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Russian Lawmakers Could Reconsider "New START"

Monday, November 1, 2010

Russia's legislature should qualify its endorsement of a new nuclear arms control treaty with the United States in response to a ratification text under consideration in the U.S. Senate, Reuters quoted a senior Russian lawmaker as saying Friday (see *GSN*, Oct. 29).

President Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev in April signed "New START," which requires their nations to each cut deployed strategic nuclear weapons to 1,550 warheads, down from the maximum of 2,200 allowed by 2012 under an earlier agreement. They must both also restrict their active nuclear delivery vehicles to 700, with another 100 platforms allowed in reserve.

"I will advise my colleagues to ... return to discussion of our conditions for ratification," Duma International Affairs Committee Chairman Konstantin Kosachyov wrote in a blog post on the website for Ekho Moskvyy radio.

The panel had previously called for the pact to be ratified by the full Duma, the lower chamber of Russia's legislature, roughly in concert with a decision by the Senate in Washington.

However, U.S. Republicans placed the pact's implementation at risk by including "unilateral declarations" in a ratification resolution that could have legal weight, Kosachyov said (see *GSN*, Sept. 17).

Kosachyov denied to Reuters he was "suggesting refusal to ratify the treaty," but said he would call this week on his panel to include "its own interpretations" of the pact.

"It's a shame that the current American activity in a direction away from ratification ... could block the reset button," Kosachyov wrote in the blog post, referring to the Obama administration's hopes to strengthen relations with Moscow.

The lawmaker urged Russia to "significantly refine" its ratification text by adding enactment procedures, specifications for updating the nation's nuclear arsenal, and situations that could prompt the nation to stop participating in the treaty. He did not elaborate on possible details of such measures (Steve Gutterman, Reuters, Oct. 29).

The U.S. ratification document includes 13 declarations, 10 conditions and three "understandings," Interfax quoted Kosachyov as saying Friday.

"What causes our biggest concerns is these three understandings, which will have to be included in the ratification instrument in case of its passage by the Senate, and they in fact interpret the text of the agreements reached by our countries," he said.

"First, it is specially emphasized that (it is the U.S. senators' understanding that) strategic-range non-nuclear weapon systems do not fall under the treaty, but it is virtually impossible to tell whether a missile that has already been launched is carrying a nuclear or non-nuclear warhead or not," he said (see *GSN*, Sept. 22).

The second understanding indicates "the Americans are trying to apply the New START Treaty to rail-mobile ICBMs in case they are built," Kosachyov said.

"And third, they say at the same time that the New START treaty will on no account limit the Pentagon's efforts toward deploying missile defenses," he added (see *GSN*, Oct. 27).

"Thus, through such unilateral understandings, the Americans are trying to dispel their concerns about the possible emergence of rail-mobile ICBMs while at the same time ignore the Russian concerns about missile defenses and strategic-range non-nuclear weapons," he said.

"International law says that such reservations cannot exist in bilateral treaties," the lawmaker said.

Kosachyov also voiced concern over the treaty's U.S. ratification prospects during the current Congress's "lame-duck" session between tomorrow's election and Christmas, along with its chances for success in a revamped Senate next year.

"If ratification is considered by a new composition of the Senate, where the Democrats may lose from three to nine [seats], it is my expectation that this consideration could become even more problematic," he said.

The Duma International Affairs and Defense committees might begin considering updates to its ratification text next week, Kosachyov said (Interfax, Oct. 29).

http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20101101_4543.php

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Iranian Student News Agency (ISNA) – Iran
30 October 2010

Nuclear Countries' Arsenals Keep "Shadow of Fear" on Humanity, Says Iran

TEHRAN (ISNA)-Nuclear countries' arsenals have still kept shadow of fear on humanity, said Iranian UN ambassador Mohammad Khazaei.

Khazaei speaking in the UN General Assembly Disarmament Committee meeting in New York on Friday, pointed to Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bomb blast by the US and said, "thousands of warheads in nuclear countries' arsenals have still kept shadow of fear on humanity."

"The program to develop and modernize nuclear weapons to extend lifespan of nuclear warheads by one of the parties involved in the measure (the US) which allocated \$1,000,000,000 for the project is in contradiction with its motto of nuclear disarmament in the world," Khazaei said in his speech.

The UN committee meeting mulled over US-Russia New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) as well.

Also members of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) prepared a statement led by Iran showing objection against the treaty.

"Reduction of nuclear weapons cannot replace its annihilation, since entire destruction is the only way to rescue humanity from danger of nuclear weapon threat," NAM said in the statement.

The statement then called for Russia and the US to follow the principle of transparency, pave the way for international verification of their nuclear work, guarantee that their nuclear weapons and launch pads are annihilated and could be used no more.

Moscow and Washington signed the new START on April 8, 2010 in Prague, which calls for a big cut in nuclear weapons from both sides.

<http://www.isna.ir/ISNA/NewsView.aspx?ID=News-1643961&Lang=E>

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Khaleej Times – U.A.E.

Iran Not Ready to Talk Nuclear: Ahmadinejad Aide

By Reuters
31 October 2010

TEHERAN - Iran will not discuss its nuclear programme at talks with global powers, an adviser to President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said on Sunday, adding fresh doubt to the chances of a negotiated end to its stand-off with the West.

Iran said on Friday it was ready to resume talks which stalled more than a year ago and led to tightened sanctions against the Islamic Republic which many countries fear is seeking nuclear weapons, something it denies.

Both sides have said the talks could happen after Nov. 10, but Ali Akbar Javanfekr, a media adviser to the president, said they would not cover the nuclear issue — the one subject the other countries want to address.

'We will not be talking with the Western party about the nuclear energy issue in this round of the negotiations,' Javanfekr said, according to the semi-official Fars news agency.

The P5+1 group — the permanent members of the UN Security Council: Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States. plus Germany — want Iran to suspend uranium enrichment which can have both civilian and military uses, in exchange for trade and diplomatic benefits on offer since 2006.

Iran says its nuclear ambitions are purely peaceful and denies it is seeking nuclear arms, but it has refused to accept demands from the UN Security Council to halt enrichment and has been subjected to tightened sanctions since June aimed at getting it to comply.

Sceptics accuse Iran of stalling talks while it continues to stockpile nuclear material. Iran insists it has a right to enrichment under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Javanfekr said the P5+1 countries had yet to address Ahmadinejad's conditions for resuming talks. He did not say what the talks would cover if they do not address the nuclear issue.

FRIENDS AND ENEMIES

In a television interview on Saturday night, Ahmadinejad reiterated his position that the other parties should say whether they come to the table as Iran's friends.

'From the very beginning we told them that they have no option but negotiating with Iran. But it should be based on justice,' he said on state-run TV.

'(We ask) on the basis of what framework are you going to negotiate? Is it based on justice and respect? But they do not dare announce it yet.'

Ahmadinejad has also asked the parties to declare their opinion on Israel's alleged nuclear arsenal. Israel says a nuclear-armed Iran would threaten its very existence and does not rule out striking Iran militarily to stop that happening.

Ahmadinejad said talks could happen even if Iran was not satisfied with the responses, but that: 'We will negotiate one way with friends, another way with enemies.' He did not specify whether that meant Iran would enter negotiations but refuse to address the nuclear issue.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast remained optimistic that the talks — which EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton proposed holding in Vienna from Nov. 15 to 17 — would still happen.

