiling on warhead delivery systems, RIA Novosti quoted Burutin as saying (see **GSN**, June 15).

"Any (ballistic) missile launched from a strategic submarine is subject to control and inspection regime. This practice includes the tests launches of the Bulava missile," he said.

"We are obliged to provide the Americans with (telemetric) data on the (Bulava) missile because we have already started the tests from a strategic submarine," Burutin added.

The Bulava is designed to deliver as many as 10 nuclear warheads as far as 5,000 miles. The weapon has failed in seven of 12 flight tests to date, most recently in December, according to official figures. However, Russia's armed forces have continued defending the weapon as an irreplaceable component of the country's future nuclear deterrent (RIA Novosti, July 9).

http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20100712_4165.php

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Kosachev Hopes US Senate Will Ratify New START

12 July 2010

MOSCOW, July 12 (Itar-Tass) -- State Duma Foreign Affairs Committee chairman Konstantin Kosachev said he was confident that the present or future U.S. Senate would sooner or later ratify the new START treaty despite resistance from the Republicans.

“I have no doubts that the ratification will take place,” Kosachev told journalists on Monday.

He said it was “incorrect” to ask whether the U.S. lawmakers would ratify the treaty by the midterm elections in November when one-third of the Senate will be elected.

“There is no deadline” in the process of START ratification, Kosachev said.

“Resistance to ratification in the United States is much stronger than in Russia not because of the contents of the document but because of the preparations for the elections. It would be good if the ratification takes place by November 3. If it does not take place -- I am confident that after November 3 this political component will quickly disappear and the new Senate will proceed with the ratification,” Kosachev said.

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said earlier that U.S. President Barack Obama and he had agreed to carry out ratification procedures “simultaneously” to avoid awkward situations on both sides.

Meanwhile, the United States and Russia have completed negotiations on three annexes to the Protocol of the New START Treaty, State Department spokesman Philip Crowley said in a statement earlier.

“The United States and the Russian Federation have completed negotiations on three Annexes to the Protocol of the New START Treaty and formally exchanged the text today in Moscow,” he said.

“These Annexes contain the technical information and detailed procedures that will be used in implementing the New START Treaty verification regime,” he said.

The annexes provide formats for the treaty’s notifications and “spell out the procedures for the conduct of inspection activities and the exchange of telemetric information”, the spokesman said.

“This completes the Treaty documents that will be transmitted to the Senate in May for its advice and consent to ratification,” Crowley said.

The new START Treaty's provisions envisage that each Party reduces and limits its strategic offensive armaments in such a way so that in seven years after the treaty comes into force and later their total numbers do not exceed:

- 700 deployed intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM), submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM), and heavy bombers;
- 1,550 warheads for them;

- 800 deployed and non-deployed ICBM, SLBM launchers and heavy bombers. The limit has been fixed upon our initiative in order to bring deployed and non-deployed launchers, as well as heavy bombers into the legal space of the Treaty, which will allow to limit the so-called "returnable potential" and provide a stimulus for the elimination or reconfiguration of the mentioned strategic offensive armaments.

The Parties agreed to reduce the total number of warheads by a third against the Moscow Treaty (START ceiling was 2200 warheads) and, what is more important, more than halve the top limit for strategic delivery vehicles (START ceiling was 1600 vehicles, while SORT did not limit the vehicles). Thus, Russia and the United States demonstrated aspiration for major and truly large-scale cuts in strategic offensive armaments.

Russian presidential aide Sergei Prikhodko said earlier that “the connection between START and missile defence is reflected in the preamble of the document”.

“The negotiators faced the task of adequately fixing in the new Treaty the inextricable connection between strategic offensive and strategic defensive armaments (i.e. missile defence). The task was successfully fulfilled - the START/ABM connection, as well as the growing significance of this connection during the reduction of strategic offensive armaments will be fixed in the Treaty and will be legally binding. Besides, the United States has agreed not to refurnish and not to use ICBM and SLBM launchers for interceptor missile deployment and vice versa. The U.S. side also agreed to discuss the distinguishing features between interceptors and ICBM and SLBM, as well as between interceptor and ICBM/SLBM launchers which would rule out a possibility to bypass the Treaty.”

“The provision does not ban unilateral decisions, but it is unequivocally based on the assumption that strategic offensive armaments will be reduced to such an extent that will ensure security of either party and take into account the presence of strategic defensive systems capable of neutralising strategic offensive armaments. Such an interconnection has been legally stipulated,” the aide said.

“The international legal formula has been included that any party in exercising its state sovereignty has the right to withdraw from the Treaty if it decides that exclusive circumstances resulting from its provisions pose a direct threat to its supreme interests. The given provision concerns qualitative and quantitative increase of the U.S. strategic missile defence potential,” Prikhodko said.

The new START Treaty was signed by President Dmitry Medvedev and U.S. President Barack Obama in Prague on April 8.

The previous Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) expired on December 5, 2009.

<http://www.itar-tass.com/eng/level2.html?NewsID=15312810&PageNum=0>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Voice of Russia – Russia

White House Hopes For START Ratification In Autumn

By Victor Yenikeev

July 12, 2010

The US government hopes that the new strategic arms reduction treaty signed between Washington and Moscow will be fully supported by the Senate, the White House's spokesman Robert Gibbs said in an interview with NBC company.

The situation with the START ratification can be described as follows: Barack Obama proposes but the Senate disposes. So far, US lawmakers made different statements on the issue. Some of them have said that the new agreement with Russia could be approved before the summer vacations which begin in early August. Others said that the document would be ratified by the end of the year. In June the US and Russian Presidents agreed that all the issues connected with the treaty's ratification should be resolved by October and Robert Gibbs' statement is just another confirmation of this.

But the statement by Gibbs is important in the light of two factors. First, the recent spy scandal between the countries has been resolved quickly without any speculation and mess. It is important that both Moscow and Washington made statements that the spy story would not damage US- Russian relations in general, and the START ratification in particular. Besides that, last week the committees of the State Duma (the lower house of parliament) last week recommended that it should ratify the agreement. Now a similar statement should follow from the Federation Council (the Upper House) and we expect no problem here. However the Russian lawmakers also said that they will watching the development of the events in the US Senate and they won't ratify the treaty before the Senators do it. This is in line with the Medvedev-Obama agreement on synchronizing the treaty's ratification.

But the question is - whether Obama's administration will manage to get support of 2/3 of the Senate, which means 67 of 100 votes? This is the number of votes required for the ratification. Some diplomats and experts suppose it won't be difficult but others doubt this pointing out at the signs of the growing criticism and discontent with the treaty in the Republican camp. That is why many things will depend on the determination of the US government to protect its agreement with Russia. The failure of this document's ratification by the Senate would be a serious blow to the reputation of Barack Obama and the reset of US-Russian relations. It would also damage the whole process of nuclear disarmament in the world which is so important to sustain peace stability and security. So we are awaiting the autumn with great hope.

<http://english.ruvr.ru/2010/07/12/12095197.html>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

FARS News Agency – Iran

July 11, 2010

Lawmaker Calls UNSC Resolution Declaration Of War Against Iran

TEHRAN (FNA) - A senior Iranian legislator blasted the UN Security Council for approving a new resolution against Tehran in complete denial of an earlier nuclear fuel swap agreement signed by Iran, Turkey and Brazil, and caution that the world powers have declared a war against Iran by issuing Resolution 1929.

