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Welcome to the CPC Outreach Journal. As part of USAF Counterproliferation Center's mission to counter weapons of mass destruction through education and research, we're providing our government and civilian community a source for timely counterproliferation information. This information includes articles, papers and other documents addressing issues pertinent to US military response options for dealing with chemical, biological, radiological, and

nuclear (CBRN) threats and countermeasures. It's our hope this information resource will help enhance your counterproliferation issue awareness.

Established in 1998, the USAF/CPC provides education and research to present and future leaders of the Air Force, as well as to members of other branches of the armed services and Department of Defense. Our purpose is to help those agencies better prepare to counter the threat from weapons of mass destruction. Please feel free to visit our web site at <http://cpc.au.af.mil/> for in-depth information and specific points of contact. The following articles, papers or documents do not necessarily reflect official endorsement of the United States Air Force, Department of Defense, or other US government agencies. Reproduction for private use or commercial gain is subject to original copyright restrictions. All rights are reserved.

FOXNews.com

Gary Samore Tapped for Weapons of Mass Destruction 'Czar'

Samore was a veteran arms control negotiator in the Clinton Administration.

By Judith Miller

Thursday, January 29, 2009

It's official, but still unannounced: The White House has tapped Gary Samore, a veteran arms control negotiator in the Clinton Administration, as its new "czar" for preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism. Samore, a vice president at the Council on Foreign Relations, a New York-based non-partisan foreign policy think tank, formerly served as the National Security Council's senior director under President Clinton from 1996 to 2000 and has had years of experience negotiating non-proliferation treaties and agreements with difficult countries like North Korea.

The still-to-be created office in the White House, which may have a staff of as many as ten officials, elevates the arms control portfolio in the new Administration and the priority that President Barack Obama places on keeping WMD -related material and expertise out of terrorist hands and stopping the spread of such weapons, material, and knowledge to states that have not agreed to abide by nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons treaties.

The 9/11 Commission recommended the creation of such a post in 2004, as has the Commission on the Prevention of Weapons of Mass Destruction, Proliferation and Terrorism, the so-called WMD Commission, which issued its report last December. The Bush Administration declined to create such an office, but candidate Obama spoke often about the need to reinvigorate arms control talks. In his inaugural address, President Obama vowed to work to reduce the size of nuclear arsenals as his third item on his foreign policy agenda, just after finding way to leave Iraq "responsibly" and forging a "hard-earned" peace in Afghanistan.

Samore's rumored appointment was initially reported by The Cable, Foreign Policy magazine's on-line news blog, which also said that Samore had not yet accepted the offer. Sources now say that Samore has agreed to accept the post, which associates say will provide even greater access to the president than he and other nonproliferation experts enjoyed under President Clinton.

In interviews and articles, Samore has been openly skeptical of North Korea's willingness to abandon its nuclear weapons program. As a State Department official, Samore helped negotiate the original 1994 agreement with North Korea. But in an interview last October, he said that the latest agreement negotiated by the Bush Administration, which called for Washington to remove North Korea from the list of terrorist-sponsoring states and requires North Korea to continue dismantling its plutonium facilities and permit inspections, was only a "very modest step forward." "It allows the next administration to carry on," he said. "But we shouldn't kid ourselves: This is only the very beginning of the toughest part of the negotiations," he said. Samore was also skeptical of efforts to negotiate a protocol to the 1972 treaty banning the development and production of germ weapons, an effort that both the Clinton and Bush administrations ultimately abandoned as futile. He is widely admired in arms control circles as an experienced negotiator and non-ideological pragmatist.

Prior to his job at the Council on Foreign Relations, he was Director of Studies and Senior Fellow for Non-Proliferation at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in Britain. His main responsibilities included directing the think tank's program called "Fostering an International Consensus on Fighting the Spread of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)", which the IISS says seeks to "strengthen transatlantic cooperation and promote coordinated responses to threats posed by the proliferation of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons and missile delivery systems."

<http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2009/01/29/gary-samore-tapped-weapons-mass-destruction-czar/>

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HSToday.us
Wednesday, 28 January 2009

Preparedness Report Details FEMA Efforts to Meet Post-Katrina Mandates

by Mickey McCarter

US has made good progress in building capabilities, implementing preparedness cycle, FEMA says. The United States dramatically improved its preparedness through building capacities to fulfill national priorities while also successfully implementing preparedness plans and procedures in fiscal 2007, according to the first-ever report on federal preparedness by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

The Federal Preparedness Report (FPR), dated Jan. 13, was released publicly by the Federation of American Scientists on Jan. 26. Its goal, as required by the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006 (Public Law 109-295), is to "provide a snapshot" of preparedness levels for planning, organization, equipment, training, exercises and evaluation nationally.

The report, presented to Congress by former FEMA chief David Paulison, stressed that future snapshots would give Congress more information on the practical results of preparedness planning.

"For example, because of limited availability of data, many of the analyses in this edition of the FPR focus on the outputs of homeland security partner programs. Future versions will highlight the practical outcomes -- the tangible effects that occur on the ground," the report said. "In subsequent editions, FEMA will also integrate the products of initiatives such as the State Preparedness Reports (SPRs) and the Catastrophic Resource Report into a unified presentation of preparedness called the National Preparedness Report."

The report cites progress in eight national priorities for building capacity, as outlined in the Post-Katrina Act, noting accomplishments in each of the areas over the previous five years.

Specifically, states and cities received more than \$1 billion in homeland security grants since fiscal 2004, thereby expanding regional collaboration. More than 96 percent of states and almost all federal agencies are compliant with the National Incident Management System (NIMS), while FEMA developed the National Response Framework (NRF) to support it. Meanwhile, US states each have set up Basic Hazard Mitigation Plans under the National Infrastructure Protection Plan (NIPP). More than 90 percent of high-priority sites have set up Buffer Zone Protection Plans, according to the report.

Authorities have established 57 intelligence fusion centers within 45 states, which used some of \$1 billion in grants to boost information sharing. Seventy-five urban areas successfully achieved regional interoperable communications with the support of \$2.8 billion in homeland security grant funds since fiscal 2004. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has deployed 527 biological monitors in urban areas, 1,062 radiation portal monitors at land ports and seaports, and more than 21,000 personal radiation detectors throughout the country to strengthen chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive (CBRNE) detection, response and decontamination. DHS also has provided CBRNE training to 2,014 law enforcement officials.

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has supported state efforts to strengthen medical surge and mass prophylaxis capabilities by developing pandemic response plans, improving surge capacity and hospital preparedness for mass casualties; and building partnerships to improve surge capacity. Finally, Citizen Corps Councils have reported coverage of 78 percent or more of the US population in their efforts to account for those who could contribute to strengthening community preparedness, with the assistance of \$140 million in homeland security grants.

DHS along with state and local governments have implemented a preparedness cycle, the report added, standing up preparedness plans and procedures with a focus on planning; organizing, equipping and training; exercising; and

evaluating and improving. Planning has gone very well overall, according to the report. FEMA has "successfully built the core national doctrine and plans necessary to unify efforts" nationwide with NIMS, NRF, NIPP and the National Strategy for Homeland Security, the report said.

Organizing, equipping and training also have experienced substantial achievements with more than \$22.7 billion in investments to date to build capabilities and to develop standards. DHS is currently developing a Homeland Security National Training Program, the report added. Exercising has gone very well with the completion of a National Exercise Program, which validates all homeland security activities at all levels of government. DHS was involved in almost 600 exercises since fiscal 2005. Evaluating and improving has been the weakness of the four categories in the preparedness cycle, the report concluded. DHS has poorly coordinated and duplicated some efforts to track and assess preparedness. FEMA vowed to combine these efforts into a national comprehensive assessment system, as mandated by the Post-Katrina Act.

<http://www.hstoday.us/content/view/7010/149/>

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Office of the Press Secretary, Department of Homeland Security
January 28, 2009

Secretary Napolitano Issues Action Directives on First Responder Health Surge Capacity and Hurricane Katrina

U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Janet Napolitano announced today two action directives, on first responder health surge capacity and Hurricane Katrina. The directives require specific department offices and components to work with state and local partners to review and assess current plans to respond to significant medical emergencies and address Hurricane Katrina's lingering impacts.

Secretary Napolitano has already issued nine action directives: Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) state and local integration; national planning, cybersecurity; northern border strategy; critical infrastructure protection; risk analysis; state and local intelligence sharing; transportation security; and state, local and tribal integration. She will continue to issue additional action directives in the coming days focused on the missions critical to the department: Protection, Preparedness, Response, Recovery and Immigration.

