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Provisional Nuclear Command Stands Up

By Michael Hoffman, Staff writer

The Air Force quietly stood up its provisional Global Strike Command at Bolling Air Force Base, Md., on Monday — nine months prior to the scheduled standup of the official command in September.

Brig. Gen. James Kowalski took the reins of the provisional command; he will lead a 55-person team at Bolling tasked with assisting in deciding where GSC's headquarters will be located and transitioning the nuclear missions from Air Combat Command and Air Force Space Command to the new command.

Air Force leaders unveiled Global Strike Command as part of a road map to cure the service's nuclear ills — highlighted over the past two years by the unauthorized transfer of six nuclear warheads and the discovery of a mistaken shipment of ballistic missile nose cones to Taiwan.

The Air Force's three nuclear missile wings and three nuclear bomb wings will be organized under Global Strike Command in September in the service's largest organizational shake up since Strategic Air Command was disbanded following the end of the Cold War.

"There is an incredibly rich tradition of operational competency in this mission and our Air Force has done a lot of work to restore our focus on deterrence," Kowalski said in a news release. "We look forward to laying the foundation needed to stand up Global Strike Command."

It's still unclear who will take over for Kowalski in September, as a commander for the official command — a three-star billet — has not been named.

Kowalski was the deputy director for global operations for the Joint Staff in the Pentagon before taking over the provisional command. The B-52 and B-1 pilot's nuclear experience includes commanding the 2nd Bomb Wing's Operations Group at Barksdale Air Force Base, La.

http://www.airforcetimes.com/news/2009/01/airforce_GSC_standup_011209w/

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Sydney Morning Herald

A Nuclear Iran: Live And Let Live, Or Die Another Day?

Richard Haass

January 14, 2009

Aside from Gaza, Barack Obama's next foreign policy crisis after taking office may be Iran and its nuclear program. Iran is well down the path of being able to enrich uranium on a large enough scale to produce a nuclear weapon. The International Atomic Energy Agency recently reported that Iran may reach this point this year. An Iran with the ability to produce one or more bombs poses a true danger. One path for the new American administration would be to adopt the "North Korea" option and live with the threat. But this risks making an unstable and conflict-prone Middle East even more so.

In a crisis, Israel or Iran may be tempted to use nuclear weapons out of fear the other might do the same. There is also the chance other countries such as Egypt or Saudi Arabia may develop or acquire nuclear weapons. The United States could reduce these risks by providing missile defence and security guarantees to selective countries, but it is far from clear it would succeed.

Moreover, nuclear proliferation is not the only danger if Iran proceeds with its nuclear efforts. What Iran does directly and through such groups as Hezbollah and Hamas will continue to have a major and mostly adverse effect on the future of Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon and Palestine. Iran is one of the Middle East's most powerful countries. A nuclear Iran would probably act more aggressively, believing its nuclear capability afforded it considerable protection.

A second policy option would be for the US, Israel or both to attack Iran's known nuclear installations. Such a pre-emptive attack would destroy some or even most of Iran's nuclear facilities and materials. But some capability

would probably survive, and the program could be rebuilt in a manner that would make a second attack much more difficult.

There would be serious consequences before then. Iran could be expected to retaliate by attacking US forces in Afghanistan and Iraq, unleashing terrorist attacks throughout the region and the world, and interrupting the flow of tanker traffic through the Strait of Hormuz. The last thing the world economy needs is a \$200 barrel of oil, but this could be the result.

Both options - living with a nuclear Iran or attacking it - involve serious risks and costs. The best outcome would be one in which Iran was persuaded to freeze or suspend its nuclear efforts or, better yet, give up an independent capability to enrich uranium. It could be allowed a symbolic "right" to enrich, but any enrichment program would have to be so small as not to pose a strategic threat. The country would also need to be subject to intrusive inspections.

What would it take to eliminate Iran's uranium enrichment effort?

To begin with, it would entail a diplomatic package that offered Iran access to nuclear energy but not physical control over nuclear materials. Economic sanctions hurting Iran's troubled economy could be eased. Security assurances could be provided to Iran and normal diplomatic relations between it and the US and others established.

There is no guarantee Iran would accept such an offer. But it might, especially now the price of oil has fallen below \$50 a barrel, a level that leaves Iran's inefficient economy in worse shape than ever.

It would also help to make clear that Iran would face additional sanctions if it refused to accept a fair and reasonable compromise. Convincing Russia and China to support a package of requirements, incentives and penalties would be important. The odds Iran would accept such an offer might increase if the details were made public. The Iranian people may choose leaders in their June elections who can deliver a higher standard of living, over those who would run the country into the ground.

