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Time

Monday, Jan. 26, 2009

Obama's Showdown over Nuclear Weapons

By Mark Thompson / Washington

The latest U.S. nuclear showdown doesn't involve a foreign enemy. Instead it pits President Barack Obama against his Defense Secretary, Robert Gates, and concerns the question of whether America needs a new generation of nuclear warheads. While serving under former President George W. Bush, Gates had repeatedly called for the Reliable Replacement Warhead (RRW) program to be put into operation, because the nation's current nukes — mostly produced in the 1970s and '80s — are growing so old that their destructive power may be in question.

"The Reliable Replacement Warhead is not about new capabilities but about safety, reliability and security," Gates said in a speech in the week before last November's election. In an article in the current issue of *Foreign Affairs*, released in early December after Gates was tapped by Obama to stay on at the Pentagon, Gates repeated that refrain. "Even though the days of hair-trigger superpower confrontation are over, as long as other nations possess the bomb and the means to deliver it, the United States must maintain a credible strategic deterrent," he wrote. "Congress needs to do its part by funding the Reliable Replacement Warhead program — for safety, for security and for a more reliable deterrent." RRW basically trades explosive force for greater assurance that new warheads would work predictably in the absence of tests, which the U.S. has refrained from conducting for nearly two decades to help advance nonproliferation goals. (See a graphic of the global nuclear arms balance.)

But Obama doesn't buy that logic. Shortly after taking the oath of office on Tuesday, he turned what had been a campaign promise into an official presidential commitment: the new Administration "will stop the development of new nuclear weapons," the White House declared flatly on its website, with no equivocation, asterisks or caveats.

Obama and Gates are "at loggerheads on this," says Michael O'Hanlon, a military expert at the Brookings Institution who has specialized in nuclear issues. A senior Pentagon official says talk of a resolution is "premature" because he doesn't believe Gates and Obama have discussed the matter.

The plutonium "pit" of a nuclear weapon — the heart of its extraordinary power — suffers radioactive decay, losing power and building up impurities, over time. There is concern that aging pits may fail to detonate properly, or perhaps at all.

O'Hanlon and other nuclear thinkers have suggested retooling existing weapons to improve reliability as an option. But the Energy Department's National Nuclear Security Administration, which develops America's nuclear weapons, has said it cannot meet the goals set for RRW by modifying existing weapons. Obama's position has backing in Congress, which has repeatedly refused to fund the program. (See who's who in Obama's White House.)

Obama would have a difficult time reversing course on what is now a stated policy of his Administration instead of simply a campaign promise. And any move to produce new nuclear weapons will be read by other nations as a U.S. push for nuclear supremacy, even as Washington urges the rest of the world — Tehran, are you listening? — to do without the weapons. Russia would very likely respond by upgrading its own arsenal.

But Gates argues that building a new generation of more reliable nuclear warheads would give the U.S. the confidence to shrink its overall nuclear arsenal. After all, if you have only a 50% level of confidence that a nuclear weapon is going to perform as advertised, you'll need twice as many. The U.S., under a self-imposed moratorium, has not conducted nuclear tests to assure the reliability and potency of its weapons since 1992. But it does spend more than \$5 billion a year conducting analyses and computerized tests to monitor the health of the weapons. (RRW is estimated to cost at least \$100 billion.)

Military officers have also expressed concern over relying on the aging atomic arsenal. (Skeptics note that U.S. policy tends to embrace the notion that all nuclear weapons possessed by adversaries will work, while those possessed by the U.S. won't.) "The path of inaction is a path leading toward nuclear disarmament," Air Force General Kevin Chilton, head of the U.S. Strategic Command, warned last month. "The time to act is now."

Nuclear weapons have tended to prevent or contain conflicts between those nations that possess them. Today's nuclear nightmare tends to focus less on a doomsday exchange with similarly armed rival states than on the nightmare of "loose nukes" falling into the hands of terrorists unaligned with any state and therefore beyond the reach of deterrence. A new batch of nuclear weapons, unfortunately, isn't going to change that.

<http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1873887,00.html?iid=tsmodule>

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Arizona Range News

Survive a Nuclear Attack: Nuclear War Survival Skills Plan Distributed to Arizona's Rural Towns

By Carol Broeder/Arizona Range News

Published: Wednesday, January 21, 2009

Area fire departments have recently been equipped with nuclear attack survival kits, including radiation detectors, thanks to the Physicians for Civil Defense. The organization's mission "is to save lives in the event of disasters, especially terrorist attacks using dirty bombs or nuclear weapons."

"In today's unprepared America, the only feasible plan that could save millions of lives on very short notice is the Nuclear War Survival Skills (NWSS) plan, using simple, government-developed and tested technology," according to the organization's website.

In addition to "prudent preparedness," the NWSS plan has three key elements that apply to all disasters:

- Duck and Cover
- Shelter In Place
- Radiologic Monitoring

Steve Jones and Kevin McDonald, both from Utah, are among the volunteers who are traveling throughout Arizona delivering nuclear attack kits to small rural fire departments. "This will create a nuclear safety net for the entire state," Dr. Jane M. Orient, the organization's president, wrote in a press release. "Like a spare tire or fire insurance, the NWSS manual is designed to be put away and forgotten about and first-read in an emergency," she said. Willcox, Bowie, Sunsites-Pearce, and Elfrida fire departments in Cochise County received the kits shortly before Christmas.

Jones and McDonald were still in Arizona as of press time, having "traversed northern Arizona for an entire week before returning to Tucson" on Saturday. "We only have about two dozen towns left -- Flagstaff and south around Prescott," Jones said in an e-mail sent to the Range News. "Tomorrow everyone is taking the day 'off' then Monday we drive up to the Flagstaff area to a clump of small towns and cities below it and we should finish the state by Wednesday," said Jones, adding that they have already driven 4,500 miles and delivered to 112 towns. "Kevin (McDonald) has taken about 3,000 photos and 12 hours of video tape," Jones said Saturday. "This last week we reached the most remote towns in Arizona driving as many as 105 miles to reach and return from a single town," he said.

The kit contains a United States government Cold War manual for emergency managers and the public called, "Nuclear War Survival Skills," which contains instructions for making a Kearny fallout meter. It enables emergency managers to prepare their jurisdictions for nuclear or radiological attack, Orient said.

(The manual may also be read online at www.madisoncountyyema.com)

In addition, each kit contains two radiation detectors and training material, she said. The value of each kit delivered is about \$600, said Orient, adding that the money was raised through private donations.

Jones told the Range News that the kits are technically on "indefinite loan," since many towns have rules against receiving donated materials. "There is no current plan for U.S. towns to handle nuclear or radiological attack," Orient said. "The Cold War plan was actually designed as a stop-gap for an unprepared America. A time like we live in now." The kit helps by providing "everything you need in any type of nuclear event," said Jones.

He believes that equipping each fire department throughout Arizona with a kit will go a long way toward reducing

panic in the aftermath of an attack. If there were a nuclear attack on Tucson, for example, the radiologic monitoring equipment would come in handy. "The biggest danger from a nuclear attack is panic," Jones told the Range News. "Everyone would stop going to work." Jones believes that with the kits he is helping to distribute, people would be able to tell when it's okay to come out. "You need to know that it's safe," he said.

Fire Chief Steve Estelle, with the Sunsites-Pearce Fire Department, had never heard of the program and was a bit leery when first approached by Jones and McDonald. "When I listened to what they had to say, I learned they were completely volunteer and not for profit," said Estelle, adding that the two men traveled all the way from Utah to distribute these kits throughout Arizona. His department certainly qualifies as the "small rural fire department" the volunteers were looking for. The Sunsites-Pearce district covers 33 square miles, with a responding area of 1600 square miles.

A "combination" department of firefighter/EMTs, Estelle has eight full-time, four part-time, and 14 volunteers. Estelle says the kit he received is there "to help us if there is a threat and to keep people from becoming alarmed if there is not a threat. We appreciate having it." "It might help to prevent mass panic," Estelle added. "It's nice to have, but hopefully we never have to use it."

Jones indicates that as they continue to travel throughout Arizona, word about their mission is preceding them. "It is a lot of fun besides work and the firemen are very happy to get the kits," he said. "Word has begun to get out ahead of us and some firemen are expecting us, which makes it much easier. We spend much more time training them to use the equipment now."

Further information may be obtained by visiting the organization's website, www.physiciansforcivildefense.org

(Editor's note: Eastern Arizona Courier Staff Writer Diane Saunders contributed to this article.)

<http://www.willcoxranenews.com/articles/2009/01/21/news/news03.txt>

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London Times
Opinion
January 26, 2009

Iran's Nuclear Adventurism

The West has few options but united diplomacy to contain a threatening regime

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the Iranian revolution. The capture of power by political Islam in a keystone state did immense damage to the standing of the then US President, Jimmy Carter. For President Obama, Iran's revolutionary regime may prove still more threatening. The regime's complicity in terrorism and threatening rhetoric against Israel have been constant features of its diplomacy. In the next few years these destructive characteristics may be buttressed by an Iranian nuclear bomb, giving an Islamist regime tremendous diplomatic leverage in a volatile region.

If Iran were interested only in a civil programme for producing nuclear energy, there would be no problem. But no Western government or reputable independent agency believes, or ought to make a presumption, that Iran's nuclear programme is intended purely for generating electricity. Iran insists on having access to the full fuel cycle. That is a provocative stance, because such access is unnecessary for a civil programme, while being a prerequisite for the development of nuclear weapons.

Iran has dissembled about its activities in the past. Its heavy-water plant at Arak and its uranium enrichment facility at Natanz were constructed covertly and were admitted only after they were exposed by an opposition group. It is false to maintain that Iran is being discriminated against by the international community; in fact, Iran has been treated with rigorous fairness. Even the Bush Administration accepted a Russian proposal that Iran could have access to the full cycle provided enrichment took place in another country. The response by Iran has been continued obstructionism and secrecy.

There is no obvious course by which outsiders can stymie the development of an Iranian bomb. A military strike against Iran's nuclear facilities has surely been debated within the US, recalling Israel's 1981 destruction of the Osirak nuclear facility in Iraq. But the logistical difficulties are immense and the chances of success slight.

Moreover, while Iran has an extremist theocratic regime, it is not a totalitarian state. It has a civil society and a degree of openness that was unknown in Baathist Iraq. The West must not lose the possibility of exerting pressure on Iran by a direct appeal to a generally young population with much instinctive goodwill to the West.

The conjunction of a new US Administration and technical obstacles may provide an opportunity to check Iran's nuclear adventurism. The evidence is that Iran freezes its nuclear activities when it faces concerted diplomatic pressure. Unlike North Korea, it wishes to remain within the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). In the face of a united front from the US and the EU-3 (Britain, France and Germany), Iran suspended its uranium enrichment in October 2003, and a year later agreed to a still more comprehensive moratorium. It now appears that Iran's stock of raw uranium is running low.

It is essential that the US and EU vigorously lobby uranium producers not to replenish those stocks. The most likely way to stimulate a renewed drive for an Iranian bomb is for the international community to take Iran's nuclear fictions at face value and pretend that nothing is wrong. Iran has obligations as a signatory of the NPT; it must be held to them, or face isolation.

http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/leading_article/article5586804.ece

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London Times
January 24, 2009

Iran in Scramble for Fresh Uranium Supplies

ROBIN PAGNAMENTA, MICHAEL EVANS AND TONY HALPIN IN MOSCOW

Western powers believe that Iran is running short of the raw material required to manufacture nuclear weapons, triggering an international race to prevent it from importing more, *The Times* has learnt.

Diplomatic sources believe that Iran's stockpile of yellow cake uranium, produced from uranium ore, is close to running out and could be exhausted within months. Countries including Britain, the US, France and Germany have started intensive diplomatic efforts to dissuade major uranium producers from selling to Iran.