"The issuance of Resolution 1929 after the Tehran Declaration and imposing sanctions (against Iran) is an open declaration of war by the Group 5+1 (the five permanent UNSC member states plus Germany) against the Iranian nation and all the freedom-seeking countries of the world," member of the parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission Mohammad Karami-Raad told FNA.

The Tehran Declaration presented a solution to a longstanding standoff between Iran and potential suppliers of nuclear fuel. According to the agreement signed by Iran, Turkey and Brazil on May 17, Iran would send some 1200 kg of its 3.5% enriched uranium to Turkey in exchange for a total of 120 kg of 20% enriched fuel.

He pointed to the US President Barack Obama's call for Brazil and Turkey's involvement in the nuclear fuel issue, and said the resolution disclosed that Obama merely sought to impose sanctions on Iran and did not at all intend to arrange a nuclear fuel swap with Tehran.

"Exchange of (enriched) uranium is a normal trade issue, while it has turned into a political issue for Washington," Karami-Raad said, reminding that Iran had bought the previous fuel cargo needed for the Tehran reactor from Argentina under conventional and normal contract terms.

The lawmaker further stressed Iran's commitment to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and underlined that all negotiations about Iran's nuclear issue should be made within the framework of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Iran is under four rounds of UN Security Council sanctions for turning down West's calls to give up its right of uranium enrichment, saying the demand is politically tainted and illogical.

Tehran stresses that sanctions and pressures merely consolidate Iranians' national resolve to continue the path.

In June, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad underscored that sanctions and pressures against Iran have no effect on the country's progress and development.

"Iran's huge energy is about to be released, meaning that even sanctions will have no effect," Ahmadinejad reiterated.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8904200788>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

The Star – Malaysia
Sunday July 11, 2010

"Irrational" Iran Can't Get Nuclear Arms - Netanyahu

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - "Irrational regimes" like Iran cannot be allowed to have nuclear arms and it is a mistake to think Tehran's ambitions can be contained, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on U.S. television.

Netanyahu, who met President Barack Obama last week during a visit to Washington and New York, told "Fox News Sunday" that Iran was "just moving on with its efforts" to develop nuclear weapons -- a prospect he called "very, very dangerous."

Asked whether a nuclear Iran could be contained, he said: "No, I don't. I think that's a mistake, and I think people fall into a misconception."

"I don't think you can rely on Iran," Netanyahu said in a taped interview. "And we should not allow irrational regimes like Iran to have nuclear weapons. It's the ultimate terrorist threat today."

Netanyahu declined to say whether he had any deadline for allowing diplomacy with Iran to run its course.

"We always reserve the right to defend ourselves," he said, reiterating a core policy of Israel, which does not confirm or deny widely held beliefs that it has the only nuclear arsenal in the Middle East.

Iran says its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes only. But the United States and its allies fear Tehran is pursuing an atomic weapons program and have pushed a series of United Nations and unilateral sanctions against Iran.

"There's only been one time that Iran actually stopped the program and that was when it feared U.S. military action," Netanyahu said.

"So when the president (Obama) says that he's determined to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons and that all options are on the table, I think that's the right statement of policy."

Netanyahu did not directly answer a question about a nuclear weapons-free zone in the Middle East but accused Iran, Iraq and Libya of violating a non-proliferation pact.

"So I think we should stay focused on the real problem in the Middle East," he said. "It's not Israel. It's these dictatorships that are developing nuclear weapons with the specific goal of wiping Israel away."

Reporting by John O'Callaghan; Editing by Sandra Maler

http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2010/7/12/worldupdates/2010-07-11T215617Z_01_NOOTR_RTRMDNC_0_-500413-1&sec=Worldupdates

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

BBC News – U.K.

Monday, July 12, 2010

'Iran Nearing Nuclear Bombs' Russia Warns

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev says Iran is "moving closer" to having the potential to create nuclear weapons.

It is one of the first times Moscow has publicly recognised that Iran might be moving towards a nuclear weapon.

Russia, which has strong economic and military ties with Iran, has traditionally been an ally of Tehran.

But it has recently adopted a tougher stance towards Tehran's nuclear drive, and backed the fourth round of UN sanctions that was imposed last month.

"Iran is moving closer to possessing the potential which in principle could be used for the creation of nuclear weapons," Mr Medvedev told a meeting of ambassadors in Moscow.

The US and major European Union powers suspect that Iran is trying to build nuclear weapons. Iran says its nuclear programme is peaceful.

On 10 June, the UN Security Council endorsed a fourth round of sanctions on Iran, including tighter financial curbs and an expanded arms embargo.

Since then, the US and EU have unilaterally imposed additional sanctions, including a ban on investment in Iran's oil and gas industry, as well as trade with key banks and individuals.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has dismissed the vote and rejected calls to halt uranium enrichment - which could have military as well as civilian uses.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/world/middle_east/10600100.stm

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Business Week

Iran Vows To Increase Enriched Uranium Stock Sixfold By 2011

July 12, 2010

By Henry Meyer

July 12 (Bloomberg) -- Iran said it can produce enough 20 percent-enriched uranium to power its Tehran research reactor, which needs six times the country's current stockpile, by September next year.

"Iran has now produced 20 kilograms of nuclear fuel with an enrichment level of 20 percent," Ali Akbar Salehi, head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, said in comments reported by state-run Press TV late yesterday. "In view of making fuel rods, we hope to deliver them by Shahrivar next year," he said, referring to the Iranian calendar month, which finishes in late September 2011.

Iran said last month it would enrich its own fuel for the medical reactor after Western powers rejected a deal to swap 1,200 kilograms of low-enriched uranium for the 120 kilograms of 20 percent-enriched fuel needed for the Tehran facility. Salehi said on June 23 that Iran can produce 5 kilograms a month of 20 percent-enriched uranium.

The Persian Gulf nation has refused United Nations Security Council demands to suspend uranium enrichment, saying the work is necessary for civilian purposes such as power generation. The UN Security Council on June 9 approved a fourth round of sanctions aimed at halting Iran's nuclear development, which the U.S. and its allies say may be intended for a weapons program.

Under a proposed international deal brokered by Turkey and Brazil in May, and rejected by the U.S. Iran had said it would swap half of its stockpile of 3.5 percent-enriched uranium for imported fuel to run the Tehran reactor, which produces medical isotopes.

‘Psychological Warfare’

The head of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Leon Panetta, said last month that Iran has enough low-enriched uranium for two atomic bombs. Iran dismissed his comments as “psychological warfare.”

France and Argentina are the only countries with the technology to make fuel for the type of reactor operating in Tehran, Paul Ingram, executive director of the London-based British American Security Information Council, said in a June 23 phone interview. Iran’s timeline for a plant to produce its own fuel is “rather optimistic,” he said.

A nuclear weapon could be made by enriching 150 to 200 kilograms of 20 percent uranium to a concentration of 80 to 90 percent, Ingram said. “Enriching to 20 percent is like going about 80 percent of the way towards having military material,” he said.

Enriching uranium to 90 percent from 20 percent accounts for about half the time needed to get the raw heavy metal into the concentrated form needed for a weapon, Federation of American Scientists physicist Ivan Oelrich said in a May 19 note. Iran is “perfectly capable” of enriching to 90 percent, he said.

With assistance from Ali Sheikholeslami in London. Editors: Ben Holland, Digby Lidstone.

<http://www.businessweek.com/news/2010-07-12/iran-vows-to-increase-enriched-uranium-stock-sixfold-by-2011.html>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Daily Star – Lebanon

Revolutionary Guards Profiting From Iran Sanctions - Karroubi

‘They make gigantic, astronomical profits from’ abandoned projects

By Agence France-Presse (AFP)

Monday, July 12, 2010

TEHRAN: Opposition leader Mehdi Karroubi has said Iran’s elite Revolutionary Guards back sanctions against Tehran as they make “astronomical profits” from the punitive measures, a website said on Sunday.