'The contacts and consultations are under way and we are hopeful we will reach agreement over the details for the talks including the time, place and the content of the negotiation,' he was quoted as saying by Fars.

Teheran has appeared keener on resuming talks on a stalled plan for it to send low-enriched uranium abroad and receive higher-grade fuel for a medical research reactor in return.

Western diplomats say that, even if the fuel exchange idea were revived, it would not resolve farther-reaching concerns about Iran's nuclear plans which it must also agree to discuss.

The US State Department said this week Washington and EU nations were preparing a new offer to Iran on a swap that would include tougher conditions than those Teheran rejected last year.

http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle08.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2010/October/middleeast_October502.xml§ion=middleeast

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Voice of America

Iranian Official Says Tehran Has Own Agenda for Nuclear Talks

31 October 2010

By Edward Yeranian, Cairo

After accepting a fresh Western proposal to resume nuclear talks in Vienna, Tehran appears to be disputing the agenda. A close aide to President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad says Iran has its own conditions for resuming the talks.

Iran is sending out mixed signals about its willingness to discuss key provisions of its nuclear program in talks proposed to begin November 15th in Vienna. Iran agreed to the talks with the United States and five other U.N. members on Friday.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad explained to government TV that Tehran is willing to discuss certain topics that it has agreed upon, and on its own terms. He said Iran has sent a letter to the International Atomic Energy Agency expressing its position and a framework for the talks. He insists that negotiations be based on what he calls "justice and respect," but complains that the Western side has not clarified its position.

Mr. Ahmadinejad's press advisor Ali Akbar Javanfekr expressed further reservations, according to Fars News Agency, stating Iran "would not just talk about the nuclear energy issue." He said that Tehran also wants the West to clarify its position over Israeli nuclear weapons and policies.

Former Iranian President Abolhassan Bani Sadr, who lives in exile in France, points out that inside Iran, many officials have been wondering recently why the West has not offered to resume negotiations, sooner. He said Iran has been in a defensive position since the June U.N. Security Council sanctions resolutions, and the West has

seemed less and less inclined to negotiate. He points out Iranian leaders have been wondering recently why the West does not want to negotiate with Iran.

The former president says Mr. Ahmadinejad must appease his critics inside the regime, who will complain he is negotiating from a position of weakness. "By appearing to set new conditions," he explains, "Ahmadinejad can say Iran has imposed its own point of view."

Mr. Bani Sadr also notes that Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei recently called for a hardline position in nuclear talks with the West, during his visit to the holy city of Qom. He said Ayatollah Khamenei condemned the late Ayatollah Montazeri, who at one time was destined to become Iran's supreme leader, over his position to settle the nuclear crisis with the West in an amicable way. Khamenei, he says, called Montazeri's plan a "position of weakness," but would not stipulate what his own position of strength was.

Iran failed to accept a draft UN proposal in Oct. 2009 to send around 60 percent of its enriched-uranium stockpile abroad, for further enrichment. It also began to produce 20-percent grade highly enriched uranium in February, amid Western criticism. Iran has repeatedly refused to obey U.N. injunctions to stop enriching uranium.

Iran insists it needs to enrich uranium for peaceful, civilian purposes, but the West fears that it is covertly working to build nuclear weapons.

<http://www.voanews.com/english/news/Iranian-Official-Says-Tehran-Has-Own-Agenda-for-Nuclear-Talks-106408648.html>

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Daily Star - Lebanon

Atom Bomb would be Strategic Mistake: Iran Envoy

Tuesday, November 2, 2010

By Fredrik Dahl

VIENNA: Building nuclear bombs would be a strategic mistake for Iran, its envoy to the UN atomic agency said Monday, and a leading Western expert said Tehran should be taken seriously when it insists it will not obtain such arms.

Ali Asghar Soltanieh, Iran's ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), suggested the Islamic Republic could never compete in terms of the numbers of warheads possessed by the nuclear-armed major powers.

It would therefore be at a disadvantage in relation to these countries if it developed atomic bombs, Soltanieh said.

"That is the reason we will never make this strategic mistake," he told a conference at IAEA headquarters in Vienna. "We are as strong as those countries without nuclear weapons," he added.

He was speaking a few days after Iran said it was ready to resume negotiations with the six powers involved in efforts to defuse a long-running dispute over its nuclear program.

The United States and its allies suspect Iran is seeking nuclear arms capability and wants Tehran to curb its atomic activity.

Iran says its activities are solely aimed at generating electricity so that it can export more oil and gas.

In September, an IAEA report said Iran was pushing ahead with its nuclear work in defiance of tougher sanctions introduced on the major oil exporter in recent months.

It also voiced growing frustration over what the UN nuclear watchdog sees as Tehran's failure to address concerns about possible military dimensions to its program.

Soltanieh said Iran had called on the six powers – the United States, Germany, France, Britain, China and Russia – to come to the negotiating table without preconditions.

Five of them are permanent members of the UN Security Council and recognized nuclear weapons states.

Soltanieh asked whether Iran would be able to compete with these six powers if it decided to acquire such arms and added: "I can tell you that 100 percent no ... therefore we would be in a disadvantageous situation."

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov urged Iran to discuss its disputed nuclear program with major powers Monday and said it hoped talks could resume this month.

"We have a common interest in the speedy resumption of the negotiating process and call on Tehran to react to the proposals that have been made in a constructive way," Lavrov told a news conference.

“We hope that, perhaps, the negotiations ... will be resumed this month,” Lavrov added.

An adviser to Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said Sunday that Tehran would not discuss its nuclear program at talks with global powers, adding fresh doubt to the chances of a negotiated end to its stand-off with the West.

Gareth Evans, co-chair of an international commission which last year issued a report on eliminating nuclear threats, told the same gathering he believed Iran “is to be taken seriously when it says it will not actually weaponize.”

There are “a number of reasons for thinking that Iran will ... stop well short of actually making nuclear weapons that it may soon have the capability to produce,” the former Australian foreign minister said in a speech.

They included the risk of an Israeli attack, zero Russian and Chinese tolerance for an Iranian bomb, even tougher international sanctions and the fact that Islam does not accept weapons of mass destruction, he said.

“This is not a factor to which Western cynics would give much credence but I have to say it is echoed very strongly in every private conversation I’ve ever had with Iranian officials,” Evans, a veteran diplomatic trouble-shooter, said.

Any agreement on removing sanctions on Iran would need to be accompanied by it accepting intrusive monitoring and inspection arrangements, Evans said.

The expert suggested this could give the international community about a year in “lead time in which to respond to any evidence of real intent to move to weaponization.”

http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition_id=10&categ_id=2&article_id=121048#axzz148c5ftOG

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People’s Daily – China

Iran Says to have Talks about Fuel Swap Based on Tehran Declaration: Spokesman

November 2, 2010

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast said Tuesday that the upcoming talks between Iran and the world powers will be about fuel swap and based on Tehran Declaration.

The nuclear talks will be about the fuel swap for the Tehran research reactor and its framework is clear, Mehmanparast made the remarks in his weekly press briefing.

The framework of the talks is Tehran Declaration, he added.

In a tripartite meeting in Tehran on May 17, Iran signed an agreement with Turkey and Brazil, dubbed Tehran Declaration, to endorse a fuel swap deal, in which Iran agreed to ship most of its low enriched uranium to Turkey in exchange for the 20 percent uranium fuel needed for its Tehran research reactor.

On Friday, Iran's chief nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili said in a letter to Ashton that Iran welcomes "the willingness of the G5+1 to return to the talks with Iran."

