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## **Articles & Other Documents:**

[The Cost of Nuclear Security](#)

[U.S. Spent More Than \\$52 Billion on Nuclear Weapon-Related Programs Last Year](#)

[Panel Urges Keeping U.S. Nuclear Arms in Europe](#)

[Pentagon Drifting from Nuclear Deterrence, Report says](#)

[Reports: Air Force Worst in Dealing with Nukes](#)

[U.S. Rejected Aid for Israeli Raid on Iranian Nuclear Site](#)

[N.K. Might Feel Safe from Nuclear Threat Due to Nuke Deterrent](#)

[Bush says North Korea Still Dangerous](#)

[Reports: Air Force Worst in Dealing with Nukes](#)

[In Interview, Obama Talks of 'New Approach' to Iran](#)

[Two al Qaeda Leaders Killed in U.S. Strike in Pakistan](#)

[Yemen Releases Former bin Laden Driver from Jail](#)

[Senior U.S. Counterterrorism Officials Differ Over Al-Qaeda Threat](#)

[Obama Under Pressure on Interrogation Policy](#)

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Los Angeles Times

**Opinion**

## **The Cost of Nuclear Security**

*It may come as a surprise that the U.S. spends much more on its arsenal than it does on minimizing risk or planning for the consequences of an attack.*

By Stephen I. Schwartz and Deepti Choubey

January 12, 2009

Seven years after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, at a time when government officials and outside experts are expressing growing concern about the prospect of a nuclear 9/11, few members of Congress know how much the United States spends on nuclear security or where the money goes.

When Secretary of State-designate Hillary Rodham Clinton and Secretary of Energy-designate Steven Chu head into their Senate confirmation hearings Tuesday, they'll face difficult questions about how the U.S. is addressing nuclear dangers. Although most lawmakers would rank nuclear threats at the top of their list of national security concerns, they won't have sufficient or comprehensive information to work with. But Congress can fix this.

Our report, the first public examination of open-source data, shows that the U.S. spent at least \$52.4 billion on nuclear weapons and programs in fiscal 2008. This budget, which spans many agencies, not just the Defense Department, does not count related costs for air defense, anti-submarine warfare, classified programs or most nuclear weapons-related intelligence programs.

The 2008 nuclear security budget exceeds all anticipated spending on international diplomacy and foreign assistance (\$39.5 billion) and natural resources and the environment (\$33 billion). It is nearly double the budget for general science, space and technology (\$27.4 billion), and it is almost 14 times what the Energy Department allocated for all energy-related research and development.

Although the size of the overall budget is troubling, another concern is that we spend so little on initiatives to minimize the risk of nuclear and radiological attacks. More than 17 years after the end of the Cold War, it may come as a surprise to most Americans that the U.S. still spends relatively large annual sums upgrading and maintaining its nuclear arsenal (\$29 billion), developing ballistic missile defenses (\$9.2 billion) and addressing the deferred environmental and health costs associated with more than 50 years of unconstrained bomb building and testing (\$8.3 billion).

More alarmingly, the government spends relatively little money locking down or eliminating nuclear threats at their source, before they can reach U.S. shores (\$5.2 billion), or preparing for the consequences of a nuclear or radiological attack on U.S. soil (\$700 million).

As President-elect Barack Obama's team heads into an enormously difficult budget season, it will need to propose expenditures that match policy goals and economic realities. How, one might ask Chu, can a Department of Energy that devotes 67% of its budget to nuclear weapons-related programs meet Obama's plan to develop new and cleaner forms of energy?

Clinton is already on the right track by reportedly seeking to expand the State Department's role and fighting for a larger budget. State is the frontline agency tackling proliferation concerns with Iran and North Korea, shoring up a rocky relationship with Russia and pursuing cooperation with other states to secure nuclear materials and address the growing threat of nuclear terrorism. Clinton is right to insist that her agency receive more than half a percent (\$241.8 million) of the total nuclear security budget.

As both proliferation dangers and fiscal concerns grow, taxpayers will want to know that their government is getting the best returns on its nuclear security investments. But effective oversight of government nuclear security programs is impossible without complete and reliable scrutiny of their cost and impact, and such an accounting has never been available to decision makers.

Congress can remedy this by requiring the executive branch to submit, as part of the annual budget request, an unclassified and classified accounting of all nuclear weapons-related spending. A senior White House official, perhaps within the congressionally mandated office to coordinate nuclear proliferation and counter-terrorism efforts,

or the National Security Council, should be responsible for overseeing this exercise, in conjunction with key officials of the Office of Management and Budget and senior budget officials of key departments and agencies.

Working outside of government and using publicly available data, we've proved that it is possible to provide a more comprehensive accounting of our nuclear security dollars.

Implementing these recommendations would increase understanding and accountability, which would in turn lead to greater public support for crucial nuclear security programs and a more effective allocation of public resources. When combined with a new focus on nuclear issues, including the Obama administration's forthcoming Nuclear Posture Review, these efforts would help ensure that political and financial priorities are properly aligned.

The nuclear threat is changing, and as long as it grows, the United States needs to be prepared to address it -- even in a time of austerity. That starts with knowing where the dollars go.

Stephen I. Schwartz is the editor of the *Nonproliferation Review* at the Monterey Institute of International Studies; Deepti Choubey is the deputy director of the nonproliferation program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/commentary/la-oe-schwartz12-2009jan12.0.5207429.story>

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

## **U.S. Spent More Than \$52 Billion on Nuclear Weapon-Related Programs Last Year**

Monday, Jan. 12, 2009

The United States spent no less than \$52.4 billion on nuclear weapon-related activities in fiscal 2008, only one-tenth of which was devoted to nonproliferation and threat reduction programs, according to a report released today by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. The rest was spent on U.S. weapon systems, missile defense, managing the environmental and health legacy of U.S. nuclear programs and preparing for nuclear catastrophes.