“I believe that part of the Iranian rule as well as the Revolutionary Guards are in favor of sanctions as they make gigantic and astronomical profits from them,” Karroubi was quoted as saying on opposition website Rahesabz.net.

The Guards regularly shrug off international sanctions imposed on Iran for its defiant nuclear program, with some top commanders expressing willingness to take on projects abandoned by Western companies, including in the energy sector.

Karroubi, who steadfastly opposes the government of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, again blamed the hardliner for the latest sets of sanctions that were imposed by the UN Security Council.

Both the United States and the European Union later took additional measures against Tehran unilaterally.

“Imprudence in [Iran’s] foreign policy and the lack of political sanity in the actions and political and diplomatic words of the man in charge of the government have imposed high costs on the country,” the reformist cleric said in a direct attack on Ahmadinejad.

“We should not give an excuse through shallow words and bungling actions and allow others to easily impose sanctions against Iran,” the website quoted Karroubi as saying on Saturday at a meeting with families of detained opposition members.

Iran is under four sets of UN sanctions for its sustained pursuance of the nuclear program, all of which have been imposed since Ahmadinejad first became president in 2005.

Western governments suspect Iran’s nuclear program is a cover for a weapons drive, something Tehran has repeatedly denied, maintaining it is aimed solely at power generation and medical research.

Karroubi, along with Iran’s other main opposition leader Mir Hossein Mousavi, continue to level charges that Ahmadinejad’s re-election last year was the result of a vote rigging.

Last week, Iran’s chief nuclear negotiator suggested in a letter to the European Union’s foreign affairs chief that talks could be held as soon as September on issues including Tehran’s atomic program.

Ahmadinejad later said Washington must make its position on Israel's nuclear strategy clear for talks to resume.

The Iranian leader also said the United States must clarify its own commitment to non-proliferation and its position on its readiness to "resort to force."

http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition_id=10&categ_id=2&article_id=116916#axzz0tUU3uNqS

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Tehran Times – Iran

July 13, 2010

81% Of Arab World Opposed To Iran Sanctions, Opinion Poll Shows

Tehran Times Social Desk

TEHRAN - In a poll conducted by the Al-Jazeera network, over 81 percent of respondents in the Arab world said they are opposed to the UN Security Council's decision to impose sanctions on Iran.

On June 9, the United Nations Security Council voted 12-2 in favor of a resolution imposing a new round of sanctions on Iran. Brazil and Turkey voted "no" and Lebanon abstained.

UN Security Council Resolution 1929 targets Iranian banks suspected of being involved in Iran's nuclear or missile development programs. It also expands the arms embargo against Iran and authorizes the inspection of Iranian ships on the high seas or the territorial waters of member states of the United Nations.

The Al-Jazeera poll asked a series of questions about the fairness of Resolution 1929 and its potential effect on the interests of Middle Eastern countries.

Over 12,000 people took part in the poll.

The UN Security Council passed the resolution imposing sanctions on Iran even though Tehran made strenuous efforts to resolve the dispute over Iran's nuclear program.

The West demanded that Iran halt its uranium enrichment program, but Iran said it would never do so but was willing to reach an agreement acceptable to both sides.

Along these lines, Iran, Turkey, and Brazil signed a declaration in Tehran on May 17, according to which the Islamic Republic would ship 1200 kilograms of its low-enriched uranium to Turkey to be exchanged for 120 kilograms of 20 percent enriched nuclear fuel rods to power the Tehran research reactor, which produces radioisotopes for cancer treatment.

In the latest development, Iranian Foreign Minister Manoucher Mottaki told reporters on Sunday that the Vienna group (the United States, Russia, and France) had finally accepted Tehran's proposal that Turkey and Brazil participate in the talks on Iran's nuclear program.

http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=222842

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Edmonton Journal – Canada

Iran Scientist Turns Up At Washington Mission

By Arshad Mohammed and Hossein Jaseb, Reuters

July 13, 2010

WASHINGTON/TEHRAN - An Iranian nuclear scientist missing for more than a year turned up in Washington on Tuesday, claiming to have been kidnapped but U.S. officials denied that they held him against his will or mistreated him.

Iran, which is locked in a standoff with the United States and other Western nations over its suspected pursuit of nuclear weapons, has repeatedly accused the CIA of abducting Shahram Amiri, who worked for Iran's Atomic Energy Organization.

Amiri, who vanished during a pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia more than a year ago, mysteriously appeared at the Iranian interests section of Pakistan's embassy.

"My kidnapping was a disgraceful act for America . . . I was under enormous psychological pressure and supervision of armed agents in the past 14 months," Amiri, who is in his thirties, was quoted as saying in a phone interview with Iran's state TV.

In a series of recent videos, a man claiming to be Amiri has variously claimed to have been kidnapped and tortured, to be have been studying in the United States and to have fled U.S. "agents" and has asked human rights groups to help him return to Iran.

"Amiri has been escorted by American forces to Iran's interests section in Washington," Iran's PressTV said.

U.S. State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley told reporters Amiri was not held in the United States against his will, was free to leave whenever he wished, and that he was unaware of any mistreatment of the Iranian he was in America.

"Mr. Amiri is free to come and go as he chooses and he is choosing to return to Iran," Crowley said at a hastily convened briefing. "I have no information to suggest that he has been mistreated while he has been in the United States."

The Amiri case has fueled speculation that he may have valuable intelligence about the Iranian nuclear program that the Americans may want.

"Mr. Amiri has been in the United States of his own free will and has decided to return to Iran of his own free will," said another U.S. official, adding Amiri is awaiting documents from a third country through which he plans to travel to Iran.

Amiri surfaced after a Cold War-style spy swap which took place in Vienna on Friday when 10 people charged in the United States with being Russian agents were exchanged for four held in Russia on charges of spying for the West.

Iran and the United States severed diplomatic ties after the 1979 Islamic revolution.

Under the umbrella of the Pakistani embassy, the interests section, which is staffed by Iranians, provides consular services including information on travel visas.

<http://www.edmontonjournal.com/news/Iran+scientist+turns+Washington+mission/3270260/story.html>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Yonhap News – South Korea

11 July 2010

N.K. Apology, Denuclearization Pledge Key To Nuclear Talks: Official

SEOUL, July 11 (Yonhap) -- North Korea should first apologize or acknowledge its responsibility for the sinking of a South Korean warship and show its willingness to give up its atomic programs if it wants to resume six-party nuclear talks, a senior official said Sunday.

Pyongyang's foreign ministry said Saturday it will "make consistent efforts" to conclude a peace treaty and resume six-party nuclear talks. The comment came in response to the U.N. Security Council's adoption of a presidential statement on the ship sinking.

The Council statement did not directly blame the North for the sinking, though it implied Pyongyang's responsibility indirectly. The North's reaction to the U.N. measure suggests that the communist nation sees the statement as not as bad as it had expected.

"It looks like North Korea is looking for a way out," a senior South Korean government official told reporters on condition of anonymity. The North's foreign ministry reaction and its offer of military talks with the U.S.-led United Nations Command can be seen in that context, the official said.

But the official also stressed that Pyongyang should first create an atmosphere for resuming the stalled nuclear talks that involve the two Koreas, China, Japan, Russia and the United States. The on-again-off-again talks have been stalled since the last meeting in late 2008.