But it is possible Iran will reject any diplomatic compromise, even one put forward directly by the US. Obama and the world would then have to choose between tolerating an Iran with nuclear weapons or using military force to prevent this outcome. It is the worst sort of choice, as neither option is attractive. For that reason, it is all the more important that diplomacy be recast and given one last chance.

Richard Haass is president of the Council on Foreign Relations.

<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2009/01/13/1231608701823.html>

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Wall Street Journal

January 15, 2009

Pg. 7

U.S. And U.A.E. To Sign Nuclear-Cooperation Pact

By Jay Solomon

WASHINGTON -- The Bush administration plans to sign a nuclear-cooperation agreement with the United Arab Emirates on Thursday, according to officials involved in the negotiations, despite concerns in Congress.

The pact, one of the administration's final foreign-policy acts, could help the U.A.E. become the first Arab nation to develop a nuclear-power industry as early as 2017, said these officials. The Bush administration has championed the agreement as a model for promoting peaceful nuclear energy, while guarding against weapons proliferation.

Still, some U.S. lawmakers are seeking to block the U.A.E. deal over fears it could fuel a nuclear-arms race in the Middle East at a time of mounting concerns over Iran's nuclear ambitions.

Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen of Florida, the ranking Republican on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, has introduced legislation seeking to hold up the nuclear-cooperation accord until the U.A.E. provides guarantees that it is assisting U.S. efforts to combat Iran. The U.A.E. is among Iran's closest trading partners, and the Emirates have served in the past as a major conduit for military technologies entering into Iran, according to U.S. officials.

"The United States should not even consider a nuclear-cooperation agreement with the U.A.E. so long as that country continues to complicate international efforts to halt Iran's" nuclear ambitions, Ms. Ros-Lehtinen said.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is expected to sign the nuclear pact along with her Emirati counterpart, Sheikh Abdallah Bin Zayid Al Nahyan, at a State Department ceremony Thursday afternoon.

To become law, the treaty needs to be presented to Congress, though not necessarily voted on. President George W. Bush won't introduce the treaty before leaving office, according to U.S. officials, and will leave a decision on the matter to President-elect Barack Obama. Mr. Obama's transition team has yet to take a position on the deal. A spokeswoman for the Obama transition team declined to comment.

The U.A.E. has agreed to give the International Atomic Energy Agency complete access to the Emirates' nuclear sites and the right to conduct snap inspections. It has also pledged to import nuclear fuels for its reactors, rather than developing the technology to produce fissile material on its own. Developing the entire nuclear-fuel cycle could allow countries to divert nuclear materials for military purposes, U.S. officials argue.

U.S. officials say these safeguards put the U.A.E.'s nuclear program in stark contrast to Iran's. The Bush administration had hoped to sign the accord in November, but U.A.E. officials decided to delay over uncertainties about Mr. Obama's position and possible negative reactions in Congress, according to officials involved in the diplomacy.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123195403132281949.html>

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RIA Novosti

N. Korea to Stop Nuclear Program if U.S. Stops Threats

13 JANUARY 2009

MOSCOW, January 13 (RIA Novosti) - North Korea in an official statement pledged on Tuesday to discontinue its nuclear ambitions only if the United States stopped its threatening and "unfriendly" policies towards the communist nation.

"We will not need nuclear weapons as soon as the U.S. nuclear threat disappears and the American nuclear umbrella over South Korea has been removed," the statement read.

According to an unnamed North Korean diplomat, the statement reflects the country's stance on its nuclear disarmament and was made ahead of the upcoming presidential inauguration of Barack Obama on January 20.

North Korea requested an invitation to Obama's inauguration; however, Washington denied North Korean diplomats permission to participate.

During U.S. President George Bush's final press conference held in Washington on Monday, Bush made it clear that Iran and North Korea are still considered by Washington as dangerous.

"North Korea's still a problem. So they're still dangerous and Iran is still dangerous," Bush said. "In order to advance our relations with North Korea, the North Korean government must honor the commitments it made to allow for strong verification measures to be in place to ensure that they do not develop a highly enriched uranium program," he added.

In 2008, the U.S. removed North Korea from the blacklist of countries supporting international terrorism after Pyongyang gave assurances on verification measures.

South Korea announced on Tuesday it would send an official delegation, headed by the country's nuclear envoy, Hwang Joon-kook, to North Korea to discuss the sale of its unspent nuclear fuel rods, Yonhap reported. It is hoped the visit may provide a stimulus to talks that stalled amid recent diplomatic wrangling.

"Our fact-finding team will focus on the technical and economic aspects of a decision on the handling of North Korea's unused fuel rods," South Korea's ministry said in a statement.