The full action directives are below:

First Responder Health Surge Capacity. Given the ongoing threat of a pandemic, biological or nuclear attack, improving the capacity to deal with large-scale medical emergencies is paramount. While the Department of Health and Human Services serves as the lead federal agency, DHS plays a critical role in enhancing emergency medical response capabilities at all levels of government. DHS also oversees the health aspects of contingency planning for all chemical biological, radiological and nuclear hazards. Given the department's all-hazards response mission, it is essential to determine the current state of medical readiness, including local first responder capabilities, hospital bed capacity, and the ability to surge existing capacity in an emergency, as well as any gaps and current efforts to address them. To this end, the Office of Health Affairs (OHA), working with FEMA, state and local emergency management officials, and other federal agencies shall:

- Review plans and activities underway to strengthen and coordinate medical readiness preparedness.
- Conduct a review and assess any shortcomings of the National Response Framework Emergency Support Function #8 - Public Health and Medical Services.
- Review the capacity for communities to handle large scale health emergencies, including first responder capacity and the ability to surge beyond existing bed space at local hospitals.
- Review any overlaps and inconsistencies in medical readiness plans and activities.
- Review ongoing grant making efforts and assess their effectiveness.
- Submit any possible restructuring or consolidations for these plans and activities that are necessary and identify areas where state and local emergency management agencies can provide input.
- An oral report is due Feb. 10, with a final report due Feb. 24.
- Hurricane Katrina. More than three years have passed since Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast. Many individuals and communities have moved forward to recover and rebuild. However, there are still

individuals, neighborhoods, and institutions, where the recovery process is stalled because of disagreements about damages and indecision about next steps. We now have the opportunity to take a fresh look at rebuilding the communities impacted by Katrina so they will be safer and more economically and socially resistant to future disasters. To determine how best to proceed, we need to understand the current circumstances relative to the following areas:

- **Public Assistance Projects.** What will it take to resolve major public assistance projects under dispute with the city of New Orleans and the state of Louisiana such as Charity Hospital, New Orleans Water and Sewer Board, St. Bernard Wastewater Plant, university projects at Louisiana State, Tulane and Southern universities and other major projects? Are there legislative or regulatory requirements that are impeding speedy resolution of these projects? What is the schedule to resolve the backlog of appeals on public assistance projects and what can be done to expedite these appeals?
- **Hazard Mitigation.** FEMA has made available over \$1.5 billion in funding for hazard mitigation projects in Louisiana. How is this funding being used to make communities more disaster-resilient?
- **Co-Location.** Historically, the state and FEMA co-located their recovery efforts. However, the state of Louisiana and FEMA are operating out of different locales. What is the value to co-locating operations and what would be required of FEMA to co-locate with the state?
- **Housing.** The Department of Housing and Urban Development has played an important role in issuing temporary housing for Katrina victims. How has the process worked and do they have the capacity for future disasters? How can we best address those individuals that continue to reside in FEMA-supported temporary housing?

An oral report is due Feb. 10, with a final report due Feb. 24.

http://www.dhs.gov/ynews/releases/pr_1233158724611.shtm

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The Economist
Jan 29th 2009

An Iranian Conundrum

Europeans fret that this year will be the trickiest so far for dealing with Iran

IF COUNTRIES like Iran are willing to unclench their fist, Barack Obama said this week on Arabic television, they will find an “extended hand” from America. You might expect Europe to react with a fresh outburst of Obamamania. After all, Europeans like to talk. The European Union, represented by its diplomatic big beasts—Britain, France and Germany—has spent years, together with Russia and China, talking to Iran, in a bid to curb its nuclear ambitions with a set of sticks and carrots.

On the campaign trail, Mr Obama talked of “bigger sticks and bigger carrots” for Iran. This meant direct diplomacy between America and Iran, after three decades of near-silence. But it would be matched by tougher sanctions, for example on Iranian banks that finance uranium enrichment (an activity Iran says is peaceful and aimed at generating electricity one day, but many others believe to be a scheme to build a bomb).

Yet the European response to Mr Obama over Iran has been mixed. Senior diplomats from the 27 EU members discussed Iran in Prague in January. France (a hawk) proposed adding two Iranian banks to the sanctions list. If the EU wanted to remain “relevant” for the Americans, the French representative told his colleagues, it had to be ready to carry a “bigger stick”. Then came the objections. Some fretted about hurting ordinary Iranians; others preferred to wait for a request from Mr Obama; others still wanted sanctions agreed by the UN Security Council, to ensure that Russia and China were on board. They have a point: a drop in EU trade with Iran since 2005 has been offset, almost euro for euro, by rising Chinese sales to Iran, undermining the sanctions.

Even so, existing sanctions are having an impact on Iran’s economy “at rather important margins”, insists a diplomat. With oil prices still low, Iran’s economy is in deep trouble. Nor are all objections to sanctions disinterested. Under pressure from governments, French, British and Spanish energy firms have frozen investments in Iran. Others have been less fussy. OMV, Austria’s big energy group, has invested heavily in Iranian onshore oil,

and also has a draft agreement to explore for natural gas. German businesses are leading exporters to Iran: November's figures showed that German exports to Iran had actually grown by some 10% over the previous year.

And yet when it comes to Iran, most EU members do not matter much. Only a few countries have the intelligence and diplomatic resources to focus on the threat from Iran. Talk to them alone, and the prospects for co-operation between Europe and America look brighter. Gruff policy types in America may grumble that Europeans appear more worried about a pre-emptive Israeli strike on Iran than by the prospect of an Iranian bomb. But in fact either prospect fills Europeans with horror—and that is enough. To quote the French president, Nicolas Sarkozy, serious diplomacy is the only means of avoiding a “catastrophic” choice: “an Iranian bomb or the bombing of Iran”.

The EU3 of Britain, France and Germany are realistic about the talks they, along with the EU's foreign-policy chief, Javier Solana, have held with Iran. Europe has a “very good policy” for curbing Iran's nuclear ambitions, says a diplomat, dryly; the problem being that it has not worked yet. The Europeans also accept that any final deal will be struck by America and Iran. They stepped in only because America was not available. Russia goes along with today's sanctions out of “despair”—objecting to the policy, but having nothing else to offer. China is torn between its need for energy security and its dislike of nuclear proliferation.

All sides see this year as decisive. Iran is expected to pass a threshold in the second half of 2009, amassing enough low-enriched uranium to get close to a bomb, though it would still need to enrich it to higher levels to fuel a nuclear device. Once that threshold is crossed, diplomacy becomes harder (though a sprint for a bomb would be risky, as it would be visible and the enrichment process would take several weeks). And from now on American engagement will be crucial, too.

Last tango in Tehran

A senior diplomat says that Iranian envoys have spent the past few years “playing for time”. EU negotiators spent hours answering tangential questions, and listening to declarations about the greatness of the Persian people—“going back to Cyrus the Great”, he sighs—leading up to its right to civilian nuclear technology. Some argue that Iran's supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, has never really been willing to negotiate in earnest. A top Khamenei aide, Ali Akbar Velayati, met Mr Sarkozy secretly in November 2007, but the initiative fizzled.

France and Britain take Iran very seriously; and after an ambiguous few years, Germany is now almost as tough. Angela Merkel, the German chancellor, has faced down the economics ministry (and some in the foreign ministry) to curb export-credit guarantees for firms trading with Iran. Under Silvio Berlusconi, Italy backs tough sanctions, despite its energy ambitions in Iran.

European, Russian and Chinese diplomats handling the Iran dossier will meet William Burns, their American colleague, in Germany next week to discuss strategy. The Europeans will urge the Americans to engage, but prudently. Some feel that America should not talk to Iran before the Iranian presidential election, for fear of handing a propaganda coup to Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who is running for re-election. Others disagree, urging immediate talks. All say that American engagement is a trump card, to be played with “circumspection”.

At the least, if an extended American hand is brushed aside, some “pretty chunky” UN sanctions will be needed. And, if American diplomacy fails completely, only bad options will be left. Europe's biggest powers are willing to do much to avoid that outcome, and they are the ones that count. On Iran, the transatlantic powers see pretty much eye to eye

http://www.economist.com/world/europe/displaystory.cfm?story_id=13022009

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Guardian.Co.UK
Thursday 29 January 2009

Revealed: The Letter Obama Team Hope will Heal Iran Rift Symbolic Gesture Gives Assurances that US Does Not Want to Topple Islamic Regime

Robert Tait and Ewen MacAskill

Officials of Barack Obama's administration have drafted a letter to Iran from the president aimed at unfreezing US-Iranian relations and opening the way for face-to-face talks, the Guardian has learned. The US state department has been working on drafts of the letter since Obama was elected on 4 November last year. It is in reply to a lengthy letter of congratulations sent by the Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, on 6 November. Diplomats said Obama's letter would be a symbolic gesture to mark a change in tone from the hostile one adopted by the Bush administration, which portrayed Iran as part of an "axis of evil".