Before Christmas, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office sent out a confidential request for its diplomats in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Brazil, all major uranium producers, to lobby governments not to sell uranium products, specifically yellow cake, to Iran.

Iran's stock of yellow cake, acquired from South Africa in the 1970s under the Shah's original civil nuclear power programme, has almost run out. Iran is developing its own uranium mines, but does not have enough ore to support a sustained nuclear programme.

It was shortly before Christmas that diplomats at Britain's sleek new embassy on Kosmonavtov Street in the Kazakh capital of Astana received a confidential and urgent request. Iran, officials back in Whitehall advised, was believed to be close to running out of its stockpiles of yellow cake — a powdered form of uranium ore.

There were concerns that Tehran could be seeking fresh supplies to support its nuclear programme at a critical juncture — just months before intelligence experts expected it to have accumulated enough enriched material for a bomb. British officials were to urge Kazakhstan, one of the world's biggest producers, to ignore any possible approaches to obtain imports.

The request, news of which emerged after an international investigation by *The Times*, was part of a drive by six countries — Britain, the US, France, Germany, Australia and Canada — to choke off supplies of uranium to Iran. It is a move that, while unlikely to cripple any effort to develop a bomb, would blunt its ambitions and help to contain the threat, authoritative sources said.

Kazakhstan, with 15 per cent of the world's deposits, is an increasingly important player in the global uranium trade and has set a target this year to become the world's largest producer.

Uzbekistan, where British officials are involved in a similar lobbying exercise, also has large deposits and was a leading supplier for weapons-grade material during Soviet times.

While there is no direct evidence that Iran has actively sought to buy uranium from either country, Western intelligence sources view them as one of a number of potential weak spots in the supply chain.

Others include the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where uranium for the bombs dropped on Japan in 1945 was mined and where there have been persistent rumours of illegal exports to countries including Iran. Getting to the truth about such claims is notoriously difficult. Reports by British Intelligence of an attempt by Saddam Hussein to acquire substantial quantities of yellow cake from Niger in West Africa for a clandestine nuclear bomb project turned out to be fabricated. That did not stop President Bush referring to them, in March 2003, as part of the justification for the invasion of Iraq.

But the very real international effort to choke off supplies of yellow cake to Iran, which also included British lobbying of Brazil, reflect mounting concern that 2009 is likely to be a pivotal year for Iran's nuclear programme.

It also vividly illustrates the urgency surrounding the biggest foreign policy challenge facing President Obama. The journey from innocent uranium ore to weapons-grade nuclear fuel is complex and requires sophisticated technology, but the Iranians are acquiring the expertise, which is why Western countries, and Israel, are so concerned at the prospect of having to confront a nuclear-armed Iran.

To reach weapons-grade uranium-235, Iran would have to produce a highly enriched fuel, and that requires thousands of centrifuges. It is estimated that 200kg of yellow cake could produce 1kg of weapons-grade (94 per cent enriched) uranium. About 20kg of highly enriched uranium are required for one bomb.

Iran, which has always claimed that its nuclear programme is peaceful, acquired several thousand tonnes of yellow cake from South Africa during the mid-1970s shortly after the Shah initiated the country's original push for civil nuclear power. Tehran also has two small uranium mines but they are costly to run, yield only small quantities of ore and are suffering from problems with purity.

Last May, a report from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) suggested that around 70 per cent of Iran's available yellow cake had been converted to uranium hexafluoride (UF₆) gas at a conversion plant in the city of Esfahan.

David Albright, founder of the Washington-based Institute for Science and International Security, said that Iran now had enough of this gasified uranium, stored in canisters weighing 10-14 tonnes each, to produce as many as 35 bombs, but it may run out of yellow cake to keep feeding the plant by the end of the year.

Beside the gas conversion facility, Iran also needs yellow cake to convert into pellets for fuel rods to run its Arak heavy water reactor. It also apparently wants large quantities of yellow cake to turn into low-enriched uranium for its new Russian-built reactor at Bushehr, in case Moscow reneges on a deal to supply nuclear fuel.

However, Tehran's relative shortage of uranium exposes puzzling questions about its claims to be pursuing a purely peaceful civil nuclear energy programme. It would need far larger quantities of yellow cake than it can produce from its own small mines to have sufficient fuel for a civil nuclear power programme.

"You need 200 tonnes per year just for one 1,000 megawatt power station," an IAEA source said. Iran has said that it wants to build 20 reactors, but the agency believes that the Iranians managed to process only 21 tonnes of uranium at a production centre at Bandar Abbas in southern Iran in one year, and plan to handle 50 tonnes a year from a new facility at Ardakan in the centre of the country, which is due to open later this year.

Moreover, Russia has an agreement with Iran to supply the prefabricated fuel that it needs for a civil nuclear power station it is building at Bushehr. The international community also offered in 2006 to supply the fuel rods and assemblies needed for a civil nuclear programme. Yet Iran insists on pursuing the development of its own facilities to mine and process uranium on its own — at vastly higher cost than it would pay for the fuel on the international market.

Any move by the Iranians to buy stocks of uranium from other countries could be interpreted two ways: either as an investment for what they claim is a genuine civil nuclear power programme or as an insurance policy for a future successful weapons project.

Iran is subject to a comprehensive safeguards agreement under which IAEA inspectors are meant to make checks to ensure that Tehran is not trying to divert nuclear material for a civil power programme to a military one. The agreement, however, covers only named installations that do not include the mines, and there remain a series of unanswered questions which have raised serious concerns about Iran's motives. UN Security Council Resolution 1737 prohibits countries from supplying any items "which could contribute to Iran's enrichment-related . . . activities". Few, if any, of the big producers would want to take the risk of doing business with Iran.

However, the frantic efforts to make sure that producing countries hold the line highlight the growing challenge of containing the uranium trade at a time when it is expanding briskly. Governments around the world are looking to nuclear energy as an answer to concerns about energy.

Mining operations are already carried out in nearly 20 countries including Canada, Australia, Russia, Namibia, Ukraine, China and Pakistan and in the past year alone new mines have been proposed in a string of countries from Zambia to Uruguay and Jordan to Sudan.

Monitoring this trade is a challenge in itself but there are also growing fears over the danger of nuclear smuggling. The US sent experts last year to help Georgia to install radiation detection equipment at border points when the work was interrupted by the war over South Ossetia. The project was given added urgency by a sting operation in Georgia in 2006, when a Russian man was arrested trying to sell 100g of highly enriched uranium. He claimed to have access to another 4kg. Georgia and the US signed an agreement in 2007 to combat nuclear smuggling. Neighbouring Armenia, which has a land border with Iran, signed a similar agreement with the US last year. But it is the possibility that uranium could be smuggled out of Africa, specifically Congo (DRC), that is keeping Western officials awake at night.

In 2005, Iran tried to smuggle some Uranium 238 by ship from Congo to Bandar Abbas, but this was foiled by Tanzanian customs officials.

Peter Rickwood, an IAEA official, said: "Nobody is quite sure how much of that stuff is being exported. There have been persistent rumours about uranium coming out of the DRC and going to North Korea or Iran. Yes, we are concerned about that."

Additional reporting by James Bone in New York, James Hider in Jerusalem and Jonathan Clayton in Johannesburg

http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/middle_east/article5576589.ece

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Epoch Times

Why Iran Seeks Nuclear Weapons

Opinion

By Arch Roberts Jr

YaleGlobal

25 January 2009

Expert observers of Iran hang on the latest reports from the International Atomic Energy Agency of how many centrifuges are running, how far the country must go to build a bomb, the latest inflammatory remarks from President Ahmedinejad, speculation about a lame-duck Bush administration military strike, or the same from Olmert's Israel.

Iran's decision on nuclear weapons was made at least two decades ago. Despite its professed peaceful intentions, nobody in their right mind would disagree with the notion that Iran maximizes its room for maneuver by all possible means, with nuclear arms or without. Tehran doesn't mind foreign suspicions at all; rather, its strategic interest is to encourage them, if only to achieve the effect of nuclear deterrence before possessing a nuclear device. Iran's policy has created a virtual deterrent, and its policies across the board, from the mullahs' point of view, amount to "constructive irresponsibility." Iran wants us to spend time guessing its next step.

The current conflict in Gaza provides an example of Iran's strategic ambitions. Iran has long used Hamas and Hezbollah as proxies in pursuit of its interests. At arm's length, these organizations support Iran's long-term goals: tie down Israel's actions in the short term, and frustrate all efforts at Middle East peace. Israel's 2006 failure in Lebanon, chasing down Hezbollah, only served to embolden the mullahs in Tehran. The assault on Gaza, while it may stop rocket attacks on civilians, could be expected to achieve much the same result.

There's no plausible peaceful explanation for Iran's uranium enrichment program: The fuel for its first nuclear reactor at Bushehr will be provided by Russia, with a requirement that spent fuel, full of weapons-usable plutonium, will be returned to Russia. Plans for future reactor construction are well in the distance. So the non-bomb uranium Iran has produced to date has no purpose besides that of a nuclear "breakout" option: kick out the inspectors, run the uranium through the centrifuges several more times, work on missiles and other delivery means, and finish up with a couple of bombs. In the view of Iranian leaders, this posture improves Iran's strategic military perspective.

Put yourself in Ahmedinejad's, or more important, Khamenei's, position. How could you not pursue the nuclear option? A proud and ancient nation, subject to a long history of Western meddling, a Persian oasis in a multitude of Arabs and others, a combatant in many bloody wars, must have insecurities that far outweigh the prospects of UN Security Council resolutions and sanctions. The flood of diplomats into Tehran over the last several years only increased the value that Iran's leaders, and much of its public, place on the virtual deterrent option that's a stockpile of uranium sufficient for a bomb.

Consider the current environment and the history that informs Iran's leaders. Iran has declared the United States its principal strategic threat for three decades; indeed, this enmity has been a central organizing principle for the government. Flirtations with more normal relations with the U.S. have been frequent, from the end of the Carter Administration through Iran-Contra to the present consideration of opening an American Interests Section in Tehran. But the government of Iran has been divided in important ways since the revolution, with many observers noting its conflicting signals to the major powers, simultaneously conciliatory and defiant. This behavior only increased during the term of fiery Ahmadinejad.

According to the Federation of American Scientists, Israel has had nuclear-capable missiles since 1966 – perhaps the most significant political driver of Iran's national policy. But there are many others as well: Saddam Hussein's Iraq, using chemical weapons and pursuing nuclear ones, waged a punishing war against Iran for a decade after the 1979 revolution. The US has had a considerable military presence on Iran's land borders since 2001, a continuous and significant naval presence in the Gulf for longer, and it shot down an Iranian airliner during the Reagan administration.

In Kenneth Pollack's excellent book, "The Persian Puzzle," he relates the tension among Iranian policymakers between transparency and concealment regarding the nuclear option. Concealment was the policy for 20 years until the revelations of 2002. Once revealed, the public face of Iran's policy changed to one of declarations of capability and denials of intent to build a nuclear weapon. On this question, Iran has many models to consider. Israel, as late as 2006, famously stated it would not be the first country to "introduce" nuclear weapons into the Middle East, a contrived ambiguity that has served its national interests, but leaves no confusion about its intent. Ironically, this Israeli policy is perhaps most consistent with Iran's current posture. The mere possibility of an Iranian nuclear weapon approximates its actual possession.

Another mature nuclear power in the neighborhood, India, has pursued a similar approach to Iran's. After its first nuclear test in 1974, India tried to persuade the world that the test was for peaceful purposes, with little success and few penalties. North Korea conducted a nuclear test in 2006, in the midst of the Six-Party talks on denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, another virtual deterrent.