U.S. nuclear spending figures are not routinely assembled by budget makers, said report authors Stephen Schwartz and Deepti Choubey, who urged Congress to require the president to provide such data annually so that lawmakers can better understand the implications of U.S. nuclear costs.

The \$52.4 billion, for example, surpasses all U.S. spending on diplomacy and international assistance, and the \$5.2 billion of nuclear-related outlays that go toward threat reduction programs signals unfortunate U.S. priorities.

"This disparity sends a message to the rest of the world that the United States considers preserving and enhancing its nuclear options more important than preventing nuclear proliferation," the report says.

*Nuclear Security Spending: Assessing Costs, Examining Priorities* says nonproliferation and threat reduction measures should receive more budgetary support.

"Such efforts ... are more cost-effective than technology-driven efforts such as missile defenses, and can be implemented quickly and at a relatively modest cost to ensure significant security gains today and in the future," it says (Carnegie Endowment release, Jan. 12).

[http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw\\_20090112\\_8192.php](http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20090112_8192.php)

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

Washington Post

## **Panel Urges Keeping U.S. Nuclear Arms in Europe**

By Walter Pincus

Washington Post Staff Writer

Friday, January 9, 2009; A07

The United States should keep tactical nuclear bombs in Europe and even consider modernizing older warheads on cruise missiles to maintain credibility with allies who depend on the U.S. weapons for security, according to a report released yesterday by a high-level task force appointed by Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates.

"The presence of U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe remains a pillar of NATO unity," the report says, adding: "Some Allies have been troubled to learn that during the last decade some senior U.S. military leaders have advocated for the unilateral removal of U.S. nuclear weapons from Europe."

The panel, officially named the Secretary of Defense Task Force on Defense Department Nuclear Weapons Management and chaired by former defense secretary James R. Schlesinger, said in the report: "As long as NATO members rely on U.S. nuclear weapons for deterrence -- and as long as they maintain their own dual-capable aircraft as part of that deterrence -- no action should be taken to remove them without a thorough and deliberate process of consultation."

Gates established the task force to look into nuclear weapons issues after weaknesses in the program were discovered when a B-52 flew across the country last year carrying live warheads and shortly thereafter nuclear missile parts were found to have been unknowingly shipped to Taiwan. Last June, Gates fired Air Force Chief of Staff T. Michael "Buzz" Moseley and Air Force Secretary Michael W. Wynne. In its first report, in September, the Schlesinger panel criticized the Air Force for lax security in handling nuclear weapons as top officials focused more on conventional weapons.

In yesterday's report, the Schlesinger panel said that "the most difficult challenge" facing the incoming Obama administration "will be in persuading this nation of the abiding requirement for nuclear forces." As an example, the panel called for modernization of the nuclear warheads on air-launched and sub-launched cruise missiles that are scheduled to be removed from the active stockpile. The panel said that the cruise missiles have "political value" and that their previous deployment in Europe provided "crucial deterrence and assurance elements," not just in Europe "but of allies elsewhere."

In a campaign speech last July, Barack Obama, now the president-elect, came out in support of eventually eliminating all nuclear weapons, but having the United States retain them, albeit in lower numbers, as long as other countries maintain their stockpiles.

While American cruise missiles were withdrawn from Europe in the 1990s, and overseas deployment of U.S. nuclear weapons is considered a classified matter, the Natural Resources Defense Council, which specializes in nuclear matters, recently reported that about 400 U.S. B-61 tactical nuclear bombs are stored at bases in several NATO countries, including Germany, Italy, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

Pentagon press secretary Geoff Morrell told reporters yesterday that Gates wants to review the panel's recommendations and evaluate "with the new service secretaries when they are named and with the rest of the new defense team that the Obama administration will be appointing over here."

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/01/08/AR2009010803494.html>

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

Los Angeles Times

## **Pentagon Drifting from Nuclear Deterrence, Report says**

*A task force recommends that leaders go back to school and refocus the nation's nuclear mission.*

By David Wood

January 9, 2009

Reporting from Washington — After firing the two top Air Force leaders last year for a series of embarrassing nuclear weapons mishaps, Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates was told Thursday that the same problems of inexperience, poor training and splintered authority over nuclear arms affect the entire Pentagon, including its top leadership.

A task force headed by former Defense Secretary James R. Schlesinger painted a dismal picture of a Pentagon that has drifted from the mission of nuclear deterrence during the nearly two decades since the Cold War ended. Among

the Pentagon's senior military and civilian leaders, the panel found "a distressing degree of inattention" to the role of nuclear weapons in deterring attacks on the United States.

Education in nuclear deterrence theory and practice at the nation's top military schools has largely ended, senior-level exercises have stopped and the number of senior officials familiar with deterrence is rapidly dwindling and will soon become an "acute" problem, Schlesinger reported.

Many senior leaders "lack the foundation for understanding nuclear deterrence, its psychological content, its political nature and its military role -- which is to avoid the use of nuclear weapons," the report concluded.

Among Schlesinger's recommendations: Send senior leaders back to school, ramp up training, consolidate responsibility for nuclear missions within the Pentagon bureaucracy and encourage the new administration to construct a new strategic framework to define the role that nuclear weapons should play.

The report also urged creation of a position of assistant secretary of Defense for deterrence to oversee the nation's nuclear weapons programs.

Gates issued a short statement Thursday saying the nation's force of intercontinental ballistic missiles, bombers and submarine-launched missiles "remains safe, secure and reliable."

"No one should doubt our capabilities or our resolve to defend U.S. and allied interests by deterring aggression," Gates said.

Schlesinger said Gates had reviewed all of his panel's recommendations, and told reporters that "so far we have gotten no push-back" on them.

Underlying the Pentagon's loss of focus on the nuclear mission, officials said, is uncertainty and confusion over how deterrence -- the prospect of certain nuclear retaliation -- works in an age when many of the potential U.S. adversaries are not states but terrorists who hold no territory and are clearly willing to engage in suicide attacks.