Source: Xinhua

<http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90777/90854/7185781.html>

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Yonhap News – South Korea

October 30, 2010

S. Korea FM Agrees with U.S., Russian Peers to Resolve North's Nuke Weapons

HANOI/SEOUL, Oct. 30 (Yonhap) -- South Korea's foreign minister met separately with his counterparts from the United States and Russia in Hanoi Saturday and agreed to push for a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula, South Korean officials said.

The South Korean foreign minister, Kim Sung-hwan, was in Hanoi accompanying President Lee Myung-bak who attended the East Asia Summit involving the 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations as well as the U.S., China, Japan and South Korea.

On the sidelines of the summit, Kim met separately with U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

During the meetings, the sides agreed that North Korea's sincere intention and actions to denuclearize should be a prerequisite for a resumption of the stalled six-party talks, South Korea's foreign ministry said in a news statement released in Seoul.

In the Kim-Clinton meeting, they agreed to further strengthen their countries' alliance to effectively respond to any threats from North Korea, it said.

"The two ministers pledged to hold another discussion in the near future on topics of mutual interest," a ministry official in Seoul said.

The South Korean official also met with his Russian counterpart, pledging to continue to persuade North Korea to denuclearize, thus promoting peace in Northeast Asia, the ministry statement said.

The six-party talks, which involve the two Korea, the U.S., China, Japan and Russia, have been stalled since late 2008.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2010/10/30/99/0301000000AEN20101030002300320F.HTML>

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Spacewars.com
October 30, 2010

US Urges China to Press NKorea to Return to Nuclear Talks

By Staff Writers

Hanoi, Agence France-Presse (AFP) - US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on Saturday urged Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi to use his government's clout to get North Korea to return to nuclear disarmament talks.

During discussions on the sidelines of the East Asia Summit in Hanoi, Clinton also urged Yang to have China pressure North Korea to smooth the way for the Group of 20 summit in South Korea and improve ties with Seoul, a senior US State Department official told reporters.

"We conveyed today the need for China to exert pressure and influence on North Korea, first of all, to behave responsibly in the run-up to the G20 and to take the appropriate steps so that they rebuild trust and relations with South Korea and also return to the six-party talks," the official said.

North Korea said this month that it was ready to resume six-party talks on its nuclear program, but gave no indication of whether it had dropped preconditions including a lifting of sanctions and separate talks with Washington.

Prospects for renewed negotiations have been clouded by South Korean and US accusations that the North torpedoed one of Seoul's warships in March, a charge it denies.

The United States says the North must mend relations with the South and show sincerity about nuclear disarmament before the six-party talks can resume.

A new incident on the Korean peninsula on Friday heightened tensions ahead of the the G20 summit on November 11-12 hosted by Seoul.

North and South Korean troops exchanged fire across their tense border, Seoul's military said, reporting no injuries.

Exchanges of fire break out occasionally near the heavily fortified and closely guarded frontier.

South Korea's military was put on top security alert this week to guard the meeting against any disruptions by North Korea or international terrorists.

http://www.spacewar.com/reports/US_urges_China_to_press_NKorea_to_return_to_nuclear_talks_999.html

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Hindustan Times – India

N Korea Seeks to Develop Smaller Nuclear Warheads: Minister

Agence France-Presse (AFP)
Seoul, November 2, 2010

North Korea is trying to develop small nuclear weapons that can be delivered by missiles or aircraft, South Korea's Defence Minister said on Tuesday. Kim Tae-Young told lawmakers the North is "constantly seeking to make its nuclear weapons smaller" for possible future delivery by ballistic missiles or bombers.

Kim said the North is also believed to have 40 kg of bomb-making plutonium, slightly less than previous estimates by the United States. He said it is "quite possible" that Pyongyang is also building nuclear weapons through uranium enrichment in addition to its plutonium operation.

"The more you test the weapons, the more likely you will deploy them to the field," he said. The North quit multinational nuclear disarmament talks in April 2009 and conducted its second nuclear test a month later.

But Kim said he sees "no clear signs" so far that the communist country is preparing for another test. Kim said last month that Pyongyang is restoring facilities at its Yongbyon nuclear reactor, its source of weapons-grade plutonium in the past.

Kim Tae-Hyo, the president's deputy national security adviser, also said last month that the nuclear programme could cause immense damage in South Korea if Pyongyang develops smaller mobile weapons.

The North's current plutonium stockpile is estimated to be enough for six to eight bombs.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/N-Korea-seeks-to-develop-smaller-nuclear-warheads-minister/Article1-621220.aspx>

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Hindustan Times – India

India will soon have Potential to Launch N-warhead from Land, Air or Water

Snehal Rebello, Hindustan Times
October 31, 2010

India would soon have the potential to launch a nuclear warhead from land, air or water. For the first time, the country's Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) chief Srikumar Banerjee spoke about the weaponisation programmes undertaken to ensure minimum credible deterrence. The announcement was made at the founder's day celebrations at BARC, India's main n-weapon complex, on Friday.

He said that all the three forces, the Army, Navy and Air Force, will have fully functional delivery systems.

"Our strategic programme will be further strengthened to assure minimum credible deterrents - our triad of the delivery system will be fully functional," Banerjee said.

This would ensure that missiles carrying nuclear warheads could be delivered by the Army, Navy or Air Force.

The AEC chief also said that entry and exit points to the country, by land, sea and air, will be equipped with scanners of different kinds to provide security against any unauthorised movement of nuclear materials.

In the wake of Pokhran nuclear weapons tests conducted in May 1998, former prime minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee had said that India would have a minimum credible deterrent and the delivery systems for the Army, Navy and Air Force will be fully functional.

Also, this is for the first time since the embargo on civil nuclear co-operation was lifted in September 2008 that India has talked about its weaponisation programme to ensure minimum credible deterrence.

"Electromagnetic and high power microwave devices will be deployed in our missile defence system," Banerjee also said. Deployment of electromagnetic and high power microwave devices in missile defence system would help our missiles home into targets with precision, he added.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/India-will-soon-have-potential-to-launch-N-warhead-from-land-air-or-water/Article1-620191.aspx>

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Economic Times – India

'Selling Uranium to India More Harmful than Beneficial'

November 1, 2010
Press Trust of India (PTI)

MELBOURNE: Selling uranium to India would spell more damage than gains for Australia as it would raise the export revenue only marginally while giving out signals to nations like Japan and South Korea that Canberra was not serious on adhering to the non-proliferation treaty, a former diplomat has argued.

According to Richard Broinowski, a professor at Sydney University and a former diplomat to several countries like Vietnam, Korea, Mexico, the uranium sale may encourage other nations to develop nuclear weapons without necessarily fearing a cut-off of Australian supplies rather than follow the NPT.

"If there is an argument for uranium sales to India, it is that the damage has already been done to the NPT and the non-proliferation regime, and Australia might as well get in there and make a few bucks from selling uranium.

"But that argument has its faults," he said. He said that uranium sale would do very little to expand Australia's export revenue - which helps explain why the Australian Uranium Association supports the government's policy of prohibiting uranium sales to countries that have not signed the NPT.

"If Australia supplied one-fifth of India's current demand, uranium exports would increase by a measly 1.8 per cent. Even if all reactors under construction or planned in India come on line, Australia's uranium exports would increase by just 10 per cent," he opined.

The climate change "benefits" would be equally underwhelming, resting as they do on the dodgy premise that Australian uranium would replace coal rather than simply replacing uranium from another source or replacing renewable energy sources, he said.

