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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

Clinton Says Hopes New Arms Cuts Treaty Does Not Fall Victim to Politics

8 September 2010

U.S. State Secretary Hillary Clinton said she hopes the new arms reduction treaty with Russia does not fall victim to political intrigues in the Senate.

The new treaty was signed on April 8 in Prague, replacing the START 1 treaty that expired in December 2009.

"It's a political issue. I wish it weren't," Clinton said. "But I hope that at the end of the day the Senate will say something should just be beyond any kind of election or partisan calculation, and that everybody will pull together and we'll get that START treaty done," she said during her "American Moment" speech.

The new pact obligates both nations to limit their fielded strategic nuclear weapons to 1,550 warheads, while the number of deployed and non-deployed delivery vehicles must not exceed 800 on either side.

The treaty is undergoing ratification in the Senate. But the chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, John Kerry, postponed a vote on the treaty until mid-September, citing the need for senators to review the document more thoroughly.

Clinton said at the Washington Council on Foreign Relations that she hopes the Senate will cast aside election- or other political-related reasons and that the treaty will eventually be ratified.

The United States will hold midterm elections in the Senate on November 2.

WASHINGTON, September 8 (RIA Novosti)

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20100908/160522365.html>

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Washington Times

Gates: Any Russian Arms Cheating Would Backfire

By Robert Burns, Associated Press

Wednesday, September 8, 2010

WASHINGTON (AP) — Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates told lawmakers Wednesday he expects Russia to abide by a new nuclear arms treaty, but Russia's not doing so could wreck chances for future agreements.

In a newly declassified letter provided to the Associated Press, Mr. Gates wrote that he and the top U.S. military leadership have concluded that Russia will not be able to achieve "militarily significant cheating" under the New START treaty.

Some Republicans have questioned the value of the treaty and expressed concern about whether Russian compliance can be adequately ensured. The Obama administration has made a strong pitch for Senate ratification, arguing that it serves U.S. national security interests and that key allies in Eastern and Central Europe view the treaty as a symbol of U.S.-Russian cooperation.

In remarks Wednesday at the Council on Foreign Relations, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said she regrets that the Senate debate over the treaty had become political.

"It's a political issue," Mrs. Clinton said. "I wish it weren't," since previous arms treaties have passed the Senate by wide margins.

"I hope that at the end of the day the Senate will say, you know, some things should just be beyond any kind of election or partisan calculation . . . and we'll get that START treaty done," she said.

Mr. Gates wrote that the Obama administration expects Russia to adhere fully to the treaty's limits. The pact would shrink the limit on strategic warheads to 1,550 for each country, down about a third from the current ceiling of 2,200. A previous treaty on strategic arms limits expired in December.

"Any Russian cheating could affect the sustainability of the New START treaty, the viability of future arms control agreements, and the ability of the U.S. and Russia to work together on other issues," Mr. Gates wrote.

Mr. Gates' message was intended to allay concerns raised by Sen. John McCain, Arizona Republican, at a July 20 congressional hearing at which Mr. McCain responded incredulously to Pentagon statements that even large-scale Russian cheating on New START was of little military concern.

"Why have a treaty?" Mr. McCain asked, if cheating matters little.

Mr. Gates sought to address that matter more fully in his letter, dated July 30 and addressed to Sen. John Kerry, Massachusetts Democrat, who is chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Mr. Kerry's committee is scheduled to meet next week to determine whether to advance the treaty to the Senate floor for an up-or-down vote on ratification. Observers say a floor vote is unlikely before the November elections.

Mr. Gates's letter was provided Wednesday to other members of Mr. Kerry's committee and to the Senate Armed Services Committee. The two-page letter originally was classified; by blacking out one paragraph, the Pentagon declassified it.

If Russia were to cheat on the New START, the Pentagon could respond by putting its doomsday submarines and bombers on higher alert and arming them with extra nuclear warheads, Mr. Gates wrote.

"Therefore, the survivable and flexible" U.S. offensive nuclear arsenal will "help deter any future Russian leaders from cheating or breakout from the treaty, should they ever have such an inclination," the Pentagon chief wrote.

Mr. Gates said his assessment is shared by the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Adm. Mike Mullen, and the commander of the U.S. Strategic Command, Gen. Kevin P. Chilton, who announced last week that he is retiring soon. The Pentagon assessment is based on a recent intelligence agency report on monitoring compliance with the treaty, Mr. Gates said.

Similar conclusions were reached in a July 12 State Department report on enforcing the treaty. It said that any benefits to be derived by Russia from cheating would appear to be questionable. "The costs and risks of Russian cheating or breakout, on the other hand, would likely be very significant," it said.

The New START treaty was signed by President Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev in April.

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2010/sep/8/gates-any-russian-arms-cheating-would-backfire/>

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Knoxville News Sentinel

Ambassador Supporting New START Treaty

Friday, September 10, 2010

By Frank Munger

Ambassador Linton Brooks, who was chief U.S. negotiator for the START I arms control agreement signed by the United States and the Soviet Union in 1991, is a big supporter of the New START Treaty with Russia that would further reduce the world's largest nuclear arsenals, and he's urging ratification by the U.S. Senate.

New START is important for multiple reasons, Brooks said during a Thursday visit to Knoxville, but he cautioned about attaching too much importance to the treaty. Those who suggest that the Western world is hanging in the balance are "overselling a significant accomplishment," he said.

Brooks was in town for an appearance at the Howard H. Baker Jr. Center for Public Policy on the University of Tennessee campus, and he came by the News Sentinel offices for an interview.

Asked if the New START Treaty would make the world a safer place, Brooks replied, "Yeah, marginally. I think it's a modest, but useful step."

He explained:

"I think we'll be safer for several reasons if it's ratified. We will be safer because we will build better relationships with Russia, and that's key. We will be safer because we'll understand the Russian nuclear programs better, and that's important. We will be safer because we will have more standing to rally the international community to counter nuclear terrorism.

"But it isn't like a 'no' vote is a vote to go buy bomb shelters because the war is coming. I think you don't want to over-hype this. But there is no question we're better off with this treaty than without it."

Besides his negotiating role, which earned him the title of ambassador from President George H.W. Bush, Brooks also headed the National Nuclear Security Administration from 2003-07 under President George W. Bush.

Brooks, however, downplayed any political partisanship on his part and said he's interested in what's best for the nation's security.

The New START Treaty has generated much debate in Washington and beyond, and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee is scheduled to vote on a Resolution of Ratification next week to determine if the treaty will come to a vote before the full Senate. Sen. Bob Corker, R-Tenn., is a member of the committee, and he's been outspoken about wanting to see commitments from the Obama administration on modernizing the nuclear weapons complex - including the Y-12 National Security Complex in Oak Ridge.

Brooks said the upgrades are getting badly needed attention, and he said he takes the administration "at their word" on planned improvements.

"You do need improvements in the complex; you need to put significant money into it," he said.

But he questioned some of the dollar figures that have been floating around, including some of the numbers used by Corker.

Asked about the senator's comment that the proposed Uranium Processing Facility at Y-12 is now expected to cost between \$4 billion and \$5 billion, Brooks said, "I don't think we know that."

Corker and others have said that the United States has fallen behind other countries in maintaining capabilities and that the U.S. nuclear weapons complex has been underfunded by about \$10 billion.

"We have no idea where that (dollar estimate) is coming from," Brooks said.