Within senior military and civilian circles, there have been ongoing debates about whether the leadership of Al Qaeda, for instance, would buy into the kind of mutual strategic deterrent rationale that governed the U.S.-Soviet confrontation during the Cold War.

Without a clear answer, many officials have simply turned to other issues, Schlesinger indicated.

The report said that the Navy had maintained its commitment to safeguarding nuclear weapons but that there had been "fraying at the edges," and it urged Navy officials to conduct more frequent reviews of how it handles weapons programs.

The Schlesinger report released by the Pentagon is the second commissioned last year by Gates after he abruptly fired the Air Force secretary, Michael W. Wynne, and its chief of staff, Gen. T. Michael "Buzz" Moseley, in June.

Gates took that unprecedented step after receiving a classified Pentagon briefing on two incidents in which the Air Force lost track of nuclear weapons and components.

In one case, the Air Force mistakenly loaded live nuclear missiles onto a B-52 bomber and unwittingly flew it from North Dakota to Barksdale Air Force base in Louisiana, a major violation of strict weapons accountability procedures. In the other incident, the Air Force shipped nuclear bomb fuses, or triggers, to Taiwan in boxes labeled "helicopter parts." The error wasn't discovered for two years.

Those may have been sensational examples but were evidence of a "serious erosion" of training, expertise and accountability within the Air Force missile and bomber force and the bureaucracy that oversees it, Schlesinger concluded in his first report, published in September.

The Air Force has moved to fix those problems, officials say.

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

## Reports: Air Force Worst in Dealing with Nukes

By Michael Hoffman - Staff writer

Sunday Jan 11, 2009 15:09:12 EST

The Air Force isn't the military's only organization to lose focus on nuclear weapons and nuclear inspections, but it is the worst offender, according to two reports by Defense Department nuclear task forces.

The Defense Department's Task Force on Nuclear Weapons Management, led by former Defense Secretary James Schlesinger, issued the second part of its report on the military's nuclear mission Jan 8. The first part, issued in September, focused squarely on the Air Force and criticized the service's oversight of its nuclear mission.

The follow-up report says the Navy and other joint agencies with nuclear responsibilities let the nuclear mission slide after the end of the Cold War, as the Air Force did, but not to the same extreme. However, the slip in performance of the other services exacerbated the Air Force's problems, the latest report says.

"The lack of interest in and attention to the nuclear mission ... goes well beyond the Air Force. This lack of interest and attention have been widespread throughout DoD and contributed to the decline of attention in the Air Force," according to the report.

The latest report makes 82 recommendations to nuclear agencies across the Defense Department, including creating the position of assistant secretary of defense for deterrence in the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy.

The report's first part picked apart the Air Force's nuclear leadership, architecture and inspections, and made 33 recommendations to correct the Air Force's nuclear enterprise.

On Thursday, the task force commended the Air Force for swift action on 30 of those items — action that included the standup of Global Strike Command in the largest Air Force reorganization since Strategic Air Command was disbanded in the early 1990s.

many of the same contributing factors that led to the Air Force's downfall were found inside joint program offices and the Navy's nuclear submarine force, the task force said in its report.

"The Task Force detected some of the same forces at work as were discerned in the case of the Air Force: loss of attention and focus, downgrading, dilution, and dispersal of officers and personnel," Schlesinger wrote in a letter to Defense Secretary Robert Gates.

However, the report says, those problems did not go as far as the ones they found in the Air Force.

"The Navy has maintained its commitment to the nuclear mission, although there is evidence of some 'fraying around the edges,'" according to the report.

The Schlesinger task force praised the Navy's nuclear inspections of its submarine force, saying that "inspection results indicated standardized oversight by the inspection regime." From 1992 to 2008, the Navy's submarine force's passing rate for Nuclear Weapons Technical Inspections never dipped below 85 percent, the report says.

Meanwhile, the Air Force's inspection pass rate fell to 50 percent in 2003 and was only 83 percent over the past 10 years, according to the first part of Schlesinger's team's report.

The Air Force did not respond by press time to requests for comment.

DSB faults Air Force inspectors

In another recent report, The Defense Science Board's Permanent Task Force on Nuclear Weapons Surety joined the parade criticizing the Air Force's handling of nuclear weapons.

The board picked apart the Air Force's nuclear inspection architecture, faulting it for not alerting leaders to the service's nuclear erosion, and recommended the Defense Threat Reduction Agency be empowered to revitalize the Air Force's nuclear inspection process.

Meanwhile, DSB members, who have extensive nuclear backgrounds in the Air Force and Navy, found few faults with the Navy's nuclear inspection process.

Board members questioned the credibility of Air Force nuclear inspections after service inspectors passed five nuclear units in 2007 and 2008 that failed parallel DTRA inspections. However, service inspector ratings supercede DTRA ratings.

Air Force inspectors passed 20 out of 21 nuclear units that had Nuclear Surety Inspections, Limited NSIs or Defense NSIs from September 2007 to April 2008, the report says. The fact that so many units passed the year after airmen mistakenly flew six nuclear-tipped weapons from North Dakota to Louisiana puzzled DSB members.

"The Task Force found significant continuing confusion and questionable practices in bomber units weeks after the unauthorized movement incident," the report says. This helped lead to the DSB recommendation that DTRA have oversight over Air Force inspectors.

Currently, DTRA inspectors visit units with Air Force inspectors every five years. They do their own inspections, but only the service inspectors have the power to pass or fail a unit.

The DSB is recommending DTRA inspectors have the authority to oversee the Air Force inspectors and issue a report to the Air Force inspection team's command, the Air Force service chief, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the assistant to the secretary of defense for nuclear, chemical and biological defense programs.

DTRA always has had the role of monitoring nuclear inspections in both the Air Force and Navy, but this would give it much more authority, said Hans Kristensen, director of the Nuclear Information Project at the Federation of American Scientists.

"The big message I get from this is the Defense Science Board doesn't trust the Air Force with nuclear inspections," Kristensen said.