"Second, while the non-proliferation regime has certainly been damaged, there is no justification for Australia to damage it further.

"Few countries support the opening up of nuclear trade with countries that refuse to sign the NPT. The 118 countries of the Non Aligned Movement voiced objections during the NPT Review Conference in New York this year," he wrote in 'The Age'.

Referring to the US deal to open up civil nuclear trade with India, Broinowski said India made no concessions whatsoever during the deal and it would be naive to imagine Australia could win concessions from India that the US was unable to do.

"Proponents celebrated the expansion of International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards achieved under the US-India deal. However, under India's agreement with the IAEA, safeguards will be tokenistic and apply only to that part of the nuclear programme that India considers surplus to its military "requirements," he said.

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics/nation/Selling-uranium-to-India-more-harmful-than-beneficial/articleshow/6851176.cms>

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Herald Scotland – U.K.

US Companies Bid to Take Over Clyde Nuclear Bomb Base

EXCLUSIVE: Rob Edwards

31 October 2010

Private companies led by the controversial US arms giant, Lockheed Martin, are bidding to take over the running of Britain's top-secret nuclear bomb base on the Clyde, the Sunday Herald can reveal.

The Royal Naval Armaments Depot at Coulport on Loch Long, managed by the Ministry of Defence (MoD) since the 1960s, is likely to be privatised in the next few months to try to save money. The heavily-guarded base is responsible for looking after the UK nuclear stockpile of more than 200 Trident warheads, and arming the four submarines that carry them.

But the plan has already been greeted by a chorus of angry protests from trades unions, politicians and anti-nuclear groups which fear for public safety, jobs, costs and the independence of the UK's nuclear weapons from the US. Questions have also been raised about the management record of Lockheed Martin.

"The Defence Secretary, Liam Fox, is not just planning to privatise Coulport, he wants to hand Britain's nuclear store over to American companies," said John Ainslie, co-ordinator of the Scottish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

"He is willing to give the US full control over British nuclear weapons. If this goes ahead, then the Royal Navy should lower the Union Jack which flutters above Loch Long and replace it with the Stars and Stripes."

Coulport is meant to be the most secure place in Britain. The buildings and bunkers in which Britain's bombs and missiles are kept are sprawled across lochside slopes, surrounded by Cold War watchtowers and protected by at least three barbed wire fences.

News of the move to sell off the management of the base was revealed in an English parish magazine. The latest newsletter from Aldermaston Parish Council in Berkshire carried a report of a recent meeting of the local liaison committee for nearby nuclear weapons factories.

Plants at Aldermaston and Burghfield make up the Atomic Weapons Establishment which is run for the MoD by a consortium of three private companies branded as AWE. As well as Lockheed Martin, they include another major US firm, Jacobs Engineering, and a UK firm, Serco, which specialises in managing privatised public agencies.

"AWE expect to take on management responsibility for the Coulport site in Scotland next year," reported the newsletter.

Both Lockheed Martin and AWE confirmed that they had made a bid to take over the running of Coulport. "We expect to hear the outcome of this proposal early next year and it would therefore be inappropriate to comment further at this time," a Lockheed spokesman told the Sunday Herald.

AWE said it was making the bid along with another branch of the US company, Lockheed Martin UK Strategic Systems, which already works on the UK Trident programme. Babcock, the UK engineering company which manages part of the nearby Faslane naval base, was also involved.

But the bid has provoked widespread anxiety, not least from the trade union Prospect, which represents the 500-plus civilian staff at Coulport. According to the union, the main aim is to cut civil-service jobs.

Prospect alleges that the proposed privatisation "flies in the face" of the recommendations made by an independent inquiry after 14 people died in an RAF Nimrod crash in Afghanistan in 2006. The inquiry highlighted the need for the MoD to retain sufficient staff to act as an "intelligent customer" when dealing with the private sector.

A private takeover of Coulport's management could lead to the loss of expert staff and "destroy MoD's ability to be an intelligent customer", warned the union's national secretary, Steve Jary. "Prospect is concerned about the safety issues arising from this."

The proposed privatisation was described as "highly questionable" by the SNP's Westminster leader and defence spokesman, Angus Robertson MP. "Weapons of mass destruction are the most sensitive areas of military technology and should not be privatised," he said.

Peter Burt, director of the independent Nuclear Information Service, pointed out that the MoD was already locked into a 25-year contract with the AWE consortium.

"The stealthy expansion of AWE's control over the UK's nuclear weapons programme raises serious questions about whether the MoD is obtaining best value from money from a monopoly supplier," he said.

"AWE's priorities should be improving safety standards and decommissioning contaminated facilities at its two current sites at Aldermaston and Burghfield, rather than pushing its profits even higher by trying to grab a bigger slice of the nuclear cake."

US critics accuse Lockheed Martin of having a "mixed record at best" in managing large-scale public projects. According to the US think tank, the New America Foundation, there had been large cost overruns on the company's F-22 combat aircraft, and the unit cost of its new F-35 Joint Strike Fighter had doubled in the last few years.

Lockheed Martin defended its record. It had delivered 88 consecutive F-22s on time, and has successfully supported the modernisation of the US Coast Guard, said a company spokesman.

He added. "In the UK, we employ more than 1500 British nationals at sites across the country working on a variety of nationally critical government contracts."

A spokesman for the MoD confirmed that how best to provide strategic weapons support at Coulport was under review. "Whatever the outcome, the site will remain under MoD control and the safety, security and effectiveness of the UK's strategic deterrent will not be compromised," he said.

<http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/home-news/us-companies-bid-to-take-over-clyde-nuclear-bomb-base-1.1064929>

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UK and France Agree to Joint Nuclear Testing Treaty

The UK and France have signed treaties agreeing to military co-operation including testing of nuclear warheads.

One centre will be set up in the UK to develop nuclear testing technology and another in France to carry it out.

UK PM David Cameron said it would make "our citizens safer and more secure" and marked a "new chapter in a long history" of defence co-operation.

President Nicolas Sarkozy said the deal, which includes plans for a joint army expeditionary force, was historic.

But Labour said there were "big questions" about the UK's defences.

A Downing Street spokesman said: "This summit marks a deepening of the UK-France bilateral relationship. Ours is now a strategic partnership tackling together the biggest challenges facing our two countries."

A ceremonial Guard of Honour lined the steps at Lancaster House, in central London, as President Sarkozy arrived on Tuesday morning.

The summit comes two weeks after the UK government announced cuts to its armed forces, in the first strategic defence review since 1998, as part of savings aimed at reducing the country's budget deficit.

Under the plans £750m will be saved over four years on the Trident nuclear missile system by cutting the number of warheads.

Warheads tested

Harrier jump jets, the Navy's flagship HMS Ark Royal and planned Nimrod spy planes will also be axed, but two new aircraft carriers were spared.

Mr Cameron and Mr Sarkozy are to sign two treaties - one on greater general military co-operation and another, a 50-year deal on nuclear weapons.

The nuclear treaty will establish a centre in the UK to develop testing technology and another one in France to carry out the testing. Warheads will be tested by technical means to ensure their safety and effectiveness, without having to test them by explosion.

It is understood that each country will still control its own warheads, and that nuclear secrets will not be shared.

Asked why Britain and France did not jointly buy nuclear weapons to replace Trident, Defence Secretary Liam Fox told BBC Radio 4's Today programme the UK wanted the "most appropriate" nuclear deterrent and had a "particularly close" relationship with the US on Trident.

