



USAF COUNTERPROLIFERATION CENTER

CPC OUTREACH JOURNAL

Maxwell AFB, Alabama

Issue No. 838, 27 August 2010

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Economic Times – India

US, India, Others Asked To Ratify Nuclear Test Ban Treaty

26 August 2010

By Agence France-Presse (AFP)

VIENNA: A UN-backed monitoring group on Thursday asked nine countries, including India to ratify a worldwide ban on atomic test blasts ahead of the International Day against Nuclear Tests this weekend.

"Now is the time for the nine states whose ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) will bring it into force to show the political will and fully endorse it," said the head of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO), Tibor Toth.

The CTBT, which bans nuclear blasts for military or civilian purposes, was drawn up in 1996 and has so far been signed by a total 182 countries and ratified by 153.

But nine key states, namely China, North Korea, Egypt, India, Indonesia Iran, Israel, Pakistan and the United States, still need to ratify it before it can come into force.

Washington signed the treaty in 1996, but has yet to ratify it. US President Barack Obama has said that Washington is committed to doing so. But it seems likely to wait until after the new START or Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty has first been cleared by the US Senate.

Last year, the UN General Assembly declared August 29 as the International Day against Nuclear Tests. The date was chosen because August 29, 1949, was when the then Soviet Union followed the US and detonated its first nuclear device, effectively starting the nuclear arms race.

The site of the first Russian test was at Semipalatinsk in Kazakhstan and a total of 450 bombs were tested there until 1991, when Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev ordered the closure of the site, also symbolically on August 29.

"The declaration of 29 August as the International Day against Nuclear Tests is an acknowledgement of the need to halt nuclear testing once and for all," CTBTO chief Toth said.

"The will to pursue a nuclear-weapon-free world is not in short measure but we need to observe August 29 as a time to act and not to wait," he said.

"The hands of states seeking to develop nuclear weapons and the hands of those that already have them will be tied without their ability to test," the CTBTO chief argued.

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/6440156.cms>

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Tehran Times – Iran

Wednesday, August 25, 2010

Bushehr Nuclear Plant Protected Against Possible Attacks: General

Tehran Times Political Desk

TEHRAN – Brigadier General Mohammad-Hassan Mansourian has said all precautionary measures have been taken to repel possible military attacks on the Bushehr nuclear plant.

The number of air defense batteries installed at the nuclear plant has been increased, Mansourian told ISNA on Tuesday.

Precautionary measures have been adopted to counter any "possible dangers" until the plant becomes fully operational, the commander noted.

He went on to say that the anti-air defense systems that have been transferred to the Bushehr nuclear site are quite efficient and are used in the form of "rapid reaction units".

Mansourian also said Iran has the know-how to produce highly efficient radar systems that are capable of detecting very small objects in the sky.

The defense industry organization has attained self-sufficiency in producing land-based radar systems, he added.

Commenting on Moscow's failure to honor its commitment to deliver the S300 missile air defense system to Iran, the general said, ""We purchased the system for our operational needs, but they haven't delivered it to us.""

Local industries are trying to replace the S300 system with similar home-made missiles to meet domestic air defense requirements, he explained

http://www.tehrantimes.com/Index_view.asp?code=225562

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Washington Post

Iran Searching For New Domestic Uranium Deposits

By ALI AKBAR DAREINI, The Associated Press

Wednesday, August 25, 2010

TEHRAN, Iran -- Iran said Wednesday it is making the search for new uranium deposits in the country a top priority now that it has started up its first in a planned network of nuclear power plants.

The head of Iran's atomic energy agency did not explain why Iran was intensifying the exploration at home. Tehran has in the past denied its uranium stockpile was running low, as some international nuclear experts have concluded.

U.N. Security Council sanctions bar countries from selling uranium to Iran in response to its refusal to stop uranium enrichment, a process that can be used to produce fuel for power plants or material for bombs.

"The most important priority, after the Bushehr nuclear power plant, is the exploration and discovery of uranium throughout the country," the official IRNA news agency quoted nuclear chief Ali Akbar Salehi as saying.

The United States and other nations have tried to persuade Iran to stop enriching uranium out of concern Tehran is seeking a pathway to weapons production under the cover of its civil nuclear power program. Iran denies such an aim and says it only wants to enrich uranium to fuel a future network of power plants.

With Russian help, Iran began loading uranium fuel into its first nuclear power plant in the southern city of Bushehr on Saturday after years of delays.

Salehi, who is also Iran's vice president, said only one-third of the country has been explored for uranium deposits. He said the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran will carry out exploration work anywhere it detects a uranium vein.

"With the assistance of President (Mahmoud Ahmadinejad) and the allocation of a budget, we hope to survey the whole country as far as uranium exploration is concerned," Salehi was quoted by IRNA as saying. He didn't elaborate but said the study and exploration activities throughout Iran may take eight years.

"Anywhere there is a vein of uranium, we will enter into exploration work," the Iranian government website quoted Salehi as saying.

International experts have said Iran's stockpile of uranium oxide - used to make the gas that is spun through centrifuges in the enrichment process - appears to be rapidly diminishing.

Tehran still has hundreds of tons of the uranium hexafluoride gas used in the enrichment process.

The U.N.'s International Atomic Energy Agency believes Iran's rapidly expanding enrichment program has been built on 600 tons of uranium oxide imported from South Africa during the 1970s as part of plans by the U.S.-backed shah to build a civil nuclear power program.

The Washington-based Institute for Science and International Security said last year that, based on 2008 IAEA statistics, Iran had already used up close to three-quarters of its South African supply.

Iran's own principal source of uranium is the Saghand mine in the center of the country, which has the capacity to produce 132,000 tons (120,000 metric tons) of ore per year. Located about 300 miles (480 kilometers) south of Tehran, the mine consists of an open pit with minimal reserves and a deep mine. It has a total estimated uranium ore reserve of 1.73 million tons (1.58 million metric tons).

It also has smaller uranium deposits near the southern port city of Bandar Abbas where a mill is reportedly converting raw uranium into uranium ore concentrate known as yellowcake.

Iran announced discoveries of new uranium deposits in 2006 at three sites in the central Khoshoomi, Charchooleh and Narigan areas.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/08/25/AR2010082502387.html>

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Press TV – Iran

Iran Minister: Former Nuclear Official Spy

Wednesday, August 25, 2010

Iran's intelligence minister says although Hossein Mousavian, a former nuclear official, has been cleared of espionage charges by the judiciary, he is still considered a spy by the ministry.

"Based on the evidence we have, this individual (Mousavian) is a spy," Intelligence Minister Heidar Moslehi told reporters on Wednesday, ISNA reported.

Hossein Mousavian was a senior member of Iran's nuclear negotiation team until 2005 and served as the Head of the Foreign Policy Committee of the Supreme National Security Council under former President Mohammad Khatami.

He was arrested in 2007 over the charges of spying and possession of classified documents.

Moslehi's remarks came after Mousavian's lawyer claimed that his client had been cleared of all espionage charges.

"The fact that there could be shortcomings in the judiciary system or deficiencies in the law does not mean that this individual is not a spy," Moslehi said.

Moslehi went on to add that the Intelligence Ministry had submitted all relevant documents to judiciary officials.