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2010/sep/10/ambassador-supporting-new-start-treaty/>

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

World Faces Nonproliferation Turning Point – START 1 Negotiator

10 September 2010

The world is at a turning point in efforts to stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons, particularly in the Middle East, a former US arms treaty negotiator said on Friday at the Global Policy Forum in the Russian city of Yaroslavl.

"The problem is if Iran acquires nuclear weapons, then three or four others could then make the decision. For example, Turkey, Syria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia," said Richard Burt, former United States ambassador to Germany and chief negotiator of the first Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START).

"We could then find ourselves within a period of 10 years in a situation where there are five or six nuclear powers in the world's most dangerous and most unstable region in the Middle East. That is why we have to act now," he added.

Burt said he wants to see and will propose both the United States and Russia announce early next year that they are going to resume negotiations on a treaty that will substantially reduce further their nuclear arsenals.

Burt has been working with Igor Yurgens, an adviser to President Dmitry Medvedev, in "Global Zero," an international organization dedicated to the elimination of nuclear weapons worldwide.

YAROSLAVL, September 10 (RIA Novosti)

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20100910/160545570.html>

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Asia Times – Hong Kong, China

9 September 2010

Iran Sticks to Its Guns on Nuclear Report

By Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

The United States has called the latest report on Iran by the United Nations' nuclear watchdog "troubling to all who care about nonproliferation and global security".

In a report released on September 6, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) says Iran is hampering the agency's work by barring some inspectors and pushing ahead with its nuclear program in defiance of tougher sanctions.

White House spokesman Tommy Vietor said the report "again demonstrates that Iran is refusing to comply with its international nuclear obligations and continues its effort to expand its nuclear program and move closer to a nuclear weapons capability".

However, Iran's envoy to the IAEA, Ali Asghar Soltanieh, said the report had tarnished the agency's "technical reputation" and was "not balanced".

Iran's Mehr news agency quoted Soltanieh as adding that the report confirmed Tehran had not diverted nuclear material toward military purposes or the creation of a nuclear weapon. He insisted that all of Iran's nuclear activities were under the IAEA's "complete supervision".

Soltanieh's comments were echoed by Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast, who said: "[The IAEA] director general has emphasized in this report for the 23rd time that there has been no diversion in Iran's peaceful nuclear program."

He continued by saying the IAEA should look instead at Israel, which is widely believed to hold the Middle East's only nuclear arsenal.

Mehmanparast also said the latest IAEA report would have "no impact on our future cooperation with the agency and our commitments to international rules and regulations."

The United States and other Western powers suspect Iran is trying to develop nuclear weapons, while Tehran insists its nuclear program is solely for energy production.

'Repeated' objections

In its latest report, the IAEA report voices concern about what it calls Iran's "repeated" objections to its choice of some inspectors, saying this "detracts from the agency's capability to implement effective and efficient safeguards in Iran."

In June, Iran barred two experienced inspectors after they reported what they called undeclared nuclear experiments.

Speaking to the ISNA news agency, the head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, Ali Akbar Salehi, said Iran had barred the two inspectors because they had filed reports that "were contrary to reality." He said Tehran had the right to bar some UN inspectors from monitoring its disputed nuclear program.

Iran has denied access to a senior inspector in the past and objected to other appointments.

Soltanieh told the Associated Press that the IAEA currently had 150 inspectors able to work in Iran and pointed out that the report mentioned the country had approved five additional inspectors. That, he said, was a "clear indication" that Tehran has cooperated with the IAEA.

Mixed signals

The 11-page IAEA document also says Iran continues to enrich uranium in contravention of UN Security Council demands and despite additional sanctions imposed earlier this year.

It says Iran has produced around 2.8 tons of low-enriched uranium, up from 2.4 tons in May.

According to the IAEA, enrichment for what Tehran says will be fuel for a research reactor has produced about 22 kilograms of 20%-enriched uranium. Such material can be turned into weapons-grade material more quickly than low-enriched uranium.

The Iranian leadership has repeatedly rejected international demands that the country halt sensitive enrichment activity and has sent mixed signals about its readiness to negotiate with the West.

The quarterly report also says that Iran continued to stonewall the agency in its efforts to follow up on intelligence indicating past experiments meant to develop a nuclear weapons program.

It also says there had been cases when agency seals had been broken at Iran's Natanz enrichment plant. Iran said they were accidental, but the IAEA said it would look into the issue.

In reaction to the report, China expressed hope that Iran and the IAEA could fully cooperate and "establish the trust of the international community in the peaceful nature of their nuclear plants".

Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu also voiced hope for increased diplomatic efforts and a speedy resumption of talks aimed at seeking a resolution to the Iran nuclear issue.

Meanwhile, six countries across the Persian Gulf called on Iran to cooperate with the IAEA, saying they wanted Tehran to help efforts to make the Middle East a region free of weapons of mass destruction.

The statement was issued by the Gulf Cooperation Council, a loose political and economic alliance that groups Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait and Oman.

Written by Antoine Blua, with contributions from RFE/RL's Radio Farda and agency reports.

http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/LI09Ak01.html

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Vancouver Sun – Canada

UN Watchdog Sniffs Around Alleged Reactor Site in Syria

Bashar Assad's regime remains tight-lipped about nuclear ambitions while stymying IAEA access to military facility

By Jonathan Manthorpe, Vancouver Sun

September 9, 2010

In the deadly drama of the proliferation of nuclear weapons, the arrogant displays of ambition by North Korea and Iran tend to overshadow the other actors on the set.

But there are many national leaders who for one reason or another believe that acquiring nuclear weapons would give their countries unmatched security.

More often than not, of course, the leaders are most worried about the survival of their regimes.

Bashar Assad, the president of Syria, is a case in point.

There is little doubt that Assad was committed to a nuclear development program. All the evidence is that he'd bought a nuclear reactor from North Korea.

But the Syria problem seemed to be solved before it got started when in September 2007 Israel, which doesn't like anyone in the Middle East having nuclear weapons except itself, bombed the Syrian reactor site at Dair Alzour.

Damascus has said very little about the raid except to firmly deny it was building a reactor at Dair Alzour, though it says the place was a military site.

The pre-emptive raid by the Israelis has left many with the impression that if Syria was a potential nuclear problem, the problem has been solved in a crude but effective manner.

Well, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the United Nations' watchdog on these matters, is not so sure.

On Monday, at the same time as it reported that Iran has totally failed to improve its behaviour since the UN tightened sanctions against the Tehran regime three months ago, the IAEA also set out its continuing worries about Syria.

The report is scathing about the almost total failure of the Assad regime to give the IAEA the access or the answers needed to ascertain exactly what the Syrian government was up to before the Israeli air force put a stop to it.

Because of this lack of cooperation, the IAEA report leaves hanging the question about whether Assad has abandoned his nuclear weapons ambitions. Indeed, in the realm of nuclear weapons, where information is purposefully withheld or obscured, it is always wise to assume the worst.

Since the veteran Japanese diplomat and specialist on arms control, Yukiya Amano, took over as director-general of the IAEA last year, the agency's pronouncements have adopted a refreshing bluntness of tone.

The report on Syria notes Damascus' denial that the Dair Alzour facility was a nuclear reactor, but then points out that the building's features, Syria's purchase of large quantities of graphite for the installation and its capacity to pump large quantities of cooling water suggest the opposite.

There's also the matter of Syria importing large quantities of barite, the material used to increase the effectiveness of concrete in stopping penetration of radiation. This could come from a reactor core or from used fuel rods being processed to extract plutonium which could be used for a bomb.