The model Iran may follow is China, which pursues a policy best described by Jeffrey Lewis and others as "minimum deterrence." Apart from fielding the largest army in the world, China maintains perhaps 200 nuclear weapons and declares a no-first-use policy. China enjoys a level of respect and consideration Iran's leaders have never enjoyed, but to which they logically aspire.

Let's go back to the box in which Iran's policymakers have placed themselves: After at least two decades, Iran got caught, publicly, in 2002, and had to submit to inspections of items never declared to the IAEA. Libya renounced its nuclear program around the same time. If you're the Supreme Leader in Iran, what do you do? You pretend to cooperate with inspectors, work your Non-Aligned Movement allies in the UN system and slow-roll the slow-response mechanisms of the UN – all the while not compromising the strategic decision made decades ago. This is predictable, not radical behavior. Iran can always hang opposition to its actions from the US and others on outsiders and "Zionist tendencies," and pin IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei's technical statements on the fact that he's an Egyptian, and therefore suspect. (Nobel Peace Prize winner ElBaradei must have the patience of Job.)

So what's to be done? The only way out of this mess is more of the same: call a high-level Middle East peace conference; think creatively about the kind of no-first-use nuclear policies that have served China well; include Israel while protecting its strategic interests; find ways to guarantee Israeli and Iranian borders; and, most important, focus on nuclear issues before it's too late.

No one can doubt the commitment of the U.S. to Israel's security, nor should anyone question the value of a prospective region-wide commitment to security behind currently-agreed borders. Israel might even rethink its own nuclear posture in light of such developments.

Iran would likely participate in any regional conference devoted to Middle East peace. Such a meeting would mark its undeniable influence in the region and perhaps mitigate the toxic relations existing with the U.S. since 1979. It might just reduce the nuclear impulses that Iran cultivates as a counteraction to U.S. and Israeli military power, as

well as those they may harbor in a long-range analysis of a nuclear Turkey or Saudi Arabia. Why not? Absent an acceptable, overarching alternative, accepting Iran's ambiguous nuclear power may all we're left with.

Arch Roberts Jr. is a consultant on international affairs, formerly a staff member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, the International Atomic Energy Agency, and elsewhere in the United Nations system. These views are his own.

<http://en.epochtimes.com/n2/content/view/10905/>

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The Hindu
Saturday, 24 January 2009

Delay in Delivery of a Russian N-submarine

Vladimir Radyuhin

MOSCOW: The delivery of a Russian nuclear submarine to India could be delayed by more than a year as a result of a sea trials accident two months ago. The Shchuka-B class attack submarine, Nerpa, was to be handed over to the Indian Navy in August 2009, but sea trials were halted in November after 20 crewmen died in an accidental release of toxic fire-fighting gas. Officials at the Amur shipyard, which has built the submarine, cited financial and organisational, rather than technological, reasons for the delay. The shipyard has encountered difficulties forming a new team for pre-delivery trials .

<http://www.hindu.com/2009/01/24/stories/2009012455111300.htm>

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GlobalSecurityNewswire.org

North Korea Reasserts Nuclear Power Status

Monday, Jan. 26, 2009

North Korea on Friday again pressed its claim for recognition as a nuclear power, the Yonhap News Agency reported (see *GSN*, Jan. 23).

Pyongyang has argued that its October 2006 nuclear test blast cemented its position among acknowledged nuclear-weapon states. Nuclear powers such as Russia and the United States have rejected that assertion.

However, a U.S. Defense Department panel "recently made public a report designating the D.P.R.K. [North Korea] as a nuclear-weapon state," according to the official Korean Central News Agency.

"The report said that D.P.R.K. has not only several nuclear weapons but a missile system capable of delivering them," the news agency said.

While a Pentagon report issued late last year included language that did appear to support Pyongyang's claim, U.S. officials quickly said that the official policy in Washington is that North Korea is not counted among the nuclear powers.

Both U.S. President Barack Obama and Defense Secretary Robert Gates have acknowledged that North Korea possesses multiple nuclear weapons. Its nuclear test, though, was seen as something of a dud (Yonhap News Agency I, Jan. 23).

The KCNA report arrived on the same day as North Korean leader Kim Jong Il reportedly professed his support for denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and for the ongoing diplomatic effort to shutter his nation's atomic complex, Agence France-Presse reported.

"That's a good thing," said U.S. State Department spokesman Robert Wood.

"If you go back to September 2005, the North Koreans (agreed) to take a number of steps toward denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. So we hope to see the North adhere to what it agreed to," he added.

The denuclearization process, established in a 2007 pact between China, Japan, Russia, the United States and both Koreas, has stalled in recent months over details of verification of Pyongyang's nuclear activities and holdings.

Pyongyang also said recently that it would not give up its nuclear weapons until it achieves diplomatic relations with Washington and can be sure there are no U.S. nuclear arms in South Korea.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, during her confirmation process, said there is "merit" in the six-nation negotiations and that they would be assessed by the Obama administration (Agence France-Presse/[Yahoo!News](#), Jan. 23).

"Secretary Clinton is very committed to trying to deal with this issue of North Korea's nuclear program," Wood said. "And again, the administration is reviewing its options with regard to North Korea."

The administration plans "a review of a wide range of things: documents, speaking with ... experts, speaking to previous administration officials. That's all part of a review, and I can't put a time line on it," Wood said (Yonhap News Agency II, Jan. 25).

Koreas expert Don Oberdorfer said it was not clear why the denuclearization process stumbled after seemingly approaching a breakthrough in 2008, the *New York Times* reported last week.

"I'm not entirely sure. There was less there than meets the eye. A lot of people expected more than was likely to happen. There are contacts. You have the six-party talks, which basically authorized and legitimized discussions between the United States and North Korea. That was certainly a positive," said Oberdorfer, chairman of the U.S.-Korea Institute at Johns Hopkins University. "But on the other hand, it didn't really go far to settle any of the outstanding issues that are on the table. So, the best thing is that there were contacts, but that didn't itself solve many of the problems involved."

Oberdorfer refuted Pyongyang's claims of deployment of nuclear weapons in the South and said that the Obama administration does not yet appear focused on the nuclear standoff.

"It's not a very high priority for the Obama team as far as I can tell. Senator Clinton mentioned North Korea in her statement before the Foreign Relations Committee that the United States will continue to prevent proliferation in North Korea and Iran, and to secure loose nukes, and to try to shut down the market for the materials," he said. "The real concern of officials in the U.S. government is not that North Korea is going to attack anybody with nuclear weapons, but that some of these weapons and weapons materials could get into the hands of very unreliable countries or nongovernments" (Oberdorfer/Gwertzman, *New York Times*, Jan. 21).

Meanwhile, in another blast of rhetoric, North Korea on Saturday said that South Korean military exercises conducted earlier this month could produce war between the neighboring foes, Reuters reported.

Pyongyang has regularly blasted the government of President Lee Myung-bak, who has taken a harder line on North Korea than his predecessors since taking office last year.

"The Lee group's act of escalating the military provocations against the D.P.R.K. at a time when the inter-Korean confrontation is festering is as dangerous as adding fuel to the fire," the official *Rodong Sinmun* newspaper said.

"Pursuing the wild ambition to militarily stifle the D.P.R.K. at any cost in league with foreign forces... has rendered the situation on the Korean Peninsula so tense that a war may break out any time," it added (Angela Moon, Reuters/*Star*, Jan. 24).

http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20090126_8235.php

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Yonhap News
Saturday, 24 January 2009

N. Korea Renews Claim to Nuclear Status

SEOUL, Jan. 23 (Yonhap) -- North Korea's state news agency said Friday that the U.S. military recognizes North Korea as a nuclear state, renewing Pyongyang's claim to membership in the nuclear weapons club ahead of expected negotiations with Washington.

North Korea has insisted that it be recognized as a nuclear state following a nuclear weapons test in 2006. Regional powers, including the United States and Russia, have so far denied Pyongyang's claims.

The state-run Korean Central News Agency said that a special U.S. Department of Defense investigations committee for nuclear weapons management "recently made public a report designating the DPRK as a nuclear weapons state." DPRK is the acronym for the North's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

"The report said that the DPRK has not only several nuclear weapons but a missile system capable of delivering them," KCNA said.

It is a general view of the international media, KCNA continued, that the Pentagon has "put the DPRK in the same category as that of India and Pakistan recognized as unofficial nuclear weapons states."

The North's media have repeatedly echoed U.S. military officials' remarks and reported on documents on Pyongyang's nuclear weapons.

In the latest such remarks, U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates said in a contribution to the January-February edition of the journal Foreign Affairs that "North Korea has built several bombs, and Iran seeks to join the nuclear club."

U.S. President Barack Obama acknowledged on the campaign trail that the North had up to eight nuclear weapons.

North Korea's first-ever atomic test is believed to have been relatively small, with less than a kiloton in yield and below the standards of what is considered a successful nuclear test.

Russia's ambassador to South Korea, Glev Ivashendsov, said in a Seoul forum this week that Moscow does not acknowledge North Korea as a nuclear power.

Regional powers grouping South Korea, the U.S., China, Japan and Russia are seeking a resolution to the dispute on North Korea's nuclear weapons program under a 2007 deal, in which Pyongyang agreed to terminate its nuclear drive in exchange for energy and diplomatic incentives. The negotiations are on hold until Obama rolls out his policy on North Korea.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2009/01/23/62/0401000000AEN20090123007400315F.HTML>

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Aljazeera.net
Saturday, 24 January 2009

N Korea 'Makes Nuclear Commitment'

Kim Jong-Il, North Korea's leader, has said that his nation is committed to removing nuclear weapons from the Korean peninsula and wants to co-exist peacefully.

Kim was talking during a meeting in Pyongyang, the capital, on Friday with a senior Chinese envoy, his first meeting with a foreign dignitary since his suspected stroke in August.

The meeting with Wang Jiarui, visiting head of the Chinese Communist Party's International Department, was reported by China's Xinhua news agency.

"The North Korean side will commit itself to the denuclearization of the North Korean peninsula, and hopes to co-exist peacefully with other involved parties," Kim was quoted as saying by Xinhua.

"North Korea is not willing to see tensions emerge in the peninsula, and is willing to strengthen consultation and cooperation with China to push forward the six-party talks," Kim, 67, said, referring to multilateral talks aimed at ending North Korea's nuclear programme in return for aid.

US relations

The report came after North Korea hinted in a new year's message that it would work amicably with Barack Obama, the new US president.

It is Kim's - who is rarely quoted directly - first such appearance in six months.

"The meeting appears to be aimed at telling Obama that Kim has no problem with his health and is well enough to meet with Obama's envoy," Kim Yong-hyun, a North Korea expert at Seoul's Dongguk University, said.

North Korea test exploded a nuclear bomb in 2006. They signed an accord a few months later with the US, China, Japan, South Korea and Russia which said that they would dismantle their nuclear programme in exchange for aid and other concessions.

However, the North has dragged its heels since then and argued over the monitoring of their nuclear activities.

Obama has appeared to be open to talking to North Korea, after saying that he would "work with old friends and former foes" to decrease nuclear threats, in his inaugural address on Tuesday.

However, concrete moves from the US have not materialised as yet.

US and South Korean officials said earlier in the year that Kim had suffered a stroke but was recovering.

<http://english.aljazeera.net/news/asia-pacific/2009/01/20091241472126583.html>

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Washington Post

Kim Jong-il says wants Denuclearization of Peninsula

By Lucy Hornby and Jack Kim

Reuters

Friday, January 23, 2009; 7:47 AM

BEIJING/SEOUL (Reuters) - North Korea is committed to removing nuclear weapons from the Korean peninsula and wants to co-exist peacefully, leader Kim Jong-il said on Friday in his first meeting with a foreign envoy since his suspected stroke in August.