"North Korea should first apologize for the Cheonan case or acknowledge its responsibility and show its willingness to denuclearize to make it possible for the six party talks to resume," the official said.

"Sincerity and trustworthiness are important for resuming the talks," he said. "This is a matter of willingness. If it is willing (to apologize) it can do so in whatever way."

North Korea has used its participation in nuclear talks itself as a negotiating card. It has been a standard pattern of North Korean behavior to raise tensions with provocations and then return to the dialogue table to get concessions it wants before backtracking on agreements and quitting the talks.

That's why South Korea, the U.S. and other nations have stressed the importance of the North showing sincere willingness to give up its nuclear programs before agreeing to reopen the nuclear talks that began in 2003.

"It's time for the North to respond," the official said. "The ball is in North Korea's court."

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2010/07/11/95/0301000000AEN20100711001500315F.HTML>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

The Star – Malaysia
Tuesday July 13, 2010

ANALYSIS - N.Korea's Call For Talks Hardly Welcome By South, US

By Jack Kim

SEOUL (Reuters) - North Korea, which escaped U.N. censure over the sinking of a South Korean warship, is signalling it wants to restart nuclear weapons negotiations. For the United States and South Korea, the talks are fraught with risk.

Washington is well aware of the political mileage it gives the hermit state by sitting at the same negotiating table. The question is how to avoid simply letting Pyongyang go through the motions only to later renege, again, on promises to roll back its nuclear arms programme.

And South Korean President Lee Myung-bak, who in a tearful nationwide address pledged to seek revenge for the ship sinking, will want to avoid being seen as giving in to North Korea which it says torpedoed the Cheonan warship in March, killing 46 sailors.

The U.N. Security Council last week condemned the sinking of the Cheonan but, to ensure support from China which is the Pyongyang's only powerful ally, did not name North Korea.

In the end, analysts say Seoul and Washington have little choice but to heed China's urging to return to six-party nuclear talks that the North has boycotted for the past 1-½ years.

"They know there is no other way; there's no other exit," said Paik Hak-soon, an expert on the North's negotiating tactics at the Sejong Institute.

"Denuclearisation of the North through the six-party talks has become a much more seriously difficult problem."

The talks include the two Koreas and regional powers China, Japan, Russia and the United States.

For Pyongyang, the talks are one of its few chances to leverage benefits from what it sees as a hostile world that has largely isolated it over a series of missile and nuclear tests.

But years of negotiation to convince it to scuttle its nuclear ambitions in exchange for generous aid and an end to its pariah status, have achieved little.

Analysts say U.S. concerns are increasingly focused on preventing North Korea exporting any atomic weaponry.

"The U.S. has been looking at the anti-proliferation aspect of the six-party talks as opposed to denuclearisation of North Korea," said Yang Moo-jin of the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul. "To some degree, it understands that it would be very difficult to get the North to denuclearise completely.

"The U.S. approach to the nuclear talks with the North is in the context of its policy on a world without nuclear weapons. As it deals with Iran and trying to get Iran to drop its nuclear ambitions, getting the North to do the same is important."

SCEPTICAL OF PYONGYANG AND BEIJING

South Korea too has little choice but to return, albeit reluctantly, to the talks, almost the only forum it has left to talk directly to the North.

"We've had almost seven years of negotiations with the North for ending its nuclear programme. So more than the fact that the North is returning to the talks ... what is important is how serious is the North's commitment to denuclearisation," Foreign Ministry spokesman Kim Young-sun said.

The South has yet to implement the toughest retaliatory measures it originally promised, including a massive joint naval exercise with the United States and loudspeaker broadcasts at the border. The North said it would shoot the loudspeakers.

"The Lee Myung-bak government is in a dilemma over whether to engage in dialogue with the North to achieve stability on the Korean peninsula or to try to change the North by applying pressure," said Yang of the University of North Korean Studies.

"Now that the U.N. Security Council recommended dialogue as a way to ease tension, the government will feel the pressure to try dialogue."

Additional reporting by Ben Blanchard in Beijing, editing by Jonathan Thatcher

http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2010/7/13/worldupdates/2010-07-13T153125Z_01_NOOTR_RTRMDNC_0_-500830-1&sec=Worldupdates

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

The Hindu – India
New Delhi, July 11, 2010

CCS Nod For Project On Nuclear, Biological, Chemical Defence

By the Press Trust of India (PTI)

The Cabinet Committee on Security has cleared a Rs 285 crore Defence Ministry project for developing systems and equipment for protection against nuclear, biological and chemical (NBC) weapons and leakages.

"Under the project for NBC defence, DRDO has been tasked to develop quick and fast detection systems in case of an NBC attack on our vital installations and cities or leakage in any of the installations dealing with these materials," Defence Ministry officials told PTI here.

"In case on any attack or leakages, such detection systems will help in finding the exact sources of contamination and the authorities concerned would be able to react in a much more effective manner," they added.

The DRDO is also working on developing and increasing the number of systems for providing individual protection for soldiers in NBC environment.

Sources said to protect human beings from getting exposed to NBC radiation, "Unmanned Ground Vehicles and robots are also being developed to go to the contaminated zones. We are also looking at the medical management in times of such incidents."

Inflatable structures are also being developed in which people can take shelter during any such incident, they added.

Till now, the focus was on building underground shelters while preparing for such eventualities.

The project got the CCS nod in a recently held meeting chaired by the Prime Minister and work on developing the systems has already started as different labs have already been told about the systems to be developed.

With the increasing threat of use of NBC weapons by state and non-state actors, Indian armed forces have been preparing themselves by deploying protection suites for their personnel.

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/article510906.ece>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Khaleej Times – U.A.E.

4 Arrested In S Africa With Low Radiation Device

By Agence France-Presse (AFP)
10 July 2010

PRETORIA - Four South Africans were arrested in the capital Pretoria for trying to sell a low-radiation industrial nuclear device, police said Saturday, insisting the incident had no link the World Cup.

'Four people were arrested, all South Africans, they were trying to exchange or sell this particular device,' said Musa Zondi, spokesman for the elite investigative unit known as the Hawks.

'It's not World Cup related at all, it's just a crime,' he said.

They were arrested Friday at a garage in a sting operation that included a police helicopter, he said.

The origin of the device is still under investigation, he said. Pretoria is a major producer of nuclear medicine used to treat some cancers.

'As a device, it's harmless unless someone opens it and even then, you would have to sit on it for hours' to be at risk, Zondi said.

'It is out of circulation, people were arrested, investigations are ongoing, so there is no need to be afraid,' he added.

The four men will appear in court on Monday, he said.

Police are still investigating if the men had links to any international network. Zondi declined to comment on whether the device could be used to make a 'dirty bomb'.

http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle08.asp?xfile=data/international/2010/July/international_July368.xml§ion=international

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

The Star – Malaysia
Tuesday, July 13, 2010

Britain Should Rethink Nuclear Weapons Renewal - Poll

By Peter Griffiths

LONDON (Reuters) - Nearly three-quarters of opinion formers in Britain think the government should either scrap the country's nuclear weapons or look for a cheaper alternative, according to a poll published on Tuesday.

Just under a third of business leaders, politicians, academics and journalists polled by YouGov for the Chatham House thinktank said Britain should abandon its nuclear deterrent after it expires in 2024. This is higher than a fifth of ordinary voters polled by YouGov who want to scrap it.