A recommendation was made to cut in half, to 18 months, the time between Nuclear Operational Readiness Inspections in Air Combat Command and Operational Readiness Inspections in Air Force Space Command.

Since NSIs are also held every 18 months, the DSB also recommended the NORIs/ORIs be held at the same time.

The DSB report comes after the Air Force announced a host of changes to its nuclear inspection architecture and process in the Air Force Nuclear Road Map, issued in October. One change was the elimination of scheduled nuclear surety inspections. Instead, inspectors will show up to nuclear units unannounced.

[http://www.airforcetimes.com/news/2009/01/airforce\\_nuke\\_inspections\\_010909/](http://www.airforcetimes.com/news/2009/01/airforce_nuke_inspections_010909/)

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

New York Times  
January 11, 2009  
Pg. 1

## **U.S. Rejected Aid for Israeli Raid on Iranian Nuclear Site**

By David E. Sanger

WASHINGTON — President Bush deflected a secret request by Israel last year for specialized bunker-busting bombs it wanted for an attack on Iran's main nuclear complex and told the Israelis that he had authorized new covert

action intended to sabotage Iran's suspected effort to develop nuclear weapons, according to senior American and foreign officials.

White House officials never conclusively determined whether Israel had decided to go ahead with the strike before the United States protested, or whether Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel was trying to goad the White House into more decisive action before Mr. Bush left office. But the Bush administration was particularly alarmed by an Israeli request to fly over Iraq to reach Iran's major nuclear complex at Natanz, where the country's only known uranium enrichment plant is located.

The White House denied that request outright, American officials said, and the Israelis backed off their plans, at least temporarily. But the tense exchanges also prompted the White House to step up intelligence-sharing with Israel and brief Israeli officials on new American efforts to subtly sabotage Iran's nuclear infrastructure, a major covert program that Mr. Bush is about to hand off to President-elect Barack Obama.

This account of the expanded American covert program and the Bush administration's efforts to dissuade Israel from an aerial attack on Iran emerged in interviews over the past 15 months with current and former American officials, outside experts, international nuclear inspectors and European and Israeli officials. None would speak on the record because of the great secrecy surrounding the intelligence developed on Iran.

Several details of the covert effort have been omitted from this account, at the request of senior United States intelligence and administration officials, to avoid harming continuing operations.

The interviews also suggest that while Mr. Bush was extensively briefed on options for an overt American attack on Iran's facilities, he never instructed the Pentagon to move beyond contingency planning, even during the final year of his presidency, contrary to what some critics have suggested.

The interviews also indicate that Mr. Bush was convinced by top administration officials, led by Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates, that any overt attack on Iran would probably prove ineffective, lead to the expulsion of international inspectors and drive Iran's nuclear effort further out of view. Mr. Bush and his aides also discussed the possibility that an airstrike could ignite a broad Middle East war in which America's 140,000 troops in Iraq would inevitably become involved.

Instead, Mr. Bush embraced more intensive covert operations actions aimed at Iran, the interviews show, having concluded that the sanctions imposed by the United States and its allies were failing to slow the uranium enrichment efforts. Those covert operations, and the question of whether Israel will settle for something less than a conventional attack on Iran, pose immediate and wrenching decisions for Mr. Obama.

The covert American program, started in early 2008, includes renewed American efforts to penetrate Iran's nuclear supply chain abroad, along with new efforts, some of them experimental, to undermine electrical systems, computer systems and other networks on which Iran relies. It is aimed at delaying the day that Iran can produce the weapons-grade fuel and designs it needs to produce a workable nuclear weapon.

Knowledge of the program has been closely held, yet inside the Bush administration some officials are skeptical about its chances of success, arguing that past efforts to undermine Iran's nuclear program have been detected by the Iranians and have only delayed, not derailed, their drive to unlock the secrets of uranium enrichment.

Late last year, international inspectors estimated that Iran had 3,800 centrifuges spinning, but American intelligence officials now estimate that the figure is 4,000 to 5,000, enough to produce about one weapon's worth of uranium every eight months or so.

While declining to be specific, one American official dismissed the latest covert operations against Iran as "science experiments." One senior intelligence official argued that as Mr. Bush prepared to leave office, the Iranians were already so close to achieving a weapons capacity that they were unlikely to be stopped.

Others disagreed, making the point that the Israelis would not have been dissuaded from conducting an attack if they believed that the American effort was unlikely to prove effective.

Since his election on Nov. 4, Mr. Obama has been extensively briefed on the American actions in Iran, though his transition aides have refused to comment on the issue.



Early in his presidency, Mr. Obama must decide whether the covert actions begun by Mr. Bush are worth the risks of disrupting what he has pledged will be a more active diplomatic effort to engage with Iran.

Either course could carry risks for Mr. Obama. An inherited intelligence or military mission that went wrong could backfire, as happened to President Kennedy with the Bay of Pigs operation in Cuba. But a decision to pull back on operations aimed at Iran could leave Mr. Obama vulnerable to charges that he is allowing Iran to speed ahead toward a nuclear capacity, one that could change the contours of power in the Middle East.

### **An Intelligence Conflict**

Israel's effort to obtain the weapons, refueling capacity and permission to fly over Iraq for an attack on Iran grew out of its disbelief and anger at an American intelligence assessment completed in late 2007 that concluded that Iran had effectively suspended its development of nuclear weapons four years earlier.

That conclusion also stunned Mr. Bush's national security team — and Mr. Bush himself, who was deeply suspicious of the conclusion, according to officials who discussed it with him.

The assessment, a National Intelligence Estimate, was based on a trove of Iranian reports obtained by penetrating Iran's computer networks.

Those reports indicated that Iranian engineers had been ordered to halt development of a nuclear warhead in 2003, even while they continued to speed ahead in enriching uranium, the most difficult obstacle to building a weapon.

The "key judgments" of the National Intelligence Estimate, which were publicly released, emphasized the suspension of the weapons work.