Last year the communist country announced it had 14,000 unspent fuel rods, which Seoul has estimated amount to some 100 tons of uranium. South Korea has 20 nuclear reactors providing the country with 40% of its energy needs and plans to increase its nuclear facilities in the future.

Relations between Seoul and the communist north have deteriorated since South Korean President Lee Myung-bak took office in February 2008, and amid claims that North Korea's leader Kim Jong-il has been incapacitated following a stroke in August.

Relations between the two sides, who are still technically at war never having signed a formal peace treaty, were dealt a further blow this month, when the North tightened controls on the heavily fortified border, and expelled some of the South Koreans working at the Kaesong industrial park, close to the border.

Each of the five countries, involved in the talks, which include the two Koreas, the U.S., Japan, Russia and China, agreed in 2007 to give the North 200,000 metric tons of fuel oil as an incentive for North Korea's nuclear decommissioning and disclosure of all information on past nuclear activities. The move followed a nuclear test blast conducted by the communist state in October 2006.

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20090113/119466450.html>

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GlobalSecurityNewswire.org

North Korea Not Ready for Nuclear Disarmament

Tuesday, Jan. 13, 2009

North Korea today reaffirmed its intention to keep its nuclear weapons for the time being, saying it would disarm only after it has direct diplomatic ties with the United States and is sure there are no U.S. nuclear weapons in South Korea, the Associated Press reported (see GSN, Jan. 12).

Five nations have spent years trying to persuade Pyongyang to relinquish its nuclear arsenal and shutter its atomic operations. North Korea signed a denuclearization in 2007; there has been some headway since then, but the process has stalled again in recent months over details of verification of the regime's nuclear activities and holdings.

"We won't need atomic weapons when U.S. nuclear threats are removed, and the U.S. nuclear umbrella over South Korea is gone," according to the North Korean Foreign Ministry.

Seoul and Washington have denied Pyongyang's long-standing claim that U.S. nuclear weapons are deployed in South Korea for use in a possible attack on the Stalinist state.

Verification would occur during the third and final stage of denuclearization, North Korea said today. Washington has hoped to see the verification protocol established during the second, current phase, which involves disablement of key facilities at the plutonium-producing Yongbyon nuclear complex.

"It is necessary to simultaneously verify the whole Korean Peninsula," the Foreign Ministry declared in its statement (Jae-Soon Chang, Associated Press I/Yahoo!News, Jan. 13).

A six-person team of nuclear experts from South Korea is expected in the North this week to examine unused nuclear fuel rods that Seoul might eventually purchase, AP reported.

The intent of the trip is to study how to handle the fuel rods, rather than to conduct actual negotiations for a sale, according to the South Korean Foreign Ministry.

North Korea holds roughly 14,000 fresh fuel rods, along with 8,000 spent rods that could be used for production of weapon-grade uranium. During denuclearization talks in December, the regime agreed to give up the fresh fuel, which South Korea might buy if it could be converted for use in the nation's nuclear power reactors (Kwang-Tae Kim, Associated Press II/[Yahoo!News](#), Jan. 13).

"This is a positive signal from North Korea," Dongguk University professor Kim Yong-hyun told Agence France-Presse. "It appears to be showing willingness to go ahead with the process of disabling its nuclear program" (Agence France-Presse/[Spacewar.com](#), Jan. 13).

Meanwhile, a U.S. Defense Department advisory panel this week expressed concerns about North Korean nuclear proliferation, the Yonhap News Agency reported.

"North Korea, India and Pakistan have acquired both nuclear weapons and missile delivery systems, while Iran is apparently headed down the same road," according to the group led by former Defense Secretary James Schlesinger.

"The derivative danger from North Korea or Iran is that they may pass nuclear weapons or nuclear technology to others," adds the document, a follow-up to the first report issued last week addressing the Pentagon's nuclear mission (see GSN, Jan. 8). "Proliferation elsewhere remains a strong possibility, particularly in East Asia" (Yonhap News Agency, Jan. 13).

http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20090113_4310.php

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The Korean Herald

Pakistan Provided Nuclear Technology to N. Korea: State Dept

13 January 2009

Pakistan has provided nuclear technology to North Korea to help the reclusive communist state build a uranium-based nuclear program, the U.S. State Department said Monday, according to Yonhap News.

The uranium program, apart from the plutonium-based nuclear reactor being sanctioned under a multilateral nuclear deal, grew from a "one stop shopping" source provided by Pakistan's A.Q. Khan, the department said.

Iran and Libya also benefited from the network, the department said in a statement to announce the list of 13 individuals and private companies, mostly British, German, Turkish, Swiss and Sri Lankan nationals, being sanctioned for their involvement in the Khan network.