IAEA inspectors have, apparently, only been allowed one visit to the Dair Alzour site in June 2008, by which time the Syrian authorities had spent a good deal of time and effort cleaning up the aftermath of the Israeli raid.

The inspectors were not and have not been given the documents, such as architectural and engineering plans of the destroyed building, that they asked for and they weren't given access to debris or equipment from the site.

But they do seem to have acquired some samples from the site and found what the report describes as "anthropogenic natural uranium." What that means is uranium that has been manufactured by a man-made chemical process.

The Syrians have tried to brush this aside, saying no doubt the uranium came from the munitions and bombs fired at the Dair Alzour facility by the Israelis.

The IAEA report says the agency "has assessed that the probability the particles originated from the missiles used to destroy the building is low," though one gets the feeling the writer would have liked to say something a good deal more direct and rude.

So there should be no surprise that moves are afoot to get the backing from the IAEA board of governors when it meets in November for a "special investigation" of Syria, a move usually reserved for extreme flouting of UN safeguards.

<http://www.vancouversun.com/technology/watchdog+sniffs+around+alleged+reactor+site+Syria/3499069/story.htm>
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London Daily Telegraph – U.K.

Iran Accused of Building Secret Underground Nuclear Plant

Iran has been secretly constructing a vast underground complex to hide a nuclear facility in the mountains east of Tehran in a development that would violate the UN sanctions regime, it has been claimed.

By Damien McElroy, Foreign Affairs Correspondent
9 September 2010

The site, code-named 311, is set inside a military base near Abyek, 75 miles outside the capital, and consists of a series of four bombproof tunnels made from reinforced concrete set 656ft (200m) deep inside a desert ridge.

The People's Mujahedeen of Iran, an opposition group with an extensive network inside the country, said Tehran launched construction at the facility in 2005 and had spent \$100 million (£65 million) on the tunnels.

The group has previously revealed secret atomic plants at Natanz and Qom that the Iranian regime has subsequently acknowledged to be nuclear facilities.

The exiled opposition group is a radical but deeply rooted enemy of the Islamic Republic and its armed wing Mujahedeen e-Khalk is proscribed as a terrorist organisation in the US.

"This is certainly part of the secret weapons program," said Alireza Jafarzadeh, a spokesman for the group who presented photographs of the site in Washington. "It's just moved underground, in tunnels, hidden from the outside world."

The organisation said it had already passed the information, which includes eyewitness reports from inside the facility and satellite images showing considerable development in the remote area, to the US government.

If construction was started in 2005 it would represent an embarrassing failure of US intelligence which concluded the Iranian leadership had suspended enrichment of uranium, the key component of a nuclear weapon, at the time.

A Western diplomat said the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the UN agency that safeguards atomic materials, would be expected to examine the report. If the information is credible the IAEA would demand access to the site to ensure that no refinement of uranium or other nuclear materials had taken place there.

"Any new plant would be in contravention of a six UN security council resolutions warning Iran to suspend all enrichment and reprocessing activities," the diplomat said.

Iran has maintained that it does not need to notify the IAEA of construction of a nuclear plant until 180 days before it is commissioned. However, the agency believes that Iran is under an obligation to confirm its intention to construct a plant.

The IAEA has established a substantial inspections regime at Natanz where, a report said this week, that Iran had processed 2.8 tonnes of low-enriched uranium, enough to manufacture two nuclear weapons, and 48lb of higher refined material that could more easily be converted into a bomb.

The People's Mujahedeen of Iran said that Iran was believed to be about one year from commissioning the Abyek site but that there had recently been a worrying escalation in the amount of electricity being consumed by the plant. It said that electricity usage had doubled in recent months, though the group could not confirm that Iran had move centrifuge equipment to refine uranium to the plant.

Iranian officials have vowed to pursue a nuclear energy programme in defiance of international pressure. Officials have said there are plans to build 10 uranium enrichment plants in secret locations including mountain tunnels.

Meanwhile in Tehran the Culture Ministry said one of the three Americans jailed for crossing the border with Iraq more than a year ago would be released tomorrow.

Shane Bauer, 27, Sarah Shourd, 31, and Josh Fattal, 27 have been accused by Iranian authorities of spying and of illegally entering Iran.

The three insist they entered the Islamic republic by mistake after being lost during a hike in Iraqi Kurdistan, while US authorities says they are innocent and should be released immediately.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iran/7992723/Iran-accused-of-building-secret-underground-nuclear-plant.html>

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Jerusalem Post – Israel

Iran Denies it is Building Secret Nuclear Facility

Nuke chief Salehi says country has no undeclared nuclear sites; opposition claims uranium enrichment plant hidden in mountains.

By ASSOCIATED PRESS AND JPOST.COM STAFF

September 10, 2010

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran is denying an opposition group's claim that it is building a secret nuclear facility west of the capital, the semiofficial Mehr news agency reported on Friday.

The head of Iran's nuclear agency, Ali Akbar Salehi, said the country has no undeclared nuclear sites.

On Thursday, an Iranian opposition group claimed to have discovered a new uranium enrichment plant being built about 75 miles (120 kilometers) west of Tehran and said it was 85 percent complete.

A US government official also disputed the claim by the People's Mujahedeen Organization of Iran, saying the site did not appear to have a nuclear role. The official said the US has known about the facility for years but has no reason to think it is nuclear.

Prominent Iranian opposition members claimed to have revealed a secret uranium enrichment site buried deep in the mountains northwest of Teheran, according to an AFP report on Thursday.

According to the report, the enrichment site is managed by Iran's defense ministry and construction began in 2005 in Abyek, roughly 70 miles northwest of Teheran, the People's Mujahedeen Organization of Iran (PMOI), revealed.

"This is controlled, run and operated... by the ministry of defense," said Alireza Jafarzadeh, former media spokesman for the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) at a press conference in Washington DC.

The PMOI, the main organization in the NCRI, has been officially recognized as a foreign terror organization by the US, however in July, a judge ruled that the group should be removed from the foreign terror list.

Until now, Iran has spent 100 million dollars on the project, said Soona Samsami, former US representative for the NCRI. He said that around 85 percent of construction of the site has been completed.

Samsami and Jafarzadeh presented satellite photographs of the alleged uranium enrichment location which they say supports information received from sources "inside the Iranian regime." The two presented what they said were four entrances and a tunnel to the site.

On top of the tunnel, a mountain peak stands at a height of 100 meters. Nuclear experts said a height of 80 meters is needed to block detection through radioactive emissions, explained Jafarzadeh. The site is protected from aerial bombardment due to the mountain's location, he added.

The tunnel, with dimensions of eight meters at the width and 200 meters in length, goes deep underground to three large halls which were designed to hold centrifuge cascades, utilized in the process of uranium enrichment, Jafarzadeh said.

When construction of the facility began, Iran had denied any nuclear activities, said the opposition members.

The data revealed about the Behjatabad-Abyek site was shared with the US government, US Congress and the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency.

<http://www.jpost.com/IranianThreat/News/Article.aspx?id=187681>

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Bangkok Post – Thailand
9 September 2010

S.Korean Minister Warns of Nuclear 'Domino Effect'

By Agence France-Presse (AFP)

South Korea's point man on North Korea warned Thursday of a global "nuclear domino effect" unless the communist state scraps its atomic weapons.

Unification Minister Hyun In-Taek was speaking days before senior US officials travel to South Korea, Japan and China for talks on the issue.

North Korea's atomic armament meant "major changes" in the region's security environment as well as the international order, Hyun, whose ministry handles cross-border relations, told a forum.