China's state Xinhua news agency said Kim made the comments during a visit to Pyongyang by a senior Chinese official.

Analysts have said a meeting with a foreign visitor would offer evidence that Kim, who U.S. and South Korean officials said fell seriously ill in August, was well enough to run Asia's only communist dynasty and make decisions about its nuclear program.

"The North Korean side will commit itself to the denuclearization of the North Korean peninsula, and hopes to co-exist peacefully with other involved parties," Xinhua news agency quoted Kim as saying.

"North Korea is not willing to see tensions emerge in the peninsula, and is willing to strengthen consultation and cooperation with China to push forward the six-party talks," Kim added, referring to multilateral talks aimed at having destitute North Korea scrap its nuclear programme in return for aid.

Xinhua and the North's KCNA news agency said Kim met Wang Jiarui, visiting head of the Chinese Communist Party's International Department, on Friday.

It is rare for Kim to be quoted directly

His comments came after the North hinted in a New Year's message that it was willing to work with new U.S. President Barack Obama by saying it wanted good relations with countries that treated it in an amicable manner.

The North, which has dragged its heels in the six-way talks, has also said it can scrap nuclear weapons when it feels Washington has dropped its "hostile policy" toward it.

North Korea has "weaponised" enough declared plutonium stocks to produce four to five nuclear weapons, a U.S. expert said last week after returning from talks with officials in Pyongyang.

TOUGH RHETORIC ALSO

Kim's reported comments -- which were not carried by North Korean media -- were a sharp contrast to the tough rhetoric its state media has fired off at South Korea and its president, who has taken a tough line toward Pyongyang.

South Korea last weekend placed its military -- backed by some 28,000 U.S. troops in the South -- after Pyongyang said it would wipe out its neighbor and warned of possible conflict in disputed waters off the peninsula's west coast, which has been the scene of deadly naval conflicts.

Xinhua said Kim also "warmly accepted" an invitation to visit China, the North's biggest benefactor, that was proffered in a letter from Chinese President Hu Jintao on the occasion of the Lunar New Year.

North Korea's state KRT television showed 15 still pictures of Wang and Kim, whose trademark paunch looked smaller than a year ago, sitting down for discussions and sharing a toast at a luncheon. Kim's left hand appeared severely swollen in photographs carried on Xinhua.

The last high-profile reception given by Kim was in June when Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping visited Pyongyang, South Korea's Unification Ministry said.

North Korea's state media have issued numerous reports in recent months saying Kim has visited army units, factories and farms. But there has been no proof of when the visits took place.

In undated photos released by North Korea, Kim has been swaddled in padded coats, ski gloves and dark sunglasses. The North has not released video of Kim since the suspected illness leading to speculation in the South that he may still show the lingering effects of the stroke.

Analysts said the meeting with Wang was part of efforts to highlight Kim's firm grip on power as the state heads into a March 8 election of its rubber stamp parliament when he is expected to be reaffirmed as its supreme military leader.

"That's a major public event he must attend," said Cho Min of the Korea Institute for National Unification, an expert on the inner workings of Pyongyang. "These things are coming because the North is confident about his health."

Kim has been conspicuously absent from major events in the past several months that he has attended before.

(Additional reporting by Jon Herskovitz and Kim Junghyun in Seoul and Chris Buckley in Beijing; Editing by Dean Yates)

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/01/23/AR2009012300470.html?wprss=rss_world/wires

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National Journal
Monday, Jan. 26, 2009

Obama Challenged to Move from War on Terror to Routine Vigilance

By Sydney J. Freedberg Jr., Shane Harris, and Corine Hegland

On Sept. 11, 2001, George W. Bush took America to war. On Jan. 20, 2009, Barack Obama took the helm of a war-weary nation. The armed forces are worn down by repeated deployments and more than 4,800 deaths. Law enforcement is frazzled by seven years in which the Homeland Security Department's color-coded level of alert has never dropped below "yellow: elevated: a significant risk of terrorist attacks."

(Jan. 26) - U.S. President Barack Obama plans to adopt different counterterrorism policies than those of the Bush administration (Alex Wong/Getty Images).

As the recession crimps federal, state, and local budgets, no level of government can stay on a war footing forever. So, without letting security slide, President Obama must somehow convert his predecessor's "global war on terror" into a routine, sustainable function of governance.

"One of the downsides of using the term 'war' is that we see war as a finite undertaking with a beginning and an end," said Brian Michael Jenkins, a senior adviser at the RAND think tank. "The reality is, in some form, we are going to be dealing with this for the foreseeable future."

The challenge is defining that new normal. How far will Obama roll back the extraordinary powers of surveillance, secrecy, and detention that Bush claimed? Which of the many weak, ill-coordinated civilian agencies will step up to fill the gaps as an overbearing but now overburdened Defense Department steps back? And how will the balance shift between federal efforts that have concentrated strictly on counterterrorism and state and local efforts that prefer incorporating counterterrorism into an "all-crimes, all-hazards" approach to public safety? Not all of Obama's

answers are as obvious as simply doing the opposite of what Bush did -- and some of his policies may be inconsistent with the lofty promises of his campaign.

Surveillance and Torture

On Jan. 11, Obama offered praise for, of all people, outgoing Vice President Dick Cheney -- and on counterterrorism, of all topics. In a lengthy discussion on ABC's *This Week*, host George Stephanopoulos played a clip from an earlier interview, in which Cheney advised the Obama team, "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, and it would be a tragedy if [the Obama administration] threw over those policies simply because they've campaigned against them."

Obama told Stephanopoulos, "I think that was pretty good advice. ... I've got no quibble with that particular quote." Obama added, though, "If Vice President Cheney were here, he and I would have some significant disagreements." But, much like the decision to invade Iraq, many once-contentious questions are now moot.

Candidate Obama chastised Bush for authorizing electronic surveillance of U.S. citizens without warrants. But Senator Obama eventually voted for changes to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act that gave legal sanction to much of what the Bush administration had been doing outside the law. The CIA has abandoned some of the most controversial interrogation tactics such as waterboarding -- essentially, half-drowning -- that it used against detainees. Yet human-rights groups and their allies are pressuring Obama to issue an immediate executive order explicitly defining waterboarding as torture and forbidding its use.

So emotional are these issues that Obama's top campaign adviser on counterterrorism, John Brennan, withdrew his name from consideration for CIA director after an uproar from the Left that he had not sufficiently distanced himself from Bush policies on torture and surveillance. Brennan will instead land at the National Security Council as a powerful senior adviser, and thus avoid Senate confirmation.

In splitting the difference on Brennan -- backing off on a high-profile post but keeping him on the team -- Obama has perhaps shown the limits of what he will do to appease the liberal base that made him a national figure. One of the most popular questions on Obama's Change.gov website has been whether he would appoint a special prosecutor or other independent investigator to look into Bush-era spying on Americans, torturing of foreigners, and other reported abuses. When Stephanopoulos pressed this point, Obama showed that he wants to close the book on the past instead of throwing it at Bush officials.

"We're still evaluating how we're going to approach the whole issue of interrogations, detentions, and so forth," Obama said. "That doesn't mean that if somebody has blatantly broken the law, that they are above the law. ... But my general belief is that when it comes to national security, what we have to focus on is getting things right in the future, as opposed to looking at what we got wrong in the past."

Slow-Rolling Guantanamo

No one word better sums up the bitterness over the Bush administration's approach to counterterrorism than "Guantanamo." The prison for suspected terrorists improvised on the grounds of the U.S. naval base leased from Cuba has become a global monument to the violation of human rights.

After taking office, Obama swiftly reversed Bush administration policies on detainees at Guantanamo and in CIA custody. One of his first official acts on Jan. 20 was to suspend the military tribunals at Guantanamo. Two days later, surrounded by retired military officers, he signed executive orders ending the CIA's secret prisons and "enhanced" interrogation techniques; bringing all detainee policies into compliance with international treaties; creating an interagency review of all remaining detainees; and closing Guantanamo within one year. "We are not," Obama said, "going to continue with a false choice between our safety and our ideals."

But if Guantanamo were easy to close, it would be gone by now. More than two years ago, in June 2006, none other than George W. Bush declared he wanted to shutter the prison but had no alternative place to put some "darn dangerous" men. Obama admitted the problem in his interview with Stephanopoulos, saying that any new approach

to detainees must adhere to the "basic principles of the Anglo-American legal system, but doing it in a way that doesn't result in releasing people who are intent on blowing us up."

A concerted diplomatic and legal effort can reduce, though not erase, Guantanamo's population of about 250 detainees. The Bush administration's efforts to repatriate prisoners were stymied by a distinct lack of global goodwill and an inability to reach agreements with other countries about how great a threat particular detainees posed. Obama will need to leverage his star power into pressuring allies to find ways to resettle not only their own nationals but also third-country citizens at risk of torture by their own governments.

"For many detainees, we need to be moving the bar for where, under what conditions, we would transfer somebody home," said Matthew Waxman, a Columbia University Law School associate professor who worked on detainee issues at the National Security Council and in the Defense and State departments. "We may need to be willing to accept some risk and to push more of the risk-mitigation responsibility onto coalition partners."

For detainees against whom we have solid evidence, Obama has indicated he wants the federal courts to replace Bush's discredited military tribunals. And for a handful of hard-core prisoners who may be impossible to charge -- because, for example, they were tortured by American hands--the new administration still has to decide what to do.

Demilitarizing Counterterrorism

One of Bush's first acts as president was to abolish the elaborate apparatus of interagency coordination that the Clinton administration set up during eight years of often painful trial and error. After Sept. 11 -- with an ineffective system of coordination led by a weak national security adviser, Condoleezza Rice -- Cheney, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, and their aides amassed unprecedented power over foreign policy, intelligence, and covert operations. Together, they ran the "global war on terror" as just that, a war.

Obama initially rose to fame for his denunciation of that war-making strategy in Iraq. Now he has chosen not only to appoint a powerful secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, but also to retain Defense Secretary Robert Gates, who has actively fought for more money for the State Department. At the helm of the National Security Council is not an academic like Rice but a former four-star general, James Jones, who commanded both the Marine Corps and NATO forces in Europe.

"A strong NSC would be able to coordinate [policy]," said Ron Marks, a former CIA and Hill staffer. "A lot of this is going to be up to Jones and John" -- that is, John Brennan, the veteran CIA operative who will be Jones's deputy for counterterrorism at the NSC.

In a March 2008 interview with NationalJournal.com, Brennan called for a new approach to counterterrorism: "Since 9/11, understandably, we've been focused downstream, on those terrorists who might be in our midst or trying to kill us," he said. "[But] there needs to be much more attention paid to those upstream factors and conditions that spawn terrorists."

The problem is, there is no civilian agency with the money, personnel, or institutional heft to do "upstream" what the FBI and Pentagon have done "downstream." Congress tried to reorganize its way out of the problem, but its intended coordinators -- the Homeland Security Department in 2002, the national intelligence director in 2004 -- remain weak players in interagency turf wars. And despite efforts by Bush's first, much-steamrolled secretary of state, Colin Powell, to rebuild his department, State remains not only understaffed but also a house divided where Foreign Service diplomats feud with USAID workers. The military had to fill slots allocated for civilian State and USAID personnel on provincial reconstruction teams in Iraq because State just didn't have enough people.

Meanwhile, the Bush administration repeatedly gave public diplomacy short shrift. "For public diplomacy, the entire budget [per year] is what we spend in a month in Iraq," said Bruce Hoffman, a counterterrorism expert at Georgetown University. "We've been very successful in the short term in killing and capturing [terrorists]. Where we've been more remiss is in breaking the cycle of recruitment and regeneration that sustains these groups and ensures we're going to be fighting for a decade to come."