"With the assistance of Khan's network, countries could leapfrog the slow, incremental stages of other nuclear weapons development programs," it said.

The department said Khan and his associates provided centrifuge designs, equipment and technology to North Korea.

http://www.koreaherald.co.kr/NEWKHSITE/data/html_dir/2009/01/13/200901130071.asp

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The Korea Herald

'N.K. has Nuclear Weapons, Missile Systems'

14 January 2009

WASHINGTON - North Korea has developed both nuclear weapons and missile delivery systems, a U.S. defense report said Monday, expressing concerns about the possible proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in Northeast Asia.

The U.S. State Department also said Pakistan has provided nuclear technology to North Korea to help the reclusive communist state build a uranium-based nuclear program.

The announcements coincided with outgoing President George W. Bush's concession at his final news conference earlier in the day that "there might be a highly enriched uranium program" in North Korea.

Word of such a program surfaced in 2002, but North Korea has denied it.

"North Korea, India and Pakistan have acquired both nuclear weapons and missile delivery systems, while Iran is apparently headed down the same road," said the report of the Pentagon's task force on nuclear weapons management led by former Defense Secretary James Schlesinger.

"The derivative danger from North Korea or Iran is that they may pass nuclear weapons or nuclear technology to others," the report said. "Proliferation elsewhere remains a strong possibility, particularly in East Asia."

The report is the second part of the Pentagon commission's review of North Korea.

In the first report released last week, the commission said that North Korea "might have been encouraged to believe that they were reasonably safe from a nuclear response."

Schlesinger said last Thursday North Korea may have begun developing nuclear arms after deciding the United States was unlikely to use nuclear weapons to eliminate its development program.

"It probably is today's situation that they have developed the confidence - perhaps misplaced confidence - that the United States, if it were to go after their nuclear capability, likely would do so with conventional forces," said former Defense Secretary James Schlesinger.

Schlesinger told reporters that he believes Pyongyang initially saw "a higher probability" that Washington would use its nuclear arsenal to wipe out a nuclear threat from 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," he said.

The report comes as U.S. President George W. Bush and other senior officials have talked about North Korea's uranium - as well as plutonium-based nuclear programs just weeks before Bush's terms ends early next week.

National security adviser, Stephen Hadley, also depicted North Korea last week as "an early challenge" for the incoming Barack Obama administration, predicting North Korea will try to renegotiate a six-party aid-for-denuclearization deal to test the fledgling Obama administration after its inauguration on Jan. 20.

In contrast to the U.S. government's official position not to recognize North Korea as a nuclear power, Defense Secretary Robert Gates said last month North Korea has built several nuclear bombs, and U.S. intelligence and defense reports have categorized the North as a nuclear weapons state.

Obama has also said the North has eight nuclear weapons, pledging to support the six-party nuclear talks while seeking more direct bilateral engagement.

North Korea considers its nuclear arsenal as its only working deterrent against an invasion, saying Iraq was invaded due to lack of a nuclear arsenal.

The State Department said the uranium program, apart from the plutonium-based nuclear reactor being sanctioned under a multilateral nuclear deal, grew from a "one stop shopping" source provided by Pakistan's A.Q. Khan.

Iran and Libya also benefited from the network, the department said in a statement to announce the list of 13 individuals and private companies, mostly British, German, Turkish, Swiss and Sri Lankan nationals, being sanctioned for their involvement in the Khan network.

"With the assistance of Khan's network, countries could leapfrog the slow, incremental stages of other nuclear weapons development programs," it said.

The department said Khan and his associates provided centrifuge designs, equipment and technology to North Korea.

Khan has been under house arrest since 2004, when he confessed to secret dealings with North Korea and several other countries, but he recently disavowed his previous remarks.

"Many of Dr. Khan's associates are either in custody, being prosecuted, or have been convicted of crimes," the department said.

"While we believe the A.Q. Khan network is no longer operating, countries should remain vigilant to ensure that Khan network associates, or others seeking to pursue similar proliferation activities, will not become a future source for sensitive nuclear information or equipment."

North Korea's plutonium program has been the focus of the six-party talks involving the two Koreas, the United States, China, Japan and Russia.

Those talks resulted in a series of agreements that outlined steps for the eventual dismantlement of North Korea's nuclear facilities at Yongbyon, north of Pyongyang, in return for economic assistance.

As the clock ticks down on the Bush administration, however, North Korea has refused to agree to inspections that would verify its compliance.

That has invited criticism that Bush's team made too many concessions regarding the plutonium program and failed to address the parallel issues of uranium production and weapons proliferation.