"It will produce nuclear domino effects across the globe," he said.

"Its nuclear programme is only pushing the North closer to a crisis," the minister added, saying that Pyongyang's weapons ambitions had "aggravated regime instability" and the impoverished country's economic woes.

The North bolted six-party nuclear disarmament negotiations in April last year following a United Nations reprimand for a long-range rocket test. It staged an atomic weapons test -- its second -- a month later.

China, which hosts the six-party forum that also including the two Koreas, the United States, Japan and Russia, is pushing to revive the dialogue.

But inter-Korean tensions remain high after the South accused the North of a deadly submarine attack on one of its warships.

At a separate event, the US military commander in South Korea said that the incident showed the North would focus on "asymmetric warfare" in any future provocations.

"We take the threat very seriously, what they will do in the future," General Walter Sharp, who commands 28,500 US troops in the country, told local reporters.

Given the strength of South Korean and US troops in a conventional all-out conflict, North Korea is "putting more money" into special operations forces, missile technology and nuclear weapons, Yonhap news agency quoted him as saying.

Sharp said annual US-South Korean war games staged last month practised a scenario that included stabilising the North following any conflict.

The computer-simulated exercise was based on lessons the US has learned from Iraq and Afghanistan, he was quoted as saying.

North Korea has reacted angrily in the past to such war planning, saying its real aim is forcible regime change.

The US envoy for North Korea, Stephen Bosworth, plus Sung Kim, the US special envoy for the six-party talks, and Daniel Russell, the National Security Council's Asia director, will make a three-country regional trip starting Sunday.

They will visit Seoul on September 12-14, Tokyo on September 14-15 and Beijing on September 15-16 as part of a flurry of recent consultations on the nuclear issue.

North Korea has reportedly finished preparing for a landmark meeting of its ruling communist party, and there is speculation it will confirm the youngest son of leader Kim Jong-Il as his eventual successor.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said Wednesday the United States was watching for any leadership changes but hoped that whoever is in power will scrap nuclear weapons.

<http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/asia/195435/s-korean-minister-warns-of-nuclear-domino-effect>

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Daily NK – South Korea

North Korea Can Untie Nuclear Knot

By Kim So Yeol
September 9, 2010

“Evidently, North Korea should undo the knot,” South Korea’s Minister of Unification told a forum today, speaking of the Gordian knot represented by the nuclear issue. “North Korea should show its sincere will for denuclearization and offer a specific plan of action as soon as possible.”

Giving the commemorative address to the Korea Global Forum (KGF), Minister Hyun In Taek further pointed out, “Now, North Korea is at a decisive turning point. Its development of nuclear weapons has added instability to its system and given it an economic problem different from that which it intended, plunging it into crisis.”

He added, “It is a problem the world should solve together, alongside the region,” adding, “We need a clear consensus on solving the North Korean nuclear issue and common acknowledgement that it is a pressing issue.”

Meanwhile, a former foreign affairs minister and sitting chair of KGF, Han Seung Ju noted in his opening remarks, “As North Korea seems to want to be recognized as a nuclear power, the North now has a serious dilemma between economic survival and systemic survival.”

He added, “North Korea wields nuclear weapons, but it cannot revive its crumbling economy with those nuclear weapons.” Nevertheless, he predicted, “North Korea will probably keep threatening others using open and illicit activities as well as nuclear weapons.”

The Korea Global Forum is a semi-governmental consultative group organized by the Ministry of Unification and Ilmin International Relations Institute at Korea University, whose mission is to expand the international consensus on peace and unification on the Korean Peninsula.

<http://www.dailynk.com/english/read.php?cataId=nk00100&num=6787>

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Yonhap News Agency – South Korea
September 9, 2010

Former U.S. Defense Secretary Says Still Premature to Restart Six-Party Talks

By Yoo Jee-ho

SEOUL, Sept. 9 (Yonhap) -- It would be "premature" to resume the stalled six-party denuclearization talks before North Korea admits its responsibility for its belligerent behavior and is made to pay a penalty, a former U.S. defense secretary said Thursday.

"I think there has to be some sort of concessions, some statement from North Korea," William Cohen said. Engaging the communist state at this time would only be playing into Pyongyang's hands, he said, speaking at a local security forum hosted by South Korea's Unification Ministry.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2010/09/09/0301000000AEN20100909004400315.HTML>

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The Australian – Australia

Party Strings Attached to North Korean Successor Kim Jong-un

By Rick Wallace, Tokyo correspondent
September 11, 2010

AS the world waits for Kim Jong-il to anoint his successor as North Korean leader - an announcement is tipped to emerge today -- a leading academic says the dictator's youngest son will be a "rubber stamp" for party powerbrokers during his first few years as leader.

Andrei Lankov, a Russian who studied in Pyongyang and now teaches at Kookmin University in Seoul, said Kim Jong-un would not assume the leadership until his father's death and would be immediately vulnerable to manipulation from the old guard.

Professor Lankov, a former Australian National University academic who studied North Korea for 25 years, said the key figures that surrounded Kim Jong-il would effectively run the country, with the young leader dependent on them for guidance.

"For the first few years, these people will try to stay in control," he told The Australian.

Professor Lankov said Kim Jong-il's brother-in-law Jang Song-thaek "seemed to be best positioned to become prince regent" to the mysterious Kim Jong-un.

The young heir-apparent is thought to be between 26 and 29 years of age and attended an international school in Switzerland for a time disguised as the son of an embassy employee.

Professor Lankov said while he expected the North's second dynastic succession to be stable in the short term, he said history showed such arrangements - young rulers being controlled from behind the scenes - often came unstuck.

"A new power structure is emerging: a member of the Kim family as essentially a powerless puppet - who will still be the object of hysterical worship - and a collective leadership whose members include the present-day top officials and they will manipulate the successor," Professor Lankov wrote in a column for the Korea Times.

His remarks came as politicians and diplomats throughout the world awaited news on the expected conference of the Korean Workers Party, which was scheduled to be held in the first 11 days of September.

Delegates have reportedly begun assembling in Pyongyang, but there have been no definitive reports that the conference, the first since 1966, was under way.

The regime issued a statement saying the summit would be held before September 11. News flows slowly from within the secretive dictatorship, and it's possible the event began yesterday.

Professor Lankov said if it were not held in the stated period, it would be an indication of serious problems within the hermit nation.

A flurry of international diplomacy erupted in response to the conference and Kim Jong-il's surprise visit to China this month. South Korean leader Lee Myung-bak and Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin met this week, agreeing to further efforts to denuclearise North Korea.

The US announced that Stephen Bosworth, special representative for North Korea policy, would travel to Seoul, Beijing and Tokyo next week to follow up his discussions with chief South Korean and Chinese nuclear envoys last week.

The commander of the US Forces Korea, General Walter Sharp, admitted that South Korea and the US had conducted exercises aimed at "stabilising" North Korea in the event of regime collapse there.

"We are designing our exercises to make sure that both the (South Korean) and US forces are not only able to defend, not only able to attack and kill, but also able to provide humanitarian assistance for the security and stability of the people," he said.

No USFK commander so far has openly mentioned such drills, which experts speculate were included as part of a contingency operation plan the two allies are working out.

While the succession plan in Pyongyang may be closed to being formalised, Professor Lankov said he expected no real reduction in the North Korean leadership's nuclear "brinkmanship".