In November 2007, Iran's judiciary ruled that Mousavian was not guilty of the spying charges and illegal possession of classified documents.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/140046.html>

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Miami Herald
August 26, 2010

Iran Proposes To Produce Nuclear Fuel With Russia

By NASSER KARIMI, Associated Press Writer

TEHRAN, Iran -- Iran has submitted a proposal to Russia to jointly assemble the nuclear fuel for the country's new power reactor and any future facilities, state media reported Thursday.

The move appeared to be an attempt by Tehran to gain some control over the nuclear fuel process at its Russian-built Bushehr nuclear plant. With Moscow's help, Iran began loading uranium fuel into the facility on Saturday.

The United States and allies lifted their opposition to the Bushehr plant after Russia pledged to handle all the nuclear fuel to make sure no material is shifted to a possible Iranian weapons program in the future. The latest proposal by Iran to have even a sideline role in the nuclear fuel process could stir backlash in the West.

"We have made a proposal to Russia to create a consortium under Russian license to do part of the work in Russia and part in Iran," the head of Iran's atomic energy agency, Ali Akbar Salehi, was quoted as saying by state-run Press TV. "We should show the world our capability in uranium production and its conversion into nuclear fuel."

Salehi, who is also Iran's vice president, said Moscow is "studying the proposal."

An official at the Russian nuclear agency said the two countries have discussed the possibility of creating a facility to assemble the fuel rods for Bushehr. The facility would operate under Russian license on Iranian territory.

But the official said the uranium enrichment would be performed on Russian soil. Speaking on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue, the official added that Russia first will focus on commissioning the Bushehr plant, and then turn its attention to Iran's new proposal.

Russia is currently supplying all the uranium fuel for Bushehr. That fuel is enriched to 3.5 percent, well below the 90 percent enrichment needed for a nuclear warhead.

Bushehr is not considered a proliferation risk because the Iranians have agreed to allow Moscow to retrieve all the used reactor fuel for reprocessing. Spent fuel contains plutonium, which can be used to make atomic weapons.

Salehi also said that Iran has produced 55 pounds (25 kilograms) of uranium enriched to 20 percent since February. Iranian officials say the uranium enriched to 20 percent is needed to fuel a medical research reactor.

Iran's refusal to stop enriching uranium lies at the heart of its dispute with the West over Tehran's nuclear program. Iran says it needs to enrich uranium to make fuel for an envisaged reactor network, but highly enriched uranium can be used to create fissile material nuclear warheads.

The United States and other nations fear Iran aims to produce nuclear weapons under the cover of its civil nuclear power program. Iran denies the charge, and says its program is peaceful.

The U.N. Security Council imposed a fourth round of sanctions on Iran in June over Tehran's refusal to stop enriching uranium.

Associated Press writer Lena Yegorova in Moscow contributed to this report.

<http://www.miamiherald.com/2010/08/26/1793155/iran-proposes-to-produce-nuclear.html>

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The Economist – U.K.

Iran's Nuclear Programme: Game Resumed

Iran pockets Bushehr and plays on

August 26th, 2010

IT WAS meant as a marker for the world's readiness to accept Iran's right to benefit from the peaceful uses of nuclear power, despite its provocative behaviour. By this reasoning, the fuelling this week by Russia of the Bushehr nuclear reactor, Iran's first power-generating nuclear plant that is due to start supplying electricity to the national grid by year's end, could help persuade the regime to return to the negotiating table over United Nations demands that it suspend more troubling nuclear work.

For Iran, however, Bushehr symbolises something altogether different: the fruits of defiance. It comes alongside recent reports that Iran has acquired a clutch of advanced air-defence missiles on the black market, developed its own new attack drone and supplied advanced radar to Syria, a neighbour of Israel, a country that Iran's fiery president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, has talked of being wiped off the map. Such an attitude augurs ill for new talks about talks that Iran hints might resume in September with the six countries (America, Russia, Britain, France, Germany and China) that have been trying to negotiate it round.

Bushehr was built by Russia, after a German firm, Siemens, abandoned the project years ago. For the next ten years, its uranium fuel (enriched to under 5%) will come from Russia too and the spent fuel will go back there.

But for Iran, Bushehr is a source of great national pride: the culmination of 36 years' determination to get the reactor completed, come what may. And rather than suspend its own suspect uranium-enrichment efforts (the stuff can be used for power generation or, with further enrichment, abused for bomb-making), Iran insists it will press ahead at all speed, even though it has no nuclear reactors that need the stuff. Work on a third enrichment plant, in addition to one already up and running at Natanz and another recently discovered nearing completion on a military compound near the city of Qom, will get under way within months, says the country's atomic chief, with more to follow.

Iran insists that its nuclear programme is peaceful. But it has dodged proper talks with the six for two years now. It also refuses to answer questions from inspectors at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the UN's nuclear guardian, about documents, experiments, development work and tell-tale imports that make sense only as part of a weapons-building effort.

A fourth round of UN sanctions was slapped on Iran in June, provoking the usual raspberry from its officials. They may be more irked by supplementary measures from America and its allies in Europe and Asia aimed at deterring foreign banks, insurance companies and energy firms from dealing with Iran. The hope is that, as the cost of Iran's nuclear defiance goes up, the regime may start to rethink the benefits of its confrontational approach. The six have been chewing their pencils of late, trying to think of confidence-building steps that Iran—and they—might take if the latest sanctions do help nudge it into more meaningful talks.

Iran, for its part, insists its uranium work is non-negotiable, now or ever. Rather than sit down with the six, it may be hoping to revive talks about a separate proposal for Russia, France, America and the IAEA to help it find replacement 20%-enriched fuel for a research reactor in Tehran that supplies medical isotopes. In fact the reactor has not been operating at full capacity and its refuelling may not be that urgent. In any event, Iran could buy medical isotopes it needs from private suppliers, as most other countries do.

Nonetheless, its demand that it be allowed to buy in the fuel, rather than the isotopes, offered another chance for outsiders to show they are not trying to halt genuinely peaceful nuclear activity in Iran. A proposal engineered by America last October would have removed much of Iran's stockpile of low-enriched uranium for Russia to enrich up to 20% and for France to fabricate into fuel rods for the reactor. Taking the stuff out of the country for a year or so while the fuel was prepared would have bought time for talks. It could also, America hoped, create a precedent for similar overseas processing of Iran's uranium in future. If its domestic stockpile could in this way be kept below a bomb's worth, this would also ease pressure in Israel for a military strike on Iran's nuclear facilities and so buy yet more time for talks.

In the end, Iran backed out of the deal and provocatively started enriching to 20% itself (a big step further towards the high-enriched stuff need for a bomb). Ham-fisted attempts by Brazil and Turkey to revive the deal would have provided Iran with 20%-enriched uranium but brought none of the other benefits.

But the toing and froing over reactor fuel helps distract attention from Iran's refusal to come clean about its nuclear past. As over Bushehr, Iran plays a long game.

http://www.economist.com/node/16889507?story_id=16889507

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Khaleej Times – U.A.E.

Iran Has Material For 1-2 Atom Bombs: Ex-IAEA Aide

By Reuters

26 August 2010

PARIS - Iran has stockpiled enough low-enriched uranium for 1-2 nuclear arms but it would not make sense for it to cross the bomb-making threshold with only this amount, a former top U.N. nuclear official was quoted as saying.