The public version made only glancing reference to evidence described at great length in the 140-page classified version of the assessment: the suspicion that Iran had 10 or 15 other nuclear-related facilities, never opened to international inspectors, where enrichment activity, weapons work or the manufacturing of centrifuges might be taking place.

The Israelis responded angrily and rebutted the American report, providing American intelligence officials and Adm. Mike Mullen, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, with evidence that they said indicated that the Iranians were still working on a weapon.

While the Americans were not convinced that the Iranian weapons development was continuing, the Israelis were not the only ones highly critical of the United States report. Secretary Gates, a former director of the Central Intelligence Agency, said the report had presented the evidence poorly, underemphasizing the importance of Iran's enrichment activity and overemphasizing the suspension of a weapons-design effort that could easily be turned back on.

In an interview, Mr. Gates said that in his whole career he had never seen "an N.I.E. that had such an impact on U.S. diplomacy," because "people figured, well, the military option is now off the table."

Prime Minister Olmert came to the same conclusion. He had previously expected, according to several Americans and Israeli officials, that Mr. Bush would deal with Iran's nuclear program before he left office. "Now," said one American official who bore the brunt of Israel's reaction, "they didn't believe he would."

### **Attack Planning**

Early in 2008, the Israeli government signaled that it might be preparing to take matters into its own hands. In a series of meetings, Israeli officials asked Washington for a new generation of powerful bunker-busters, far more capable of blowing up a deep underground plant than anything in Israel's arsenal of conventional weapons. They asked for refueling equipment that would allow their aircraft to reach Iran and return to Israel. And they asked for the right to fly over Iraq.

Mr. Bush deflected the first two requests, pushing the issue off, but "we said 'hell no' to the overflights," one of his top aides said. At the White House and the Pentagon, there was widespread concern that a political uproar in Iraq about the use of its American-controlled airspace could result in the expulsion of American forces from the country.

The Israeli ambassador to the United States, Sallai Meridor, declined several requests over the past four weeks to be interviewed about Israel's efforts to obtain the weapons from Washington, saying through aides that he was too busy.

Last June, the Israelis conducted an exercise over the Mediterranean Sea that appeared to be a dry run for an attack on the enrichment plant at Natanz. When the exercise was analyzed at the Pentagon, officials concluded that the distances flown almost exactly equaled the distance between Israel and the Iranian nuclear site.

"This really spooked a lot of people," one White House official said. White House officials discussed the possibility that the Israelis would fly over Iraq without American permission. In that case, would the American military be ordered to shoot them down? If the United States did not interfere to stop an Israeli attack, would the Bush administration be accused of being complicit in it?

Admiral Mullen, traveling to Israel in early July on a previously scheduled trip, questioned Israeli officials about their intentions. His Israeli counterpart, Lt. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi, argued that an aerial attack could set Iran's program back by two or three years, according to officials familiar with the exchange. The American estimates at the time were far more conservative.

Yet by the time Admiral Mullen made his visit, Israeli officials appear to have concluded that without American help, they were not yet capable of hitting the site effectively enough to strike a decisive blow against the Iranian program.

The United States did give Israel one item on its shopping list: high-powered radar, called the X-Band, to detect any Iranian missile launchings. It was the only element in the Israeli request that could be used solely for defense, not offense.

Mr. Gates's spokesman, Geoff Morrell, said last week that Mr. Gates — whom Mr. Obama is retaining as defense secretary — believed that "a potential strike on the Iranian facilities is not something that we or anyone else should be pursuing at this time."

### **A New Covert Push**

Throughout 2008, the Bush administration insisted that it had a plan to deal with the Iranians: applying overwhelming financial pressure that would persuade Tehran to abandon its nuclear program, as foreign enterprises like the French company Total pulled out of Iranian oil projects, European banks cut financing, and trade credits were squeezed.

But the Iranians were making uranium faster than the sanctions were making progress. As Mr. Bush realized that the sanctions he had pressed for were inadequate and his military options untenable, he turned to the C.I.A. His hope, several people involved in the program said, was to create some leverage against the Iranians, by setting back their nuclear program while sanctions continued and, more recently, oil prices dropped precipitously.

There were two specific objectives: to slow progress at Natanz and other known and suspected nuclear facilities, and keep the pressure on a little-known Iranian professor named Mohsen Fakrizadeh, a scientist described in classified portions of American intelligence reports as deeply involved in an effort to design a nuclear warhead for Iran.

Past American-led efforts aimed at Natanz had yielded little result. Several years ago, foreign intelligence services tinkered with individual power units that Iran bought in Turkey to drive its centrifuges, the floor-to-ceiling silvery tubes that spin at the speed of sound, enriching uranium for use in power stations or, with additional enrichment, nuclear weapons.

A number of centrifuges blew up, prompting public declarations of sabotage by Iranian officials. An engineer in Switzerland, who worked with the Pakistani nuclear black-marketeer Abdul Qadeer Khan, had been "turned" by American intelligence officials and helped them slip faulty technology into parts bought by the Iranians.

What Mr. Bush authorized, and informed a narrow group of Congressional leaders about, was a far broader effort, aimed at the entire industrial infrastructure that supports the Iranian nuclear program. Some of the efforts focused on ways to destabilize the centrifuges. The details are closely held, for obvious reasons, by American officials. One

official, however, said, "It was not until the last year that they got really imaginative about what one could do to screw up the system."

Then, he cautioned, "none of these are game-changers," meaning that the efforts would not necessarily cripple the Iranian program. Others in the administration strongly disagree.

In the end, success or failure may come down to how much pressure can be brought to bear on Mr. Fakrizadeh, whom the 2007 National Intelligence Estimate identifies, in its classified sections, as the manager of Project 110 and Project 111. According to a presentation by the chief inspector of the International Atomic Energy Agency, those were the names for two Iranian efforts that appeared to be dedicated to designing a warhead and making it work with an Iranian missile. Iranian officials say the projects are a fiction, made up by the United States.