The replacement of Britain's submarine-launched missile system is expected to cost at least 20 billion pounds (\$29.96 billion), a sum critics say is unthinkable at a time of public spending cuts that Prime Minister David Cameron has warned will change the country's "whole way of life".

Most government departments have been told to prepare for cuts of around 25 percent to help reduce a record peacetime budget deficit and all large state projects are under scrutiny.

Defence Secretary Liam Fox said last week the government was committed to replacing its Trident nuclear weapons, although it has ordered a review to make sure it offers value for money.

A fifth of opinion makers questioned said they backed a straight replacement.

However, more than four in 10 wanted a cheaper nuclear option, possibly an airborne weapon or a new deterrent carried by fewer submarines. Britain currently has four submarines capable of carrying the Trident missiles.

These Vanguard class submarines are likely to start leaving service in the early 2020s and the government estimates it will take about 17 years to design and build their replacement.

The ruling Conservative Party has long supported a new submarine-launched system, while their junior coalition partner, the Liberal Democrats, wants a cheaper alternative.

The two parties agreed to push ahead with renewing the nuclear weapons, although the Lib Dems will be allowed to continue to make the case for finding another option.

The coalition said in May that Britain would for the first time set a 225-warhead limit on its nuclear stockpile. That coincided with a treaty agreed by the United States and Russia to cut their nuclear arsenals by a third.

YouGov also polled 2,500 ordinary voters and found that 29 percent wanted a like-for-like replacement, 30 percent favoured a cheaper system and 20 percent opted to scrap nuclear weapons.

Editing by Jon Loades-Carter

http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2010/7/13/worldupdates/2010-07-13T182622Z_01_NOOTR_RTRMDNC_0_-500867-1&sec=Worldupdates

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

London Daily Telegraph – U.K.

Liam Fox: Britain Could Cut Nuclear Submarines

Britain could reduce the number of nuclear-armed submarines in its fleet, Liam Fox has said.

By James Kirkup, Political Correspondent

13 July 2010

Defence Secretary said ministers are committed to the £20 billion replacement of the Trident deterrent, but said that the number of submarines carrying nuclear missiles could be cut from four to three.

The Labour government said it was willing to reduce the number of nuclear-armed submarines if it was still possible to provide continuous at-sea deterrent.

Dr Fox confirmed that the Coalition has a similar objective, but said the final decision on the fourth submarine will not be taken for some time.

He said: "That reality is still there. We would have to look at what technology was available and what risks we were taking as we came to make that decision on the fourth submarine sometime in 2014/15."

Dr Fox was speaking at Chatham House, a think-tank, where he outlined an approach to defence based on using the means and the willingness to deploy military power in order to deter potential threats.

He accepted that the stance could be seen as "bellicose" but said that was deliberate.

He said: "I hope that to those who might pose a threat to the UK, I sound bellicose.

"The trouble with peacekeeping is that there has to be a peace to keep. Sometimes you have to fight for the peace. Sometimes you have to die for the peace."

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopics/politics/defence/7888240/Liam-Fox-Britain-could-cut-nuclear-submarines.html>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

Russia Against Placing Weapons In Space - Medvedev

12 July 2010

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev reiterated on Monday that Russia was strictly against the placement of weapons in space.

"We stand against unilateral approaches to missile defense issues and against the placement of weapons in space," Medvedev said at a meeting with Russian ambassadors and envoys in Moscow.

As of 2009, there are no known operative orbital weapons systems, but several were developed by the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

Development of orbital weaponry was largely halted after the 1967 Outer Space Treaty and the 1979 SALT II Treaty came into force. These agreements prohibit weapons of mass destruction (but not other weapons) being placed in space.

In 2008, Russia and China proposed a draft international treaty to ban the deployment of weapons of any kind in space and to prohibit the use of force against space objects.

In 2009, the United Nations unanimously approved a draft resolution on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space, also submitted by Russia and China.

The document envisions, in particular, that the predictability of military activities in outer space would "reduce the probability of emergence of sudden military threats in space and from space, would diminish ambiguities in the strategic situation in outer space and, consequently, would decrease the need for early preparation of states to neutralize such threats."

MOSCOW, July 12 (RIA Novosti)

<http://en.rian.ru/russia/20100712/159771744.html>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

Russia's New Generation S-500 Missile Defense System To Enter Service

13 July 2010

Russia's new generation S-500 air defense system will resolve the country's missile defense problems when it enters service, Air Force Commander Colonel General Alexander Zelin said on Tuesday.

"The S-500 air defense system is a system that will solve Russia's missile defense problems," Zelin said.

Answering a question about the S-500's technical specifications, Zelin said: "I would not compare the S-500 with the U.S. missile defense since they have different technical characteristics".

The S-500 is expected to have an extended range of up to 600 km (over 370 miles) and simultaneously engage up to 10 targets. The system will be capable of destroying hypersonic and ballistic targets.

He also added that two S-400 long-range missile defense systems would be delivered to the Far East by the end of 2010.

"We are planning to put two S-400s on combat duty at the Vostok strategic command," Zelin said.

MOSCOW, July 13 (RIA Novosti)

http://en.rian.ru/military_news/20100713/159794602.html

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

London Guardian – U.K.

Fidel Castro Returns To TV With Dire Warning Of Nuclear Conflict

In rare appearance, Cuba's former president, 82, analyses Middle East situation and says Iran will not be cowed by the US

By Jo Tuckman in Mexico City

Tuesday, 13 July 2010

The Middle East is on the verge of a nuclear war triggered by a US attack on Iran in the name of preventing the country from developing its own weapons, according to ageing Cuban revolutionary Fidel Castro.

"To do this on the basis of a calculation that the Iranians are going to come running out to ask the Yankees for forgiveness is absurd," Castro said. "They [the US] will encounter a terrible resistance that will spread the conflict that cannot end up any other way than turning nuclear."

The former Cuban president said Israel would throw the first bomb, but the risk that red buttons would also be pressed in Pakistan and India was latent.

Castro made the prediction on Cuban TV last night, in a dramatic return to public life after four years in near-seclusion.

"The US is activating the machinery to destroy Iran," he said. "But the Iranians have been building up a defensive force little by little for years."

Castro said attacking Iran would have a very different result from invading Iraq. "When Bush attacked Iraq, Iraq was a divided country," he said. "Iran is not divided."

The Cuban leader also emphasised that India, Pakistan and Israel are the three nuclear powers who have refused to sign the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

"The control that Israel has over the United States is enormous."

"US foreign policy is better described as the policy of total impunity."

The leader of the 1959 Cuban Revolution who went on to become an icon of resistance to US dominance in Latin America during the Cold War, and ended up as the great survivor of the fall of communism, fell seriously ill in 2006. After emergency intestinal surgery he handed power over to his younger brother Raul, who is now 79, first temporarily and then permanently.

Castro appeared in a couple of videotaped interviews with Cuban television in 2007 and rather more frequently in photographs greeting foreign leaders visiting the island. He had not been seen in a public setting until photographs

of him visiting a science centre in Havana were published in the Communist party newspaper Granma on Monday. He was shown smiling and chatting to workers, dressed in sports clothes and looking relaxed.

Still the official head of Cuba's Communist party, Castro maintains a lively presence in print, publishing regular 'Reflections' on his own nation and the world.

In recent weeks he has turned his attention to the Middle East, prompted by the Israeli raid on an aid convoy attempting to break the blockade of Gaza on 31 May. During Monday's broadcast of a special edition of a daily public affairs show called Round Table, the 82-year-old looked rather frail and his voice was somewhat weak. He shuffled papers and quoted extensively from the Arabic press, Pentagon and Noam Chomsky, among others.