In unusual public remarks about Iran's disputed nuclear programme Olli Heinonen, the former chief of U.N. nuclear inspections worldwide, told *Le Monde* newspaper that Iran's uranium reserve still represented a "threat."

Until he stepped down earlier this month for personal reasons, Heinonen was deputy director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency and head of its nuclear safeguards department, which verifies that countries' nuclear programmes are not being diverted for military use.

A no-nonsense Finn, he was one of the U.N. agency's leading experts on Iran, which denies Western suspicions that its nuclear programme is aimed at making bombs despite intelligence indications to the contrary, which he investigated for years.

In the interview published on Thursday, Heinonen said the Islamic Republic now possessed three tonnes of low-enriched uranium, material which can be used to fuel nuclear power plants, or form the core of a bomb if refined much further.

"In theory, it is enough to make one or two nuclear arms. But to reach the final step, when one only has just enough material for two weapons, does not make sense," Heinonen said in the interview carried out just before he left office.

In comments translated from English to French, he suggested this was not sufficient to constitute a serious bargaining chip in any negotiations with the United States, the Islamic Republic's old adversary.

"But this constitutes a ... threat," he said, apparently referring to Iran's LEU stockpile.

Heinonen said the United States estimated that Iran would need a year to convert its low-enriched uranium to higher-grade material, adding that this was a not a "bad estimate."

Top Pentagon officials told the U.S. Congress in April that Iran could produce enough highly enriched uranium for a single nuclear weapon in as little as a year — but would probably need three to five years to assemble, test and deploy it.

World powers hope that new U.N., U.S. and European sanctions imposed on Iran since June will persuade it to enter negotiations on its nuclear programme which the West hopes will lead to a suspension of all uranium enrichment activity.

Iran, which says its nuclear work is aimed at generating electricity so that it can export more of its gas and oil, has repeatedly ruled out halting enrichment, while keeping the door open for talks.

Heinonen is probably best known for giving a closed-door presentation to diplomats on Iran in 2008 which indicated links between projects to process uranium, test explosives and modify a missile cone in a way suitable for a nuclear warhead.

His department's five-year investigation based on Western intelligence funnelled to the agency helped harden IAEA concerns that Iran might have worked to develop a nuclear-armed missile and was still doing so.

Tehran says the intelligence is forged and that its atomic work is solely for peaceful purposes.

http://www.khaleejtimes.com/displayarticle.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2010/August/middleeast_August533.xml§ion=middleeast&col=

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Yonhap News – South Korea
August 25, 2010

Carter In N. Korea To Free Imprisoned American Amid Brewing Nuclear Diplomacy

By Sam Kim

SEOUL, Aug. 25 (Yonhap) -- Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter arrived Wednesday in North Korea, official media reports said, as he sought to secure the release of an American imprisoned there amid brewing signs of diplomacy aimed at reviving nuclear talks involving Pyongyang.

"Jimmy Carter, ex-president of the U.S., and his party arrived here Wednesday," the North's Korean Central News Agency said in a brief dispatch seen here, adding Pyongyang's top nuclear envoy, Kim Kye-gwan, received him at the airport.

A child handed the 85-year-old a flower bouquet after Carter arrived on a chartered plane, the North's Korean Central Television Station said in a separate report. China's official Xinhua news agency said Carter "declined to speak to the press at the airport."

Carter's arrival marks his first known trip to North Korea in 16 years. In 1994, he met with then North Korean leader Kim Il-sung and helped defuse soaring tensions on the Korean Peninsula and set the mood for a breakthrough in nuclear talks.

U.S. officials have refused to describe Carter's trip as anything more than private and humanitarian. A team of U.S. officials traveled to North Korea earlier this month in a failed attempt to bring home Aijalon Mahli Gomes, a 30-year-old American citizen who was sentenced to eight years of hard labor and fined an equivalent of US\$700,000 in May for illegal entry.

Last month, Gomes attempted suicide out of frustration that his country was not doing enough to save him, according to the North's official media. Pyongyang reportedly promised to set Gomes free if Carter visited the communist country.

The visit, which the U.S. declined to formally confirm, came a day ahead of a three-day trip to South Korea by Chinese nuclear envoy Wu Dawei, who met with his North Korean counterpart last week in Pyongyang.

Trying to put behind the regional tension that has soared since the sinking of a South Korean warship in March, North Korea and China have been seeking to resume six-party talks on Pyongyang's nuclear arms programs that had been in limbo since 2008.

South Korea and the U.S., which are two of the negotiating partners along with Russia and Japan, have dismissed the chances of resuming the talks unless the North apologizes for the sinking that killed 46 sailors. Pyongyang denies any role in the incident.

On Wednesday, however, a South Korean foreign ministry official, speaking to reporters on the condition of anonymity, said the sinking and the six-party talks are "different in nature."

"It'd be a stretch to establish a direct connection between the two," the official said, hinting that Seoul may be easing its months-long stance and opening room for a breakthrough.

Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan was more explicit as he spoke in Seoul to a group of reporters from Japan.

"The North must act on its promise to disable" its nuclear facilities and allow international nuclear monitors back on its soil, he said, describing the steps as necessary for guaranteeing the success of the six-party dialogue, if it is resumed.

Focus has centered on whether Carter's visit would provide fresh impetus for possible dialogue between North Korea and the United States and the stalled six-party talks. Following former U.S. President Bill Clinton's visit in August of last year to North Korea on a humanitarian mission to free two U.S. journalists held there, Washington sent its top nuclear envoy, Stephen Bosworth, to Pyongyang in December to urge the regime to return to the six-party talks, only to see the call go unanswered.

Gomes taught English in South Korea between 2006 and 2009. He joined rallies denouncing North Korea's dismal human rights records and reportedly sympathized with Robert Park, a Korean-American missionary who entered North Korea illegally from China in December but was set free about two months later.

Carter, the 2002 Nobel Peace Prize winner who headed the White House from 1977 to 1981 as a Democrat, has called on his government to engage North Korea directly and without fear.

"There is no harm in making a major effort, including unrestrained direct talks. The initiative must be from America and South Korea," he said in a speech in Seoul in March.

No U.S. officials apparently accompanied Carter in his latest trip to North Korea, during which he may seek a meeting with leader Kim Jong-il, the son of Kim Il-sung. The 68-year-old North Korean leader met with Clinton last year when he visited Pyongyang. Kim also held talks with then U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright when she traveled to Pyongyang in 2000.

Kim is said to be struggling with health problems since he apparently suffered a stroke in the summer of 2008. His third son, Jong-un, is widely considered being groomed to take over the secretive country, which will hold a rare ruling party meeting next month that could offer a glimpse into the succession process.

It remains to be seen how the release of Gomes, if successful, would influence the fate of four South Koreans and three Chinese captured by a North Korean patrol boat while fishing off the east coast of the divided peninsula earlier this month.

North Korea says the 41-ton South Korean boat Daeseung violated its exclusive economic zone. China, which has sided with North Korea in an array of diplomatic issues, has appealed to North Korea to release the crewmen, but Pyongyang has yet to respond amid heightening military tensions with Seoul over the Cheonan sinking.