The Fusion Centers

Abroad, Bush emphasized military action -- intended to be short, sharp strikes -- instead of a multifront, long-term, interagency campaign. At home, Bush emphasized federal efforts, narrowly focused on counterterrorism, over the broader public safety agenda preferred by state and local government.

Understandably afraid that Congress would milk "homeland security" as a perpetual source of pork, Bush officials fought to keep grant money tied tightly to urgent improvements in counterterrorism. They went so far as to cut general-purpose grants for local agencies, such as the popular "COPS" program, passed under Clinton to hire 100,000 local police; at the same time they added money to more-targeted grants that explicitly forbade recipients to use the money for personnel.

So, around the country, police and fire departments binged on mobile command posts and chemical-warfare suits -- but they had to strip people from day-to-day public safety duties to cover their new homeland-security responsibilities. As seven years passed with numerous alerts but no attacks, and as the economy began to crumble, pressure has grown to shift ever-scarcer resources back from counterterrorism to everyday needs.

"The grant programs have always been so short-term and so sporadic that it just drives the chiefs crazy," said Richard Cashdollar, a senior adviser on homeland security to the Major Cities Chiefs Association, which represents 63 big-city police departments.

The focus of this fiscal tug-of-war are the so-called intelligence "fusion centers" that have sprung up in most major cities and in every state. "The thing about fusion centers is that everybody is at the table: military, federal, state agencies, local sheriffs, and police departments," explained David Huffman, sheriff of Catawba County, N.C., and chairman of the homeland-security committee of the National Sheriffs' Association. So successful is this information-sharing model that the Israelis -- the world's most practiced terrorist fighters -- invited Huffman to Jerusalem to explain it. "I got a call back about six months later," he said, "and they had set up a fusion center in Jerusalem."

Back in the United States, however, where terrorist threats are not a daily occurrence, the dilemma is whether fusion centers should handle information about other kinds of criminal activity as well, such as gangs and drug rings. The feds have fought to keep the centers focused on counterterrorism. State and local officials argue for an "all-crimes" approach. "It's just real hard for a local community or even a big city to sustain the costs of these facilities long-term," Cashdollar said. "It's good to be able to show the local community that they are getting value for investment in these centers on a day-to-day basis." Besides, he added, it is often routine investigations that turn up terrorist cells, such as the Hezbollah fundraisers busted in North Carolina for smuggling cigarettes -- or fail to, as when Florida sheriff's deputies picked up Sept. 11 architect Mohamed Atta for driving without a license and then, unaware that his name was on a federal watch list, let him go.

So far, state and local officials are optimistic about Obama, whose staff went out of its way to listen to them during both the campaign and the transition. "They repeatedly called back," said Trina Sheets, executive director of the National Emergency Management Association, adding that some draft policy documents from the Obama team "were a direct reflection of [our] recommendations."

Here, as elsewhere, Obama faces high expectations. His challenge will be to preserve the essential tools of counterterrorism developed during the Bush administration's "war" and wrap them into a new, sustainable framework of permanent vigilance.

http://gsn.nti.org/siteservices/print_friendly.php?ID=ts_20090126_6470

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Washington Times
Monday, January 26, 2009

Homeland Security Agenda

Michael O'Hanlon

More than seven years after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, where does the United States stand in trying to ensure that such a terrible tragedy - or something even worse - never again befall this country? And what should President Obama's new homeland security team, led by Secretary Janet Napolitano, emphasize in its efforts?

Former President Bush and his associates frequently emphasized, in their last days in office, that they are proud of the fact the United States was not attacked again on their watch after Sept. 11, 2001. Indeed, even for those of us who are critics of much of Mr. Bush's foreign policy, I would argue it is correct to acknowledge substantial progress on the homeland security front - with much better intelligence cooperation domestically and internationally, improved procedures for verifying the movements of people and money, and other important steps having been taken as federal spending on homeland security tripled during Mr. Bush's time in office.

However, for all the progress, the list of enduring vulnerabilities is almost as long. For example, the Border Patrol has been increased from 9,000 to 20,000, but most land borders are still fairly easy to penetrate. Progress is being made toward screening cargo on passenger airlines, but 100 percent screening will not be in place until 2010. And for all the cargo now inspected, most arriving in the country by sea still is not. The screening that is taking place for such cargo may not be an adequate substitute for actual inspection, and will require constant monitoring and improvement.

Standards for reliable identification remain too weak in some states; some drivers' licenses should make better use of biometric indicators and of digitization technologies for verifying proper ownership. The Real ID act will require that they do so soon, for those wishing to use their drivers' licenses as proof of identity to travel on airplanes or enter federal buildings. But not all states may comply fully.

Trains and subways remain inherently soft and unprotected targets in general. Only about half of key transportation assets or systems have developed risk mitigation strategies. Moreover, this figure applies only to planning and not actual implementation. More broadly, only very few cities devote substantial police resources to address terrorism threats.

Hospitals are not ready to treat victims of chemical or biological attack for the most part. While more antidote has been procured for some specific biological threats, methods for developing, producing, stockpiling and above all distributing vaccines against biological agents are wanting to date. The nation's food supply is not particularly well secured. Biological weapons detectors are being developed, but they would usually pick up agent only four hours after dispersal - and as of now even this capability is still in the development and testing stage.

The country's military still has limited capacity for rapid response for domestic emergencies. NORTHCOM (the U.S. Northern Command) does have about 8,000 troops on call to help with emergencies, but they may not have the attributes needed to respond effectively. Procedures for helping the National Guard organize regionally, so neighboring states may help each other more dependably and quickly in major crises, are still informal and fairly weak. National Guard links with NORTHCOM appear better, and more equipment may have been predeployed to states where it is most likely to be needed, but the ability of Guard units to help each other promptly and directly is less developed.

Perhaps the nation's main stadiums and other large public arenas are partially protected against terrorism, the other half are not. Trucks carrying hazardous materials are not amply protected at all stages in their normal operations. Except perhaps in New York, large buildings are generally not being better outfitted with simple counterterrorism capabilities, even when being refit or built anew - shatterproof glass in ornate lobbies is not used enough, air intakes are still too easily accessible.

Not all hypothetical vulnerabilities must be addressed. Trying to do so could bankrupt the country. In addition, as Brookings Institution scholar Jeremy Shapiro has argued, al Qaeda and affiliates seem to have a strong proclivity for certain types of attacks - principally those involving airplanes and truck bombs - as well as a penchant to attempt only the spectacular against U.S.-based targets. Having "overachieved," so to speak, on Sept. 11, they are reluctant to attempt garden-variety terrorism. They might believe such smaller attacks would fail to live up to the standards and expectations they have created among their followers as well as the American and global publics.

Moreover, while they may still harbor some hopes of being able to attack with weapons of mass destruction, their capacity to do so given the state of the global al Qaeda diaspora and network is extremely limited. On balance, as

Mr. Shapiro argues fairly convincingly, they are probably not inclined to attack economic targets such as ports, food distribution systems, and information systems, moderately unlikely to employ Hamas-style low-level attacks, and quite unlikely to have access to weapons of mass destruction (especially the most threatening types).

Even for one taking a somewhat less sanguine view than Mr. Shapiro, practical considerations have to compete with worst-case planning. Many targets are extremely hard to protect, meaning the premium should be on stronger prevention (through intelligence and border controls and the like) rather than site defense or consequence management. And some types of attacks are worse than others, suggesting the country should indeed focus primary attention on catastrophic rather than more modest risks.

This framework for identifying homeland security priorities - focus on preventive efforts, on catastrophic threats, on the types of attacks already preferred (or actively contemplated and planned) by al Qaeda, and also where possible on activities that provide additional benefits beyond the security sphere - was introduced in earlier Brookings work. It guides the recommendations listed below as well:

- Airport and airplane security initiatives ("Sniffers," Cargo Inspections, etc.): \$350 million.
- Border Patrol and related activities: \$300 million.
- Coast Guard force structure growth: \$900 million.
- "COPS II" initiative to help local police forces with counterterrorism: \$100 million.
- Biological detectors and Food and Drug Administration food inspection initiatives: \$300 million.
- Container cargo inspection improvements: \$250 million.
- Hazardous cargo inspection/security initiatives: \$100 million.
- Improved planning capacity at the Homeland Security Department: \$100 million.

The net effect of these suggested budgetary changes of just under \$2.5 billion a year is a modest investment in our homeland security. Even in these tough times, it is affordable. As budget season opens in Washington, such an agenda should be considered by the new administration and new Congress.

Michael O'Hanlon is author of the forthcoming Brookings Institution book, "Budgeting for Hard Power."

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/jan/26/homeland-security-agenda/print/>

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New York Times
January 25, 2009

What's Ahead for Plum Island?

By DERRICK HENRY

ABOUT 50 years ago, the United States Department of Agriculture took control of Plum Island, already a federal property, to study dangerous animal diseases that might harm the national food supply. A sense of mystery and danger in nearby communities emerged as employees took a special ferry to the 840-acre island and took showers to protect themselves before and after work. But that sense of living near danger will begin to fade in about five years.

The Department of Homeland Security announced this month that it would move the research performed at the Plum Island Animal Disease Center to Manhattan, Kan. More dangerous research will be done there, on the Kansas State University campus. "It's pretty much beginning to reach the end of its life cycle," John S. Verrico, a spokesman for the Department of Homeland Security's Science and Technology Directorate, said of the Plum Island lab.

Mr. Verrico said that as new livestock diseases emerge, a larger and more secure place for research is needed. “Those cannot be studied in a laboratory like Plum Island,” he said. “Plum Island really allows us to only study one disease at a time.”

Homeland Security took over Plum Island in 2003 and two years later announced that it would build a new biological and agricultural defense center called the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility, or N.B.A.F.

At the time of that announcement, Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton of New York, a Democrat who was confirmed last week as secretary of state under President Obama, and Representative Timothy H. Bishop, Democrat of Southampton, said the laboratory should remain open at the current security level — Level 3. Mr. Bishop still has hope that the closing may be put off.

The government said it needed a Level 4 laboratory, the highest security designation, enabling it to handle diseases fatal to animals and humans for which there is no known cure. Right now, the Plum Island laboratory studies foreign animal diseases, like foot-and-mouth disease, that are not lethal to humans. But it can handle anthrax, which is deadly to humans.

In December, the government identified Kansas State as the preferred location from among six sites, including Plum Island. The closing of Plum Island will mean about 200 lost science and support jobs. But “it’s still quite a ways out there,” said Jamie Johnson, the director of national labs for the Science and Technology Directorate of the Homeland Security Department.

That is because construction of the Kansas laboratory will not begin until early 2010 and will take about four years to complete, according to the Homeland Security Department. Meanwhile, research will continue on Plum Island. In 2014, a three-year transition will begin to move research to the new laboratory.

In 2017 or early 2018, the Plum Island laboratory will close and the government will consider selling the island, Mr. Johnson said. Plum Island is on the northern edge of Gardiners Bay, about one and a half miles from the hamlet of Orient Point. “I do not believe that it is a done deal,” Mr. Bishop said of that chronology. He called the lab construction “a priority of the Bush administration.” “We do not know if it’s going to be a priority for the Obama administration,” Mr. Bishop said. He said Congress had not yet appropriated any money for the new laboratory.

But Mr. Johnson, of Homeland Security, said \$46 million in federal money was allocated for the laboratory in the 2008 fiscal year and \$35 million was allocated in the 2009 fiscal year. He also said he was confident that Congress would pay for it. The proposal calls for \$451 million for the laboratory, but Mr. Johnson said additional costs would bring the total to about \$630 million.