"We're not thinking of buying new missiles - we have the Trident D5 missile. We don't have to think about new warheads until 2019.

"We do however have to maintain the safety of the warheads we have at the present time... therefore it makes sense that we become involved in the facilities for the experimental physics that will allow that to happen.

"That's a big cost saving to our taxpayers on both sides of the Channel but it does give us the ability to maintain separate nuclear deterrent programmes."

The other treaty will allow the setting up of a "combined joint expeditionary force", thought to involve a brigade of about 5,000 soldiers from each side.

Each country will retain a veto for each operation, which will operate under one military commander to be chosen at the time.

The UK and France have also agreed to keep at least one aircraft carrier at sea between them at any one time.

Each will be able to use the other's carrier in some form, certainly for training and possibly operations.

Meanwhile, France is to use British A400M fuelling aircraft when there is spare capacity, with plans in place for common maintenance and training.

Joint work on drones, mine counter-measures and satellite communications is also proposed.

'Hysteria'

Dr Fox told the BBC there had been a "great deal of hysteria" in the media about the idea of British troops coming under French command.

"Under the existing Nato system our troops could come under Turkish or Polish command. There's nothing new about that.

"This does not affect our special relationship with the United States. It gives us economies of scale and helps us to welcome France back fully into Nato."

Asked who would decide what happen if the French were involved in operations about which Britain was not enthusiastic - at a time they were sharing Britain's aircraft carrier - he said: "That would depend on what the other nation thought. This is not a question of our military assets coming under the control of any other power than the United Kingdom."

He said it made sense that training could still be carried out while a UK aircraft carrier was in for maintenance - "if we are able to have agreements on the military operation that is fine, but we have to maintain our sovereign independence wherever the United Kingdom's interests require it".

In a statement, the French presidency said the nuclear test centre in Valduc, eastern France, would start operations in 2014.

The Valduc laboratory would work with a French-British research centre based in Aldermaston, Berkshire, it added.

Together the facilities would involve "several dozen" French and British experts and cost both countries several million euros.

It said scientists from both countries would be able to ensure the "viability, safety and security in the long term of our nuclear arsenals".

The UK's shadow defence secretary Jim Murphy said: "I support the government's emphasis on international co-operation, taking forward the good work of the last government.

"We share common threats with countries such as France, from terrorism to privacy to cyber-attack. Deepening military ties is an essential part of modern defence policy.

"Interdependence, however, is different from dependence, and binding legal treaties pose some big questions for the government."

Mr Murphy also questioned whether the the UK was entering "an era where we are reliant on our allies to fill in the gaps in the government's defence policy".

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-11670247>

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Tehran Times - Iran
Sunday, October 31, 2010

Iran to Help Bolivia Build Peaceful Nuclear Power Plant

LA PAZ (Xinhua) -- Bolivian President Evo Morales said on Friday that Bolivia and Iran will work together to build a nuclear power plant in Bolivia.

Bolivia and Iran ""have expressed interest in developing cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear energy,"" Morales, who newly returned from a visit to Tehran, told a press conference in Cochabamba, 383 km from Bolivia's capital, La Paz.

Iran has offered to set up a joint venture with Bolivia on lithium battery and nuclear electricity production, Morales told the press conference.

Bolivia has the right to develop peaceful use of nuclear energy, and no one has the right to interfere, he added.

http://www.tehrantimes.com/Index_view.asp?code=229531

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People's Daily – China
November 1, 2010

Bolivia Denies Plan for Uranium Exploitation with Iran

The Bolivian government on Sunday denied having a strategic alliance with Iran to explore and exploit uranium in Bolivia.

Bolivian Economy Minister Luis Arce dismissed media reports that Bolivia had launched joint actions with Iran to exploit uranium.

"The uranium issue is not on the agenda, neither in any agreements. We have not decided on anything about uranium and still we do not have conditions to do it. We do not have any plan for this issue," Arce said.

Arce went on to say that although his country has mining agreements with Iran, they do not have anything to do with uranium.

He regretted that some politicians from the opposition and media reports tried to describe the Bolivian-Iranian ties as a threat to world peace.

Source: Xinhua

<http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90777/90854/7183649.html>

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Sify News – India

Asian News International (ANI)

November 1, 2010

US Nuclear Safety Claim is a 'Dangerous Fantasy'

The Obama administration has reportedly adopted a new nuclear strategy that depends on the conclusion that the current missile defense systems will reliably protect the continental United States in the extreme circumstances of nuclear-armed combat.

However, research appearing in the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, which is published by SAGE, shows that these defenses have not been tested against real-world threats and would be ineffective in real combat conditions.

The April 2010 strategy relies on assumptions that the current US Ground-Based Missile Defense (GMD) and Standard Missile 3 (SM-3) systems will be reliable and robust in nuclear-armed combat.

It also asserts that the GMD system is currently protecting the continental United States from long-range nuclear-armed ballistic missiles that might be launched in the future from countries such as Iran and North Korea.

But the authors of the research—George Lewis and Theodore Postol -- argue that the US should replace the ineffective, untested, and unworkable GMD system with a defense that could reliably intercept Iranian and North Korean long-range ballistic missiles before they reach the United States, Northern and Western Europe, and Northern Russia.

They further add that the current GMD and SM-3 systems have fundamental flaws determined by the laws of physics that cannot be overcome, based on technology they both share.

These flaws, they claim, relate to their ability to accurately target the correct part of the target missile in flight.

They have cautioned the Pentagon not to rely exclusively on the fact that the nuclear defense systems will perform to near perfection, even when confronted by the overwhelming complexities and uncertainties of real combat against nuclear-armed ballistic missiles.

The authors are concerned that the Defense Department has shown no test-based evidence that these defense systems can ever work in combat, yet claims that the continental United States is already defended from missile attack, and that these systems are also an effective deterrent that can offset cuts to nuclear-strike forces.

"These claims are fantastical, audacious, and dangerous," says Lewis.

The proposed alternative, based on unmanned drones, would not require new technologies or science, the authors say.

It would be designed only to target long-range missile threats, replacing the GMD and SM-3 defense systems.

"The situation is urgent, as Iran is already demonstrating countermeasures in flight tests that would render both the GMD and SM-3 long-range missile defense systems ineffective," Lewis says.

He added: "If we, as a nation, refuse to confront the fact that our chosen defense system is not reliable, and if we fail to build a robust and reliable alternative system using existing technology, we will have only ourselves to blame if the continental United States suffers a catastrophe as a result of the successful delivery of a nuclear weapon by long-range ballistic missile."

<http://sify.com/news/us-nuclear-safety-claim-is-a-dangerous-fantasy-news-international-klbs4icdcji.html>

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The Upshot – via YahooNews.com
November 1, 2010

Is an Existential Crisis Behind a Spate of Nuclear Blunders?

By Zachary Roth

America's recent spate of nuclear mishaps may have roots in a broader geopolitical identity crisis for the nation's nuclear weapons program. And some observers say that the odds of a serious nuclear accident only increase as the crisis goes unresolved.

Last weekend, a computer glitch took 50 US nuclear missiles, housed at a Wyoming Air Force base, offline for more than 45 minutes. The military says it still could have launched the weapons had it needed to, and there's no evidence of foul play.