Dressed casually in a tracksuit top over a checked shirt, the man once known for always wearing military fatigues, interspersed his warnings of imminent nuclear conflict with a rambling history lecture that ranged from the roots of the Korean war to the Cuban missile crisis, by way of the war in Angola.

"We have experiences of being close to it [nuclear war]," he said. "Now I believe the threat of war has greatly increased. They [the US] is playing with fire."

News that Castro would appear on TV garnered emotional responses from Havana residents. "We are so, so excited to see him. It is unbelievable," sugar ministry worker Paula Alonso told Reuters TV. "Especially for people from the same generation, we want to see our president."

Castro's reappearance comes after last week's decision by the regime to release 52 political prisoners over the next few months, following negotiations with the Vatican and Spain. They were jailed in 2003 during a crackdown on dissidence when he was still in power. The first group of freed prisoners was expected to arrive in Madrid today.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jul/13/fidel-castro-on-cuban-tv-middle-east-iran-us>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Global Security Newswire

U.S. Details Planned Nuclear Stockpile Cut, Funding Priorities

Tuesday, July 13, 2010

The United States foresees eliminating between 30 and 40 percent of its nuclear weapons within 12 years, slashing its existing stockpile of more than 5,100 weapons down to fewer than 3,500 bombs, the Federation of American Scientists concluded yesterday in an analysis of the nation's stockpile management plan (see **GSN**, May 4; Hans Kristensen, Federation of American Scientists, July 12).

"The 3,000 to 3,500 total warhead target is a ceiling," Hans Kristensen, heads of the federation's Nuclear Information Project, said in a statement. "Of course, the United States could reduce its arsenal to even lower levels through negotiated agreements with Russia and the other nuclear-weapon states."

Lisbeth Gronlund, co-head of the Global Security Program at the Union of Concerned Scientists, lauded the planned stockpile reduction. "Nuclear weapons are now a liability, not an asset, so the plan to reduce the U.S. nuclear stockpile is a step in the right direction," Gronlund said (Union of Concerned Scientists release, July 13).

The nation is expected to allocate more than \$175 billion over 20 years to modernize its nuclear arsenal and weapons complex, according to the National Nuclear Security Administration's Stockpile Stewardship and Management Plan for fiscal 2011 (see **GSN**, Feb. 19). The updated complex would be capable of maintaining no more than the "3,000 to 3,500 active, logistic spare, and reserve warheads" that would remain under the plan (Kristensen, Federation of American Scientists).

"Weapons expenditures will remain high because the plan calls for retaining a large weapons complex independent of the size of the arsenal," Nickolas Roth, an expert with the UCS Global Security Program, said in a press release. "This could be a problem for deeper reductions that are needed since it would be possible for the United States to rapidly rebuild" (Union of Concerned Scientists release).

Annual expenses for refurbishing and prolonging the service life of the B-61 gravity bomb, W-78 ICBM warhead and W-76 submarine-launched strategic missile warhead are expected to reach \$1.05 billion, their highest point, in 2017. The total cost from 2010 to 2025 would be roughly \$10 billion. Refurbishing the arsenal's other active weapons is expected to cost \$1 billion each year between 2021 and 2030.

In addition, the U.S. Defense Department is expected to dedicate more than \$100 billion over the next two decades on development of new delivery systems for the warheads, including next-generation ballistic-missile submarines, long-range bombers and tactical fighter-bombers. The Pentagon also appeared likely to pursue a new cruise missile.

One NNSA document asserts that maintaining significantly fewer nuclear weapons "would not lead to a smaller, less costly infrastructure" for their upkeep. "The costs to maintain capabilities necessary to support the stockpile are essentially independent of the size of the stockpile," the document states.

The assertion would require ongoing assessment to determine its validity, Kristensen said (Kristensen, Federation of American Scientists).

"That calculation makes no sense," the analyst said in released remarks. "It's akin to saying that today's stockpile of about 5,000 weapons requires a complex of nearly the same size and cost as when the stockpile had 8,000 warheads. Given the size of the federal deficit, the Obama administration needs to think more clearly about how it spends taxpayers' money" (Union of Concerned Scientists release).

The United States in recent years began manufacturing additional W-88 warheads to stand in for weapons destroyed in reliability examinations, the analysis notes. As the nation rebuilds the nuclear weapons complex, it is expected to become capable of producing as many as 80 W-88 warheads annually, up from today's annual limit of 20 of the weapons.

The nuclear agency refers to the W-78 refurbishment as "the next re-entry system," and suggests that "the development cycle of future weapons" would be "compressed" through updates to the nuclear weapons complex.

The document recommends maintaining "current weapon alterations and modifications" with the addition of "alterations/modifications to the enduring stockpile (or future strategic systems)." The addition would incorporate updated schematics to "enable vastly improved capabilities for next system arming, fusing, and firing (AF&F) and/or radar componentry," the plan states.

The document also calls for safety and security updates to U.S. nuclear weapons, including upgraded power controls, security sensors and "advanced internal/external use-denial technologies," according to the analysis. The NNSA plan calls for warheads refurbished after this year to receive detonator safety features, optical firing sets and stronglink concepts.

The United States has sought to boost warhead safety and security in the wake of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

"It is not clear why the requirement for new surety features has increased, much less how much is needed," according to Kristensen. "The same weapons were deployed before 2001 without any problems, but NNSA states that the new surety features are being pursued 'independent of any threat scenario.'"

"Most people obviously see nuclear weapons safety and security as important, but the addition of new features will gradually bring modified life-extended warheads further from their tested design," he stated. "Since this could lead to demands for warhead replacements or even testing in the future, and given 'the high cost and long time frame associated with integrating, qualifying, and certifying deeply buried subsystems through the LEP process,' a cost-benefit assessment is needed to create a benchmark for how much surety is enough" (Hans Kristensen, Federation of American Scientists).

http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20100713_3293.php

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Philadelphia Inquirer

OPINION

Sunday, July 11, 2010

Worldview: Keeping All The Options Open On A Nuclear Iran

By Trudy Rubin, Inquirer Opinion Columnist

Which is more threatening to U.S. security interests: the prospect of an Iran with nuclear weapons or the fallout from a U.S. (or Israeli) strike against Iran's nuclear sites?

President Obama hopes he won't have to make this choice. The administration is congratulating itself on having gotten Russia and China to vote last month for new U.N. sanctions on Iran. Congress followed up last week with even harsher unilateral economic sanctions. The hope is that these economic strictures will squeeze Tehran into freezing its nuclear program and resuming negotiations over the program's future.

Yet, at a fascinating conference on Iran run by the U.S. Army Central Command and the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution, I heard deep skepticism from experts on Iran that sanctions would force Tehran to change its behavior - at least within the time it might take them to produce a nuclear weapon. CIA director Leon Panetta puts that window at two years.

We can always hope for the best, and the Mideast is unpredictable. Yet I worry the administration may be boxing itself in to choosing between two very bad options: letting the ayatollahs get nukes or plunging into a third Middle East war.

The Obama team's language on Iran's nuclear program has gotten markedly tougher in recent months, obviously aimed at persuading Tehran to take U.S. warnings seriously. The words "all options are on the table" are repeated frequently. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton told a pro-Israel audience in March: "The United States is determined to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons."

And lest Tehran think we might settle for containment, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates stated bluntly last month that the United States was not "prepared to even talk about containing a nuclear Iran."