It would be intended to allay the -suspicions of Iran's leaders and pave the way for Obama to engage them directly, a break with past policy. State department officials have composed at least three drafts of the letter, which gives assurances that Washington does not want to overthrow the Islamic regime, but merely seeks a change in its behaviour. The letter would be addressed to the Iranian people and sent directly to Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, or released as an open letter.

One draft proposal suggests that Iran should compare its relatively low standard of living with that of some of its more prosperous neighbours, and contemplate the benefits of losing its pariah status in the west. Although the tone is conciliatory, it also calls on Iran to end what the US calls state sponsorship of terrorism.

The letter is being considered by the new secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, as part of a sweeping review of US policy on Iran. A decision on sending it is not expected until the review is complete. In an interview on Monday with the al-Arabiya television network, Obama hinted at a more friendly approach towards the Islamic Republic. Ahmadinejad said yesterday that he was waiting patiently to see what the Obama administration would come up with. "We will listen to the statements closely, we will carefully study their actions, and, if there are real changes, we will welcome it," he said.

Ahmadinejad, who confirmed that he would stand for election again in June, said it was unclear whether the Obama administration was intent on just a shift in tactics or was seeking fundamental change. He called on Washington to apologise for its actions against Iran over the past 60 years, including US support for a 1953 coup that ousted the democratically elected government, and the US shooting down of an Iranian passenger plane in 1988.

The state department refused to comment yesterday on the draft letters. US concern about Iran mainly centres on its uranium enrichment programme, which Washington claims is intended to provide the country with a nuclear weapons capability. Iran claims the programme is for civilian purposes. The diplomatic moves are given increased urgency by fears that Israel might take unilateral action to bomb Iranian nuclear facilities.

The scale of the problem facing the new American president was reinforced yesterday when a senior aide to Ahmadinejad, Aliakbar Javanfekr, said that, despite the calls from the US, Iran had no intention of stopping its nuclear activities. When asked about a UN resolution calling for the suspension of Iran's uranium enrichment, Javanfekr, the presidential adviser for press affairs, replied: "We are past that stage."

One of the chief Iranian concerns revolves around suspicion that the US is engaged in covert action aimed at regime change, including support for separatist groups in areas such as Kurdistan, Sistan-Baluchestan and Khuzestan. The state department has repeatedly denied that there is any American support for such groups.

In its dying days, the Bush administration was planning to open a US interests section in the Iranian capital Tehran, one step down from an embassy. Bush's secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice, said that never happened because attention was diverted by the Russian invasion of Georgia. Others say that rightwingers in the Bush administration mounted a rearguard action to block it. The idea has resurfaced, but if there are direct talks with Iran, it may be decided that a diplomatic presence would obviate the need for a diplomatic mission there, at least in the short term.

While Obama is taking the lead on policy towards Iran, the administration will soon announce that Dennis Ross will become a special envoy to the country, following the appointments last week of George Mitchell, the veteran US mediator, as special envoy to the Middle East, and Richard Holbrooke, who helped to broker the Bosnia peace agreement, as special envoy to Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Ross, who took a leading role in the Middle East peace talks in Bill Clinton's administration, will be responsible on a day-to-day basis for implementing policy towards Iran. In a graphic sign of Iranian mistrust, the hardline newspaper Kayhan, which is considered close to Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has denounced Ross as a "Zionist lobbyist".

Saeed Leylaz, a Tehran-based analyst, said a US letter would have to be accompanied by security guarantees and an agreement to drop economic sanctions. "If they send such a letter it will be a very significant step towards better ties, but they should be careful in not thinking Tehran will respond immediately," he said.

"There will be disputes inside the system about such a letter. There are lot of radicals who don't want to see ordinary relations between Tehran and Washington. To convince Iran, they should send a very clear message that they are not going to try to destroy the regime."

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/jan/28/barack-obama-letter-to-iran>

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Ynet News

1/28/2009

IAF Chief: Diplomatic Efforts to Prevent Nuclear Iran 'Unsuccessful'

Hanan Greenberg

The commander of the Israeli Air Force called the international community's diplomatic efforts to block Iran's nuclear program as "frustrating and unsuccessful". "The methods employed by the UN, the Arab world and the International Atomic Energy Agency (to thwart Tehran's nuclear armament) have not bore fruit," Maj.-Gen. Ido Nehushtan told the Fourth Ilan Ramon Annual International Space Conference, which began Wednesday at the Herzliya Performing Arts Center.

The IAF chief stressed that preventing Iran from obtaining nuclear capabilities was vital to global stability, adding that the issue would remain at the top of Israel and the international community's agenda. He added that the "radical axis that begins with Iran extends to the Middle East and includes Hizbullah and Hamas."

As for the recent IDF offensive in Gaza, Nehushtan said that caused the international community to take action to prevent arms smuggling into the Gaza Strip. "The global arena understood that this is an issue that is likely to undermine the stability of the whole world." He said that the most essential achievement of the operation is harnessing the support of many countries to prevent arms smuggling, and not the physical damage caused to the smuggling tunnels, which, he noted, the Palestinians can easily rebuild.

Nehushtan continued to say that the purpose of the incessant rocket fire on the Negev region, which prompted Israel to launch its military offensive in Gaza, was to "gradually pulverize the population," adding "the people on the other side (Gaza) aren't stupid; they know exactly what they're doing."

<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3663415,00.html>

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Foreign Policy In Focus (FPIF-org)

January 27, 2009

Russia and Iran get Strategic

Col. Sam Gardiner, USAF (ret.)

While many analysts predicted a rosier picture for U.S.-Iranian relations with the Obama administration, the situation is rapidly becoming profoundly more difficult and more complicated. The new dimension is Russia. On February 20, the Russian Federation Security Council and the State Council will approve a new national security strategy to go through 2020. Without saying the "United States," the draft document clearly identifies the United States as Russia's primary rival for the next decade. It goes on to say that the primary focus of the struggle will be

for hydrocarbons in some very specific areas. The Middle East and Central Asia are mentioned specifically. In these areas, according to the document, the struggle could develop into a military confrontation.

Russia's last general security document was adopted in 2000 and was much more general than this one about the security objectives of the Russian Federation. The new draft is much more focused and gives indications of future policy directions. Looking at the developments of the past 90 days through the filter of the new Russian security framework, a clearer picture emerges. It's no longer a question for the United States of whether or not Russia will support additional sanctions on Iran. That won't happen. Russia is on the path to make Iran a strategic partner, a counter to the United States in the regions of rivalry.

The United States falls into a trap in assuming that Russia doesn't want a nuclear-armed Iran. Russian officials repeat over and over that they have no evidence that Iran has a weapons program. U.S. officials discount that statement but shouldn't. The United States needs to remember that Russia has nuclear engineers inside Iran working with the Iranians.

Strategic Partnership

There are three examples in the past few months that suggest a strategic partnership: the nuclear power plant at Bushehr, the S-300 missile, and a refinery in Armenia. The work on the Bushehr nuclear reactor has been punctuated by continuous delay. One almost got the impression that Russia was dragging its feet on purpose. However, Russia appears to have a renewed commitment to the work. Russia recently announced that it was planning to dispatch up to 3,000 technicians there. It's hard to argue that Russia has any interest in punishing Iran for enriching in light of this project.

Although the system hasn't been delivered, the Russians know that the United States and Israel don't want the new air defense capability, the S-300 missile, sold to the Iranians. The Russians seem to have gone ahead anyway. That makes no sense if they share our objective of punishing the Iranians for not suspending their enrichment program.

The refinery in Armenia is not as blatant, but equally meaningful. The discussions between GAZPROM and Armenia are for a refinery that would serve both Armenia's needs as well as export to Iran. On the top of almost everyone's list for the next level of sanctions against Iran is refined petroleum products; Israel wants it and even President Barack Obama suggested it when he gave a speech to the AIPAC convention last summer. Russia is diminishing the sanctions on refined petroleum in advance of a formal proposal by the United States.

On Friday January 23, Russia and Iran signed an agriculture agreement in Moscow. The Russian Minister of Agriculture called Iran a Russia "strategic partner." Although the agreement is a small step, this is the first time I recall a Russian using that phrase.

Over the weekend, I talked to a member of the Defense Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee. He told me he has had recent conversations with some Iranian officials. They told him the United States has forced Iran in the direction of the Russians. That's certainly consistent with recent developments.