Additional reporting: agencies

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/party-strings-attached-to-north-korean-successor-kim-jong-un/story-e6frg6so-1225917636588>

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New York Times
September 9, 2010

Nuclear - Armed Pakistan Expected to Chair IAEA Board

By Reuters

VIENNA (Reuters) - Pakistan is expected to become the next head of the U.N. nuclear watchdog's governing body despite being outside a global anti-nuclear arms pact and home to a nuclear smuggler who supplied Iran and North Korea, diplomats say.

One Western diplomat said the choice was "not ideal" because, like India, North Korea and Israel, Pakistan has shunned the 1970 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) that is at the heart of the International Atomic Energy Agency's work.

But Western powers are not expected to oppose the nominee of a group of Middle East and South Asia member states because Pakistan was a longstanding member of the Vienna-based IAEA Board of Governors and the choice would be within its rules.

"People are talking about it but I don't think there will be any uproar," a European diplomat said. "There is no rule saying that an informal nuclear weapons state cannot be chair."

The one-year position rotates between regions, who put forward their own nominee, and entails chairing debates of the IAEA's 35-nation decision-making body and helping them reach consensus decisions. It would not give Pakistan individual powers to decide U.N. nuclear policy.

In theory, other IAEA member states could reject Pakistan's chairmanship at a board meeting to decide on the issue scheduled for late September but this is very unlikely, diplomats said. Malaysia currently chairs the board.

"They are not the ideal board chairman but at the same time it is not really possible to make an issue of it," the Western diplomat said, suggesting opposition would undermine the traditional selection process.

NATIONAL HERO

The diplomat said Pakistan may have been chosen because it was easier to agree on within the regional group than a state from the Middle East. Iran and Syria, under IAEA investigation over nuclear proliferation suspicions, are also in this group.

"There is consensus on Pakistan in our group," an Asian diplomat said, without giving further details.

Iran and North Korea, seen as major proliferation risks by the West, are believed to have benefited from a nuclear smuggling ring run by Pakistani scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan, the father of Pakistan's atomic bomb and a national hero.

He confessed on television in 2004 to selling nuclear secrets to Iran, North Korea and Libya. Pakistani authorities denied any connection to Khan's smuggling ring but have never let foreign investigators question him.

Some analysts say Pakistan's nuclear arsenal and stockpile of weapons-grade material pose a risk in the region because of internal security threats from the Taliban and al Qaeda.

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Pakistan has about 60 warheads while regional rival India has 60-70. Both nations conducted nuclear tests in 1998.

Oliver Thraenert, senior fellow at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, said Pakistan was a "special case" because of the Khan network and it being outside the NPT.

But he did not expect its IAEA chairmanship to "necessarily" cause any problems and said it might even encourage Pakistan to "become more responsible as an IAEA member and bring it closer to the whole nuclear non-proliferation regime."

Editing by Mark Heinrich

<http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2010/09/09/world/international-us-nuclear-iaea-pakistan.html?partner=rss&emc=rss>

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

Bulava Tests to Resume in Late September - Defense Minister

8 September 2010

Test launches of Russia's Bulava submarine launched ballistic missile will resume in late September, Russian Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov said on Wednesday.

Test launches of Bulava were put on hold after a failed launch last year. Experts say manufacturing faults were to blame.

"Preparations are currently underway," Serdyukov said. "We have tried to control the entire process of the missiles' assembly."

"There will be three [more test] missiles, and during their launch we will find out the cause of failed launches if the same mistakes happen again," he added.

The Bulava (SS-NX-30), a three-stage liquid and solid-propellant submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM), has officially suffered seven failures in 12 tests.

Some analysts suggest that in reality the number of failures has been considerably higher.

MOSCOW, September 8 (RIA Novosti)

http://en.rian.ru/military_news/20100908/160514392.html

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Global Security Newswire

NATO Chief Anticipates Diminished Reliance on Nuclear Arsenal

Wednesday, September 8, 2010

By Elaine M. Grossman

WASHINGTON -- The head of NATO yesterday said the military alliance will use a major summit in November to signal a reduced reliance on nuclear weapons for deterring attacks against European member nations (see GSN, Aug. 17).

"I would expect allies to endorse the grand vision of a world without nuclear weapons," NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen told reporters at a breakfast event. "But, at the same time, [they will] state that as long as nuclear weapons exist, the alliance will remain a nuclear alliance, while gradually reducing the role and number of nuclear weapons."

His statement closely mirrored the Obama administration approach to nuclear weapons, laid out in the U.S. president's April 2009 speech in Prague and this year's Nuclear Posture Review.

Alliance member states are negotiating a consensus position on the status of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons in Europe in the lead-up to a NATO summit of heads of state, to be held Nov. 19 to 20 in Lisbon, according to the former Danish prime minister.

"I don't think it's a secret that there are different positions when it comes to our nuclear posture," Rasmussen said. "My task will be to find the right balance and platform on which we can trace consensus."

Some West European leaders have proposed the removal of the roughly 200 B-61 nuclear gravity bombs deployed at six air bases in five NATO nations: Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey. It is unclear whether Washington would destroy such weapons or maintain them in active stockpiles in the United States.

Anxiety that these relatively small arms might be vulnerable to terrorist theft has been on the rise, particularly after an incident this year in which peace activists succeeded in sneaking onto a Belgian base housing nuclear weapons and evaded detection for more than an hour (see GSN, Feb. 17).

Though NATO's tactical atomic weapons were widely seen as necessary to counter a Warsaw Pact conventional armament advantage during the Cold War, German State Minister Werner Hoyer said in May that today they "no longer serve a military purpose and do not create security."

A Belgian arms control envoy, Werner Bauwens, similarly called on Moscow and Washington to begin talks on withdrawing their deployed tactical nuclear weapons "as soon as possible" (see GSN, May 7). Russia maintains an estimated arsenal of 2,000 tactical nuclear weapons in Europe.

Despite the growing calls for withdrawal, Turkey is believed unlikely to accept a pullback of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons fielded on its soil, particularly if Iran develops an atomic bomb.

At the same time, Russia has been pressing the United States and NATO for new negotiations aimed at reducing heavy conventional armaments deployed in Europe, where the Western allies now hold numerical superiority. Moscow could make its call for new Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty talks a prerequisite for further reductions in nuclear weapons, following ratification of the New START agreement (see GSN, July 21).

Any change in NATO nuclear or conventional forces deployed in Europe can be expected to have some effect on deterring would-be adversaries, Rasmussen said at the Defense Writers Group breakfast.

"Obviously all disarmament efforts and steps will have an impact on our deterrence policy," said the NATO leader. "But I don't think we should distinguish between conventional and nuclear deterrence policies. It will still be a mix."

He said NATO would continue to rely on both types of arms to prevent war.

"We will not give up nuclear capabilities as an essential part of our deterrence policies," Rasmussen said. "But we will certainly address a broader spectrum of new security threats and challenges."

Despite the anticipated changes, nuclear weapons policy is not expected to headline the upcoming summit in Portugal. Rather, NATO plans for withdrawing forces from Afghanistan and transitioning increased responsibility to Kabul's security forces are expected to take center stage.

Nonetheless, Rasmussen called the role of nuclear weapons "a very central question" in NATO's newly updated strategic concept, which is to be unveiled at the November conference. A May draft version of the mission statement said the alliance should maintain deployed nuclear weapons "at the minimum level required by the prevailing security environment" (see GSN, May 17).

The strategic concept will also discuss contingency plans for addressing emerging threats, such as cyber attacks, missile strikes and terrorism, the NATO leader said.