North and South Korea remain technically at war after the 1950-53 Korean War ended in a truce rather than a peace treaty. Their relations have deteriorated in recent years as conservative South Korean President Lee Myung-bak opposes sending massive aid to North Korea unless Pyongyang makes good on its promise to denuclearize.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2010/08/25/49/0401000000AEN20100825007300315F.HTML>

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Los Angeles Times

North Korean Leader, Youngest Son On Trip To China, South Says

There is no word on the purpose of the trip by reclusive leader Kim Jong Il. The son is expected to be named as his successor.

By John M. Glionna and Barbara Demick, Los Angeles Times Staff Writers
August 26, 2010

(Reporting from Seoul and Beijing) - In a trip shrouded in mystery and speculation, North Korean leader Kim Jong Il traveled to China by train with his youngest son, according to two South Korean government officials.

An official in the South Korean Blue House confirmed late Thursday that Kim's train had crossed the border into China around midnight Wednesday, but said the North Korean leader did not take the usual route through the city of Dandong.

We "detected indications a few days ago," the official told reporters, asking not to be named. "Chairman Kim's special train has been confirmed to have left Manpo for China's Jilin around midnight Wednesday."

Another official, who asked not to be named because he was not authorized to discuss the matter, said earlier that intelligence had detected movement by the reclusive Kim.

South Korea's Yonhap news service quoted an official speculating that the trip might be associated with the anticipated handover of power in the secretive regime.

"Signs have been detected that Chairman Kim visited China early Thursday morning," the second unnamed official told the agency. "We are still trying to grasp his exact destination and the purpose of the visit."

This was Kim's second trip to China since May, when he embarked on a five-day journey for a summit with Chinese President Hu Jintao.

The Chinese government Thursday had no immediate comment on the visit. Because of security concerns, Kim's rare trips outside North Korea to the ally nation are publicly confirmed only after they end.

The Yalu River crossing between North Korea and the Chinese city of Dandong was badly flooded last weekend, disrupting the railroad lines over which Kim normally travels in an armored, luxury train, reportedly equipped with conference rooms, bedrooms and high-tech communication facilities.

Shi Yinhong, a professor at Beijing's Renmin University, speculated that Kim "must need China's help in reducing tensions and ensuring a good environment for the succession of his son."

The visit may signal that North Korea is prepared to return to six-party talks hosted by China on its nuclear program. North Korea also badly needs humanitarian assistance as a result of a series of economic blunders, as well as poor harvests and damage to cropland caused by the recent flooding.

Kim, who is 68 and in poor health after suffering a stroke in 2008, is in the process of naming his youngest son, the little-known Kim Jong Eun, 26, as his successor, a decision which should be announced at a special congress next month of North Korea's ruling Workers' Party.

"It's likely that Kim Jong Il wants to end the debate on the succession issue in Pyongyang ahead of a meeting next month of the North Korea's Workers' Party," said Yang Moo-jin, a professor at the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul.

"There's been plenty of succession talk between working-level and senior-level officials in Beijing and Pyongyang where they have failed to reach an agreement. Kim Jong Il now seems to be taking matters into his own hands."

Kim Jong Eun, who was educated in Switzerland and speaks several languages, did not accompany his father during the previous trip to China in June. His presence on this visit might be something of a courtesy call to introduce the future leader to the Chinese.

"China will have no choice but to deal with Kim Jong Eun. Their regime is traditionally a family dynasty and, like it or not, if you deal with North Korea, you have to deal with their ruler," said Shi.

Kim Jong Il assumed power in North Korea with the death of his father, Kim Il Sung, in 1994.

The rumors come amid tensions on the Korean Peninsula following the deadly sinking of a South Korean warship in March. The south has blamed North Korea for an unprovoked torpedo attack.

The trip also comes the day after former U.S. President Jimmy Carter arrived in Pyongyang to secure the release of a U.S. citizen imprisoned for illegally entering the country.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-north-korea-china-20100826,0,3434414.story>

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People's Daily – China
August 26, 2010

Chinese, S Korean Nuclear Envoys Meet On Resuming Six-Party Talks

China's special representative for Korean Peninsula affairs Wu Dawei Thursday met with South Korea's top nuclear envoy Wi Sung-lac for talks on restarting the long-stalled six-party discussions on denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

At the beginning of the meeting, Wu, also China's top envoy to the six-party talks, said he will exchange views with his South Korean counterparts on the current affairs on the Korean Peninsula and the multilateral nuclear disarmament forum.

Wu, arriving in Seoul earlier in the day, is on a three-day visit here, during which he is scheduled to meet with Vice Foreign Minister Shin Kak-soo and Kim Sung-Hwan, senior secretary to the President for Foreign Affairs and National Security.

Wu visited the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) on Aug. 16-18. During the visit, Wu met with DPRK's Foreign Minister Pak Ui Chun, Vice Foreign Ministers Kim Kye-gwan and Kim Song Gi.

Beijing plays host to the multilateral talks that also involve the two Koreas, the United States, Japan and Russia. The talks hit a snag since Pyongyang unilaterally pulled out in April 2009.

Source: Xinhua

<http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/7119190.html>

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

BrahMos Missile Maker Happy With Russian Glonass Receivers

25 August 2010

BrahMos Aerospace Ltd., a Russian-Indian joint venture manufacturing supersonic cruise missiles, is successfully using Russian-built Glonass receivers for aiming and target acquisition, CEO Sivathanu Pillai said on Wednesday.

Glonass - the Global Navigation Satellite System - is the Russian equivalent of the U.S. Global Positioning System, or GPS, and is designed for both military and civilian uses. Both systems enable users to determine their positions to within a few meters.

BrahMos missiles equipped with Glonass receivers acquire and effectively engage targets, Pillai told the Bengaluru Space Expo 2010 exhibition.

He said the receivers performed reliably and consistently.

The BrahMos missile has a range of 290 km (180 miles) and can carry a conventional warhead of up to 300 kg (660 lbs). It can effectively engage targets from an altitude as low as 10 meters (30 feet) and has a top speed of Mach 2.8, which is about three times faster than the U.S.-made subsonic Tomahawk cruise missile.

Established in 1998, BrahMos Aerospace manufactures and markets BrahMos supersonic missiles. Sea- and ground-launched versions have been successfully tested and put into service with the Indian Army and Navy.

Prime Minister Vladimir Putin said in early August Russia will complete the formation of a global navigation satellite group by the end of 2010 and that there will be between 24 and 28 satellites in orbit at any given time.

Russia currently has a total of 22 Glonass satellites in orbit, but only 16 of them are functional. The system requires 18 operational satellites for continuous navigation services covering the entire territory of Russia and at least 24 satellites to provide navigation services worldwide.

BENGALURU, August 25 (RIA Novosti)

http://en.rian.ru/military_news/20100825/160334563.html

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Times of India - India

India Says Myanmar Has No Nukes

By the Indo-Asian News Service

August 26, 2010

NEW DELHI: India believes that neighbouring Myanmar has no nuclear programme but is monitoring developments closely as nuclear weapons in the neighbourhood were a matter of concern, External Affairs Minister S.M. Krishna said on Thursday.

"Myanmar asserts that it has no nuclear programme on its anvil. The government of India will have to believe," Krishna said while replying to a supplementary in the Rajya Sabha, parliament's upper house.

The minister, however, added that information was being gathered through intelligence networks as well.

"We will also gather through our own intelligence what is happening. The government always monitors development closely because it concerns our security," Krishna said.