I also exchanged e-mails on this subject with a former European ambassador to Tehran. His made a very interesting point. Iran is the only potential competitor for natural gas to Europe. He said Moscow doesn't want Tehran to get too close to Europe to the point it could jeopardize Europe's dependence on GAZPROM. We've seen the evidence of Russia and GAZPROM leverage over Europe recently.

The consequences of the new Russian security strategy and the developing of a relationship with Iran are very significant. Incentives for the Iranians to agree to anything as a result of talking now have much less value for them. The Iranians haven't changed their behavior with over 30 years of sanctions. With the Russians as a strategic partner, there is no reason to believe any new sanction will be effective.

Another consequence of what we're seeing is an even greater separation between the objectives of the United States and Israel with Russia in the equation. That will make progress with both Iran and the other pressing Middle East issues more difficult for the United States. Israel will have to understand that although the United States supports its security, we have our own interests in the region. Israel must respect those interests.

This isn't a done deal. Even if the Russians want to move to a strategic partnership, a new relationship may not be embraced in Tehran. The Iranians are suspicious of Russia. Iran also wants to be an independent power and not a power in the shadow of Russia. The new Russian national security strategy is significantly changing the equation in the Middle East for the Obama administration, how they will react is anyone's guess at the moment.

Sam Gardiner, a Foreign Policy In Focus contributor, is a retired Air Force colonel who has taught military strategy and operations at the National War College, Air War College, and Naval War College.

<http://www.fpif.org/fpif.txt/5816>

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The Daily Times (Pakistan)

1/29/2009

Japan, Iran Agree on Afghanistan, not Nuclear Push

Japan and Iran agreed on Wednesday to work together for the reconstruction of Afghanistan, but Tehran rejected Tokyo's call for a suspension of its nuclear programme. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad dispatched special envoy Samareh Hashemi for talks in Japan, a close US ally which nonetheless keeps cordial relations with the Islamic republic. In talks with Foreign Minister Hirofumi Nakasone, Hashemi "acknowledged and supported Japan's efforts in the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan", a foreign ministry statement said. "He said that Japan and Iran would be able to cooperate in this field." Nakasone replied that it was important for Iran to play a "constructive role" in neighbouring Afghanistan working with the international community. Earlier this month, Japan said it would send civilian officials to Afghanistan in the coming months to take part for the first time in NATO-backed reconstruction efforts. Officially pacifist Japan has pledged two billion dollars of aid to Afghanistan and keeps a refuelling mission in the Indian Ocean as part of the US-led "war on terror". During the meeting, Nakasone urged Iran to stop enriching uranium in an effort to "win the trust of the international community", the statement said. But the Iranian envoy only repeated Tehran's position that the country's nuclear activities were for peaceful purposes.

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2009%5C01%5C29%5Cstory_29-1-2009_pg20_3

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Agenzia Giornalistica Italia, Italy

28 January 2009

IRAN: WILL NOT HALT NUCLEAR PROGRAMME DESPITE OBAMA

(AGI) - Teheran, 28 Jan. - Despite openings announced by US president Barack Obama, Iran will not halt its nuclear programme. Sources within the presidency made the announcement. During an interview in Teheran's government offices, Ahmadinejad's counsellor Aliakbar Javanfekr stated that Iran has no intention of stopping its nuclear activities, which are "peaceful and controlled by IAEA". To those citing the UN resolution asking for the suspension of uranium enriching activities, Javanfekr replied that "we are past that stage. We rejected the resolutions, which were developed under US pressure. We work in the context of international laws". He also defined sanctions imposed on Iran as "ineffective".

<http://www.agi.it/world/news/200901282004-pol-ren0093-art.html>

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Tehran Times

Diplomat: Iran Able to Export Uranium

Wednesday

28 January 2009

TEHRAN (IRNA) -- Veteran Iranian diplomat Mahmoud-Mehdi Soltani said on Tuesday that Iran is capable enough to export uranium. "Iran's reserves are identified with many of them being discovered prior to the (1979

Islamic) Revolution by western states themselves and that's not a secret. Iran has not only the potential to supply fuel to Bushehr nuclear power plant but can also be a major exporter," Soltani told IRNA. When asked about rumors by western media and political circles that Iran has not enough uranium reserves, Soltani said, "That's part of western states' policy of putting the rival in a defensive position to take concessions.

http://www.tehrantimes.com/Index_view.asp?code=187947

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Times of India

Iran 'could have a Nuclear Bomb by 2010'

28 January 2009

LONDON: Iran, labelled as an 'axis of evil' by the United States, could have a nuclear bomb by 2010, a leading international think-tank has warned. According to the International Institute for Strategic Studies, Iran will amass enough low-enriched uranium this year which could put it on course to build a nuke weapon by the end of next year, 'The Daily Telegraph' reported. "This year, it's very likely that Iran will have produced enough low-enriched uranium which, if further enriched, could constitute enough fissile material for one nuclear weapon, if that is the route Iran so desires," said IISS's Senior Fellow for Non-Proliferation Mark Fitzpatrick.

Further enrichment to produce weapons-grade uranium would take at least 12 months after the threshold that Iran is likely to reach at the end of this year, he said. However, according to the institute, based in Britain, scientists in Iran would have to overcome numerous hurdles and fully master the enrichment of uranium before this can finally take place by 2010.

Iran is defying five United Nations Resolutions by enriching uranium inside an underground plant at Natanz. This process is highly sensitive because it amounts to "dual use" technology.

If the country goes to the next stage and chooses to produce weapons-grade uranium, however, it would have to expel the IAEA inspectors who presently monitor its plants. And, to have a proper weapons system, Iran will need to build missiles capable of delivering a nuclear warhead too. US President Barack Obama has already pledged to "engage" directly with Iran's leaders and seek a diplomatic solution to the nuclear confrontation. "If countries like Iran are willing to unclench their fist, they will find an extended hand from us."

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/Middle East/Iran could have a nuclear bomb by 2010 /articleshow/4040949.cms>

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Los Angeles Times

Iran Sets Conditions for Improved Ties with U.S.

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad says Tehran welcomes Obama's call for change, but it wants Washington to apologize for past actions and end its support of Israel.

By Borzou Daragahi

January 29, 2009

Reporting from Beirut -- Iran's president said Wednesday that the Islamic Republic was open to a new relationship with the United States -- provided Washington stopped its support of Israel and apologized for alleged misdeeds against his nation. Speaking to thousands gathered in the western city of Kermanshah, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad made his government's most extensive response so far to signs of potential changes in policy under President Obama, who has offered the possibility of diplomatic talks with Iran without preconditions in an attempt to resolve differences.

"We welcome change," Ahmadinejad said, referring to Obama's campaign mantra, "provided the change is fundamental and in the right direction." But "if you talk of change in policies, withdraw your forces from Afghanistan," he said. "If you say change in policies, then halt your support to the uncultivated and rootless, forged, phony, killers of women and children Zionists and allow the Palestinian nation to determine its own destiny."

Iran and the U.S. remain at odds over Tehran's support for militant groups opposed to Israel and over its nuclear program, which the West alleges is aimed at making nuclear arms. Ahmadinejad's power is superseded by that of

supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, a cleric who is Iran's highest political and religious authority. But his comments echoed recent statements by government officials and followed several days of relative official silence about Obama, suggesting they had the approval of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, a body that includes Khamenei and the country's top military and political officials.

"We will be patient," Ahmadinejad said. "We will take our time. We will scrutinize [them] under the magnifying glass, and if change takes place and it's a fundamental change, we will welcome it." One sign of change, he added, would be for the U.S. to "apologize to the Iranian nation and try to compensate for the . . . murderous crimes which they have committed against" it. Ahmadinejad cited the 1953 U.S.-backed overthrow of democratically elected Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh; Washington's support of Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein during the Iran-Iraq war; and the 1988 downing of a civilian airliner by a U.S. warship in the Persian Gulf, which killed 290.

In 2000, former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who served under President Clinton, acknowledged Washington's role in the coup against Mossadegh and described it as a setback for Iran's democratic development. The U.S. eventually agreed to pay \$62 million in damages to the families of the Iranian victims aboard the airliner. Obama said in an interview with an Arab satellite news channel this week that if countries like Iran are "willing to unclench their fist, they will find an extended hand" from the U.S.

Times staff writer Jeffrey Fleishman in Cairo and special correspondent Ramin Mostaghim in Tehran contributed to this report.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-iran29-2009jan29.0.3634468.story>

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Stratfor.com
January 28, 2009

Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula: Desperation or New Life?