From news reports

http://www.koreaherald.co.kr/NEWKHSITE/data/html_dir/2009/01/14/200901140037.asp

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International Herald Tribune

North Korea Tries New Tack with Obama

By Choe Sang-Hun

Wednesday, January 14, 2009

SEOUL: North Korea is demanding that the United States readjust its focus in multilateral talks on ending the Communist state's nuclear weapons program, insisting that it will never give up its nuclear arms before Washington normalizes relations with Pyongyang.

Coming a week before President-elect Barack Obama's inauguration, the statement from the North Korean Foreign Ministry issued late Tuesday was widely seen as North Korea's first official message to the incoming U.S. administration.

Speaking in her Senate confirmation hearing hours after the North Korean statement, Hillary Rodham Clinton, Obama's choice for secretary of state, indicated that the Obama administration would be more willing to engage North Korea in bilateral talks than was the administration of President George W. Bush.

"Smart power requires reaching out to both friends and adversaries, to bolster old alliances and to forge new ones," she said.

During the past several years of six-nation talks, the United States focused on dismantling the North's nuclear weapons facilities and stopping it from spreading nuclear technology to countries like Syria.

As the talks stalled, however, critics said the U.S. approach had failed because it did not address the root of North Korea's nuclear weapons development: a lingering hostility from the 1950-53 Korean War that keeps Washington and Pyongyang deeply mistrustful of each other. The war ended with a truce, not a peace treaty.

In response, U.S. officials have said that North Korea must give up nuclear weapons to build the confidence necessary to sign a peace treaty and normalize ties with Washington.

"It is a twisted logic to assert that the bilateral relations can be improved only when we show nukes before anything else," North Korea said in its statement. "We will never do such a thing as showing our nuclear weapons first, even in 100 years, unless the U.S. hostile policy and nuclear threat to the North are fundamentally terminated."

North Korea said Washington's "hostile" policy had resulted in the North's development of nuclear weapons, not the other way round. "We won't need atomic weapons when U.S. nuclear threats are removed and the U.S. nuclear umbrella over South Korea is gone," the North said.

In Washington, a State Department spokesman, Sean McCormack, said that "there is going to have to be a denuclearized Korean Peninsula" before the North can normalize ties with the United States.

Although the North Korean statement summarized its old stance in emphatic terms, its timing highlighted the policy choice that will face Obama's administration. In recent weeks, Pyongyang has refrained from its usual tirades against the United States, apparently in a sign that it wants to start afresh.

In a series of deals struck in 2005 and 2007, the United States, North Korea and four other regional powers agreed to work together to make the Korean Peninsula free of nuclear weapons. Those agreements also called for talks on normalizing ties between Washington and Pyongyang and building a peace mechanism in Northeast Asia. But these dialogues have barely begun, while talks on disabling the North's nuclear facilities have made fitful progress.

"North Korea wants the United States to shift its focus," said Paik Hak Soon, a senior analyst at the Sejong Institute. "It is signaling that it can cooperate with the new U.S. administration if Washington pursues efforts to normalize ties in parallel with the denuclearizing process."

Negotiators in Washington and Seoul have been skeptical about such an overture from Pyongyang because North Korea never convinced them that it would open up and abandon its nuclear weapons if given all the incentives it demanded. They share a long-running fear that Pyongyang's recent moves, such as its refusal to accept a thorough nuclear inspection, were not just negotiating tactics but were instead designed to achieve international acquiescence to North Korea as a nuclear power.

Ryoo Kihl Jae, a professor at the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul who is a policy adviser to President Lee Myung Bak, said that to break the stalemate, the United States and South Korea needed to consider a broader approach, opening "multiple tracks" of talks to address North Korea's other concerns.

"But such an idea will be difficult to sell to politicians in Washington and Seoul," Ryoo said, referring to a sharp political divide over how to deal with North Korea.

Analysts who support a comprehensive deal with North Korea say Washington must realize that its past tactic of applying pressure did not work because it resulted only in North Korea's accumulating more plutonium and even conducting its first nuclear test in 2006.

They also say the United States cannot simply promise economic incentives in exchange for termination of North Korea's nuclear weapons program, because the program has become an integral part of the North's nationalistic pride and the regime sees it as a key to its survival.

<http://www.iht.com/articles/2009/01/14/news/north.2-407486.php>

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GlobalSecurityNewswire.org

North Korea to Maintain Negotiating Strategy on Nukes, Diplomat Says

Wednesday, Jan. 14, 2009

A former U.S. ambassador to South Korea said yesterday that North Korea is likely to maintain its negotiating strategy in hopes of cementing its position as a nuclear power, the Yonhap News Agency reported.