Rasmussen said he anticipates that the alliance statement regarding the disposition of U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe will not offer many details about where or how many arms will remain.

"I would not expect the NATO summit in this context to produce concrete numbers regarding nuclear or conventional disarmament. That's not the purpose of the summit," Rasmussen said. "We will adopt a new strategic concept which, in broad terms, will give direction. And then, of course, it is for follow-up negotiations to produce more concrete facts and figures."

http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20100908_9517.php

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SpaceDaily.com

Study Says Sheltering Better Nuclear Plan

By Staff Writers

Washington, United Press International (UPI)

September 7, 2010

A U.S. study says that in a nuclear detonation people in large cities would be better off sheltering in place rather than trying to evacuate immediately.

Researchers at Stanford University say that unless a lengthy warning period is provided, clogged exit roads would pose more significant risks by exposing evacuees to radiation than if people were to remain in place at the center of large buildings or in basements, a release from the Society for Risk Analysis says.

The Stanford research uses sophisticated mathematical models to investigate the impact of various response strategies.

"The logistical challenge of an evacuation appears to be beyond current response capabilities," study author Lawrence M. Wein of Stanford said.

The Stanford researchers cite previous studies saying first responders are unlikely to be able to establish evacuation stations until 12-48 hours after an attack, no significant federal response would be likely for 24 hours, and a full federal response is not likely to be achieved for 72 hours.

"Unlike a bioterror or chemical attack, it may not be possible for the government to provide timely advice to the populace after such an event," the study said.

The research was published in the journal Risk Analysis.

http://www.spacedaily.com/reports/Study_says_sheltering_better_nuclear_plan_999.html

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National Nuclear Security Administration

Press Release

NNSA Announces Elimination of More Than 400 Metric Tons of Russian HEU

Program reaches 80 percent completion milestone

September 9, 2010

WASHINGTON, DC - The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) today announced that it has monitored the elimination of more than 400 metric tons (MT) of Russian highly enriched uranium (HEU) – the equivalent of more than 16,000 nuclear weapons – under a landmark nuclear nonproliferation program.

The 1993 U.S.-Russian HEU Purchase Agreement is now 80 percent complete and by 2013 will convert 500 MT of HEU from dismantled Russian nuclear weapons into low enriched uranium (LEU) for peaceful nuclear energy use. Nearly half of all electricity generated in commercial nuclear reactors in the U.S. comes from fuel that has its origins in Russian nuclear weapons.

"This is the ultimate sword to plowshares program, and I commend the continued joint commitment of the U.S. and Russian Federation to the safe and irreversible elimination of excess fissile materials under this important bilateral

agreement," said NNSA Administrator Thomas D'Agostino. "This milestone puts us one step closer to accomplishing the President's goal of securing or eliminating all weapons-usable nuclear materials worldwide."

The agreement requires the Russian Federation to convert weapons-origin HEU into LEU in Russia. The LEU is then delivered to the U.S. where it is fabricated into nuclear fuel and used in commercial reactors to generate approximately 10 percent of all electrical power nationwide.

NNSA's HEU Transparency Program monitors the Russian HEU to LEU conversion process to ensure that all LEU delivered to the U.S. under the agreement is derived from Russian weapons HEU. The Program implements extensive access and monitoring rights during 24 annual monitoring visits to four Russian HEU processing facilities. At these facilities, U.S. experts measure and observe HEU processing firsthand, and this information allows the U.S. to confirm that Russian HEU conversion activities fulfill the agreement's nonproliferation goals.

To date, the NNSA Program has conducted 290 monitoring visits to Russian HEU processing facilities, and U.S. experts monitor the elimination of 30 metric tons of HEU each year – the annual equivalent of 1,200 nuclear weapons. The Russian Federation also conducts reciprocal monitoring activities at U.S. facilities to confirm the peaceful use of all LEU delivered under the agreement.

<http://www.nnsa.energy.gov/mediaroom/pressreleases/heutransparency80090910>

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San Francisco Chronicle

Russian Defense Minister to Visit U.S. to Boost Cooperation

Friday, September 10, 2010

Sept. 10 (Bloomberg) -- Russian Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov will visit the U.S. next week to discuss issues such as anti-missile defense, disarmament and global stability with Defense Secretary Robert Gates.

Serdyukov will meet with Gates in Washington, visit the U.S. Naval Academy and tour an infantry base from Sept. 14-16, the minister's spokeswoman, Irina Kovalchuk, said today in an e-mailed statement.

The talks with Gates are part of the "continuing consultations on disarmament programs, anti-missile defense, military cooperation and common responsibility for preserving strategic stability," Sergei Prikhodko, President Dmitry Medvedev's foreign policy aide, said in an interview.

Medvedev and U.S. President Barack Obama in April signed a treaty to cut their nuclear arsenals, saying the agreement marked a new era of cooperation between the two countries. The two presidents met again on June 24 in Washington.

This visit is "a step to develop agreements on cooperation between the two countries that President Medvedev achieved during the Russian-American summit in June," Kovalchuk said.

Serdyukov, who became defense minister in 2007, is overseeing an overhaul of the military initiated after Russia's five-day war with Georgia in 2008.

He plans to change the command structure, cut personnel by 23 percent to 1 million, and increase arms imports to boost competition for Russian producers.

The main goal is to create a "mobile, compact and well-equipped army," he says.

The U.S. Navy has announced plans to buy 21 Russian-made Mi17 helicopters, made by Russia's state-owned Kazan Helicopters JSC. Hartford, Connecticut-based United Technologies Corp.'s Sikorsky unit, maker of Black Hawk helicopters, filed a protest, saying U.S. manufacturers weren't allowed to compete for the contract.

Editors: Willy Morris, Patrick G. Henry

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article/article?f=/g/a/2010/09/10/bloomberg1376-L8ISKG0D9L3701-20RCORJ6E0SJ13L6FJ0CN18OF2.DTL>

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London Guardian – U.K.

Osama bin Laden Challenged by Former Comrade

Repentant ex-jihadi Noman Benotman calls for an end to al-Qaida US campaign, saying 9/11 attacks only brought suffering to ordinary Muslims

By Ian Black, Middle East editor

Friday, 10 September 2010

Is Osama bin Laden willing to listen to constructive criticism from an old friend? If so, a former al-Qaida comrade-in-arms has some advice for him to mark the anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, coinciding this year with the row over Qur'an-burning by an obscure American church that could, some fear, give the organisation a new lease of life.

Noman Benotman is a Libyan ex-jihadi who now devotes himself to combating the message of jihadi extremism. He fought with the mujahideen against the Red Army in Afghanistan but broke with Bin Laden in 2000, after urging him to stop his campaign against the United States because, he argued, it was sabotaging the prospects for change in the Arab world.

Chances are that Benotman's latest appeal calling for a unilateral six-month ceasefire will fall on deaf ears in Waziristan, or wherever Bin Laden is hiding these days. Cynics may dismiss it as a propaganda exercise. But it is worth listening to as an eloquent challenge to al-Qaida from one who once embraced its noxious world view:

"What has September 11 brought to the world except mass killings, occupations, destruction, hatred of Muslims, humiliation of Islam, and a tighter grip on the lives of ordinary Muslims by the authoritarian regimes that control Arab and Muslim states?" Benotman asks.

"Muslims across the world have rejected your calls for wrongful jihad and the establishment of your so-called 'Islamic state' when they witnessed the form this has taken in Iraq. Even the Palestinians consider your 'help' to have had negative repercussions on their cause. Indeed, Israel's control over Gaza has never been stronger and yet some of your supporters have even declared Hamas to be an apostate organisation!