While the international agency readily concedes that the evidence about the two projects remains murky, one of the documents it briefly displayed at a meeting of the agency's member countries in Vienna last year, from Mr. Fakrizadeh's projects, showed the chronology of a missile launching, ending with a warhead exploding about 650 yards above ground — approximately the altitude from which the bomb dropped on Hiroshima was detonated.

The exact status of Mr. Fakrizadeh's projects today is unclear. While the National Intelligence Estimate reported that activity on Projects 110 and 111 had been halted, the fear among intelligence agencies is that if the weapons design projects are turned back on, will they know?

*David E. Sanger is the chief Washington correspondent for The New York Times. Reporting for this article was developed in the course of research for "The Inheritance: The World Obama Confronts and the Challenges to American Power," to be published Tuesday by Harmony Books.*

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/11/washington/11iran.html?partner=rss&emc=rss>

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

The Korea Herald  
Monday, 12 January 2009

## **N.K. Might Feel Safe from Nuclear Threat Due to Nuke Deterrent**

North Korea might feel safe from any nuclear threat from abroad due to its own nuclear deterrent, a U.S. defense commission said in a report, according to Yonhap News.

The commission, led by former defense secretary James Schlesinger, focused on nuclear weapons management.

"As a general proposition, I think that Pyongyang years ago might have had a higher probability estimate of a nuclear move against North Korea, but as the decades have gone on and as we have not reacted in the way they might have anticipated to their development of nuclear capabilities, they might have been encouraged to believe that they were reasonably safe from a nuclear response," said Schlesinger.

[http://www.koreaherald.co.kr/NEWKHSITE/data/html\\_dir/2009/01/09/200901090082.asp](http://www.koreaherald.co.kr/NEWKHSITE/data/html_dir/2009/01/09/200901090082.asp)

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

International Herald Tribune

## **Bush says North Korea Still Dangerous**

The Associated Press  
Monday, January 12, 2009

WASHINGTON: U.S. President George W. Bush says that while the United States has taken North Korea off a terrorist threat list, it is still dangerous.

Bush says he is concerned that North Korea has a highly enriched uranium program.

For years, Washington and Pyongyang have been locked in a standoff over Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions.

Six-nation talks aimed at resolving the dispute have been stalled due to the North's refusal to accept a protocol that would allow verification of its nuclear programs' list.

Bush said Monday in a news conference that if North Korea wants to improve relations it "must honor the commitments it made to allow for strong verification measures."

He said that it was "still a problem."

<http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2009/01/12/america/NA-US-North-Korea.php>

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

New York Times

January 12, 2009

## **In Interview, Obama Talks of 'New Approach' to Iran**

By Brian Knowlton

WASHINGTON — President-elect Barack Obama addressed some of the most delicate foreign policy issues over the weekend, confirming that he intended to pursue a clear policy of engagement with Iran and to press immediately for peace in the Middle East.

Speaking on the ABC News program "This Week," Mr. Obama reiterated that he wanted to work directly with Iran — a country whose president has called for Israel's destruction — to improve relations and halt a nuclear program that Tehran describes as peaceful, but that the West believes is not.

"We are going to have to take a new approach," he told the program's host, George Stephanopoulos. "My belief is that engagement is the place to start."

Mr. Obama said he wanted to adopt "a new emphasis on respect and a new willingness on being willing to talk" to the Iranians, while making it clear "that we also have certain expectations."

The remarks suggested a clear departure from the often pointed and deprecatory speech that has prevailed between Iran's president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and President Bush.

Last year, President Bush deflected a secret request by Israel for specialized bombs it wanted for an attack on Iran's main nuclear complex, The New York Times reported on Sunday. Quoting senior American and foreign officials, the article said that the president told the Israelis that he had authorized new covert action intended to sabotage Iran's suspected effort to develop nuclear weapons.

Speaking about the Israeli attacks in Gaza, Mr. Obama said he remained convinced that Israel had a clear right of self-defense. More broadly, he promised that after his inauguration on Jan. 20, his foreign policy team would become "immediately engaged in the Middle East peace process."

Jeff Zeleny, David M. Herszenhorn and Peter Baker contributed reporting.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/12/us/politics/12iran.html>

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

The Wall Street Journal

JANUARY 11, 2009

## **Two al Qaeda Leaders Killed in U.S. Strike in Pakistan**

By ZAHID HUSSAIN

ISLAMABAD -- A New Year's Day strike by a U.S. drone aircraft killed two suspected al Qaeda leaders in Pakistan, including one accused of organizing a truck bombing that destroyed Islamabad's Marriott Hotel last year, a Pakistani official said Friday.

The alleged organizer of that attack – a Kenyan identified as Usama al-Kini – was seen as a key link between al Qaeda and Pakistani militants and is believed to have played a leading role in a number of other terror attacks that have struck the country's major cities in the past year, said the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Apart from the September attack on the Marriott, Mr. al-Kini was also suspected of orchestrating bombings that ripped through a procession led by former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in October 2007 in Karachi, the official said. Ms. Bhutto was killed three months later in another suicide attack, although it's not clear if Mr. al-Kini had any connection to her death.

The official said Mr. al-Kini may also have organized a suicide bombing at Denmark's embassy in Islamabad last year. "His death will be a serious blow to al Qaeda activities," the official said.

Like Mr. al-Kini, the other al Qaeda suspect killed in the New Year's Day drone strike -- identified as Sheikh Ahmed Salim Swedan -- was also a Kenyan. Both men were believed to have played a role in the twin 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, one of al Qaeda's first major strikes against America.

News of the drone attack came as U.S. Vice President-elect Joe Biden arrived in Islamabad with a Congressional delegation. The group was due to meet top Pakistani civilian and military leaders.

The missile strike that killed the pair was the latest in U.S. campaign of using pilotless drone aircraft to target Islamic militant suspects inside Pakistan. There have been more than two dozen strikes in the past 12 months, and the campaign has drawn sharp protests from Pakistan.