"North Koreans will continue to use brinkmanship to drive a wedge between Seoul and Washington," Alexander Vershbow said during a speech in Washington. "We still don't know whether today's North Korean leaders and the powerful North Korean military will every give up their nuclear weapons."

Pyongyang pledged in 2007 to dismantle its nuclear sector in exchange for economic, diplomatic and security concessions from China, Japan, Russia, South Korea and the United States. There has been notable progress since then in the denuclearization effort, including disablement of key plutonium production plants, but the process has stalled recently over the question of verification of the regime's atomic activities and holdings.

North Korean leaders "have been dragging out negotiations for years on the hope they will be accepted as a nuclear power, something I think will never happen no matter who is in the White House," said Vershbow, who left his post in Seoul in September after three years and is reportedly being considered for the job of assistant defense secretary for international security affairs in the Obama administration.

"[North Korean leader] Kim Jong Il has a very clear choice between nuclear weapons and a normal relationship with the rest of the world," he said (Yonhap News Agency, Jan. 14).

North Korea yesterday declared that it would not give up its nuclear arsenal until it had diplomatic relations with the United States and was sure there were no U.S. nuclear warheads in South Korea. It also called again for an end to the U.S. "hostile policy."

The statement suggested that the crisis would continue for some time, analysts said.

Deputy South Korean nuclear envoy Hwang Joon-kook said today, though, the declaration was "not new," the Associated Press reported.

"Relevant countries are making efforts to denuclearize North Korea," said Hwang, who was leading a six-person team heading to North Korea to look at unused nuclear fuel rods that could be sold to his nation (Jae-Soon Chang, Associated Press I/Washington Post, Jan. 14).

"Ahead of Obama's inauguration, North Korea is strongly presenting its position that relations with the U.S. must be normalized before there can be any progress on the nuclear issue," said North Korea expert Kim Yong-hyun, of Dongguk University in Seoul. "North Korea wants to make it clear that the point is the relations with the U.S., not its nuclear weapons" (Jean Lee, Associated Press II/*Washington Post*, Jan. 13).

Pyongyang will realize diplomatic relations with Washington only after passing through the denuclearization process, said State Department spokesman Sean McCormack (Chang, AP I).

http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20090114_4980.php

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New York Times
January 15, 2009

North Korea Maintains Its Tough Stance

By Choe Sang-Hun

SEOUL, South Korea — In what appears to be its first official message to the incoming Obama administration, North Korea has demanded that the United States normalize relations with it before the North abandons nuclear weapons.

"It is a twisted logic to assert that the bilateral relations can be improved only when we show nukes before anything else," the North Korean Foreign Ministry said in a statement. "We will never do such a thing as showing our nuclear weapons first, even in 100 years, unless the U.S. hostile policy and nuclear threat to the North are fundamentally terminated."

The statement, distributed Tuesday night, came a week before President-elect Barack Obama formally takes office, and coincided with the Senate confirmation hearings for Hillary Rodham Clinton, Mr. Obama's choice to be secretary of state. Mrs. Clinton indicated that the Obama administration would be more willing than the Bush administration was to engage directly with North Korea.

During the past several years of six-nation talks, which also included China, South Korea, Japan and Russia, the United States focused on dismantling the North's nuclear weapons facilities and stopping the North from spreading nuclear technology to countries like Syria.

As the talks stalled, however, critics said the American approach had failed because it did not address what they called the root of North Korea's nuclear weapons development: a lingering hostility from the 1950-53 Korean War that keeps the United States and North Korea deeply mistrustful of each other. The war ended with a truce, not a peace treaty.

The North Korean statement said Washington's "hostile" policy had led to the North's development of nuclear weapons. "We won't need atomic weapons when U.S. nuclear threats are removed and the U.S. nuclear umbrella over South Korea is gone," the North said.

In Washington, a State Department spokesman, Sean McCormack, said that “there is going to have to be a denuclearized Korean Peninsula” before the North could expect the United States to normalize diplomatic relations with North Korea.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/15/world/asia/15korea.html?partner=rss&emc=rss>

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London Times

Kim Jong Il 'Names Favourite Son Jong Un as Successor' in North Korea

15 January 2009

Rumours of poor health have kept the Dear Leader out of the public eye for some time and the nomination of such a young man as his successor may be a way of restating his virility

LEO LEWIS, IN TOKYO

North Korea’s enigmatic and ailing dictator, Kim Jong Il, is thought to have made a surprise selection of the man who will succeed him as leader of the nuclear-armed, Stalinist autocracy when he is gone.

Intelligence sources in Seoul today suggested that – very much against the expectations of South Korean analysis – Mr Kim, 66, has chosen this youngest and favourite son, Jong Un, to take over the all-pervasive family personality cult that controls the country.