"Most Muslim communities wish to embrace and engage in democracy; they seek justice, peace, freedom, human rights and peaceful co-existence with the rest of the world. Instead, where there was harmony, you brought discord. In New York, your un-Islamic actions have caused hurt, loss, pain and anguish to thousands of innocent people and their families. One consequence is that those Muslims seeking to build a House of God in New York are today being compared to Nazis. And now we hear that on the anniversary of your attack, an American preacher is even planning to burn the Qu'ran in revenge! Indeed, Muslims living in democratic and free societies around the world are now experiencing the consequences of your irresponsible acts."

Benotman speaks with the zeal of the convert, like those former communists who came to excoriate the god that had failed them. He is in demand by academics, the media and governments as an expert on al-Qaida who has near-unique personal experience. He recently joined the Quilliam Foundation, which describes itself as "the world's first counter-extremism thinktank". It is criticised by the left and Islamists for enjoying public funding, paying insufficient attention to western foreign policy and equating all forms of political Islam with extremism and terrorism.

Benotman played a key role in persuading imprisoned members of his old outfit, the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, to draw up theological "revisions" to the jihadi world view, which directly challenged al-Qaida. He worked closely on this with Saif al-Islam al-Gaddafi, the Libyan leader's son, who likes to advertise his modernising agenda.

The largest-scale "re-education" of jihadis has been in Saudi Arabia, where financial inducements and pressure on prisoners' families combined with a religious message that emphasises the Islamic authority and legitimacy of the Saudi state. Like other Arab regimes, the Saudis sent thousands of young men to fight the communists in Afghanistan and later turned a blind eye to jihad against the US in Iraq until it began to "blow back" home and threaten them.

Egypt has also seen success with the pioneering "revisions" or "recantations" undertaken by Sayyid Imam al-Sharif - aka Dr Fadl - a once-revered al-Qaida ideologue, from inside his prison cell. Furious reactions from Ayman al-Zawahiri, Bin Laden's deputy, suggested that al-Qaida central took these challenges very seriously.

Conventional wisdom among governments, intelligence services and pundits in the west and the Arab world is that nine years after 9/11, al-Qaida is on the back foot. It is under heavy military pressure in Afghanistan and Pakistan, though still dangerous in Iraq and showing signs of resurgence in Yemen and Somalia. High-profile public criticism from a former jihadi is part of the ideological and propaganda war against it.

It is not enough, of course, to look critically at only one side: Benotman has referred to the problem of the west "talking idealistically and acting brutally" in the Middle East. But that is another story.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/sep/10/bin-aden-challenge-former-comrade>

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Review & Outlook
September 8, 2010

Iran's Shadow Games

Now you see a nuclear proliferation threat, now you don't.

Another International Atomic Energy Agency report serves up more data on Iran's atomic progress. Ho-hum. So, barring an epiphany of seriousness by the so-called international community, one of these days Mahmoud Ahmadinejad will usher his regime into the world's club of nuclear states.

The IAEA's 11-page report, circulated to member countries Monday, suggests that day looms sooner than later. What's most striking isn't the latest, fast-growing tally of enriched uranium but Iran's escalating war against the Vienna-based watchdog itself. Tehran is closing the blinds even on its declared, supposedly peaceful, civilian sites.

The report says that in June Iran barred two inspectors who had earlier this year reported that Iranian scientists had told them about plans to work with uranium metal, which can be used to make a nuclear device. The Iranians said the inspectors had made "false and wrong statements."

The IAEA has also sounded the alarm on Iran's growing refusal to cooperate with inspectors, allow access to nuclear sites and answer its questions—for example, about its nuclear warhead program. It says it can't confirm the quantity of certain nuclear materials and wasn't provided information it sought about plans for new enrichment facilities. The IAEA says it "is concerned that the repeated objection to the designation of experienced inspectors hampers the inspection process and detracts from the agency's ability to implement safeguards in Iran." No doubt.

By now this is Groundhog Day, the Persian movie classic. The Iranian secret enrichment plant at Natanz came to light in 2002 and the illegal underground facility near Qom last year. Information about Iran's consistent attempts to build warheads and procure ballistic missile technology and hardware has come out in steady bits. As Iran now pulls a longer shroud over its nuclear work, how can anyone not consider anything Iran does in the nuclear field a significant proliferation threat?

That includes the nuclear power plant in Bushehr, the Russian-built facility that was loaded with fuel last month and will be fired up shortly. The nuclear fuel comes from Russia and by contract the spent rods will be sent back there. But already Iran has asked to manage the handling of the fuel jointly with Russia. Little stands in its way to one day reprocess it into weapons-grade plutonium. The contempt shown the IAEA is a harbinger of Iran's commitments to Russia at Bushehr.

The latest U.N. sanctions adopted in June—the hallmark of the Obama Administration's strategy toward Iran—aren't pushing the regime off its atomic path. Iran's stockpile of low-enriched uranium rose 15% since May, to 2.8 tons, enough to make up to three bombs. At least 22 kilograms were enriched up to 20% purity, a technical milestone for Iran; from there, it can hop within weeks to the 90% required in a nuclear device. The IAEA does report Iran has slightly fewer centrifuges busy refining uranium—for all they know. U.S. intelligence says Iran needs a year to get a bomb, as if that's reassuring.

These IAEA reports, which sound so depressingly similar, ought to rally our leaders to explain the grave stakes here, in particular that military force might be needed as diplomacy and sanctions seem to be failing, and rally the world to stop Iran from acquiring a bomb. U.N. inspections won't matter once the first bomb goes off.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704358904575477761797589920.html>

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Gulf News – U.A.E.
OPINION

Washington Favours a Weaker Foe

The United States can't attack Iran in the near future as such action will make life miserable for America on many fronts

By Marwan Al Kabalan, Special to Gulf News
September 10, 2010

In October 2003, six months after the fall of Baghdad, North Korea admitted publicly that it had acquired nuclear weapons. The US reaction was a combination of rage and embarrassment. In an address to delegates at an Asian security summit in Singapore in November 2003, then Deputy Secretary of Defence, Paul Wolfowitz, was asked why a nuclear power such as North Korea was being treated differently from Iraq, where hardly any weapons of mass destruction had been found. Wolfowitz said: "Let's look at it simply. The most important difference between North Korea and Iraq is that economically, we just had no choice in Iraq. The country swims on a sea of oil".

As important and frank this answer might have been in clarifying the real motive behind the invasion of Iraq, it does not tell the whole story, however. Iran has as much oil and is accused by the US government of seeking nuclear weapons. Yet, Washington has so far been hesitant to attack it. There must be then another element that needs to be illuminated.

When Pyongyang announced that it had produced several nuclear bombs, foes of the George W. Bush administration mocked its policies for going after Iraq while leaving North Korea develop its nuclear weapons with almost total disregard to US warnings. Despite the embarrassment, officials of the Bush administration called for caution and insisted on the use of diplomacy to defuse the crisis with Pyongyang. Then vice-president, Dick Cheney, the architect of the Iraq war, was asked on the CNN if he would support the use of military action to disarm North Korea. His answer was simply a startling "No".

'Doable' Iraq

Cheney was asked why then he supported the use of military action against Iraq. Cheney replied: "because Iraq was doable".

Indeed, Iraq turned to be a lot more difficult than Cheney had predicted. Yet, his answer was key to understanding the logic of action for the US military machine and to Washington's approach in dealing with international crises. These answers can also help predict the US reaction to Iran's endeavour to acquire nuclear weapons.