Mr. Bishop said he had sent a letter about Plum Island’s future to Janet Napolitano, who was confirmed last week as secretary of homeland security. That letter has not been made public, but in December Mr. Bishop argued that Plum Island should remain a Level 3 laboratory and that more dangerous research should be conducted at facilities that can handle it, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta and Fort Detrick in Frederick, Md.

The new laboratory in Kansas will first focus on Level 3-security research like classical swine fever and foot-and-mouth disease, according to the Homeland Security Department. Later, research conducted under Level 4 security would focus on Hendra and Nipah viruses, which have been linked to respiratory and neurological diseases.

The federal government has had a long presence on Plum Island. It bought 130 acres on the west end in 1897 to build Fort Terry, which was a defense position during the Spanish-American War. Guns were installed there to repel enemy warships, and during World War II, soldiers there kept watch for German U-boats and planes.

The fort was later closed and reopened by the Army Chemical Corps and the Department of Agriculture in 1952 for animal disease research. In 1954, the Department of Agriculture took over the entire island to build the Plum Island Animal Disease Laboratory. The laboratory became a part of the Homeland Security Department in 2003. Access to the island is restricted.

Plum Island has had safety incidents that worried East End residents. In 1991, Hurricane Bob knocked out power on the island for several hours, disabling air pressure systems that ensured that viruses were contained. And in 1978, a foot-and-mouth outbreak occurred among animals in pens outside the laboratory.

As the countdown begins to the end of the Plum Island laboratory, some ideas for its use have emerged. If the disease lab closes, Mr. Bishop said, he would like to see Plum Island turned into a government-run laboratory dedicated to the study of alternative fuels and renewable energy. Mark Smith, a spokesman for the Suffolk County executive, Steve Levy, said officials envisioned a wind farm, but had not fully studied the idea yet.

Enzo Morabito, the director of real estate development for Prudential Douglas Elliman Real Estate in Bridgehampton, which deals exclusively in luxury property, said a two-acre lot of bare waterfront property on the south side of Plum Island would likely go for about \$2 million. He also said the entire island would be suitable for a golf course and luxury homes. "That's what I would do with it," Mr. Morabito said. "That's the highest and best use."

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/25/nyregion/longisland/25plumli.html?_r=1&pagewanted=print

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TimesUnion.com

January 26, 2009

Close Gaps in FDA's Oversight

By CAROLINE SMITH DEWAAL

While the Bush administration's failures in financial regulation are getting much-needed attention, its laissez faire approach to government regulation of more kitchen-table issues like food safety also needs urgent repair. And as with failures in our homeland security or emergency response, disasters often illustrate the gaps in federal oversight. Since the fall, six consumers have died and nearly 500 have been sickened in a nationwide outbreak linked to peanut butter, the second peanut butter-related outbreak in two years.

Processed foods are only part of the challenge. Outbreaks from various vegetables have become an all-too-common part of our nation's diet. Spinach tainted with deadly E. coli in 2006 awakened many Americans to the problem. Since then, tomatoes, lettuce and even hot peppers have been linked to large outbreaks.

Pet food containing melamine — a chemical intentionally added to grain by crooked Chinese merchants — caused the deaths of thousands of pets. That episode clearly illustrated the vulnerability of our food supply to bioterrorism.

Last fall, Chinese infants were sickened and killed by intentionally contaminated infant formula. We were lucky that that tragedy did not ripple into our own country.

Those foods are all regulated by the Food and Drug Administration, which is responsible for the safety of 80 percent of our food supply. Yet, after each food-safety scare, consumers are stunned to find new gaps in FDA's programs. The deaths from peanut butter are indeed tragic but they are far from isolated incidents. All told, CDC estimates that 5,000 Americans — about 75 a day prematurely perish each year because of unsafe food.

Last summer, Barack Obama introduced the Improving Food-borne Illness Surveillance and Response Act. The bill sought to identify outbreaks faster by enhancing state and local health departments, our first line of defense through early detection of food-borne illness.

Improving state and local surveillance is essential for quickly identifying when sporadic illness reports are part of a nationwide outbreak. Standardizing epidemiological tools and improving communication between states and federal agencies would accelerate investigations. Funding for laboratories and stronger partnerships between private and public laboratories would strengthen their ability to participate in surveillance systems.

President Obama is now in charge of our nation's food supply and the agencies implementing the laws that form our highly fragmented national system. The FDA's inability to handle its food-safety mission should be addressed early,

perhaps by dividing the agency into two independent units — one focusing on food safety and nutrition, the other addressing drugs and medical devices.

Congress should continue to increase the budget for programs to ensure manufacturing facilities are inspected frequently (peanut butter and other facilities are inspected every five or 10 years) and that the FDA has the tools to find problems before tainted food gets to grocery stores.

Caroline Smith DeWaal is director of food safety at the nonprofit Center for Science in the Public Interest in Washington (<http://www.cspinet.org>).

<http://www.timesunion.com/AspStories/story.asp?storyID=763594&category=OPINION>

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Stratfor.com

January 26, 2009

Strategic Divergence: The War against the Taliban and the War against Al Qaeda

By George Friedman

The Devolution of Al Qaeda

Washington's attention is now zeroing in on Afghanistan. There is talk of doubling U.S. forces there, and preparations are being made for another supply line into Afghanistan — this one running through the former Soviet Union — as an alternative or a supplement to the current Pakistani route. To free up more resources for Afghanistan, the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq probably will be accelerated. And there is discussion about whether the Karzai government serves the purposes of the war in Afghanistan. In short, U.S. President Barack Obama's campaign promise to focus on Afghanistan seems to be taking shape.

We have discussed many aspects of the Afghan war in the past; it is now time to focus on the central issue. What are the strategic goals of the United States in Afghanistan? What resources will be devoted to this mission? What are the intentions and capabilities of the Taliban and others fighting the United States and its NATO allies? Most important, what is the relationship between the war against the Taliban and the war against al Qaeda? If the United States encounters difficulties in the war against the Taliban, will it still be able to contain not only al Qaeda but other terrorist groups? Does the United States need to succeed against the Taliban to be successful against transnational Islamist terrorists? And assuming that U.S. forces are built up in Afghanistan and that the supply problem through Pakistan is solved, are the defeat of Taliban and the disruption of al Qaeda likely?

Al Qaeda and U.S. Goals Post-9/11

The overarching goal of the United States since Sept. 11, 2001, has been to prevent further attacks by al Qaeda in the United States. Washington has used two means toward this end. One was defensive, aimed at increasing the difficulty of al Qaeda operatives to penetrate and operate within the United States. The second was to attack and destroy al Qaeda prime, the group around Osama bin Laden that organized and executed 9/11 and other attacks in Europe. It is this group — not other groups that call themselves al Qaeda but only are able to operate in the countries where they were formed — that was the target of the United States, because this was the group that had demonstrated the ability to launch intercontinental strikes.

Al Qaeda prime had its main headquarters in Afghanistan. It was not an Afghan group, but one drawn from multiple Islamic countries. It was in alliance with an Afghan group, the Taliban. The Taliban had won a civil war in Afghanistan, creating a coalition of support among tribes that had given the group control, direct or indirect, over most of the country. It is important to remember that al Qaeda was separate from the Taliban; the former was a multinational force, while the Taliban were an internal Afghan political power.

The United States has two strategic goals in Afghanistan. The first is to destroy the remnants of al Qaeda prime — the central command of al Qaeda — in Afghanistan. The second is to use Afghanistan as a base for destroying al Qaeda in Pakistan and to prevent the return of al Qaeda to Afghanistan.

To achieve these goals, Washington has sought to make Afghanistan inhospitable to al Qaeda. The United States forced the Taliban from Afghanistan's main cities and into the countryside, and established a new, anti-Taliban government in Kabul under President Hamid Karzai. Washington intended to deny al Qaeda bases in Afghanistan by unseating the Taliban government, creating a new pro-American government and then using Afghanistan as a base against al Qaeda in Pakistan.

The United States succeeded in forcing the Taliban from power in the sense that in giving up the cities, the Taliban lost formal control of the country. To be more precise, early in the U.S. attack in 2001, the Taliban realized that the massed defense of Afghan cities was impossible in the face of American air power. The ability of U.S. B-52s to devastate any concentration of forces meant that the Taliban could not defend the cities, but had to withdraw, disperse and reform its units for combat on more favorable terms.

At this point, we must separate the fates of al Qaeda and the Taliban. During the Taliban retreat, al Qaeda had to retreat as well. Since the United States lacked sufficient force to destroy al Qaeda at Tora Bora, al Qaeda was able to retreat into northwestern Pakistan. There, it enjoys the advantages of terrain, superior tactical intelligence and support networks.

Even so, in nearly eight years of war, U.S. intelligence and special operations forces have maintained pressure on al Qaeda in Pakistan. The United States has imposed attrition on al Qaeda, disrupting its command, control and communications and isolating it. In the process, the United States used one of al Qaeda's operational principles against it. To avoid penetration by hostile intelligence services, al Qaeda has not recruited new cadres for its primary unit. This makes it very difficult to develop intelligence on al Qaeda, but it also makes it impossible for al Qaeda to replace its losses. Thus, in a long war of attrition, every loss imposed on al Qaeda has been irreplaceable, and over time, al Qaeda prime declined dramatically in effectiveness — meaning it has been years since it has carried out an effective operation.

The situation was very different with the Taliban. The Taliban, it is essential to recall, won the Afghan civil war that followed the Soviet withdrawal despite Russian and Iranian support for its opponents. That means the Taliban have a great deal of support and a strong infrastructure, and, above all, they are resilient. After the group withdrew from Afghanistan's cities and lost formal power post-9/11, it still retained a great deal of informal influence — if not control — over large regions of Afghanistan and in areas across the border in Pakistan. Over the years since the U.S. invasion, the Taliban have regrouped, rearmed and increased their operations in Afghanistan. And the conflict with the Taliban has now become a conventional guerrilla war.

The Taliban and the Guerrilla Warfare Challenge

The Taliban have forged relationships among many Afghan (and Pakistani) tribes. These tribes have been alienated by Karzai and the Americans, and far more important, they do not perceive the Americans and Karzai as potential winners in the Afghan conflict. They recall the Russian and British defeats. The tribes have long memories, and they know that foreigners don't stay very long. Betting on the United States and Karzai — when the United States has sent only 30,000 troops to Afghanistan, and is struggling with the idea of sending another 30,000 troops — does not strike them as prudent. The United States is behaving like a power not planning to win; and, in any event, they would not be much impressed if the Americans were planning to win.

The tribes therefore do not want to get on the wrong side of the Taliban. That means they aid and shelter Taliban forces, and provide them intelligence on enemy movement and intentions. With its base camps and supply lines running from Pakistan, the Taliban are thus in a position to recruit, train and arm an increasingly large force.

The Taliban have the classic advantage of guerrillas operating in known terrain with a network of supporters: superior intelligence. They know where the Americans are, what the Americans are doing and when the Americans are going to strike. The Taliban declines combat on unfavorable terms and strikes when the Americans are weakest. The Americans, on the other hand, have the classic problem of counterinsurgency: They enjoy superior force and firepower, and can defeat anyone they can locate and pin down, but they lack intelligence. As much as technical

intelligence from unmanned aerial vehicles and satellites is useful, human intelligence is the only effective long-term solution to defeating an insurgency. In this, the Taliban have the advantage: They have been there longer, they are in more places and they are not going anywhere.

There is no conceivable force the United States can deploy to pacify Afghanistan. A possible alternative is moving into Pakistan to cut the supply lines and destroy the Taliban's base camps. The problem is that if the Americans lack the troops to successfully operate in Afghanistan, it is even less likely they have the troops to operate in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. The United States could use the Korean War example, taking responsibility for cutting the Taliban off from supplies and reinforcements from Pakistan, but that assumes that the Afghan government has an effective force motivated to engage and defeat the Taliban. The Afghan government doesn't.