By Fred Burton and Scott Stewart

The media wing of one of al Qaeda's Yemeni franchises, al Qaeda in Yemen, released a statement on online jihadist forums Jan. 20 from the group's leader Nasir al-Wuhayshi, announcing the formation of a single al Qaeda group for the Arabian Peninsula under his command. According to al-Wuhayshi, the new group, al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, would consist of his former group (al Qaeda in Yemen) as well as members of the now-defunct Saudi al Qaeda franchise.

The press release noted that the Saudi militants have pledged allegiance to al-Wuhayshi, an indication that the reorganization was not a merger of equals. This is understandable, given that the jihadists in Yemen have been active recently while their Saudi counterparts have not conducted a meaningful attack in years. The announcement also related that a Saudi national (and former Guantanamo detainee) identified as Abu-Sayyaf al-Shihri has been appointed as al-Wuhayshi's deputy. In some ways, this is similar to the way Ayman al-Zawahiri and his faction of Egyptian Islamic Jihad swore allegiance to Osama bin Laden and were integrated in to al Qaeda prime.

While not specifically mentioned, the announcement of a single al Qaeda entity for the entire Arabian Peninsula and the unanimous support by jihadist militants on the Arabian Peninsula for al-Wuhayshi suggests the new organization will incorporate elements of the other al Qaeda franchise in Yemen, the Yemen Soldiers Brigade.

The announcement also provided links to downloadable versions of the latest issue of the group's online magazine, Sada al-Malahim, (Arabic for "The Echo of Battle"). The Web page links provided to download the magazine also featured trailers advertising the pending release of a new video from the group, now referred to by its new name, al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.

The translated name of this new organization sounds very similar to the old Saudi al Qaeda franchise, the al Qaeda Organization in the Arabian Peninsula (in Arabic, "Tandheem al Qaeda fi Jazeerat al-Arabiyyah"). But the new group's new Arabic name, Tanzim Qa'idat al-Jihad fi Jazirat al-Arab, is slightly different. The addition of "al-Jihad" seems to have been influenced by the Iraqi al Qaeda franchise, Tanzim Qaidat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn. The flag of the Islamic State of Iraq also appears in the Jan. 24 video, further illustrating the deep ties between the newly

announced organization and al Qaeda in Iraq. Indeed, a number of Yemeni militants traveled to Iraq to fight, and these returning al Qaeda veterans have played a large part in the increased sophistication of militant attacks in Yemen over the past year.

Four days after the Jan. 20 announcement, links for a 19-minute video from the new group titled “We Start from Here and We Will Meet at al-Aqsa” began to appear in jihadist corners of cyberspace. Al-Aqsa refers to the al-Aqsa Mosque on what Jews know as Temple Mount and Muslims refer to as Al Haram Al Sharif. The video threatens Muslim leaders in the region (whom it refers to as criminal tyrants), including Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh, the Saudi royal family, and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. It also threatens so-called “crusader forces” supporting the regional Muslim leaders, and promises to carry the jihad from the Arabian Peninsula to Israel so as to liberate Muslim holy sites and brethren in Gaza.

An interview with al-Wuhayshi aired Jan. 27 on Al Jazeera echoed these sentiments. During the interview, al-Wuhayshi noted that the “crusades” against “Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia” have been launched from bases in the Arabian Peninsula, and that because of this, “all crusader interests” in the peninsula “should be struck.”

A Different Take on Events

Most of the analysis in Western media regarding the preceding developments has focused on how two former detainees at the U.S. facility in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, appear in the Jan. 24 video — one of whom was al-Shihri — and that both were graduates of Saudi Arabia’s ideological rehabilitation program, a government deprogramming course for jihadists. In addition to al-Shihri who, according to the video was Guantanamo detainee 372, the video also contains a statement from Abu-al-Harith Muhammad al-Awfi. Al-Awfi, who was identified as a field commander in the video, was allegedly former Guantanamo detainee 333. Prisoner lists from Guantanamo obtained by Stratfor appear to confirm that al-Shihri was in fact Guantanamo detainee No. 372. We did not find al-Awfi’s name on the list, however, another name appears as detainee No. 333. Given the proclivity of jihadists to use fraudulent identities, it is entirely possible that al-Awfi is an alias, or that he was held at Guantanamo under an assumed name. At any rate, we doubt al-Awfi would fabricate this claim and then broadcast it in such a public manner.

The media focus on the Guantanamo aspect is understandable in the wake of U.S. President Barack Obama’s Jan. 22 executive order to close the Guantanamo Bay detention facility and all the complexities surrounding that decision. Clearly, some men released from Guantanamo, and even those graduated from the Saudi government’s rehabilitation program, can and have returned to the jihadist fold. Ideology is hard to extinguish, especially an ideology that teaches adherents that there is a war against Islam and that the “true believers” will be persecuted for their beliefs. Al Qaeda has even taken this one step further and has worked to prepare its members not only to face death, but also to endure imprisonment and harsh interrogation. A substantial number of al Qaeda cadres, such as al-Zawahiri and Abu Yahya al-Libi, have endured both, and have been instrumental in helping members withstand captivity and interrogation.

This physical and ideological preparation means that efforts to induce captured militants to abandon their ideology can wind up reinforcing that ideology when those efforts appear to prove important tenets of the ideology, such as that adherents will be persecuted and that the Muslim rulers are aligned with the West. It is also important to realize that radical Islamist extremists, ultraconservatives and traditionalists tend to have a far better grasp of Islamic religious texts than their moderate, liberal and modernist counterparts. Hence, they have an edge over them on the ideological battlefield. Those opposing radicals and extremists have a long way to go before they can produce a coherent legitimate, authoritative and authentic alternative Islamic discourse.

In any event, in practical terms there is no system of “re-education” that is 100 percent effective in eradicating an ideology in humans except execution. There will always be people who will figure out how to game the system and regurgitate whatever is necessary to placate their jailers so as to win release. Because of this, it is not surprising to see people like al-Shihri and al-Awfi released only to re-emerge in their former molds.

Another remarkable feature of the Jan. 27 video is that it showcased four different leaders of the regional group, something rarely seen. In addition to al-Wuhayshi, al-Shihri and al-Awfi, the video also included a statement from Qasim al-Rami, who is suspected of having been involved with the operational planning of the suicide attack on a group of Spanish tourists in Marib, Yemen, in July 2007.

In our estimation, however, perhaps the most remarkable feature about these recent statements from al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula is not the appearance of these two former Guantanamo detainees in the video, or the appearance of four distinct leaders of the group in a single video, but rather what the statements tell us about the state of the al Qaeda franchises in Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

Signposts

That the remnants of the Saudi al Qaeda franchise have been forced to flee their country and join up with the Yemeni group demonstrates that the Saudi government's campaign to eradicate the jihadist organization has been very successful. The Saudi franchise was very active in 2003 and 2004, but has not attempted a significant attack since the February 2006 attack against the oil facility in Abqaiq. In spite of the large number of Saudi fighters who have traveled to militant training camps, and to fight in places such as Iraq, the Saudi franchise has had significant problems organizing operational cells inside the kingdom. Additionally, since the death of Abdel Aziz al-Muqrin, the Saudi franchise has struggled to find a charismatic and savvy leader. (The Saudis have killed several leaders who succeeded al-Muqrin.) In a militant organization conducting an insurgency or terrorist operations, leadership is critical not only to the operational success of the group but also to its ability to recruit new members, raise funding and acquire resources such as weapons.

Like the Saudi node, the fortunes of other al Qaeda regional franchises have risen or fallen based upon ability of the franchise's leadership. For example, in August 2006 al Qaeda announced with great fanfare that the Egyptian militant group Gamaah al-Islamiyah (GAI) had joined forces with al Qaeda. Likewise, in November 2007 al Qaeda announced that the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) had formally joined the al Qaeda network. But neither of these groups really ever got off the ground. While a large portion of the responsibility for the groups' lack of success may be due to the oppressive natures of the Egyptian and Libyan governments and the aggressive efforts those governments undertook to control the new al Qaeda franchises, we believe the lack of success also stems from poor leadership. (There are certainly other significant factors contributing to the failure of al Qaeda nodes in various places, such as the alienation of the local population.)

Conversely, we believe that an important reason for the resurgence of the al Qaeda franchise in Yemen has been the leadership of al-Wuhayshi. As we have noted in the past, Yemen is a much easier environment for militants to operate in than either Egypt or Libya. There are many Salafists employed in the Yemeni security and intelligence apparatus who at the very least are sympathetic to the jihadist cause. These men are holdovers from the Yemeni civil war, when Saleh formed an alliance with Salafists and recruited jihadists to fight Marxist forces in South Yemen. This alliance continues today, with Saleh deriving significant political support from radical Islamists. Many of the state's key institutions (including the military) employ Salafists, making any major crackdown on militant Islamists in the country politically difficult. This sentiment among the security forces also helps explain the many jihadists who have escaped from Yemeni prisons — such as al-Wuhayshi.