But the incident was just the latest in a string of hair-raising nukes mishaps that have embarrassed the Air Force, the branch of service charged with overseeing the nation's nuclear arsenal. And according to some analysts, the SNAFUs keep occurring because military strategists have been unable to advance a compelling mission for U.S. nuclear weapons systems, two decades since the Soviet collapse, and nearly half a century after we started reducing our nuclear stockpile.

Last weekend's episode was the result of a hardware failure. But the Air Force has said that a similar outage occurred at other missile sites in the late 1990s, suggesting a recurring technical problem that the Air Force failed to fix. And should it prove to be a chronic malfunction, the incident would take its place among a list of even more glaring Homer Simpson-style fumbblings of the basics of nuke-handling:

- In August 2007, a B-52 bomber was mistakenly armed with six nuclear-tipped cruise missiles for a flight from Minot Air Force Base in North Dakota to Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana, where the plane sat unattended for hours. The pilot and crew were unaware that they were transporting nuclear weapons.
- In March 2008, the Pentagon admitted that ballistic missile components had mistakenly been shipped to Taiwan, where they sat for two full years before Defense officials discovered the screw-up.
- Two months later, the 5th Bomb Wing at Minot failed its security inspection after one airman was found playing video games on his cellphone as he guarded a restricted area perimeter. Another Air Force enlistee on hand was judged to be "unaware of her duties and responsibilities."
- Not long after that, three Air Force officers fell asleep as they were supposed to be in control of an electronic component that contained launch codes for nuclear weapons, though the codes had been deactivated.

The Defense Department has taken steps to address the spate of mishaps. Following an investigation into the Taiwan fiasco, Defense Secretary Robert Gates fired the Air Force's military and civilian chiefs in 2008. Last year, Gates also created a new unified military initiative, Global Strike Command, to oversee the nuclear mission.

But some analysts said making personnel changes and creating new organizational charts misses the point. Such moves are tantamount to rearranging "deck chairs on the Titanic," says Jeffrey Lewis, director of the Nuclear Strategy and Nonproliferation Initiative at the New America Foundation.

The real problem, Lewis and others argue, is that our nuclear arsenal was built in the 1940s and '50s to counter the Soviet threat. We started reducing our weapons stockpile in the mid '60s, and haven't built a new bomb since 1992. With the Cold War long over, these weapons now serve little purpose. "Nuclear weapons are militarily irrelevant today," Stephen Schwartz, of the Center for Nonproliferation Studies, told The Upshot. "We've got this system set up to deal with a world situation that no longer exists."

What's more, these experts note, the military personnel charged with handling the weapons understand this all too well--meaning that they all too often take a slapdash approach to the task. "The people handling those weapons know in their bones that what they do doesn't matter, so they're not motivated or interested," said Lewis, who also writes a prominent blog on nuclear weapons issues, ArmsControlWonk.com. "There's no way you can convince some kid at Minot Air Force Base that those weapons are as important as what's happening in Afghanistan."

Indeed, the routine operations of nukes oversight can seem at times more akin to a Dilbert comic strip than a high-powered military operation. For example, that 2007 mistaken shipment of nuclear arms from North Dakota to Louisiana occurred on the very day that the base issued a press release warning airmen to guard against a loss of concentration on account of the upcoming Labor Day holiday weekend.

Part of the problem, experts say, is that the dilapidated nukes program isn't exactly a magnet for talent. "We've had these weapons deployed on alert for 65 years now," said Schwartz, a former publisher of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, a leading journal on nuclear issues founded in 1945 by Manhattan Project physicists. "This can be a mind-numbing job. We've got men and women punching buttons, running drills, preparing for the ultimate act of their careers and hoping they won't have to do it. There's not a whole lot of career advancement in nukes these days."

It's not just outside analysts who are worried. A high-level DOD task force, convened in the wake of the Taiwan episode and led by former defense secretary James Schlesinger, pointed to the disturbing lapses in articulating and executing the nation's nuclear mission. "There has been an unambiguous, dramatic and unacceptable decline in the Air Force's commitment to perform the nuclear mission," the task force concluded in a 2008 report. "An essential element of leadership involves inspiring people to feel they are doing important work and are valued for it," the task force argued. At a House Armed Services subcommittee hearing in January, lawmakers cited Schlesinger's conclusions and reiterated anxieties that the U.S. military command was continuing to neglect the nuclear mission.

Of course, not everyone sees nuclear weapons as entirely irrelevant to the needs of 21st century warfare. During the last decade, the Bush administration initiated, then called off, work on the development of a "bunker-busting" nuclear weapon. And more broadly, Bush administration hawks sought to blur the lines between nuclear and conventional weapons, in order to reinvent nukes as a tool of conventional warfare.

But according to Schwartz, such efforts also wound up weakening the already lax security surrounding the U.S. nukes arsenal, since they reduced the aura around nuclear weapons. "When nukes aren't perceived to be as special, the attitudes around handling them and dealing with the security regulations tends to get lax," Schwartz said. "So you'll get accidents where people don't follow proper procedure."

Analysts say there's a simple reason the basic question of mission goes unaddressed in nuclear matters. "If you have that wider conversation, then you wade into all these politically controversial debates about what the role of U.S. nuclear weapons ought to be," said Lewis.

"You need a compelling vision," he continued, "and that is missing right now. Maybe because there is no answer."

http://news.yahoo.com/s/yblog_upshot/20101101/pl_yblog_upshot/is-an-existential-crisis-behind-a-spate-of-nuclear-blunders

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Bloomberg Businessweek

U.S. Nuclear-Bomb Scan Ignored by Truckers, Boxes Go Unchecked

November 1, 2010

Oct. 30 (Bloomberg) -- Two years after South Korea's busiest port installed a \$3.5 million scanner to check U.S.-bound shipping containers for nuclear weapons, the machine sits idle because truckers won't drive through it due to fears of radiation exposure.

That means about 1.9 million containers left Busan for American harbors last year without U.S.-mandated screening. Singapore and Hong Kong, the world's busiest and third-busiest ports, also don't participate. Nine years after the Sept. 11 attacks, less than 1 percent of the 14.5 million cargo boxes reaching U.S. shores are scanned abroad, the government said.

A goal to screen all containers is opposed by the Retail Industry Leaders Association, a group representing Wal-Mart Stores Inc., Apple Inc. and Nike Inc. "Prohibitive challenges" involving cost and technology mean a July 1, 2012, deadline for 100 percent inspections will be delayed by at least two years, Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano said.

"The system remains very vulnerable," said Stephen Flynn, president of the Washington-based Center for National Policy, which studies security issues. "If I were an adversary who wants to cause mass destruction to the global economy, this is the system to target."

Two packages shipped by air-freight from Yemen and directed to Jewish institutions in Chicago were found in the U.K. and Dubai containing explosive materials in what President Barack Obama said yesterday represented a "credible terrorist threat."

The Department of Homeland Security responded to the discovery of the packages by increasing checks on people and cargo.

High-Risk Cargo

U.S. senators Patty Murray, a Washington Democrat facing re-election Nov. 2, and Susan Collins, a Maine Republican, introduced legislation in July eliminating the 2012 deadline and supporting a “layered security approach” toward “high-risk cargo containers” identified by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection agency. That approach started in 2006.

The retailers group, whose members also include Home Depot Inc., Target Corp. and Costco Wholesale Corp., endorsed the bill. RILA supports current programs requiring shippers to send cargo manifests to the Homeland Security Department 24 hours before a container leaves a foreign port, said Kelly Kolb, the group's vice president of global supply chain policy.