He stated that nuclear weapons in neighbouring countries were a matter of concern and that the Indian intelligence was keeping tight watch on the situation.

"We know Pakistan has nuclear weapons, China also has. We also know there has been a clandestine proliferation effort that Libya and other similar countries are making. We know A.Q. Khan network is very active. (The) government is monitoring the situation and will take steps to see India's security is not jeopardised," he said.

Myanmar has been under military rule since 1962. Its leader, Senior General Than Shwe, visited India in July to discuss energy and cross-border security issues.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/India-says-Myanmar-has-no-nukes/articleshow/6438743.cms>

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Sydney Morning Herald – Australia

Three Arrested In Moldova Uranium Trafficking Plot

August 26, 2010

By Agence France-Presse, Bloomberg

CHISINAU: Moldova has seized almost two kilograms of the radioactive substance uranium-238 from a suspected group of traffickers, including former Interior Ministry officials.

Police found 1.8 kilograms of the substance in a garage in the capital Chisinau where it was under guard and in a special container, said an Interior Ministry spokesman, Kirill Motpan.

He said the radioactive substance had been brought to Chisinau in the form of contraband and the people linked to the operation wanted to sell it for €9 million (\$12.8 million).

"The suspects are under arrest," Mr Motpan said, adding they had previous convictions for possessing radioactive materials. He said the group of seven people included two former Interior Ministry officials who were now retired.

Sources suggest only three of the gang are in custody. As well as the uranium-238, security officials found rounds of ammunition, a grenade, a pistol, number plates and false documents in the garage.

CNN reported that undercover policemen acting as buyers acquired less than one gram of the substance and sent it to the US for analysis where its identity was confirmed.

"Seven members of the criminal group came under suspicion of police in mid-June when they started to look for ways of selling the radioactive material," Mr Motpan said.

It was not clear from where the substance was obtained. Moldova is not a producer of uranium. Reuters reported that Moldovan authorities were now waiting for tests conducted in Germany to determine the uranium's country of origin.

Police are investigating whether the smugglers were attempting to sell the uranium in the breakaway region of Transnistria as one of the suspects came from that region.

"We are expecting more information coming out of Russia, Romania and some other countries that can shed light on this case and those suspects," Mr Motpan told CNN.

Experts have repeatedly expressed fears over traffickers obtaining nuclear materials from the former Soviet Union with the aim of selling them on to rogue groups in the hope of making a so-called dirty bomb.

Moldova is one of Europe's poorest nations, making it prone to smuggling of all kinds.

Uranium-238, known as yellowcake, is the most common of the three radioactive uranium isotopes. It is not a fissile substance, which means it cannot by itself unleash a chain reaction. It can be converted to create plutonium, a source for nuclear power and warheads.

But the enrichment involves an "elaborate set-up", Xiachun He, a professor of nuclear physics at Georgia State University in the US, told CNN.

The uranium 238 alone is not potent enough to make an effective dirty bomb, the physicist said, since the level of radiation would be too low once scattered as dust. That did not deter the traffickers. Mr Motpan said: "They were actively looking for a customer."

<http://www.smh.com.au/world/three-arrested-in-moldova-uranium-trafficking-plot-20100825-13s6e.html>

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

U.S. Hails Arrest Of Uranium Smugglers In Moldova

26 August 2010

The U.S. State Department has congratulated Moldova on the successful detention of three men suspected of trying to sell about two kilograms of uranium.

The alleged smugglers, two of whom were identified by Moldovan officials as former policemen, were arrested on Wednesday in a police sting operation. Moldovan police found 1.8 kilograms of uranium-238 in a garage Chisinau, the country's capital.

The Moldovan police said the men were seeking about \$11 million for the uranium.

"We congratulate the Moldovan Ministry of Interior for its work in thwarting what was a serious smuggling attempt," State Department spokesman Mark Toner said at a briefing on Wednesday.

He added that "an FBI team had cooperated with Moldovan police on technical analysis."

"The U.S. government continues to work with partners worldwide to thwart nuclear smuggling cases, providing assistance with investigations, provisions of radiation detection equipment, training, and legal assistance to increase sentencing for these crimes," he said. "We did in this case offer law enforcement and technical assistance to the Moldovan Ministry of Interior."

It was not clear who the men had hoped to sell the uranium to. The amount of radioactive matter involved is well short of that required to build a nuclear bomb, or even a so-called dirty bomb.

WASHINGTON, August 26 (RIA Novosti)

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20100826/160345608.html>

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The Moscow Times – Russian Federation

OPINION

A Weak Start For START

24 August 2010

By Bennett Ramberg

A strange sense of déjà vu is gripping Washington these days as the debate over ratification by the U.S. Senate of the New START treaty with Russia heats up. Spats have broken out between the administration of President Barack Obama and future presidential contenders, senators, and arms control and defense experts. There may not be nostalgia for the Cold War in any of this, but much of that era's mindset can be perceived again in the arguments being knocked about.

The Senate must decide whether New START enhances U.S. security. Unfortunately, whatever the decision — which has been delayed perhaps until late fall to allow the Obama administration more time to muster support for the treaty — the U.S. and Russian governments will continue to place each other in the nuclear crosshairs for the foreseeable future.

New START builds on a legacy of strategic nuclear arms limitation that goes back to the 1970s. Former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger captured the allure in recent testimony: "The subject of nuclear arms control grew out of the seemingly paradoxical effort of those who had created the largest and most destructive arsenals to avoid by negotiation the ultimate consequences of their own decisions."

Over the years, "avoiding ... the ultimate consequences" through limitations butted against the bitter legacy of the surprise attacks suffered by both the United States and Russia in World War II. After the war, each adopted a "never be surprised again" policy and invested trillions of dollars in a multitude of hardened, mobile and concealed nuclear weapons to deter the other. The result produced tens of thousands of nuclear warheads. In time, strategic arms control treaties became the measure of the political relationship.

With the Soviet Union's collapse, a unique opportunity to end the nuclear competition emerged. While elimination did take place in the former Soviet republics, the Kremlin hung on to its nuclear arsenal — the last vestige of Russia's former superpower status. Likewise, U.S. administrations have remained wedded to the bomb. As a result, the "nuclear hostage" relationship of the Cold War continued, capped in 2002 by the Strategic Offensive Reduction Treaty, which set the upper limit on warheads at 2,200 by 2012.

In spring 2009, speaking in Prague, Obama advanced a bold ambition: a world without nuclear weapons. But his audacity confronted a world in which the bomb remained at the heart of many countries' deterrence strategies. Obama muddled his message further by admitting that he did not expect to see abolition in his lifetime.

Nonetheless, New START marks a step in the direction of disarmament. It would limit each country to 1,550 strategic warheads on 700 deployed delivery vehicles. Verification relies on 18 on-site inspections, notification of forces in and out of service, missile-test flight information and other data exchanges, plus a consultative commission to iron out compliance.

Were the Senate to fail to ratify New START, the treaty's proponents argue that the United States would lose predictability about Russia's nuclear activities, resulting in greater distrust and risk of miscalculation, making both sides less secure. But arms control skeptics take issue with this. Throughout the Cold War, they viewed restraints on U.S. development and fielding of nuclear weapons as compromising national security. Fears that the Soviet Union would cheat reinforced their position. And cheating did indeed upset the broader superpower relationship. Today, similar apprehensions stoke opposition to New START.