Yemen has also long been at the crossroads of a number of jihadist theaters, including Afghanistan/Pakistan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, the Levant, Egypt and Somalia. Yemen also is a country with a thriving arms market, a desert warrior tradition and a tribal culture that often bristles against government authority and that makes it difficult for the government to assert control over large swaths of the country. Yemeni tribesmen also tend to be religiously conservative and susceptible to the influence of jihadist theology.

In spite of this favorable environment, the Yemeni al Qaeda franchise has largely floundered since 9/11. Much of this is due to U.S. and Yemeni efforts to decapitate the group, such as the strike by a U.S. unmanned aerial vehicle on then-leader of al Qaeda in Yemen, Abu Ali al-Harithi, in late 2002 and the subsequent arrest of his replacement, Mohammed Hamdi al-Ahdal, in late 2003. The combination of these operations in such a short period helped cripple al Qaeda in Yemen's operational capability.

As Stratfor noted in spring 2008, however, al Qaeda militants in Yemen have become more active and more effective under the leadership of al-Wuhayshi, an ethnic Yemeni who spent time in Afghanistan as a lieutenant under bin Laden. After his time with bin Laden, Iranian authorities arrested al-Wuhayshi, later returning him to Yemen in 2003 via an Iranian-Yemeni extradition deal. He subsequently escaped from a high-security prison outside the Yemeni capital, Sanaa, in February 2006 along with Jamal al-Badawi (the leader of the cell that carried out the suicide bombing of the USS Cole).

Al-Wuhayshi's established ties with al Qaeda prime and bin Laden in particular not only provide him legitimacy in the eyes of other jihadists, in more practical terms, they may have provided him the opportunity to learn the tradecraft necessary to successfully lead a militant group and conduct operations. His close ties to influential veterans of al Qaeda in Yemen like al-Badawi also may have helped him infuse new energy into the struggle in Yemen in 2008.

While the group had been on a rising trajectory in 2008, things had been eerily quiet in Yemen since the Sept. 17, 2008, attack against the U.S. Embassy in Sanaa and the resulting campaign against the group. The recent flurry of statements has broken the quiet, followed by a Warden Message on Jan. 26 warning of a possible threat against the compound of the U.S. Embassy in Yemen and a firefight at a security checkpoint near the embassy hours later.

At this point, it appears the shooting incident may not be related to the threat warning and may instead have been the result of jumpy nerves. Reports suggest the police may have fired at a speeding car before the occupants, who were armed tribesmen, fired back. Although there have been efforts to crack down on the carrying of weapons in Sanaa, virtually every Yemeni male owns an AK-variant assault rifle of some sort; like the ceremonial jambiya dagger, such a rifle is considered a must-have accessory in most parts of the country. Not surprisingly, incidents involving gunfire are not uncommon in Yemen.

Either way, we will continue to keep a close eye on Yemen and al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. As we have seen in the past, press statements are not necessarily indicative of future jihadist performance. It will be important to watch developments in Yemen for signs that will help determine whether this recent merger and announcement is a sign of desperation by a declining group, or whether the addition of fresh blood from Saudi Arabia will help breathe new life into al-Wuhayshi's operations and provide his group the means to make good on its threats.

http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/20090128_al_qaeda_arabian_peninsula_desperation_or_new_life

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Haaretz.com
January 29, 2009

'Massive Hezbollah Attack against Israeli Target Thwarted in Europe'

By Haaretz Service

A massive terror attack against an Israeli target in Europe has been thwarted in recent weeks, Channel 2 quoted security officials as saying Wednesday. The attack, linked to the Lebanese militia Hezbollah, was foiled thanks to intelligence sharing between Israel and an undisclosed European country.

Israeli officials believe that as the one year anniversary of the February 14 assassination of Hezbollah second-in-command Imad Mughniyeh approaches, attempts to attack Israeli targets around the world will intensify. Some two weeks ago, the Times of London reported that a Hezbollah plot to attack the Israeli embassy in Azerbaijan was foiled last year, after Azeri Intelligence discovered the plot. Azeri intelligence authorities reportedly first caught wind of the plot weeks after Mughniyeh was killed by a car bomb in Damascus. Hezbollah's 1800 Unit is reportedly working on possible attacks inside Israel.

Hezbollah leader, Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, said: "The Zionists will discover that the war they had in July was a walk in the park if we compare it to what we've prepared for every new aggression," the Times reported. The report also stated that the Egyptian intelligence broke up a Sinai-based Hezbollah cell headed by Sami Shehab, a Lebanese citizen. The cell, which also included Palestinians members, had allegedly planned to attack Israeli targets.

<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/pages/1059589.html>

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Al Jazeera.Net

Yemen and Saudi al-Qaeda Arms Merge

Wednesday, 27 January 2009

Al-Qaeda groups in Yemen and Saudi Arabia have announced they are merging their operations, raising fears of new attacks in the region. The organisation said on Tuesday that the joint forces would carry out operations across the Arabian peninsula and beyond. Nasir Wuhaiishi was named as the head of the new combined al-Qaeda unit. Wuhaiishi's appointment was confirmed by Ayman Al-Zawahiri, the deputy al-Qaeda chief, in a video posted online. The group's deputy was named as Said Ali al-Shihri, a former prisoner at the United States' Guantanamo Bay detention facility, who was released from Saudi custody in 2007. Yemeni authorities said they had stepped up security following the announcement.

'Huge significance'

Analysts say Yemen is of huge significance to al-Qaeda. "Weapons, training, crossing points and the launch of operations have all come from Yemen," Abd Alelah-Haidar, a "terrorism" specialist who has met Wuhaiishi, told Al Jazeera. "This country is seen as having strategic significance, not only by al-Qaeda, but also by others. [However,] their operations are not confined to the Arabian peninsula but also include Iraq, Afghanistan, Nahr al-Bared [in Lebanon], and Palestine." The announcement follows a number of attacks by al-Qaeda in Yemen.

An attack outside the US embassy in Sanaa earlier in the week is believed to have been carried out by the group. Yemeni police arrested three men on Monday after they fired on security forces near the embassy. No one was hurt in the incident. Nineteen people died in an attack targeting the US embassy last September for which al-Qaeda claimed responsibility.

<http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2009/01/2009128115142980866.html>

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New York Times

January 27, 2009

Pg. 16

9 Alumni of Saudi Program for Ex-Jihadists are Arrested

By Robert F. Worth

BEIRUT, Lebanon — Nine graduates of an influential Saudi rehabilitation program for former jihadists, including some who had been imprisoned at Guantánamo Bay, have been arrested for rejoining terrorist groups since the program started in 2004, Saudi officials said Monday. The Saudi Interior Ministry acknowledged the arrests after it emerged late last week that two other graduates had joined the Yemeni branch of Al Qaeda, raising questions about how the Saudis lost track of them. Both had been released from Guantánamo, in Cuba, in 2007, and one of the men is suspected of having helped plan a deadly attack in Yemen last year.

The statement on Monday about the arrests appeared to be an effort by the Saudi authorities to underline their vigilance, despite the lapses, in keeping track of former militants. Hundreds of men have passed through the Saudi program, and it has been viewed as a model for similar efforts elsewhere. Late last year, Saudi officials said none of the program's graduates had returned to violence, but the statement about the arrests, which took place separately over the course of the past few years, appeared to contradict that.

It is not clear how many of the nine men had been at Guantánamo, said Maj. Gen. Mansour al-Turki, a spokesman for the Saudi Interior Ministry. The rehabilitation program also includes people who were convicted of involvement in terrorist activities or groups inside Saudi Arabia. "When they were released from the program they were O.K., but in one way or another they were recruited again" by terrorist groups, General Turki said. The program, which includes religious re-education, therapy and assistance with reintegrating the former jihadists into their families and jobs, is more comprehensive than earlier, similar efforts in Yemen and Egypt, and appears over all to have been more successful.

If doubts are raised about the Saudi program, they could complicate President Obama's plan to close the Guantánamo detention center within a year, as required by one of his first executive orders after taking office last week. Almost half of the remaining prisoners there are Yemeni, and their return home depends in part on Yemen's creation of a rehabilitation program, paid for partly by the United States, that is modeled on the Saudi one. Pentagon officials have said that 61 of the more than 525 Guantánamo detainees who have been released have returned to

terrorism. That claim has generated some skepticism, and the Pentagon is expected to declassify portions of a report on the subject in the coming days.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/27/world/middleeast/27saudi.html?partner=rss&emc=rss>

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Time

Can Jihadis be Rehabilitated?