The potential heir, who is thought to be no more than 24 years old, was educated in Switzerland and is the offspring of Kim’s third marriage and supposedly favourite wife – a woman who died five years ago.

In the regular and heated speculation among North Korea watchers over the shape of a world without Mr Kim, Jong Un has been routinely dismissed as a likely successor because of his youth.

Little about his upbringing is thought to make him especially suited to the task of following in his father and grandfather’s footsteps. If Jong Un does eventually assume control, he will inherit a persistently moribund economy, relations across the Korean peninsula that have plumbed new lows and an agricultural crisis that annually pushes the country dangerously close to outright famine.

Analysts at the Korea Institute for National Unification said that the critical date to watch was the parliamentary election on March 8: if Jong Un is suddenly given a seat on the powerful National Defence Commission, said one KINU official, that will be a sign that he is begun the grooming process required before he can succeed his father.

Experts in North Korean propaganda said that the selection of a notably young successor to Mr Kim was a logical step for the regime: the cult surrounding the “Dear Leader” has consistently presented him as vigorous and hearty. If, as many suspect, Mr Kim has suffered a stroke and is actually rather frail, the only way to present that reality to ordinary North Koreans, said one government source in Seoul, is with his young, vigorous son at his side.

Rumours of the anointment were greeted with scepticism in some intelligence quarters, as were suggestions that the political and military hierarchies had already been asked to pass the heir apparent’s name down through their ranks to prepare people for an eventual handover. In a nation defined by its opaqueness, the succession issue in North Korea is perhaps the most closely guarded secret and many observers believe that South Korean intelligence “scoops” on the subject are liable to be flawed.

Others said that the selection of a successor was a natural move for Mr Kim, whose health and continuing grip on power have been matters of intensifying speculation in recent months. That speculation has been fuelled by a relentless flow of photographs, officially released to show an apparently healthy Mr Kim touring various factories

and military facilities. None of the pictures is dated, and Mr Kim has still not appeared at any live-broadcast public event since the middle of last year.

The questions began to arise last September when Mr Kim failed to make an appearance at a huge public parade for which participants had been rehearsing for more than a year. As suspicions mounted that the Dear Leader might be critically ill or dying, so too did worries over a possible power vacuum at the top of the notoriously unpredictable regime. If he died without selecting and grooming an heir, said US intelligence sources in December, the risks of instability were substantial.

Until today, the succession question has been complicated by the lack of an obvious heir. Mr Kim's eldest son, Jong Nam, is in his late thirties but is believed to have put himself out of the running with a series of blunders that included being deported from Japan while reportedly attempting to visit Tokyo Disneyland with a forged passport. A biography of Mr Kim, written by his former sushi chef, suggests that the Dear Leader considered his second son, Jong Chol, too weak to be in the running as successor.

The succession question comes amid continuing deadlock in efforts to wean North Korea off its nuclear weapons programmes. Yesterday a deputy nuclear envoy from Seoul left on the first high-level visit in over a year, though hopes for a breakthrough remain low.

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article5522699.ece>

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U.S. News & World Report

Some Freed Terrorism Detainees Return to the Fight

Just over 1 in 10 of those released from Guantánamo Bay are said to take up terrorist activities

By Anna Mulrine

Posted January 13, 2009

The debate over closing the Guantánamo Bay military detention center in Cuba, long a campaign promise of President-elect Barack Obama, just got more complicated. New Pentagon intelligence asserts that 61 former Guantánamo Bay detainees, or about 11 percent of those who have been released, appear to have returned to involvement in terrorism.

While officials provided few details, the Defense Intelligence Agency numbers highlight the problem of what to do with the roughly 255 remaining detainees. Some of them have been cleared for release, subject to finding a country to take them.

Secretary of Defense Robert Gates supports the closure of the Guantánamo detention center, but handling the remaining detainees remains one of the "thorny issues" that the president-elect and his new team will confront, Pentagon spokesman Geoff Morrell said today.

In many cases, the U.S. government is looking for other countries to take in prisoners with the guarantee that they will not be tortured or persecuted there. In other instances, the United States is seeking countries that will "at least monitor them effectively so they don't return to terrorism," said Morrell.

The new figures on recidivism, current through December 24, suggest that such monitoring will be among the new administration's most pressing goals. The latest numbers show "a pretty substantial increase in recidivism," said Morrell.

Prior to the new report, the recidivism rate among those who had been held at Guantánamo and released was 7 percent confirmed or suspected of "returning to the fight"—a total of 37 former prisoners. According to the new figures, that number has increased to 11 percent, or 61 total, with 18 confirmed and 43 suspected of involvement in terrorist activities.