But Pakistani officials privately say the strikes have helped by eliminating at least six senior al Qaeda operatives and scores of other militants. The officials caution, however, that any security gains from the attacks could be short lived if the popular anger provoked by the strikes increases longer-term support for the militants among ordinary Pakistanis.

[http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123149807854767807.html?mod=googlenews\\_wsj](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123149807854767807.html?mod=googlenews_wsj)

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

New York Times  
January 12, 2009

## **Yemen Releases Former bin Laden Driver from Jail**

By REUTERS

SANA, Yemen (Reuters) — Yemen freed Osama bin Laden's former driver last week after he served out his prison term following his return in November from the American prison camp at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, his lawyer said Sunday.

"Salim Hamdan was released on Thursday to live with his family in Sana," said the lawyer, Khaled al-Ansi. He said Mr. Hamdan had signed a pledge not to commit violent acts.

An Interior Ministry official confirmed the release of Mr. Hamdan.

In the first American war crimes trial since World War II, Mr. Hamdan was convicted in a United States court in August of providing personal services in support of terrorism by driving and guarding Mr. bin Laden, leader of Al Qaeda.

He was sentenced to 66 months in prison but given credit for time served at Guantánamo.

Mr. Hamdan, who is about 40, acknowledged he was part of Mr. bin Laden's motor pool in Afghanistan but said he took the job because he needed the \$200 monthly salary and said he did not know or support his employer's goals.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/12/world/middleeast/12yemen.html?ref=world>

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

## Senior U.S. Counterterrorism Officials Differ Over Al-Qaeda Threat

By Elaine M. Grossman, Global Security Newswire

WASHINGTON -- Two senior Bush administration officials this week offered differing assessments of al-Qaeda's capability to carry out a major new attack against the United States.

The terrorist network continues to pose a serious threat to the United States, potentially involving the use of weapons of mass destruction, according to a key White House adviser.

Kenneth Wainstein, homeland security adviser to President George W. Bush, said Wednesday that the United States succeeded in weakening al-Qaeda shortly after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Washington and its allies quickly expelled al-Qaeda and its Taliban hosts from Afghanistan, and since then have targeted high-ranking operatives and their financial networks throughout the region and around the globe.

Most recently, a CIA missile strike in northern Pakistan on New Year's Day killed two top al-Qaeda lieutenants long on the U.S. most-wanted list, the *Washington Post* reported today.

However, Wainstein said, the group led by Osama bin Laden and his deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri, remains operationally viable and interested in inflicting maximum damage against the United States. Over the past few years, al-Qaeda has reconstituted much of its senior leadership, rebuilt its operational base and re-established some capability to sow terror, Wainstein said. The group's top leaders are believed to be hiding in Pakistani tribal areas.

"No matter how much you degrade the opposition's capability, we still have to keep our pedal to the metal ... because of the potential that terrorists will get their hands on weapons of mass destruction," Wainstein said in response to questions after delivering a speech at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

"Now they are globalized and have the capability potentially to get access to -- whether it's biological or nuclear -- components that can actually kill Americans by ... the hundreds and thousands," he said.

A day earlier, though, another senior U.S. official said the United States and its allies had effectively contained al-Qaeda's ability to stage big attacks.

"The international community has really beaten them back into the hole," Dell Dailey, the State Department's coordinator for counterterrorism, said at a Tuesday question-and-answer session with reporters. "They are kind of bottled up. I submit to you that bin Laden can't get an operational effort off the ground without it being detected ahead of time and being thwarted."

As an example, he cited the discovery and prevention of a 2006 al-Qaeda plot to board as many as 10 airliners in the United Kingdom and blow them up while en route to the United States.

"Their ability to reach us is nonexistent," said Dailey, a retired three-star Army general experienced in special operations and counterterrorism. "All Zawahiri can do is make public announcements, that's all. The only thing they have right now is [an increasingly] weakened media program."

He added that given the strides in degrading al-Qaeda, capturing or killing its top leaders might be seen as more of a "symbolic accomplishment" than a crippling blow.

Wainstein took issue with that view.

"They are still alive and they are still a threat," he said of bin Laden and al-Zawahiri. "I'm not in a position to say that we face no danger from al-Qaeda or that al-Qaeda senior leadership's at a point where they cannot operationally be involved in a way that would direct an attack against the [U.S.] homeland."

Dailey noted that although he emphasizes al-Qaeda's operational limitations, others in the U.S. counterterrorism community continue to regard the group as a serious threat. Even if al-Qaeda is largely hamstrung today, a slight-

but-lingering possibility that the group could acquire weapons of mass destruction and pull off a WMD attack remains a worry for U.S. intelligence analysts, he said.

"[Its] intent, in the scheme of things, is to come after the United States all ways it possibly can, to include WMD," Dailey told reporters attending the Defense Writers' Group event. "We accept that their intent is rolled into the [intelligence community] analysis of al-Qaeda as a threat to the United States."

[http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw\\_20090109\\_3316.php](http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20090109_3316.php)

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

Washington Post  
January 10, 2009  
Pg. 1

## **Obama Under Pressure on Interrogation Policy**

*Some See Harsh Methods as Essential*

By Michael Abramowitz, Joby Warrick and Walter Pincus, Washington Post Staff Writers

President-elect Barack Obama introduced his nominees to head his national security team on Friday. But now Obama begins a perilous balancing act to fulfill his pledge to make a clean break with the detention and interrogation policies of the Bush administration while still effectively ensuring the nation's security.

Obama named retired Navy Adm. Dennis C. Blair director of national intelligence and former congressman and White House chief of staff Leon E. Panetta as his CIA director.

"Under my administration, the United States does not torture. We will abide by the Geneva Conventions. . . . We will uphold our highest values and ideals," Obama told reporters. "It is important for us to do that not only because that's who we are, but also, ultimately it will make us safer and will help in changing hearts and minds in our struggle against extremists."