By BOBBY GHOSH

Tuesday, January 27, 2009

It's been described as the Betty Ford Center for terrorists: Saudi Arabian officials boast that the Care Rehabilitation Center, outside Riyadh, has successfully deprogrammed scores of former jihadis, including more than 100 ex-inmates of the U.S.'s Guantánamo Bay military prison. As recently as last fall, Saudi officials claimed the program had a 100% success rate. That claim was dashed last week, when two alumni of the rehab program proudly announced to the world that they had returned to the jihad. In a video posted online, Saudi nationals Said al-Shihri and Abu al-Hareth al-Oufi — former detainees at Guantánamo Bay — boasted that they had become leaders of al-Qaeda in Yemen. (See pictures of the Care Rehabilitation Center.)

The video could hardly have come at a worse time for the Obama Administration, which has just announced that it will close Gitmo within a year and is already being accused by some Republicans of jeopardizing U.S. security. But it is doubly discomfiting for the Saudi government. Officials in Riyadh now say they have rearrested at least nine other men who had previously been rehabilitated; it's not clear how many of those are ex-Gitmo detainees.

Many observers claim that this means the rehab program is a bust, but both U.S. and Saudi officials argue that its successes far outnumber the handful of recidivists like al-Shihri and al-Oufi. "These things are never going to be perfect, but when you look at the big picture of rehabilitation, it's a remarkable story," says Christopher Boucek, a Carnegie Endowment scholar who has closely studied the Saudi program. The Pentagon says it will not change its policy on repatriating Gitmo detainees to Saudi Arabia. "There are never any absolute guarantees," said Navy spokesman Commander Jeffrey Gordon. "There's an inherent risk in all detainee transfers and releases from Guantánamo."

Brigadier General Mansour al-Turki, spokesman for the Saudi Interior Ministry, which runs the rehab program, claims the program's success stemmed from its guiding principle that jihadis are victims, rather than villains. "We think these people can be turned into normal human beings and be reintegrated into society," al-Turki told me when I visited Saudi Arabia during the Ramadan fast last summer. (Ironically, it was at the end of Ramadan that al-Shihri "disappeared," his father Jaber told the Saudi *Gazette* newspaper.) That's not to say the jihadis aren't punished. Indeed, before they can be rehabilitated, many must first undergo jail terms of varying lengths. The "hardest of the hard-core" militants are not allowed in the program, al-Turki told me. "With some people, there is just no cure."

Once admitted to the center, the jihadis are put through a rigorous program of religious discussion — designed to wean them from misconceptions about what the Koran does and doesn't permit — and sessions with psychologists and sociologists. Some receive vocational training to prepare them for a "normal" life. The center is guarded by Saudi police, but it doesn't look or feel anything like a prison. TIME's Scott Macleod, who visited the center in fall 2007, says it's akin to a college campus or country club, where the detainees play Ping-Pong and sip Pepsi. It could hardly be more different from Gitmo.

At the end of the program, the men are returned to their families and given a monthly stipend of \$700 to help make ends meet. Some are given cars, and single men are encouraged to get married — the Saudi government pays \$20,000 toward wedding expenses. "The important thing is that these men should not be idle and frustrated, because that could send them back to their old haunts, their old friends," said al-Turki.

The recidivism of al-Shihri, al-Oufi and the nine rearrested men suggests that the program needs some tinkering — especially in the monitoring of those who are released into society. Although the police monitor the men, the main burden of keeping them on the straight and narrow falls to their families. "The best way to make sure they don't go back to their bad habits is to recruit their families," al-Turki said. "We can't watch them every second of the day, but their parents or siblings or wives ... they can alert us if they suspect anything." (According to reports in the Saudi media, Jaber al-Shihri did inform the authorities after his son went missing for two months. He has denounced his son as a "deviant member of society, who must be removed.")

Another area that needs re-examination, says scholar Boucek, is the assessment of the risk of recidivism. "There's a lot of research on, for instance, when you should release a child molester from jail," he says. "But there's been no study on terrorists. When do you let a head chopper out of rehab?"

<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1874278,00.html>

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New York Post
January 28, 2009
Pg. 8

Freed from Gitmo -- to Murder

By Ed Robinson

A terrorist who was released from the Guantanamo Bay prison and later blew himself up - along with 12 other people - in Iraq thanked God for his release in a tape made just before the attack, it was reported yesterday. Abdallah Ali al-Ajmi, was sprung from the facility, which the Obama administration plans to close, in 2005, and sent back to his home country of Kuwait. "I thank Allah, Lord of the Worlds, who freed me from Guantanamo prison, and, after we were tortured, connected me with the Islamic state of Iraq," al-Ajmi said on a chilling tape, just before the deadly April attack in Mosul, Fox News' Web site said. The murderous fanatic mentions Guantanamo very early in the video, according to the NEFA Foundation, a nonprofit that tracks terrorist groups and translated the tape. Last week, President Obama signed an executive order to close the prison, but officials must figure out what to do with the more than 250 prisoners still there.

With Post Wire Services

http://www.nypost.com/seven/01282009/news/nationalnews/freed_from_gitmo_to_murder_152349.htm

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GlobalSecurityNewswire.org

Drug Safety Watchdog Sees Al-Qaeda Risk to U.S. Food, Drug Imports

Thursday, Jan. 29, 2009

By Elaine M. Grossman

Global Security Newswire

WASHINGTON -- Scant monitoring of expanding U.S. food and medicine imports could heighten the risk of biological attack by al-Qaeda or other terrorist groups, according to a leading drug-industry watchdog (see *GSN*, Jan. 21). Over the past two years, reports of tainted ingredients in powdered milk, blood-thinner medication and pet foods manufactured in China have underscored the perils of globalization for U.S. public health, said Steven Nissen, a Cleveland Clinic cardiologist.

Chairman of the hospital's cardiovascular medicine department, Nissen is said to be in contention to become head of the Food and Drug Administration in the Obama administration. The former president of the American College of Cardiology sounded early alarms about heart attack risks related to the painkillers Vioxx and Celebrex; he also led an effort to block an emerging diabetes drug, Avandia, because of similar concerns.

Thus far, repeat incidents of contaminated foreign foods and medicines appear to reflect a drive to reduce production costs in poorly regulated nations, rather than an intention to harm consumers, Nissen said during a Tuesday telephone interview. However, the Food and Drug Administration has exerted insufficient control over the quality and content of imported food and drugs, he asserted. Terrorist leaders could easily identify and exploit this key U.S. vulnerability, Nissen said.

"If you were al-Qaeda and you wanted to harm Americans, you're not going to go try to hijack a plane and then fly it into a building again," Nissen told *Global Security Newswire*. "But if you could get access to a plant in China that makes pharmaceuticals and put something into those [drugs] that is hard to detect, I believe you could put Americans at great risk." Until recently, Nissen has not spoken out about his concerns regarding a terrorist risk to the food and drug supply. "I'm not interested in giving al-Qaeda any ideas," he said. "But, on the other hand, burying

our heads in the sand, as we did before 9/11, isn't necessarily the right thing to do. ... There are certain areas where we are very vulnerable, and I happen to think this is one of them."

The United States is particularly dependent on foreign nations for foodstuffs, he noted. Eighty percent of seafood and nearly half of the fresh fruits consumed in this country come from abroad. Much of it clears customs based on electronic data provided by the importer, without any U.S. sampling or testing, Nissen said. At the same time, the U.S. agency charged with protecting the food and medicine supply maintains a very small monitoring presence abroad. The Food and Drug Administration has roughly 800 investigators trained to conduct foreign inspections, but critics say the available personnel cannot keep up with the vast growth in consumable imports.

"Amazingly, unless invited by the foreign government, the FDA lacks the authority to inspect the foreign food processors, even when investigating outbreaks of illness linked to the country," Nissen said during a speech in Cleveland on Monday. "Additionally, the FDA does not require that imported foods be produced under conditions equivalent to U.S. food safety systems." While the challenge for the United States is global, Nissen is particularly concerned about Chinese imports, he said in the interview the next day.

"In 2006 and 2007, the FDA did not conduct a single inspection of a Chinese food importer -- zero," Nissen said. "I want to make sure that we understand when we import drugs and food from overseas, where we are not supervising the manufacture of those drugs or food, that there are real risks involved."