"I don't think we're prepared to identify where each and every one of these people was released to and where they've since either went on to commit an act of terrorism or are suspected of going on to commit an act of terrorism," said

Morrell. "Just that we have, you know, intelligence, in some cases evidence, to prove that they have indeed gone on to return to violence, and that's a real concern."

Longtime advocates of the closure of Guantánamo dispute the term "recidivism" and note that these figures could include those who were innocent but were radicalized as a result of mistreatment at the detention center.

<http://www.usnews.com/articles/news/2009/01/13/some-freed-terrorism-detainees-return-to-the-fight.html>

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Washington Times
January 15, 2009
Pg. 13

Bin Laden Calls for Holy War Against Israel Over Gaza

By Lee Keath, Associated Press

CAIRO -- Osama bin Laden urged Muslims to launch a jihad against Israel, seeking to harness anger over the Gaza offensive with a new message posted Wednesday on the Internet.

The al Qaeda chief vowed to open "new fronts" against the U.S. and its allies beyond Iraq and Afghanistan and also criticized Arab leaders, accusing most of them of being allies of the U.S. and Israel.

The White House dismissed the call to jihad, saying it reflects bin Laden's isolation and shows he is trying to remain relevant at a time when his ideology and mission are being challenged.

Bin Laden spoke in a 22-minute audiotape posted on Islamic militant Web sites where al Qaeda usually issues its messages. The 51-year-old al Qaeda leader has been in hiding since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. He is believed to be living somewhere along the lawless Pakistan-Afghan border.

It was bin Laden's first tape since May and came nearly three weeks after Israel launched its offensive against Hamas that Gaza medical officials say has killed more than 1,000 Palestinians.

He said President-elect Barack Obama has received a "heavy inheritance" from President Bush - two wars and "the collapse of the economy." He predicted that burden will render the U.S. unable to sustain a long fight against the mujahedeen, or holy warriors.

There is "only one strong way to bring the return of Al Aqsa and Palestine, and that is jihad in the path of God," bin Laden said, referring to the revered Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. "The duty is to urge people to jihad and to enlist the youth into jihad brigades."

He also appealed for donations to finance the fight, saying the "tithes from any of the great Muslim or Arab traders" would be enough "for jihad on all the fronts."

The authenticity of the tape could not be independently confirmed.

"Wherever he is, he's in a deep hole," Vice President Dick Cheney said in an interview with PBS' "The NewsHour With Jim Lehrer." "He does not have much impact on the organization as best we can tell."

Gordon Johndroe, a spokesman for the National Security Council at the White House, said, "It appears this tape demonstrates his isolation and continued attempts to remain relevant at a time when al Qaeda's ideology, mission and agenda are being questioned and challenged throughout the world."

"This also looks to be an effort to raise money as part of their ongoing propaganda campaign," he added.

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/jan/15/bin-laden-calls-for-holy-war-against-israel-over-g/>

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New York Times
January 16, 2009

Pakistan Says 124 Arrested in Mumbai Probe

By SALMAN MASOOD

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan — Vowing to cooperate with India in the investigations of the Mumbai terrorist attacks, a Pakistani official said Thursday that 124 people had been arrested in a crackdown against a group linked with the attacks and urged India to provide more evidence to bring the perpetrators to justice.

In a televised press briefing, Rehman Malik, a senior Interior Ministry official, said the Pakistani government had formed a high-level investigation committee that would examine information provided by India.

He said a ranking police officer would head the committee. Investigators in Pakistan will “have to inquire into this information to try to transform it to evidence, evidence which can stand the test of any court in the world and of course our own court of law,” Mr. Malik said.

“We are with you in this difficult time,” Mr. Malik said while assuring a transparent investigation. But he stressed the need for cooperation between investigators from India and Pakistan. “We should share real-time information,” he said.

Tension between the nuclear-armed neighbors has worsened since the November attacks that killed more than 160 people.

Mr. Malik said top and mid-ranking leaders of Jamaat-ud-Dawa, a charity which is seen as a front for Lashkar-e-Taiba, the militant organization India has blamed to be behind the Mumbai attacks, have been detained. He added that five camps, 20 offices, 87 schools and six Web sites affiliated with Jamaat-ud-Dawa have been shut down.

Mr. Malik said the government had no knowledge of the whereabouts of Maulana Masood Azhar, the founder of Jaish-e-Muhammad, another extreme Islamist group suspected of involvement. India has demanded that Pakistan hand over Mr. Azhar. India and Pakistan have no extradition treaty and Pakistani officials say any Pakistani national who is accused of involvement will be tried in a Pakistani court.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/16/world/asia/16pstan.html?ref=world>

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