Having spoken so clearly, the administration will be in a bind if Tehran refuses to back down in the coming year. An impatient Israel might feel compelled to launch its own military attack if the United States hesitates. I was fascinated that Obama told an Israeli television reporter last week - during the visit of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu - that the "relationship between Israel and the U.S. is sufficiently strong that neither of us try to surprise each other."

Can he be sure?

What's clear: If Iran holds tight, the president will have to reassess his Iran options in 2011. Several insights from the Iran conference speak to the daunting choices he will face.

First, despite Iranian rhetoric, these experts don't think Iran's regime has any intention of attacking Western countries - or Israel - with nuclear weapons, and bringing on a Shiite version of Armageddon. They believe Iran wants nuclear capability so it can pursue regional hegemony without fear of being attacked. (I've heard the same analysis in previous interviews with U.S. and Israeli officials.)

Yes, an empowered Iran - whose leadership has a dangerously overinflated sense of its potential reach - would be a threat. Iran gives (conventional) arms to Hezbollah and Hamas, which oppose Israel's existence. And if Iran achieved nuclear capacity, the conferees feared (exaggeratedly, I believe) that Sunni Arab states might try to develop their own nuclear programs. But how does one measure those threats against the incalculable risks of attacking Tehran?

Given the dispersed nature of the Iranian nuclear program, there's no guarantee that an attack would destroy it. Moreover, a war in the gulf could create a catastrophic economic crisis for a world just recovering from deep recession.

The U.S. military says it believes Iran's Revolutionary Guard navy could not stop shipping in the gulf - including vital oil tankers - but could seriously impede it. Iran can mine the waters, block them with sunken ships, and fire cruise missiles from mobile launchers along its long shore. Such asymmetrical attacks are difficult to counter. Insurance costs and oil prices would soar.

Meanwhile, Iran's proxies, Hezbollah and Hamas, would be rocketing Israel. And for those hoping a strike will cause the mullahcracy to fall, most Iran experts predict that, to the contrary, it will harden the regime.

So it isn't so easy to conclude that one of these options trumps the other. Both are bad (which is why neither Obama nor Israel has yet made a choice). But a military strike could provoke a chain of unintended consequences even more disastrous than those that followed the Iraq war.

Some suggested at the conference that there might be a third option:

Let Iran retain a small enrichment program, under more intense international inspections, while forbidding the building of more centrifuges or the enrichment of uranium to a high level. The administration hasn't ruled this out, although it's unclear whether Iran is interested.

Before engaging in another Mideast war, a fourth option - containment - should also be considered squarely, despite its dangers.

While hoping sanctions will bite, the Obama team must consider multiple options, in case Iran stonewalls. Otherwise, I fear we're heading down a path that could be disastrous for us and the entire Middle East.

http://www.philly.com/inquirer/currents/20100711_Worldview_Keeping_all_the_options_open_on_a_nuclear_Iran.html

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Los Angeles Times

OPINION

The New START Treaty Deserves To Be Ratified

Obama's critics are wrong; the arms control treaty enhances our security.

By Jacob Heilbrunn

July 12, 2010

Here we go again.

President Obama signed a nuclear arms control agreement — the New START treaty — with Russian counterpart Dmitry Medvedev in Prague in April to much fanfare. Senate hearings on the treaty are taking place. But in a reprise of Cold War debates, hard-liners are seeking to block Senate ratification of the treaty, where it needs a two-thirds majority, by depicting the deal as a dangerous sellout to Moscow. The treaty deserves careful scrutiny, but it is in danger of becoming the victim of a hazing campaign.

The Heritage Foundation announces on its website that it "has been leading the charge against New START treaty, as we do with all threats to American sovereignty and independence. And our message is getting through to our target audience in Congress." Indeed it is. Senate Minority Whip Jon Kyl (R-Ariz.) is citing the foundation's studies. Other Republican senators expressing doubts include Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, James M. Inhofe of Oklahoma and Jim DeMint of South Carolina. The most inflammatory attack, however, has come from former presidential candidate Mitt Romney. In an op-ed in the Washington Post, he claimed the treaty represented Obama's "worst foreign policy mistake yet."

It's not a mistake. The treaty would not eviscerate American national security. It would enhance it, which is why it enjoys the bipartisan support of the Foreign Relations Committee leaders, Sens. John F. Kerry of Massachusetts and Richard G. Lugar of Indiana. It's also why GOP foreign policy eminences such as Henry Kissinger, George P. Shultz and Richard Burt endorse the treaty.

By capping each side's deployed warheads at 1,550, the New START treaty would cut Russia's and America's arsenals by about 30%. It would also restore verification procedures that lapsed with the expiration of the START I treaty. Each Russian missile would be given a unique serial number, and onsite inspections would take place. Tracking nuclear weapons and materials safeguards U.S. security. And the more concerned conservatives are about Russian intentions, the more they should welcome the verification procedures contained in the New START treaty.

But its opponents are not about to let facts stand in their way. They never have. As J. Peter Scoblic shows in his valuable book, "U.S. Versus Them," the right has a long, misguided history of fulminating against nuclear arms control. Richard Nixon and Kissinger were labeled as appeasers for the 1972 strategic arms limitation talks with Moscow. Jimmy Carter was attacked for his efforts to reduce nuclear weapons. Ronald Reagan, who entered office denouncing arms control efforts but ended up signing sweeping agreements, was accused by his more overheated followers of being a "useful idiot" and committing "nuclear suicide." Instead, Reagan's readiness to reach out to Mikhail Gorbachev helped bring about the dissolution of the Soviet empire.

Obama's critics are intent on portraying him as bent on nuclear suicide as well. To derail the New START treaty, they are advancing a welter of objections, many related to missile defense. Never mind that after decades of research, there is no such system in sight, or that Lt. Gen. Patrick J. O'Reilly, head of the Missile Defense Agency, has testified that he sees no constraints on missile defense in the treaty.

In its preamble, the treaty states that offensive and defensive weapons are related — a truism akin to acknowledging that water is wet. Treaty foes, however, combine this statement with the fact that the treaty is designed to control offensive weapons and charge that the preamble wording potentially disallows the construction of a missile defense system. A related criticism holds that the treaty would give Moscow a unilateral veto over missile defense by allowing it to exit the agreement if it chose to — but that right applies to both sides and is a customary part of any treaty.

The opponents also point to the fact that Russia will continue to possess tactical — limited flying range — nuclear weapons that threaten Europe. Repeating the Heritage Foundation's talking points almost verbatim, Romney declared that Obama, in pushing for the treaty, "fails to mention that Russia will retain more than 10,000 nuclear warheads that are categorized as tactical because they are mounted on missiles that cannot reach the United States." But if there is no agreement on long-range strategic nuclear weapons, why would Russia even consider entering separate treaty negotiations on the much more difficult issue of reducing tactical nuclear weapons?

And so it goes with other objections relating to bombers, multiple warheads and other details, where these opponents contort the text and the weapons totals in order to reach the most alarming conclusions. Just about the only thing the critics aren't accusing Obama of is handing over his nuclear briefcase to the Kremlin.

What's at the bottom of conservative objections has far less to do with the New START treaty's provisions than its spirit. Writing in the Wall Street Journal on Thursday, Kyl made it clear he finds the idea of a nuclear-free world abhorrent. He warns that Obama will not spend enough to modernize America's nuclear force.

Kyl and his brethren are living in the past. Russia is no longer an implacable Cold War foe, although treating it as one could reverse that. In furthering arms reductions, Obama is wisely improving relations with Russia and helping to fulfill Reagan's vision of a nuclear-free world, a goal shared by Kissinger and Shultz who advocate a move toward "global zero." Instead of dithering over the New START treaty, the Senate should approve it this fall.