“It's not effective or feasible to scan every container that meets our shore,” Kolb said.

The association also asked whether U.S. taxpayers or U.S. companies will pay for the scanners and the Customs personnel to operate them. The Busan scanner was paid for by the U.S. government.

\$16.8 Billion

“That's the question of the day,” Kolb said. “The legislation is not particular on that.”

About 90 percent of world trade is carried by sea. Trade is expected to grow by 11.4 percent this year and 7 percent next year on the strength of emerging economies, the International Monetary Fund said last month.

About 14.5 million loaded twenty-foot equivalent containers reached the U.S. last year, the Army Corps of Engineers said.

The Secure Freight Initiative adopted in 2007 requires the U.S. to buy scanners, install them after reaching agreements with host countries and use Customs personnel to man them. Napolitano has told Congress it would cost about \$16.8 billion to deploy scanners in all ports.

Customs spent \$61 million on the 100 percent scanning program so far, said Jenny Burke, an agency spokeswoman. Current scanners require staffing and cannot detect threats on their own, Napolitano said in explaining her reasons for pushing the mandatory deadline to at least 2014.

'New Trade Barrier'

“Most observers have serious doubts about whether that will be ever implemented,” said Ron Widdows, chief executive officer of Singapore-based Neptune Orient Lines Ltd., owner of Asia's second-largest container company by capacity. “The impact that will have on flow of commerce, not just in the U.S. but in other parts of the world, will be fairly dramatic.”

A European Commission staff working document said in February the mandate “may become a new trade barrier” and trigger reciprocal actions requiring the U.S. to scan all outbound cargo.

It would cost 10 percent more to ship goods from Europe to the U.S., and European countries would spend 430 million euros (\$595 million) initially to comply and 200 million euros annually after that, the document said.

“It could actually bring the flow to a screeching halt,” American Association of Port Authorities President Kurt Nagle said.

'Virtually Unused'

U.S. Customs started pilot programs in 2007 in Puerto Cortes, Honduras; Port Qasim, Pakistan; and Southampton, U.K. They later expanded to Hong Kong, Busan and Oman's Salalah.

Hong Kong scanned boxes from November 2007 to April 2009, Jessie Law, spokeswoman for the customs and excise department, said in an e-mail. About 24,000 containers were checked, and each X-ray took less than a minute.

Singapore agreed to participate starting in late 2008. That was aborted when U.S. Customs decided to focus on “high-risk trade corridors,” the agency said.

Busan, the world's fifth-busiest port, handled 12 million containers last year, with 16 percent going to the U.S. It agreed to the scanner in 2008 because the U.S. is South Korea's third-biggest export market after China and Japan, the Busan Port Authority said in an e-mail.

“The machine has virtually been unused since then,” the authority said.

Truckers are supposed to drive rigs through the approximate 20-foot-high (6-meter-high) scanner before cargo is loaded on ships. Yet the drivers balked.

The U.S. was planning to bring in new equipment that has not yet arrived, the port authority said. Officials with U.S. Customs in Busan declined to comment.

“The truckers have refused to conduct container screening because we are worried about being exposed to radiation,” said Cho Ik Ryeol, who leads the local union chapter. “There hasn't been any scanning.”

With assistance from Wing-Gar Cheng in Hong Kong. Editors: Michael Tighe, Bret Okeson.

<http://news.businessweek.com/article.asp?documentKey=1376-LB1CW11A114H01-00OT867AHU3B6Q00R9PL8DN5DR>

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The Star – Malaysia

Monday November 1, 2010

U.N. Nuclear Agency Mulls More "Special Inspections"

By Fredrik Dahl

VIENNA (Reuters) - The U.N. nuclear watchdog signalled on Monday it wanted to use its "special inspection" powers more often, something the United States has suggested could be invoked in the case of Syria.

The International Atomic Energy Agency last resorted to such a prerogative in 1993 in North Korea, which still withheld access and later developed nuclear bomb capacity in secret.

"It is a normal tool that we should be able to use more frequently," Herman Nackaerts, the IAEA's deputy director general in charge of inspections, told a news conference.

He said the U.N. body wanted to look at ways to "lower the threshold" for deploying such missions but he declined to discuss specific states whose activities it is probing.

Washington's envoy to the IAEA said earlier this year a "number of countries" were beginning to ask whether it was time to invoke the special inspection tool to give the IAEA the authority to look anywhere necessary in Syria at short notice.

It has been over two years since the IAEA was allowed to visit a desert site in Syria where secret nuclear activity may have taken place before it was bombed by Israel in 2007.

U.S. intelligence reports have said it was a nascent North Korean-designed reactor geared to produce bomb fuel. Syria, an ally of Iran, denies ever having an atomic bomb programme.

PLUTONIUM REACTOR?

But Damascus is unlikely to agree to a special inspection and diplomats and analysts believe the IAEA will refrain from escalating the dispute at a time of rising tension with Iran, which the West suspects of seeking nuclear weapons.

If Syria were to reject a possible request for such an inspection, the IAEA board could vote to refer the issue to the U.N. Security Council, as it did with Iran four years ago.

In September, an IAEA report said Syria's refusal to allow U.N. inspectors access to the site, known as Dair Alzour, was endangering potential evidence in the investigation.

Nackaerts' predecessor, Olli Heinonen, suggested in an interview with an Israeli newspaper published last month he believed a special inspection was merited for Syria.

"If it was a nuclear reactor, it would have been...the first time that an IAEA member state was constructing a plutonium reactor on such a large scale," he told Israel's Haaretz daily.

Nackaerts said the IAEA wanted to see if special inspections could become more of a routine tool.

"This type of inspection has become very difficult to use and so the threshold has become very high," he said.

"I think we should change that so that we don't necessarily have to have a major issue of non-compliance (with IAEA rules) before we can start thinking of using it."

Syria's case has been overshadowed by the more high-profile dispute over Iran's nuclear activity. Tehran rejects Western accusations its programme has military aims.

One important difference between the two, diplomats say, is that Iran's work is still going on while the Syrian site was destroyed.

Editing by Mark Heinrich

http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2010/11/2/worldupdates/2010-11-01T224621Z_01_NOOTR_RTRMDNC_0_-526003-1&sec=Worldupdates

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London Daily Telegraph – U.K.

OPINION/Comment

Britain Should Now Take Steps to Share a Nuclear Deterrent with France

Cooperation between Britain and France during tough economic times.

2 November 2010

SIR – As the French and British governments seek to maintain military capabilities during the toughest spending climate in living memory, it is essential that greater co-operation be on the agenda at today's summit.

The trauma of Iraq has receded and France has rejoined Nato. Europe needs to cooperate with the United States, and the United States needs a strong partner. Pooling of strategic lift and mid-air refuelling capabilities and maintenance would be a first step that is practical and money-saving, provided that operational independence was not compromised.

Recent discussions aimed at the possibility of using French facilities to help maintain UK nuclear warheads have taken many by surprise but would be a timely departure from the status quo.

Since the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty was adopted in 1996, we in Britain and France have denied ourselves the right to test new warheads physically. France invested €544 million (£474 million) in 2009 alone in facilities to conduct virtual tests — Britain has no such capability. Britain can now either spend the billions it would take to reinvent the wheel, or cooperate with France.

Cooperation on warhead maintenance would be an essential first step towards a possible joint deterrent in the future.

We now face an unpleasant new paradox: we cannot afford to maintain capabilities that we cannot afford to lose. The current British-proposed Trident replacement is hugely expensive, but in an uncertain world, it remains important to have a nuclear capability.