The obvious American solution — or at least the best available solution — is to retreat to strategic Afghan points and cities and protect the Karzai regime. The problem here is that in Afghanistan, holding the cities doesn't give the key to the country; rather, holding the countryside gives the key to the cities. Moreover, a purely defensive posture opens the United States up to the Dien Bien Phu/Khe Sanh counterstrategy, in which guerrillas shift to positional warfare, isolate a base and try to overrun it.

A purely defensive posture could create a stalemate, but nothing more. That stalemate could create the foundations for political negotiations, but if there is no threat to the enemy, the enemy has little reason to negotiate. Therefore, there must be strikes against Taliban concentrations. The problem is that the Taliban know that concentration is suicide, and so they work to deny the Americans valuable targets. The United States can exhaust itself attacking minor targets based on poor intelligence. It won't get anywhere.

U.S. Strategy in Light of al Qaeda's Diminution

From the beginning, the Karzai government has failed to take control of the countryside. Therefore, al Qaeda has had the option to redeploy into Afghanistan if it chose. It didn't because it is risk-averse. That may seem like a strange thing to say about a group that flies planes into buildings, but what it means is that the group's members are relatively few, so al Qaeda cannot risk operational failures. It thus keeps its powder dry and stays in hiding.

This then frames the U.S. strategic question. The United States has no intrinsic interest in the nature of the Afghan government. The United States is interested in making certain the Taliban do not provide sanctuary to al Qaeda prime. But it is not clear that al Qaeda prime is operational anymore. Some members remain, putting out videos now and then and trying to appear fearsome, but it would seem that U.S. operations have crippled al Qaeda.

So if the primary reason for fighting the Taliban is to keep al Qaeda prime from having a base of operations in Afghanistan, that reason might be moot now as al Qaeda appears to be wrecked. This is not to say that another Islamist terrorist group could not arise and develop the sophisticated methods and training of al Qaeda prime. But such a group could deploy many places, and in any case, obtaining the needed skills in moving money, holding covert meetings and the like is much harder than it looks — and with many intelligence services, including those in the Islamic world, on the lookout for this, recruitment would be hard.

It is therefore no longer clear that resisting the Taliban is essential for blocking al Qaeda: al Qaeda may simply no longer be there. (At this point, the burden of proof is on those who think al Qaeda remains operational.)

Two things emerge from this. First, the search for al Qaeda and other Islamist groups is an intelligence matter best left to the covert capabilities of U.S. intelligence and Special Operations Command. Defeating al Qaeda does not require tens of thousands of troops — it requires excellent intelligence and a special operations capability. That is true whether al Qaeda is in Pakistan or Afghanistan. Intelligence, covert forces and airstrikes are what is needed in this fight, and of the three, intelligence is the key.

Second, the current strategy in Afghanistan cannot secure Afghanistan, nor does it materially contribute to shutting down al Qaeda. Trying to hold some cities and strategic points with the number of troops currently under consideration is not an effective strategy to this end; the United States is already ceding large areas of Afghanistan to the Taliban that could serve as sanctuary for al Qaeda. Protecting the Karzai government and key cities is therefore not significantly contributing to the al Qaeda-suppression strategy.

In sum, the United States does not control enough of Afghanistan to deny al Qaeda sanctuary, can't control the border with Pakistan and lacks effective intelligence and troops for defeating the Taliban.

Logic argues, therefore, for the creation of a political process for the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan coupled with a recommitment to intelligence operations against al Qaeda. Ultimately, the United States must protect itself from radical Islamists, but cannot create a united, pro-American Afghanistan. That would not happen even if the United States sent 500,000 troops there, which it doesn't have anyway.

A Tale of Two Surges

The U.S. strategy now appears to involve trying a surge, or sending in more troops and negotiating with the Taliban, mirroring the strategy used in Iraq. But the problem with that strategy is that the Taliban don't seem inclined to make concessions to the United States. The Taliban don't think the United States can win, and they know the United States won't stay. The Petraeus strategy is to inflict enough pain on the Taliban to cause them to rethink their position, which worked in Iraq. But it did not work in Vietnam. So long as the Taliban have resources flowing and can survive American attacks, they will calculate that they can outlast the Americans. This has been Afghan strategy for centuries, and it worked against the British and Russians.

If it works against the Americans, too, splitting the al Qaeda strategy from the Taliban strategy will be the inevitable outcome for the United States. In that case, the CIA will become the critical war fighter in the theater, while conventional forces will be withdrawn. It follows that Obama will need to think carefully about his approach to intelligence.

This is not an argument that al Qaeda is no longer a threat, although the threat appears diminished. Nor is it an argument that dealing with terrorism in Afghanistan and Pakistan is not a priority. Instead, it is an argument that the defeat of the Taliban under rationally anticipated circumstances is unlikely and that a negotiated settlement in Afghanistan will be much more difficult and unlikely than the settlement was in Iraq — but that even so, a robust effort against Islamist terror groups must continue regardless of the outcome of the war with the Taliban.

Therefore, we expect that the United States will separate the two conflicts in response to these realities. This will mean that containing terrorists will not be dependent on defeating or holding out against the Taliban, holding Afghanistan's cities, or preserving the Karzai regime. We expect the United States to surge troops into Afghanistan, but in due course, the counterterrorist portion will diverge from the counter-Taliban portion. The counterterrorist portion will be maintained as an intense covert operation, while the overt operation will wind down over time. The Taliban ruling Afghanistan is not a threat to the United States, so long as intense counterterrorist operations continue there.

The cost of failure in Afghanistan is simply too high and the connection to counterterrorist activities too tenuous for the two strategies to be linked. And since the counterterror war is already distinct from conventional operations in much of Afghanistan and Pakistan, our forecast is not really that radical.

http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/20090126_strategic_divergence_war_against_taliban_and_war_against_al_qaeda

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Washington Post

To Combat Obama, Al-Qaeda Hurls Insults

Effort Hints at Group's Consternation

By Joby Warrick

Washington Post Staff Writer

Sunday, January 25, 2009; A01

Soon after the November election, al-Qaeda's No. 2 leader took stock of America's new president-elect and dismissed him with an insulting epithet. "A house Negro," Ayman al-Zawahiri said.

That was just a warm-up. In the weeks since, the terrorist group has unleashed a stream of verbal tirades against Barack Obama, each more venomous than the last. Obama has been called a "hypocrite," a "killer" of innocents, an

"enemy of Muslims." He was even blamed for the Israeli military assault on Gaza, which began and ended before he took office.

"He kills your brothers and sisters in Gaza mercilessly and without affection," an al-Qaeda spokesman declared in a grainy Internet video this month.

The torrent of hateful words is part of what terrorism experts now believe is a deliberate, even desperate, propaganda campaign against a president who appears to have gotten under al-Qaeda's skin. The departure of George W. Bush deprived al-Qaeda of a polarizing American leader who reliably drove recruits and donations to the terrorist group.

With Obama, al-Qaeda faces an entirely new challenge, experts say: a U.S. president who campaigned to end the Iraq war and to close the military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and who polls show is well liked throughout the Muslim world.

Whether the pro-Obama sentiment will last remains to be seen. On Friday, the new administration signaled that it intends to continue at least one of Bush's controversial counterterrorism policies: allowing CIA missile strikes on alleged terrorist hideouts in Pakistan's autonomous tribal region.

But for now, the change in Washington appears to have rattled al-Qaeda's leaders, some of whom are scrambling to convince the faithful that Obama and Bush are essentially the same.

"They're highly uncertain about what they're getting in this new adversary," said Paul Pillar, a former CIA counterterrorism official who lectures on national security at Georgetown University. "For al-Qaeda, as a matter of image and tone, George W. Bush had been a near-perfect foil."

Al-Qaeda's rhetorical swipes at Obama date to the weeks before the election, when commentators on Web sites associated with the group debated which of the two major presidential candidates would be better for the jihadist movement. While opinions differed, a consensus view supported Republican Sen. John McCain (Ariz.) as the man most likely to continue Bush administration policies and, it was hoped, drive the United States more deeply into a prolonged guerrilla war.

Soon after the vote, the attacks turned personal -- and insulting. In his Nov. 16 video message, Zawahiri denounced Obama as "the direct opposite of honorable black Americans" such as Malcolm X. He then used the term "house Negro," implying that Obama is merely a servant carrying out the orders of powerful whites.

Since then, as Obama has begun moving to reverse controversial Bush administration policies, the verbal attacks have become sharper, more frequent and more clearly aimed at Muslim audiences.

On Jan. 6, Zawahiri issued a message calling for a global jihad by Muslims to counter Israel's military campaign in Gaza. He then sought to frame the Israeli assault as a "link in the chain of the crusade against Islam and Muslims," with then-President-elect Obama at the head of the chain.

"These raids are Obama's gift to you before he takes office," the Egyptian-born Zawahiri said in the message, addressed to "Muslim brothers and mujaheddin."

"This is Obama, whom the American machine of lies tried to portray as the rescuer who will change the policy of America," Zawahiri said, according to a translation provided by Site Intelligence Group, a private company that monitors jihadist communications.

Days before Obama's inauguration, al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden chimed in with a mocking prediction that the new president would founder under the weight of the military and financial burdens he would inherit. No matter what he tried to do, Obama would ultimately lose, bin Laden said on Jan. 14.

"If he withdraws from the war, it is military defeat," he said in an audiotaped message. "And if he continues it, he drowns in economic crisis. How can it be that [Bush] passed over to him two wars, not one war, and he is unable to continue them? We are on our path to open other fronts, with permission from Allah."

Friday, a new al-Qaeda salvo attempted to embarrass Obama, a day after the new president announced his plans for closing the prison at Guantanamo Bay. Appearing on the videotaped message were two men who enlisted in al-Qaeda after being freed from that detention center.

"By Allah, imprisonment only increased our persistence in our principles for which we went out, did jihad for and were imprisoned for," said Abu Sufyan al-Azdi al-Shahri, who described himself as a deputy commander for al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. The translation was also provided by the Site group.

Site founder Rita Katz said the messages show "just how much al-Qaeda is intimidated by Obama."

"The leadership of al-Qaeda is very concerned about the wide support that Obama has been receiving from Arab and Muslim countries," Katz said. "To combat this threat, al-Qaeda has embarked on a propaganda campaign against Obama, not only by linking him to the policies of the Bush administration, including the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, but also by accusing him of actions in which he had no part."

Other jihadist groups appear less threatened, or perhaps more accepting of an American commander who appears more open to peaceful accommodation, Katz said. A publication known as Al-Samoud, linked to the Taliban in Afghanistan, viewed Obama's election as a welcome sign that Americans are "very much tired from the bitter war" and do not wish to prolong a conflict "ignited by Bush's insanity and his satanic policy."

Regardless of how Obama is viewed now by the Muslim world -- savior, menace or something in between -- the opinions will almost certainly change in the coming months. For Muslim countries, as for the United States, perceptions based on rhetoric and image will soon collide with reality as the policies of the new administration take form, said Pillar, the former CIA official.

"Inevitably Obama will make certain decisions that will be unpopular and which the propagandists will quickly castigate," Pillar said. "I expect that the honeymoon will be just as fragile and short as with the American electorate."

Staff researcher Julie Tate contributed to this report.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/01/24/AR2009012401703.html>

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New York Times
January 23, 2009

Freed by the U.S., Saudi Becomes a Qaeda Chief

By ROBERT F. WORTH

BEIRUT, Lebanon — The emergence of a former Guantánamo Bay detainee as the deputy leader of Al Qaeda's Yemeni branch has underscored the potential complications in carrying out the executive order President Obama signed Thursday that the detention center be shut down within a year.