At the same time Obama intends to curb counterterrorism practices he considers excessive or even illegal, he will also come under great pressure to leave the CIA the kind of flexibility its operatives have long considered necessary to heading off another Sept. 11-style attack, current and former national security officials said.

Many officials expect Obama to fulfill a pledge to eliminate the special rules for CIA interrogations of suspected terror suspects and require the agency's operatives to follow non-coercive military guidelines for questioning. Human rights groups are already calling on the president-elect to send a strong message to the world that U.S. policy on dealing with detainees has changed.

"With the stroke of a pen Obama could take a major step to restore America's moral authority and make clear that the United State no longer endorses torture, secret detention or abuse," Jennifer Daskal, senior counsel for Human Rights Watch, said yesterday. Her group has called on Obama to issue an executive order soon after taking office mandating a single U.S. standard for CIA and military interrogation that prohibits harsh tactics.

Agency officials have said they will do whatever the president orders -- but along with other senior Bush officials they have made little secret that they consider their interrogation program effective.

"Those were programs that have been absolutely essential to maintaining our capacity to interfere with and defeat all further attacks against the United States," Vice President Cheney said in an interview this week with CBS Radio. "If I had advice to give, it would be, before you start to implement your campaign rhetoric, you need to sit down and find out precisely what it is we did and how we did it, because it is going to be vital to keeping the nation safe and secure in the years ahead."

Obama did not refer to the interrogation controversies in introducing Blair and Panetta. Instead, he focused on the need for candid, unvarnished assessments, an apparent reference to allegations that intelligence was politicized in the run-up to the Iraq war.

"We've learned that to make pragmatic policy choices, we must insist on assessments grounded solely on the facts and not seek information to suit any ideological agenda," Obama said.

Obama went out of his way to defend Panetta, rebutting criticism from the Hill, which has receded in the last day or two, that the onetime White House budget director is not qualified for the job. Describing Panetta as "one of the finest public servants of our time," Obama said he would have his "complete trust and substantial clout" at the CIA, with the full authority of the White House behind him. "He has handled intelligence daily, at the very highest levels, and time and again he has demonstrated sound judgment, grace under fire and complete integrity," Obama said.

Obama also announced John Brennan, who had initially been considered for the CIA post, as homeland security adviser, a post that may be folded into the National Security Council after Obama takes office. Brennan will also have the title of deputy national security adviser. Mike McConnell, the current DNI, will retain an advisory position, Obama said, while Michael E. Leiter will keep his job as head of the National Counterterrorism Center.

Obama faces considerable pressure to take early and dramatic steps to shift course from the Bush administration on a range of legal issues involving terrorism -- shutting down the military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, curbing the practice of rendering terror suspects to other countries outside normal channels, rewriting legal opinions on terror policy his advisers have condemned. Dawn E. Johnsen, Obama's choice to lead the Justice Department Office of Legal Counsel, has been a vocal critic of the office's output and the process by which it has reached conclusions, testifying before Congress that the Bush administration's approach to legal advice had been infected by political considerations.

Each of these terror issues present a series of minefields for the Obama administration, perhaps no more so than in the area of interrogation policy, which has been a major source of embarrassment for the Bush administration since revelations surfaced of the use of waterboarding (simulated drowning) and other harsh tactics on senior al-Qaeda operatives. In 2007, Bush signed an executive order that allowed the CIA to use interrogation tactics tougher than those allowed for the military, though he did not authorize some of the most controversial techniques, including waterboarding.

If Obama goes ahead with his plan to scrap the special CIA program, he could expose himself to criticism that he did not do all he could to prevent another terrorist attack. That is exactly the kind of criticism that President Bush himself was subjected to after the Sept. 11 attacks.

"The Bush White House was accused of paying insufficient attention to the threat posed by al-Qaeda before 9/11," said one senior administration official. "Will the new administration let the pendulum swing too far in the effort to purge the perceived excesses of the past? Will they have on blinders to the continuing threat?"

Some administration officials noted that outgoing CIA Director Michael V. Hayden is on the record saying that the special interrogation tactics have been effective. They point to a white paper put out by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence titled "Summary of the High Value Terrorist Detainee Program," which attributed the waterboarding of Zayn al-Abidin Muhammed Hussein, better known as Abu Zubaida, to getting the first information about Khalid Sheik Mohammed's role in 9/11 and intelligence that helped capture Ramzi Binalshibh, a prominent al-Qaeda operative.

"It is a very weighty decision to shut down a program entirely, one that intelligence professionals have said is a very valuable thing," said another administration official.

In finding his way on interrogation policy, Obama will have to be mindful of several other important constituencies, including Capitol Hill. Several prominent Democratic lawmakers, including new Senate intelligence committee Chairman Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), have publicly called for firm limits on interrogation methods, including a ban on the use of waterboarding, or simulated drowning. A bill introduced by Feinstein this week would require all American interrogators to adhere to the Army Field Manual, which prohibits an array of harsh interrogation tactics.

Even the Army Field Manual recognizes that drawing a bright line for interrogations is difficult. At one point it cautions, "Although no single comprehensive source defines impermissible coercion, certain acts are clearly prohibited."

Congress last March passed a bill similar to Feinstein's and Bush vetoed it. Thus, Obama's problem is not only whether to decide whether to prohibit the techniques via executive order, but also whether he is prepared to veto such a measure to preserve presidential prerogatives.



Obama actions will also be watched closely by the career officials at the CIA, who want to see how supportive the new president and his team will be. Former CIA officials note that all the agency's actions were authorized by Bush with legal opinions and concurrence by senior White House officials and Congress. "The Obama people can run against the Bush guys all they want, but they shouldn't run down the CIA," said one retired agency official.

*Staff researcher Julie Tate contributed to this report.*

[http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/01/09/AR2009010903784.html?nav=rss\\_nation/special](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/01/09/AR2009010903784.html?nav=rss_nation/special)

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