To allay such concerns, the Obama administration committed to a multi-year increase in the budgets of the U.S. military's nuclear weapon laboratories. And in the April 10 release of the Nuclear Posture Review, the Obama

administration warned nuclear-armed states and others tempted to violate the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty that they would remain nuclear targets.

Missile defense has become another bone of contention. The language in the preamble to New START states that the agreement will not “undermine the viability and effectiveness of the strategic offensive arms of the parties.” Critics contend that the clause, along with the Kremlin’s implied warning that it could withdraw from the treaty unilaterally were U.S. defenses to become too robust, provides the Kremlin with leverage to impede deployment of any strategic missile defense system.

The Obama administration repeatedly denies such claims, along with others that the treaty’s verification provisions remain insufficient. It scoffs at assertions that Russia would cheat by multiplying warheads on bombers or new rail-based missile carriers, arguing that the Kremlin would want to avoid a compensatory response from the United States.

But Obama’s team does concede one point: New START fails to curtail Russia’s large numerical advantage in tactical nuclear weapons. Arguing that short-range devices pose no risk to the U.S. homeland, negotiators plan to press for reductions in follow-on talks.

Despite the claims by both the Bush and Obama administrations that Russia and the United States are no longer adversaries, it seems that the rapprochement has not translated into elimination of mutual nuclear targeting. The result, even if New START is ratified, should satisfy no one.

Bennett Ramberg served in the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs in the administration of former U.S. President George H.W. Bush. He is the author of several books on international security.

<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/opinion/article/a-weak-start-for-start/413495.html>

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Wall Street Journal

OPINION

August 25, 2010

Why The Senate Should Block 'New Start'

The nuclear treaty is the first step toward unilateral disarmament.

By ROBERT R. MONROE

After returning from recess on Sept. 6, the Senate will consider whether to ratify New Start, the nuclear weapons treaty that President Barack Obama signed with his Russian counterpart in April. The treaty has many problems, from being unverifiable to giving Russia virtual veto power over U.S. missile defense, and more. But the Senate should block it for another more important reason: It is the first major step in the implementation of Mr. Obama’s broader nuclear strategy. This strategy would gravely weaken American national security.

The Obama administration’s nuclear policy is set out in the Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), which was released in April, two days before the signing of New Start. The NPR is joined at the hip with New Start, and together they take this country down a dangerous path. For 65 years, the very existence of our nation has depended upon a strong nuclear deterrent. The new NPR wipes out this proven policy, substituting one of weakness in its place.

Mr. Obama’s NPR treats nuclear weapons as an evil to be eliminated, rather than as the ultimate foundation of America’s security in a dangerous world. The review opens with Mr. Obama’s pledge to “seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons” and “to take concrete steps toward that goal, including by reducing the number of nuclear weapons and their role in national security policy.”

Yet nuclear weapons have been our most effective means of avoiding and limiting conflicts, and of achieving our foreign policy goals, since World War II. Nuclear weapons ended the most destructive war in history. For a half-century thereafter they prevented a vastly more devastating war and were a huge factor in deterring proliferation.

By pledging not to develop new nuclear capabilities—including earth-penetration weapons and any new warheads—the new NPR also promises to let our deterrence atrophy. This ignores that threats and technology are changing, and our weapons must keep pace with them.

The NPR further hurts our ability to modernize our deteriorating nuclear arsenal by essentially cashing the “replacement” approach, which allows for the use of nuclear components based on previously tested designs. And it undermines the reliability and effectiveness of our stockpile by pledging that the U.S. will not conduct any nuclear testing.

Finally, Obama's new nuclear strategy seriously limits our use of nuclear weapons. The NPR has an entire chapter on reducing their role that, among other things, commits us not to use nuclear weapons against nonnuclear states that comply with the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty—even if they attack us with other weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. Obama's NPR amounts to a road map for achieving a position of strategic inferiority. As other states improve their nuclear arsenals, we will be carrying out unilateral nuclear disarmament.

How have we come to this? In essence, because the two elements of Mr. Obama's nuclear weapons policy are mutually incompatible. First, he has established the goal of "a world without nuclear weapons," pledging to take concrete steps to achieve it. Second, he's stated that as long as such weapons exist, the U.S. arsenal will be safe, secure and effective. Yet the NPR—the result of 12 months of intensive work by all relevant elements of the U.S. government—focuses only on the impossible goal of achieving a nuclear-free world. It fails utterly to maintain an effective nuclear arsenal.

The nuclear deterrent that has kept us safe for over half a century cannot be maintained under the Obama administration's limitations. Unless the Senate supports such nuclear disarmament, it must deny ratification to New Start, which is the first step in that direction.

Mr. Monroe, a retired vice admiral in the U.S. Navy, was director of the Defense Nuclear Agency from 1977-1980.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704271804575405634208565808.html>

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Mainichi Daily News – Japan
OPINION/PERSPECTIVE
August 25, 2010

Japan Should Stop Working With India On Atomic Energy If It Conducts Nuke Test

During negotiations on a bilateral civil nuclear pact, Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada told his Indian counterpart that Tokyo will immediately discontinue its cooperation with India over atomic energy technology if it conducts a nuclear test. We support Japan's stance as it is pursuing the elimination of nuclear weapons and leading international efforts toward nuclear arms reductions and nonproliferation.

A civil nuclear agreement provides for basic rules, including acceptance of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors, in order to help ensure the peaceful use of atomic energy. Japan has signed such a pact with six countries including the United States, Britain and France as well as an international organization. However, Japan has withheld its atomic energy cooperation with India, which has been developing nuclear weapons while refusing to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

India conducted nuclear tests in 1974 and 1998. Cooperation with any country like India on atomic energy could make the NPT a dead letter and give Iran and other countries that are suspected of developing nuclear weapons even though they are parties to the treaty an excuse to develop nuclear arms.

Nevertheless, the administration of Prime Minister Naoto Kan abruptly began negotiations with India in June on concluding such a pact. Behind the move is a change in U.S. policy on nuclear nonproliferation and requests from American and French companies that are aiming to procure Japanese-made equipment in order to win contracts on the construction of nuclear power plants as well as requests from Japanese firms aiming to break into the Indian atomic energy market.

After the United States agreed to sign a civilian nuclear agreement in 2007, the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) that regulates the transfer of nuclear technology agreed the following year to treat India as an exception, a decision supported by Japan. Subsequently, France, Russia and Britain signed a similar pact with India.

India, which has the world's second largest population over its vast land, is particularly enthusiastic about boosting its nuclear power generation in a bid to make up for a shortage of electric power. It is reportedly planning to build about 20 more nuclear power plants. U.S., French and Russian companies are fiercely competing in winning contracts with Indian power suppliers while South Korea is negotiating a similar pact.

It is understandable to a certain extent that the Kan administration that is pressing forward with its new growth strategy is desperate not to lag behind these competitors. Boosting nuclear power generation in India, which emits the fourth largest amount of greenhouse gases in the world, will help prevent global warming. It is certain that Japan's cooperation with India over atomic energy technology does not necessarily have negative effects.

Nevertheless, in negotiating with India, Japan should assert its position as the only country that has suffered from nuclear devastation.