Anglo-French defence cooperation offers an obvious way forward which we cannot afford to ignore. The security of Britain, France and Europe is at stake.

Roland Rudd

Chairman, Business for New Europe

Claude Bébéar

President, Institut Montaigne

Sir Richard Branson

Chairman, Virgin Group

Major General Tim Cross (ret'd)

Sir Richard Dearlove

Head, Secret Intelligence Service 1999-2004

Etienne de Durand

French Institute of International Relations

Charles Grant

Director, Centre for European Reform

Sir John Grant

UK Permanent Representative to the EU 2003-2007

Lord Guthrie of Craigiebank

Chief of the Defence Staff 1997-2001

Professor Stephen Haseler

Director, Global Policy Institute

François Heisbourg

Special adviser, Foundation for Strategic Research

Lord Jay of Ewelme

Former head, Diplomatic Service

Mark Leonard

Director, European Council on Foreign Relations

Karine Lisbonne-de Vergeron

Fellow, Global Policy Institute, London

Peter Luff

Chairman, European Movement

Lord Maclellan of Rogart

Liberal Democrat Cabinet Office spokesman

Lord Marshall of Knightsbridge

Chairman, Nomura International

Dominique Moïsi

Professor, College of Europe and Harvard University

Contre-Amiral Michel Picard

Former head, Force de Frappe

Vice-Amiral Patrice Puy-Montbrun

Sir Mike Rake

Chairman, BT

Lord West of Spithead

First Sea Lord 2002-2006

John Stevens

Chairman, Europachannel

Bruno Tertrais

Foundation for Strategic Research

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/letters/8102867/Britain-should-now-take-steps-to-share-a-nuclear-deterrent-with-France.html>

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Pakistan Observer – Pakistan

OPINION/Friendly Fire

Tuesday, November 2, 2010

The Goal of Nuclear Disarmament

By Khalid Saleem

Ever wonder why the mention of the ‘security’ of Pakistan’s nukes has gone off the front pages of the media? The exercise of rebuking Pakistan for all the ills of the developed world continues but direct reference to this country’s nuclear status is being avoided, undoubtedly under some hidden agenda. Even India’s Chief of staff had a good word to say about the security of Pakistan’s nuclear assets. This taboo subject, apparently, did not receive mention at the recently concluded strategic dialogue with the United States. Writing in The Guardian some time back, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had talked feelingly about ‘a world free from nuclear danger’. She averred somewhat menacingly, “To those who refuse to meet their international obligations and seek to intimidate their neighbours; the world is more united than ever before and will not accept your intransigence”. The only snag is that, as always, the sole superpower continues to apply this concept selectively and not universally.

Meanwhile, back home we continue to harp on our old hackneyed tunes. Will we ever give up vain attempts at turning the clock back? We are once again repeating the mantra of asking the American administration to treat Pakistan at par with India in the matter of nuclear energy. One had thought that this thesis had died with the late lamented Agha Shahi. It appears that it has not. At the same time, it should be fairly obvious that the Americans have no intention of doing any such thing. The US intentions in the region are political and not at all disarmament oriented. So why beat a dead horse; why not instead pursue the goal of nuclear disarmament?

Ever wonder why it is no longer fashionable to discuss the subject of disarmament in knowledgeable circles? This state of affairs is hardly surprising, though. After all, in this topsy turvey world of ours - beset as it is with such pestilences as globalization and one in which such lethal toys as smart bombs, daisy cutters and the like are the latest rage - who would have the time or the inclination to dwell on such mundane matters as disarmament? How many would recall that - in the 1960s when what was to be known as the “Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)” was under negotiation - it was the Indian delegation that came up with the (infamous?) compound word “non-proliferation”. Until then, the buzzword among the multilateral circles was “disarmament” that, admittedly, made a great deal of sense.

Thanks to the inbuilt ambiguity in the compound word “non-proliferation”, the NPT emerged with enough loopholes to warrant comparison with a leaking bucket. For one thing, the Non Proliferation Treaty apparently ended up relating only to the ‘horizontal’ proliferation of nuclear weapons rather than to their ‘vertical’ proliferation that would have been logical. It is essentially due to this that the NPT has never been seriously regarded as an earnest

step towards nuclear disarmament. Come to think of it, the NPT has singularly failed to check even the “horizontal proliferation” that it was designed to control in the first place.

Had the powers that be been interested in nuclear disarmament, the one sane approach that could possibly have set the ball rolling would have been to encourage the creation of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones. That strategy aims at creating a mesh of N-W-F Zones around the globe with a view to isolate such areas where nuclear weapons continue to exist. A nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia, it will be recalled, had been the fond hope of peace-loving people of this region for years. As is well known, the United Nations General Assembly adopted several pro forma resolutions calling for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in several regions of the world. But, like most other decisions of the World Body, the impact of these resolutions on powers that be has been only marginal, if that. The world’s much-vaunted multilateral diplomatists, who show remarkable agility and sleight of hand during the debates in the United Nations, regrettably, exhibit little commitment when it comes to the implementation of the resolutions it adopts.

The US-led invasion of Iraq was premised on the assumption that the latter harbored Weapons of Mass Destruction. As things turned out, the one thing that was conspicuously missing in Iraq was the very trace of the said W M Ds. Subsequently the only positive outcome of the general mayhem that followed was the consensus that Weapons of Mass Destruction were to be condemned as a “bad thing” per se. And yet the powers that be showed little or no inclination to cut down their own nuclear arsenals (The present US-Russia agreement is neither here nor there). The small states were invited to set an example.

What is conveniently forgotten is that disarmament, like charity, must be that as it may, the fact remains that the path to global nuclear disarmament lies via the creation of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones. The Treaty of Tlatelolco, it will be recalled, was recognized as a pioneering effort, even though it failed in casting its shadow beyond the shores of Latin America. Latin America is a long way off and omens hardly look promising nearer home. Those enamored with nuclear status point to the ‘deterrence value’ of these horrid weapons. In this context, the confrontation between India and Pakistan has oft been cited as an example of “balance of terror”, which, in turn, has been projected as the sine qua non of peaceful co-existence in the region. The very concept of balance of terror appears to be full of holes. The “deterrence value” of tactical nuclear weapons may have made some sense in the standoff between the erstwhile Soviet Union and the Western bloc during the height of the Cold War. In the current context of India-Pakistan relations, though, it may require a serious “re-think”. Possession of nuclear weapons is one thing; freedom of action to use (or even to threaten to use) them in the post nine/eleven scenario is quite another.

The option of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones, weighed against the mirage of a nuclear deterrent, makes a lot of sense. Now that so much fuss is being made of the quest for peace in the sub-continent, wouldn’t it make sense for the smaller states in the region to work towards making the region free of these horrible weapons of mass destruction at the same time? The aforementioned may appear to some as idealistic. The choice facing the peoples of India and Pakistan is stark; either embrace a new dawn of peaceful co-existence or revert to the odious status quo ante. There is no gray area in between. Regrettably, recent developments have dealt a deadly blow to the hopes for nuclear disarmament.

The India-US Defense Framework Agreement and its subsequent follow-up have the makings of rewriting the entire script in the subcontinent. The new strategy of the sole superpower is to no longer treat the nuclear capabilities of India and Pakistan at par, through the elevation of the former to the pedestal of a regional power. This can, at best, be a short-sighted approach, though.

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