The militant, Said Ali al-Shihri, is suspected of involvement in a deadly bombing of the United States Embassy in Yemen's capital, Sana, in September. He was released to Saudi Arabia in 2007 and passed through a Saudi rehabilitation program for former jihadists before resurfacing with Al Qaeda in Yemen.

His status was announced in an Internet statement by the militant group and was confirmed by an American counterterrorism official.

"They're one and the same guy," said the official, who insisted on anonymity because he was discussing an intelligence analysis. "He returned to Saudi Arabia in 2007, but his movements to Yemen remain unclear."

The development came as Republican legislators criticized the plan to close the Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, detention camp in the absence of any measures for dealing with current detainees. But it also helps explain why the new administration wants to move cautiously, taking time to work out a plan to cope with the complications.

Almost half the camp's remaining detainees are Yemenis, and efforts to repatriate them depend in part on the creation of a Yemeni rehabilitation program — partly financed by the United States — similar to the Saudi one. Saudi Arabia has claimed that no graduate of its program has returned to terrorism.

"The lesson here is, whoever receives former Guantánamo detainees needs to keep a close eye on them," the American official said.

Although the Pentagon has said that dozens of released Guantánamo detainees have "returned to the fight," its claim is difficult to document, and has been met with skepticism. In any case, few of the former detainees, if any, are thought to have become leaders of a major terrorist organization like Al Qaeda in Yemen, a mostly homegrown group that experts say has been reinforced by foreign fighters.

Long considered a haven for jihadists, Yemen, a desperately poor country in the southern corner of the Arabian Peninsula, has witnessed a rising number of attacks over the past year. American officials say they suspect that Mr.

Shihri may have been involved in the car bombings outside the American Embassy in Sana last September that killed 16 people, including six attackers.

In the Internet statement, Al Qaeda in Yemen identified its new deputy leader as Abu Sayyaf al-Shihri, saying he returned from Guantánamo to his native Saudi Arabia and then traveled to Yemen “more than 10 months ago.” That corresponds roughly to the return of Mr. Shihri, a Saudi who was released from Guantánamo in November 2007. Abu Sayyaf is a nom de guerre, commonly used by jihadists in place of their real name or first name.

A Saudi security official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said Mr. Shihri had disappeared from his home in Saudi Arabia last year after finishing the rehabilitation program.

A Yemeni journalist who interviewed Al Qaeda’s leaders in Yemen last year, Abdulela Shaya, confirmed Thursday that the deputy leader was indeed Mr. Shihri, the former Guantánamo detainee. Mr. Shaya, in a phone interview, said Mr. Shihri had described to him his journey from Cuba to Yemen and supplied his Guantánamo detention number, 372. That is the correct number, Pentagon documents show.

“It seems certain from all the sources we have that this is the same individual who was released from Guantánamo in 2007,” said Gregory Johnsen, a terrorism analyst and the editor of a forthcoming book, “Islam and Insurgency in Yemen.”

Mr. Shihri, 35, trained in urban warfare tactics at a camp north of Kabul, Afghanistan, according to documents released by the Pentagon as part of his Guantánamo dossier. Two weeks after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, he traveled to Afghanistan via Bahrain and Pakistan, and he later told American investigators that his intention was to do relief work, the documents say. He was wounded in an airstrike and spent a month and a half recovering in a hospital in Pakistan.

The documents state that Mr. Shihri met with a group of “extremists” in Iran and helped them get into Afghanistan. They also say he was accused of trying to arrange the assassination of a writer, in accordance with a fatwa, or religious order, issued by an extremist cleric.

However, under a heading describing reasons for Mr. Shihri’s possible release from Guantánamo, the documents say he claimed that he traveled to Iran “to purchase carpets for his store” in Saudi Arabia. They also say that he denied knowledge of any terrorists or terrorist activities, and that he “related that if released, he would like to return to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, wherein he would reunite with his family.”

“The detainee stated he would attempt to work at his family’s furniture store if it is still in business,” the documents say.

The Yemeni branch of Al Qaeda has carried out a number of terrorist attacks over the past year, culminating in the assault on the American Embassy in Sana on Sept. 16. In that assault, the attackers disguised themselves as Yemeni policemen and detonated two car bombs. The group has also begun releasing sophisticated Internet material, in what appears to be a bid to gain more recruits.

Yemen began cooperating with the United States on counterterrorism activities in late 2001. But the partnership has been a troubled one, with American officials accusing Yemen of paroling dangerous terrorists, including some who were wanted in the United States. Some high-level terrorism suspects have also mysteriously escaped from Yemeni jails. The disagreements and security lapses have complicated efforts to repatriate the 100 or so Yemenis remaining in Guantánamo.

Despite some notable Yemeni successes in fighting terrorist groups, Al Qaeda in Yemen appears to be gaining strength.

“They are bringing Saudi fighters in, and they want to start to use Yemen as a base for attacks throughout region, including Saudi Arabia and the Horn of Africa,” said Mr. Johnsen, an expert on Al Qaeda in Yemen.

Eric Schmitt contributed reporting from Washington; Khalid al-Hammadi from Sana, Yemen; and Muhammad al-Milfy from Beirut.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/23/world/middleeast/23yemen.html>

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International Herald Tribune

Report: Ex-Gitmo Detainee Joins al-Qaida in Yemen

The Associated Press

Friday, January 23, 2009

CAIRO, Egypt: A Saudi man released from Guantanamo after spending nearly six years inside the U.S. prison camp is now the No. 2 of Yemen's al-Qaida branch, according to a purported Internet statement from the terror network.

The announcement, made this week on a Web site commonly used by militants, came as President Barack Obama ordered the detention facility closed within a year. Many of the remaining detainees are from Yemen, which has long posed a vexing terrorism problem for the U.S.

The terror group's Yemen branch — known as "al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula" — said the man, identified as Said Ali al-Shihri, returned to his home in Saudi Arabia after his release from Guantanamo about a year ago and from there went to Yemen, which is Osama bin Laden's ancestral home.

The Internet statement, which could not immediately be verified, said al-Shihri was the group's second-in-command in Yemen, and his prisoner number at Guantanamo was 372.

"He managed to leave the land of the two shrines (Saudi Arabia) and join his brothers in al-Qaida," the statement said.

Documents released by the U.S. Defense Department show that al-Shihri was released from the facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba in November 2007 and transferred to his homeland. The documents confirmed his prisoner number was 372.

Saudi Arabian authorities wouldn't immediately comment on the statement. A Yemeni counterterrorism official would only say that Saudi Arabia had asked Yemen to turn over a number of wanted Saudi suspects who fled the kingdom last year for Yemen, and a man with the same name was among those wanted. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to speak to the press and would not provide more details.

Yemen is a U.S. ally in the fight against terror, but it also has been the site of numerous high-profile, al-Qaida-linked attacks including the 2000 bombing of the USS Cole in the Gulf of Aden, which killed 17 American sailors.

Yemen's government struggles to maintain order. Many areas of the California-size country are beyond government control and Islamic extremism is strong. Nearly 100 Yemeni detainees remain at Guantanamo, making up the biggest group of prisoners.

Al-Shihri's case highlights the complexity of Obama's decision to shut down the detention center within a year despite the absence of rehabilitation programs for ex-prisoners in some countries, including Yemen. The Pentagon also has said more former ex-detainees appear to be returning to the fight against the U.S. after their release.

Rep. Jane Harman, D-California, who heads the House Homeland Security subcommittee on intelligence, said the reports about al-Shihri should not slow the Obama administration's determination to quickly close the prison.

"What it tells me is that President Obama has to proceed extremely carefully. But there is really no justification and there was no justification for disappearing people in a place that was located offshore of America so it was outside the reach of U.S. law," she told CBS's "The Early Show."

But Rep. Pete Hoekstra, of Michigan, the top Republican on the House Intelligence Committee, criticized the executive order Obama signed Thursday to close the facility as "very short on specifics."

Interviewed on the same program, he said there are indications that as many as 10 percent of the men released from Guantanamo are "back on the battlefield. They are attacking American troops."

The militant Web statement said al-Shihri's identity was revealed during a recent interview with a Yemeni journalist. That journalist, Abdelela Shayie, told The Associated Press in a telephone interview on Friday that 35-year-old Saudi man had joined the kingdom's rehabilitation program after his release and got married before leaving for Yemen.

Shayie said al-Shihri told him that several other former Guantanamo detainees had come to Yemen to join al-Qaida.

Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula is an umbrella group of various cells. Its current leader is Yemen's most wanted fugitive Naser Abdel Karim al-Wahishi, who was among 23 al-Qaida figures who escaped from a Yemeni prison in 2006.

Since the prison break, al-Qaida managed to regroup. It set up training camps, has attracted hundreds of young men and launched dozens of bloody attacks against Westerners, government institutions and oil facilities. Most recently, gunmen and two vehicles packed with explosives attacked the U.S. Embassy in Yemen in September, killing 17 people, including six militants. Al-Qaida claimed responsibility for the attack.

According to the Defense Department, al-Shihri was stopped at a Pakistani border crossing in December 2001 with injuries from an airstrike and recuperated at a hospital. Within days of his release, he became one of the first detainees sent to Guantanamo.

Al-Shihri allegedly traveled to Afghanistan after the Sept. 11 attacks, provided money to other fighters and trained at an urban warfare at a camp north of Kabul, according to a summary of the evidence against him from U.S. military review panels at Guantanamo.

He also was accused of meeting extremists in Iran and briefing them on how to enter Afghanistan, according to the documents.

Al-Shihri, however, said he traveled to Iran to buy carpets. He said he felt bin Laden had no business representing Islam, denied any links to terrorism and expressed interest in rejoining his family.

Associated Press writer Ahmed al-Haj in San'a, Yemen contributed to this report.

<http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2009/01/23/news/ML-Yemen-Al-Qaida.php>

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International Herald Tribune

Al-Qaida Urges Muslims to Attack Western Capitals

The Associated Press

Thursday, January 22, 2009

CAIRO, Egypt: An al-Qaida commander who escaped from a U.S. prison has urged Muslims to launch attacks against Western and Arab capitals to avenge Israel's offensive in Gaza.

Abu Yahia al-Libi, who escaped from Afghanistan's Bagram prison in 2005, says in a video posted on militant Web sites Thursday that Muslims should launch the attacks because of the failure of Western and Arab leaders to denounce Israel's three week offensive.

The authenticity of the half-hour video could not be verified, but it was posted on Web sites commonly used by al-Qaida.

Palestinian officials say the fighting in Gaza killed some 1,300 people. The fighting ended Sunday with a fragile cease-fire.

<http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2009/01/22/news/ML-Al-Qaida-Tape.php>

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China Presses Japan on Abandoned Chemical Weapons

Friday, Jan. 23, 2009

Chinese officials today pressed Japan to follow through on its pledge to recover and eliminate chemical weapons abandoned in China at the close of World War II, the Xinhua News Agency reported (see *GSN*, Dec. 15, 2008).

Beijing has claimed that 2 million tons of Japanese chemical munitions were left in roughly 40 locations in 15 provinces, particularly the Heilongjiang, Jilin and Liaoning provinces in northeast China. The two nations in 1999 signed an agreement on eliminating the weapons.

Xinhua reported last month that excavation had begun of weapons abandoned at Haerbaling in the Jilin Province. However, Tokyo has suspended the effort and cut related funding, according to the *Sankei Shimbun* newspaper.

"China has demanded that the Japanese side clarify the report. The Japanese side said clearly that the report does not conform to the fact, and there's no change to the government's principle to speed up the process of dealing with the

chemical weapons it abandoned in China during World War II," said Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu (Xinhua News Agency, Jan. 23).

http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20090123_7236.php

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