In recent weeks and after a period of calm, the Obama administration raised the stakes in its confrontation with Iran when the US chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) Admiral Mike Mullen stated in a televised interview that his administration "has a plan to attack Iran". Admiral Mullen made this assertion on the basis that "the risk of Iran's developing a nuclear weapon is unacceptable". Many have interpreted the carefully worded statement by the top US military commander as a warning that military action against Iran is approaching and that an Iraqi scenario is in the paly. Others downplayed the statement as mere rhetoric.

Given what Cheney had revealed before, US military action against Iran does not seem probable at this stage. US Secretary of Defence Robert Gates ruled out an early push for military action against Tehran.

"There is still time, of course, for the Iranians to react," Gates said.

The Obama administration's cautious response to Iran's alleged endeavours to acquire nuclear weapons cannot be interpreted as a mere interest in peaceful resolution to international crises. Rather, the fear of the consequences of attacking Iran at the most inappropriate time is what keeping Washington quite uncertain about what to do with this challenge.

The US attitude in dealing with the Iranian crisis is also seen by many as a confirmation of the golden rule in US military strategy. Except for the Second World War, the United States has never fought a war with powerful states. Vietnam, Granada, Panama, Haiti, Somalia, Serbia, Afghanistan and Iraq, to name but a few, are just examples of this tendency in US policy circles.

Iran, by comparison, is a relatively strong country and can inflict as much damage at the US interests in the region as the United States can do to Iran. Iran has already threatened to stop the flow of oil to the international market at a time when the world is still squabbling with the economic crisis. Iran can complicate the US strategy in Iraq and can even retaliate against its military presence there. It can strike against Israel and use surrogate powers to undermine the fragile stability in the entire Middle East.

For all these reasons, the best the United States can do — for now — is to give diplomatic efforts more time to defuse the crisis. It might also seek a fifth round of sanctions against Iran in the UN Security Council but not more.

For the time being Iran seems "undoable" for the United States. This does not mean, however, that it might not become "doable" at sometime in the future. This will depend more on Iran's approach to handling the crisis than on anything that the United States can or cannot do.

Dr Marwan Al Kabalan is a lecturer in media and international relations at Damascus University's Faculty of Political Science and Media in Syria.

<http://gulfnews.com/opinions/columnists/washington-favours-a-weaker-foe-1.679879>

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Washington Post
OPINION/EDITORIAL

If Iran Makes a Final Nuclear Push, Can it be Detected?

Friday, September 10, 2010

EARLIER THIS summer President Obama legitimately claimed credit for increasing the cost to Iran of its nuclear program. Fresh United Nations sanctions, the product of painstaking U.S. diplomacy with Russia and China, were augmented by tough new measures by Congress, the European Union, Japan and other allies. As these have been implemented, there have been signs of stress on the Iranian economy. But the ultimate goal of Mr. Obama's policy is not limiting Iran's prosperity but stopping its enrichment of uranium and forcing its compliance with the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. By this measure, the administration has yet to produce tangible results.

A new report by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) this week showed that there has essentially been no change in Iran's steady accumulation of low-enriched uranium. Since last November, its stockpile has grown from 1,800 kilograms to 2,800 kilograms -- an increase of more than 50 percent. Tehran now has enough low-enriched uranium to produce two nuclear weapons with further enrichment. Already, it has enriched 22 kilograms to the level of 20 percent, which is considerably closer to the 60 percent threshold for weapons.

Mr. Obama has expressed the hope that Iran finally will be drawn into negotiations over its nuclear activities in the coming months. But the growth of the stockpile has greatly complicated the prospects for the one compromise Iran has been willing to discuss in the last year -- a proposed swap of 1,200 kilograms of low-enriched uranium for fuel rods that could be used in a research reactor. When the deal was first proposed, Iran would have given up more than two-thirds of its stockpile and would have been left with less than the amount needed for one bomb. To achieve the same effect, Tehran would now have to be induced to nearly double the amount of low-enriched uranium it turned over.

Administration officials say that it would still take Iran a year to produce a weapon and that such an attempt would likely be detected by U.N. inspectors. But the IAEA report contained worrisome information on that score, too. Iran is refusing to answer questions about its work on more advanced centrifuges or on plans to construct more enrichment facilities. In June it barred two of the most experienced inspectors, part of a systematic effort to blind the IAEA to its activities. An analysis of the report by the Institute for Science and International Security concluded that Iran may be seeking "to increase its capability to divert nuclear material in secret and produce weapon-grade uranium in a plant unknown to the inspectors or Western intelligence agencies." If that is the case, economic sanctions are unlikely to prevent it.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/09/09/AR2010090905731.html>

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New York Times
OPINION/EDITORIAL
September 9, 2010

Read the Report

Iran has spent the last four years ignoring the United Nations' order to stop enriching uranium. And far too many of the world's major players have spent the last four years ignoring Iran's defiance.

The good news is that many countries are finally waking up to the danger. In the three months since the United Nations Security Council adopted its latest round of sanctions, a growing number is turning up the heat on Tehran, implementing the United Nations penalties and, in some cases, going beyond them.

The United States, the European Union, Canada and Australia have approved national sanctions that aim to choke off Iran's access to foreign capital, halt investment in its energy sector and impede its shipping industry.

In recent days, Japan barred all transactions with 15 Iranian banks, the United Arab Emirates froze four Iranian bank accounts and South Korea announced plans to restrict foreign exchange transactions for 126 Iranian companies and individuals — including the only Asian branch of Bank Mellat, one of Iran's largest banks. The sanctioned accounts, institutions and individuals are all associated with Iran's nuclear or missile programs.

The Obama administration, which has been pressing allies and others to take a much tougher line, went even further on Tuesday, sanctioning an Iranian-owned bank in Germany, the European-Iranian Trade Bank, or E.I.H. Bank, which is accused of facilitating billions of dollars of transactions for blacklisted Iranian companies. The move effectively shuts E.I.H. out of the American financial system.

Iran's government — so far at least — remains defiant. According to the latest report by the International Atomic Energy Agency, Iranian scientists are continuing their slow but steady production of low-enriched uranium and now have 6,108 pounds, up 15 percent from June. With further enrichment, that would be enough fuel for about two nuclear weapons.

Tehran has a long and cynical history of hiding nuclear facilities — including its main enrichment site at Natanz and more recently discovered enrichment facility at Qum. If that isn't enough, an Iranian dissident group on Thursday said it has found evidence of yet another secret nuclear site. And Iran is still refusing to fully cooperate with inspections by the atomic energy agency. For the past two years, Iran has barred two of the agency's most experienced monitors. The report also says Iran is continuing to refuse to answer questions about whether it is hiding other facilities and whether its program has military uses, including a suspected project to fit a nuclear warhead on a missile.

American officials say said the new sanctions are beginning to bite — choking Iran's access to foreign capital, trade and investments. If there is any chance of changing Tehran's behavior, it is clearly going to take more pressure and more time.

Countries that have adopted sanctions already need to implement them robustly. We are sure that the United Arab Emirates, a major hub for Iranian business activity, can find more than four accounts to freeze. Countries that for political or economic reasons are still enabling Iran — China comes immediately to mind — need to read that I.A.E.A. report again.

Tehran, predictably, insists it is not building a weapon. Its refusal to halt enrichment and cooperate with the I.A.E.A. makes that ever more impossible to believe.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/10/opinion/10fri1.html>

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