While criticizing Foreign Minister Okada for declaring that Japan will discontinue its cooperation if India conducts a nuclear test, Indian Foreign Minister S. M. Krishna pledged that India will make efforts to create a framework in which it can be verified whether its atomic energy program is purely for peaceful purposes in a bid to help achieve the goal of a world without nuclear weapons.

India is urged to make sure that the atomic energy technology that Japan will provide to it will not be converted for military purposes.

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/perspectives/news/20100824p2a00m0na001000c.html>

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The Globe and Mail – Canada

OPINION

The Sunni Factor In Iran's Nuclear Calculus

Tehran needs reassurance against Sunni hostility as much as against Israeli and Western threats of invasion and regime change

By Prakash Shah and Ramesh Thakur

Wednesday, August 25, 2010

The United States, no more but no less than other states, tends to make self-centred assessments of other countries' policies. This is one reason it missed the Iran factor as the most likely explanation for Saddam Hussein's deliberate ambiguity about a "weapons of mass destruction" capability. Washington may be committing a similar error with respect to Iran's nuclear motives. In projecting the threat from a potential nuclear Iran to Israel, the West keeps open the last resort possibility of a pre-emptive Israeli attack on Iran. Tehran's security concerns and its quest for nuclear weapons may be aimed as much at meeting the Sunni threat as the Israeli threat.

Like most countries, Iran's security policy is driven by multiple motives. Since Iraq was attacked and occupied after having disarmed, other states that fear a U.S. attack have a powerful incentive to acquire nuclear weapons to deter it. The history of Western intervention in Iranian affairs, coupled with the continuing bellicose rhetoric directed at the Iranian regime and large numbers of U.S. military forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, mean that Tehran cannot discount an armed attack. Moreover, with so many of its neighbours being nuclear armed – Israel, Russia, Pakistan, China and India – a prudent Iranian national security planner is likely to recommend acceleration, not abandonment, of the nuclear program.

Iran's aggressive posture in the Middle East is, in part, a reaction to its fears of being overwhelmed by Sunni countries surrounding the Shia island. True, Iraq is a Shia majority, but the years of Sunni rule under Mr. Hussein and the ambiguity of Americans in finalizing the Iraqi government around its Shia majority heightened Iranian suspicions. The decade-long war against Iran by Mr. Hussein's Sunni regime was supported by Kuwait and Saudi Arabia and politely ignored by the West and the United Nations. Iran has not forgotten that.

Tehran is opposed to Taliban domination of Afghanistan, at the expense of the sizable Shia Hazara population.

Pakistan, the world's only Muslim nuclear power and an immediate neighbour, has the fastest growing nuclear arsenal today. In dismissing India's warnings of a Chinese-assisted weapons program by Pakistan, Washington set the stage for India's – and Pakistan's – overt nuclear breakout in 1998. In neglecting the Pakistan factor as a driver of Iran's nuclear policy, the U.S. may be reducing its leverage over Iran's actions.

Pakistan's growing nuclear arsenal poses two kinds of danger to Iran. The first is the possibility of Pakistani nuclear weapons falling into the hands of the Taliban or al-Qaeda, both of whom are anathema to the Iranians as much as they are to India and the West. Iran harbours suspicions that Pakistan could be the provider of last resort of nuclear material and weapons to Sunni countries hostile to Shia Iran. After all, Libya tried to buy nuclear weapons from the infamous A.Q. Khan syndicate, backstopped by Pakistan's armed forces, and the same group was accused of helping the Iraqi search for WMDs.

If Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons is seen as a search for security in a hostile Sunni region, and not just as the desire to destroy Israel, it opens up possibilities of solutions other than the one based solely on the current approach. Countries in the Persian Gulf fear they form the first line of attack of a Iranian nuclear weapon. But they're not quite ready to publicly oppose Iran's nuclear ambitions as long as Israel has nuclear weapons. Innate caution and the ambivalence of the Gulf countries loaded with emotional hostility toward Israel make it expedient for them to leave the issue to Washington. But they should be brought into the dialogue process with Iran, just as Japan and South Korea are integral partners in the six-party talks with North Korea.

If Iran is to be dissuaded from the nuclear weapons path, a realistic assessment of its threat perception is essential. It needs reassurance against Sunni hostility as much as against Israeli and Western threats of invasion and regime change. A continued failure to grasp the security calculus behind Tehran's interest in nuclear weapons will fail to check proliferation.

Prakash Shah is a former Indian ambassador to the UN and a UN special envoy to Iraq. Ramesh Thakur is a professor of political science at the University of Waterloo and a former UN assistant secretary-general.

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/opinions/the-sunni-factor-in-irans-nuclear-calculus/article1683839/>

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New York Times

OPINION

International Herald Tribune Op-Ed Contributor

Bringing Israel's Bomb Out Of The Basement

By AVNER COHEN and MARVIN MILLER

August 25, 2010

In the shadow of the Holocaust, Israel made a determined and ultimately successful effort to acquire nuclear weapons. Just as fear of genocide is the key to understanding Israel's nuclear resolve, that fear has also encouraged nuclear restraint. After all, if Israel's enemies also acquired the bomb, the small Jewish state might well face destruction. Moreover, the specter of killing large numbers of innocent people was morally unsettling.

This combination of resolve and restraint led to a nuclear posture known as opacity, which is fundamentally different from that of all other nuclear weapons states. Israel neither affirms nor denies its possession of nuclear weapons; indeed, the government refuses to say anything factual about its nuclear activities, and Israeli citizens are encouraged, both by law and by custom, to follow suit.

Opacity was first codified in a secret accord between President Richard Nixon and Prime Minister Golda Meir of Israel in September 1969. As long as Israel did not advertise its possession of nuclear weapons, by either declaring it had them or testing them, the United States agreed to tolerate and shield Israel's nuclear program. Ever since, all U.S. presidents and Israeli prime ministers have reaffirmed this policy — most recently, President Obama in a July White House meeting with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, during which Mr. Obama stated, "Israel has unique security requirements. ... And the United States will never ask Israel to take any steps that would undermine [its] security interests."

Opacity continues to have almost universal support among members of the Israeli security establishment, who argue that, by not publicly flaunting its nuclear status, Israel has reduced its neighbors' incentives to proliferate and has made it easier to resist demands that it give up its nuclear shield before a just and durable peace is established in the Middle East.

But this policy has now become anachronistic, even counterproductive. In the early days of its nuclear program, Israel had no concerns about legitimacy, recognition and responsibility; its focus was acquiring a nuclear capability. Today, the situation is different. Israel is now a mature nuclear weapons state, but it finds it difficult under the strictures of opacity to make a convincing case that it is a responsible one. To the extent that opacity shields Israel's nuclear capabilities and intentions, it also undercuts the need for its citizens to be informed about issues that are literally matters of life and death, such as: Whose finger is on the nuclear trigger and under what circumstances would nuclear weapons be used?

Opacity also prevents Israel from making a convincing case that its nuclear policy is indeed one of defensive last resort and from participating in a meaningful fashion in regional arms control and global disarmament deliberations.

Israel needs to recognize, moreover, that the Middle East peace process is linked to the issue of nuclear weapons in the region. International support for Israel and its opaque bomb is being increasingly eroded by its continued occupation of Palestinian territory and the policies that support that occupation. Such criticism of these policies might well spill over into the nuclear domain, making Israel vulnerable to the charge that it is a nuclear-armed pariah state, and thus associating it to an uncomfortable degree with today's rogue Iranian regime.