Jacob Heilbrunn is a senior editor at the National Interest.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/commentary/la-oe-heilbrunn-start-20100712.0.224364.story>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

National Public Radio (NPR)

OPINION

National Review: Romney Had It Right At The START

By The Editors

July 12, 2010

Mitt Romney caused a furor last week when he wrote a *Washington Post* op-ed opposing the New START treaty. Democrats and liberal commentators rushed to accuse Romney of bad-faith politics, of ignorance, and of a dangerous extremism. He'll never get into the Council on Foreign Relations now.

The squealing is a sign that Romney hit his target: New START is a bad deal for the United States, and the Senate should send the administration back to the negotiating table.

Romney pointed out that the linkage in the preamble of the treaty between strategic offensive weapons and missile defenses could limit our defenses. His critics scoff, *It's just a meaningless preamble*. They should tell that to the Russians. The Russians believe that if we increase our strategic defenses, we are in violation of the treaty and that they will be justified in withdrawing from it. Foreign minister Sergei Lavrov said, "Linkage to missile defense is clearly spelled out in the accord and is legally binding." Members of the Duma have said the same thing.

The Obama administration and the Russians have vastly different interpretations of what the treaty does on this score, or at least that's what the Obama team says now. There's every reason to believe that once the treaty is ratified by the Senate, the administration will implicitly accede to the Russian view and will, in fact, have traded away our ability to develop missile defenses for this pitiful piece of parchment. (President Obama's recess appointment of fierce missile-defense critic Philip Coyle to a slot at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy is another sign of just how little use he has for missile defense.)

The body of the treaty, by the way, explicitly crimps missile defense. It contains a prohibition on the conversion of ICBM silos for missile interceptors and also rules out using submarine launchers for this purpose. The treaty's defenders say this doesn't matter, because there are no current plans to put more ICBM silos or submarine launchers to this use. Of course, this may be something we'd want to do in the future, and, in fact, a director of the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative Organization and senior Navy officers expressed interest in such plans in the past.

Romney noted that the Bilateral Consultative Commission (BCC) under the treaty has broad powers to make changes to it in secret. His critics look skyward in exasperation, *Doesn't he realize prior treaties had such commissions?* Yes, START I had a similar commission. And it did indeed make material changes to the treaty without Senate consent. The BCC has even more discretion. It could make important changes without the Senate having any say whatsoever.

Romney argues that the Russians get a better deal on the treaty's force limits than we do. *Can't Romney read?* his critics wonder: The same limit on deployed launchers (700) and warheads (1,550) applies to each side. But these limits have different consequences for each side. The Russians already have fewer than 700 launchers, and the number is inevitably going lower — probably as far down as the low hundreds, according to congressional testimony of arms-control expert Keith Payne of Missouri State University. We have about 850 launchers, so, as a practical matter, this limit affects only us.

Oh, Romney's critics reply, *but the Russians have more warheads, so that limit bites more against them*. This, too, is wrong-headed. When a country's deployed launchers go down, its deployed warheads go down as well. So the number of Russian warheads was inevitably going to decline. But one way for the Russians to check this trend is through MIRVing — putting multiple warheads on one launcher. As it happens, New START encourages MIRVing by removing the limits on it established by the old START treaty.

Similarly, as Romney wrote, the new treaty counts a bomber as one weapon no matter how many warheads are loaded onto it. The Russians, unlike us, have decided to start a new heavy-bomber program — once again, the treaty is laxest in just the area most convenient to the Russians. Notably, the Russian press has been reporting that Moscow will game the treaty to retain 2,100 deployed strategic nuclear weapons.

This gets to the crux of the matter: The treaty imposes a mutually agreed upon ceiling (in theory) on both sides, but it forces new reductions only from us. For those in thrall to arms-control theology, this is the product of brilliant negotiation. For anyone who can truly calculate our interests, it's a travesty. All honor to Mitt Romney for setting out the case against the treaty so cogently. We hope Senate Republicans are listening.

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[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

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OPINION

Comment: Cost Of Attacking Iran Underplayed

By Roula Khalaf

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Yousef al-Otaiba, the United Arab Emirates' ambassador to Washington, had a "McChrystal" moment last week.

No doubt the diplomat was feeling relaxed in his surroundings at the Aspen ideas festival. And so he spoke freely – a bit too freely – just like the US general who lost his job last month over his and his aides' scathing comments about the Obama administration in Rolling Stone magazine.

That the UAE ambassador endorses military strikes against Iran is likely to have come as no surprise to the US; American officials have surely heard similar, if less melodramatic, comments in private before. Nor is the Iranian regime likely to have been shocked since it ascribes the worst intentions to its Arab neighbours.

Mr al-Otaiba's comments, however, are likely to be news to some Emiratis, accustomed as they are to public opposition to military action. But Emiratis may not necessarily have heard about the remarks since they were covered locally as a denial, in most cases without mentioning what the young diplomat said in the first place.

The silence in the UAE media, and across the regional press, speaks volumes about the sensitivity of Gulf Arab relations with Iran.

By asserting that the dangers of military strikes are preferable to the perils of nuclear arms in Tehran ("I am willing to absorb what takes place at the expense of the security of the UAE," said Mr al-Otaiba), the senior UAE official may have been exaggerating. By underlining that a nuclear-armed Iran is intolerable to the UAE, however, he was not.

In one of his most colourful (and alarmed) comments, he asserted that the UAE military should "wake up, dream, breathe, eat and sleep the Iranian threat".

The UAE's frustrations are understandable: the hope of engagement with Iran has faded; and economic sanctions are unlikely to convince Tehran to halt its nuclear programme. It seems plausible, therefore, that the US will, eventually, settle on a policy of containment of a nuclear-armed Iran.

For the UAE, which lies just across the Gulf from Iran, this is a terrifying option. Clear threats of retaliation may prevent Iran from using a nuclear weapon – but not from throwing its weight round the region. Even without a nuclear weapon, Tehran feels emboldened enough to flex its muscle in the Middle East, and frustrate many of its neighbours.

As uncomfortable as containment is, however, military strikes cannot be a preferable option. The US in fact wants to avoid an intervention at all costs. It has been telling its allies – not least Israel which could take the offensive against Iran – that Tehran is still years away from nuclear capability so there remains plenty of time for a diplomatic solution.

Mr al-Otaiba framed the debate as a cost-benefit analysis, assuming that war is the least bad option given the menace of Iranian nuclear weapons. But this analysis underestimates the costs and overplays the benefits.

Attacking nuclear facilities is likely, at best, to delay Iran's programme. No one knows if the Islamic Republic has a parallel programme, in addition to the known nuclear sites. Military strikes, moreover, could convince Tehran, more than ever, that it needs atomic weapons for its protection. That was the conclusion of the Saddam Hussein regime after Israel destroyed the Osirak nuclear plant in 1981.

The costs, meanwhile, are not to be counted in terms of public outrage and rioting, as Mr al-Otaiba suggested.

It is not clear how Iran would react to an attack but it certainly has the capability to retaliate. I have heard some Iranian hardliners say that the UAE and other Gulf states that co-operated with the US would be among the first targets of Iranian missiles. The economic costs could also be devastating if Iran were to disrupt oil shipments through the straits of Hormuz.

It is tempting to teach Iran a lesson. But there is a day after – and the risks of damage across the Gulf cannot be taken lightly.

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/f076ccd8-8dca-11df-9153-00144feab49a.html>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)