Indeed, while almost all states publicly oppose the acquisition of nuclear weapons by Iran, there is also growing support for dealing with this problem in an "evenhanded" manner, namely, by establishing a nuclear weapons free zone across the entire region.

However, if Israel takes seriously the need to modify its own nuclear posture and its approach to the peace process, there will likely be stronger international support for measures designed to stop Iran from crossing the nuclear threshold and to contain a nuclear-armed Iran if those efforts fail.

Israel was not the first state to acquire nuclear weapons, and given its unique geopolitical concerns, it should not be expected to lead the world into the nuclear-free age. But in order to deal effectively with the new regional nuclear environment and emerging global nuclear norms, Israel must reassess the wisdom of its unwavering commitment to opacity and realize that international support for retaining its military edge, including its nuclear capacity, rests on retaining its moral edge.

Avner Cohen is a senior fellow at the James Martin Center for Non-proliferation Studies at the Monterey Institute of International Studies. Marvin Miller is a research associate in the Science, Technology, and Society Program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. A longer version of this article will appear in the September/October issue of Foreign Affairs.

Tribune Media Services

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/25/opinion/25iht-edcohen.html>

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Ha'aretz Daily – Israel

OPINION

August 26, 2010

Interview / Why Israel Should End Its Policy Of Nuclear Ambiguity

An interview with Avner Cohen, expert on nonproliferation issues and author of the forthcoming book "The Worst-Kept Secret: Israel's Bargain with the Bomb."

By Natasha Mozgovaya

Avner Cohen is a senior fellow of the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies at the Monterey Institute of International Studies. He is the author of "Israel and the Bomb" and the forthcoming "The Worst-Kept Secret: Israel's Bargain with the Bomb."

Avner Cohen, you claim that the time has come for Israel to abandon its policy of nuclear ambiguity. Why now, and why would that be good for Israel?

"Nuclear ambiguity is a cornerstone of Israeli strategic thinking. It was born many years ago, and sealed as part of a comprehensive deal with the United States in 1969. It was appropriate at the time, but today, in my opinion, it is not just anachronistic, but foolish and anti-democratic. Even in realpolitik terms, it is an 'own goal' for Israel. In my view, it undermines genuine Israeli interests, including the need to gain recognition and legitimacy and to be counted among the responsible states in this strategic field."

Are you sure the pressure on Israel is so severe? If Israel is criticized over its nuclear program, it's usually marginal. The brunt of the criticism is over its treatment of the Palestinians.

"Israel received tacit consent for its nuclear program from the Western world because it appeared to be a small, just state surrounded by enemies, and the memory of the Holocaust was still fresh. Israel's image was different then."

"In the long term, the more Israel appears to reject peace and to be the one that opposes a two-state solution, the more it will be perceived as a regional bully that possesses nuclear weapons. So the world will be a lot less forgiving on the nuclear issue. The situation of ambiguity, in which you don't have real legitimacy, is not a good place to be."

The United States has called on Israel to join the nonproliferation treaty, but during Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's visit to Washington, U.S. President Barack Obama said he recognizes the special nature of the threats Israel faces, and these threats warrant special security measures.

"The Americans want to appear just and fair because the issue is seen in Israel as completely sacred. They want to look as though they respect that. This agreement [with the U.S.] has been passed along from president to president, but I don't believe this issue is as sacred to Americans as it is to Israelis."

Do you give credence to the slippery slope theory, under which abandoning ambiguity would lead to demands that Israel disarm?

"Those are cliches used by the defense establishment. Nobody demands that Israel make such an announcement without first doing the preparatory work among its allies and the Arab states. This great fear of a slippery slope is ridiculous. Israel has its own interests; nobody can coerce it to do things."

What about the claim that ambiguity is what keeps the Arab states from feeling a need to launch an arms race against Israel?

"I don't dismiss that claim out of hand, and if, after study and thought, this fear turns out to be warranted, I would be prepared to wait. But in some ways, ambiguity is insulting to the Arabs. The claim you mention treats Arabs as though they were children: If they are told that Israel doesn't admit to it, that frees them of the need to deal with the reality. I believe the Arab countries don't want to play a game of make-believe, but rather want to discuss the topic directly and realistically."

You say, basically, that Iran is imitating Israel's nuclear behavior. That comparison would certainly rankle Israel supporters.

"But the way Iran has advanced toward nuclear capability is not via announcements and tests, but rather by rumors. It can even remain within the bounds of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. If that rankles anybody, let it rankle."

"If Iran is not attacked, it will want to achieve a status of ambiguity; I see this as nearly certain. The international community thus has another reason not to accept the idea of ambiguity as legitimate. The norm that a state with a nuclear weapon must say so clearly is part of the nonproliferation regime. The longer Iran continues down this path, the less patience the world will have for Israel."

How do you envision the scenario of 'coming out of the nuclear closet'?

"Censorship plays a very central role in the enforcement of nuclear ambiguity. So long as there is a [military] censor, it is very hard to alter ambiguity. If censorship didn't exist, Israeli newspapers would be able to write about the subject more openly."

"Another issue is the need for a law that addresses the nuclear topic. There is a Shin Bet [security service] law, but there is no law for the Mossad and no law for the Israel Atomic Energy Commission. This is a very problematic situation."

"On the international level, it's a sensitive subject that demands preparatory work. Ultimately, I see a political statement by Israel's government in which the prime minister would find the right way to put this subject on the table. He would talk about the historical background and the responsible way Israel has dealt with this topic. With a few rare exceptions, these weapons have no military use; Israel views them as a means of deterrence. I don't think Israel would need to go into detail regarding how many [bombs] it has or exactly what it has."

"Israel has a right to the bomb no less than New Delhi, or even the United States. Ambiguity creates a sense that we are sinners, as though we had done something so terrible that we can't tell the awful truth - and I don't think it is so awful. This is a country that the world has viewed as a nuclear state for a long time, and the time has come for it to say something positive on this huge, complicated and awe-inspiring topic..."

"All these states are ultimately committed under the treaty they signed to achieve a world without nuclear weapons. Whether that will happen in our lifetimes I can't say."

You say ambiguity undermines Israeli democracy and prevents debate on matters of life and death, such as the question of whose finger will be on the button. Do you think the Israeli public is ready for such a discussion?

"There has been very little creative thinking in this area, and ambiguity is one of the stifling factors that have produced an unacceptable, closed culture incapable of creative thinking. Ambiguity's power derives from the fact that Israeli society accepts it, and it seems to the public that any attempt to deviate from it would cause serious damage to Israeli security."

"Ambiguity has created a public incapable of dealing with the topic, one that is afraid of it and prefers the issue to be handled by 'trustworthy hands' so that it does not have to take responsibility itself."

Ambiguity has created an ignorant, craven public which, in a certain sense, has betrayed its civic, democratic duties on this subject."

What's it like researching a topic nobody discusses?

"When I started studying this subject 25 years ago, I had the feeling I was entering a palace where nothing could be touched. It took me years to find the right way to handle the topic responsibly - from a researcher's perspective, not from the standpoint of someone who is directly involved in the matter."

Today I think it is possible to initiate a meaningful dialogue about concrete, real issues."

<http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/features/interview-why-israel-should-end-its-policy-of-nuclear-ambiguity-1.310278>

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