Some national security experts believe that such characterizations of the terrorist threat are overblown. According to this view, one reason why terrorists have not already penetrated the imported food or medicine supply is that the hurdles to doing so -- even abroad -- remain enormous. There are many more likely scenarios that terrorists might embrace for harming U.S. citizens than attempting to operate undetected in a food or drug export business in a nation such as China, skeptics say.

Nissen conceded that profit-driven or accidental lapses in the quality of foreign-source food are clearly more likely to occur. He noted, though, that bolstering prevention would help protect the U.S. public from contaminated imports, regardless of a producer's intent. Nonetheless, the terrorist threat remains real, he said.

"There are people out there that want to harm Americans. And they will go to great lengths to do so," Nissen said. "We have to protect ourselves." Andrew von Eschenbach, who resigned his post as FDA commissioner on Jan. 20, last year acknowledged that his agency had not yet fully adapted to globalization. Concerning medicine imports, "FDA must further shift from 'gate-keeper' to a stronger and more comprehensive import safety authority," he said last April in testimony before the House Energy and Commerce Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee. "Imported drugs and devices must be safe and effective and must meet all applicable FDA standards prior to reaching U.S. ports-of-entry."

The commissioner described implementation of the Bush administration's "Action Plan for Import Safety," released in November 2007, as "only a start" toward protecting U.S. consumables. "The agency will learn and adapt as we move forward as part of the larger, ongoing agency transformation into an FDA of the 21st century," von Eschenbach said. Still, he added, "even with the challenges presented by globalization, the American product supply for drugs and devices continues to be among the safest in the world."

The Food and Drug Administration conducted 498 inspections of foreign prescription drug-manufacturing plants in fiscal 2007, more than any other year in its history, von Eschenbach testified. In order to enhance import safety, the agency also has concluded 70 cooperative arrangements with its counterparts abroad and another 30 information-sharing agreements that allow for the exchange of inspection data, he said.

During fiscal 2008, the agency invested \$13 million in an effort to "improve its ability to integrate and assimilate risk-based information into data systems [and] detect signals of intentional and unintentional food contamination," among other efforts, FDA Associate Commissioner for Foods David Acheson testified before the same committee in September.

Nissen said existing FDA initiatives to partner with foreign nations offer a good start toward more assertive monitoring of the food and drug supply, but he would like to see more done. As the most urgent next steps to be taken, "I'd say increase dramatically the on-site inspections of foreign manufacturers and do much more testing and sampling of things being imported into the U.S.," he told *GSN*. "We've got to do a better job of on-the-ground surveillance. That means we've got to be there in those countries," he said. "We've got to demand cooperation from the local authorities. I think we also have to do a lot more spot inspections and testing of what comes in."

Nissen has called for a doubling of the "desperately underfunded" budget at the Food and Drug Administration, which currently regulates \$1.5 trillion in products with a \$2.4 billion annual spending plan. He acknowledged that

any such funding boost might remain on the back burner as the nation grapples with a financial recession and skyrocketing budget deficit. However, the FDA watchdog said he sees broad support on Capitol Hill for reinvigorating the agency and strengthening its hand. One initiative attracting interest could be legislation to require full ingredient disclosure on imported prescription drug labels, Nissen said. "We have to realize that globalization is here to stay; that food and drugs are now a global marketplace; that if we're going to then operate in that global marketplace, we have to have the checks and balances in place to make sure we're doing a good job of protecting the public," he said.

http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20090129_3617.php

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Times of India

Obama Seeks Space Weapons Ban but Challenges Loom

25 January 2009

WASHINGTON: President Barack Obama's pledge to seek a worldwide ban on weapons in space marks a dramatic shift in US policy while posing the tricky issue of defining whether a satellite can be a weapon. Moments after Obama's inauguration last week, the White House website was updated to include policy statements on a range of issues, including a pledge to restore US leadership on space issues and seek a worldwide ban on weapons that interfere with military and commercial satellites.

It also promised to look at threats to US satellites, contingency plans to keep information flowing from them, and what steps are needed to protect spacecraft against attack. The issue is being closely watched by Lockheed Martin Corp, Boeing Co, Northrop Grumman Corp, the biggest US defense contractors, and other companies involved in military and civilian space contracts. Watchdog groups and even some defense officials welcomed the statement, which echoed Obama's campaign promises, but said it would take time to hammer out a comprehensive new strategy. Enacting a global ban on space weapons could prove even harder.

For instance, it was difficult to define exactly what constituted a "weapon" because even seemingly harmless weather tracking satellites could be used to slam into and disable other satellites, said two US officials involved in the area who were not authorized to speak publicly. Michael Krepon, co-founder of the private Henry L Stimson think tank on space, cited recent reports that the Pentagon was using two smaller satellites launched in 2006 to fly near a dead missile-warning satellite and investigate what happened.

The Defense Support Program satellite, DSP-23, built by Northrop, failed on orbit in mid-September. "This incident clarified how important it is to have rules of the road for technologies that could have many different applications," Krepon said. "There are lots of benign reasons to have a closer look at an object in space. But we all know that when satellites make close passes they could also do things that are not benign."

http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/World/Obama_seeks_space_weapons_ban_but_challenges_loom/articleshow/4030915.cms

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Telegraph.co.uk

Russia Drops Plans to Deploy Missiles Next to Poland after Barack Obama Takes Office

Russia has sent a conciliatory signal to President Barack Obama by dropping plans to deploy short-range missiles alongside Poland and Lithuania.

By Miriam Elder in Moscow and David Blair, Diplomatic Editor

28 January 2009

The Kremlin had threatened to retaliate for America's policy of installing a missile defence shield by placing these weapons in Kaliningrad, Russia's Baltic enclave sandwiched between two Nato members.

The US defence system will consist of a radar station in the Czech Republic and 10 interceptor missiles in Poland. America says the only aim is to guard against a possible future threat from a nuclear-armed Iran. Washington points out that 10 interceptor missiles pose no conceivable challenge to Russia's arsenal of 5,000 operational nuclear warheads, with another 8,000 in reserve.

But Moscow has vociferously objected to the proposed defence shield. Mr Obama's new administration has pledged to rethink this policy. Russia appears to be trying to encourage this process by drawing back from confrontation.

"The realisation of these plans has been halted in connection with the fact that the new US administration is not rushing through its plans," said a Russian official, according to the Interfax news agency.

A spokesman for Kurt Volker, the US ambassador to Nato, said that Russia's move, "if true", would be a "very positive step".

Last August, Poland signed an agreement with America to host the interceptor missiles forming the key part of America's proposed shield. But no timetable was laid down for the deployment of the system and its future remains an open question.

Radek Sikorski, the Polish foreign minister, told The Daily Telegraph that Mr Obama was taking a "fresh look" at the missile defence policy he inherited from George W Bush.

Mr Sikorski said the new administration was having an "internal debate", adding: "If I were to make a prediction, it's a question of timing, of pace and of resources available and confidence in the technology."

After several years of mounting hostility, Russia is reappraising its policy towards America in the light of Mr Obama's arrival. A senior diplomat in Moscow said he hoped there "would be a new possibility to restart our relations after a period of extensive turbulence last year".

Sergei Lavrov, the foreign minister, said last week: "We believe that Washington's policy on the international arena will contain changes for the better."

Vladimir Putin, the prime minister, has arrived at the World Economic Forum in Davos where he was due to speak on the global financial crisis. Mr Putin, both as premier and formerly as president, has led Russia's anti-American rhetoric and policy.

But in a rare interview with Bloomberg Television, Mr Putin said he was "cautiously optimistic" about US-Russia relations under Mr Obama.

President Dmitry Medvedev of Russia is expected to have his first formal meeting with Mr Obama on the sidelines of a Group of 20 summit in London in April. One possible formula for easing the tension might be for America to defer its missile defence system in return for Russian co-operation in the Middle East and elsewhere

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/4373616/Russia-drops-plans-to-deploy-missiles-next-to-Poland-after-Barack-Obama-takes-office.html>

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New York Times
January 29, 2009

Russian Report says Moscow will Halt Missile Deployment

By Clifford J. Levy

MOSCOW — A Russian news report on Wednesday that Russia is putting off its plan to deploy missiles near the Polish border raised speculation that the Kremlin is seeking ways to lower tensions with the United States now that a new administration has taken office. The report, from the Interfax news agency, was attributed to an unidentified Russian defense official, and when contacted later in the day, other Russian defense and Foreign Ministry officials in Moscow would not confirm it or comment on it.

Interfax quoted the unidentified defense official as saying that "these plans have been suspended," referring to the Kremlin's proposal to base Iskander missiles in the western region of Kaliningrad and direct them toward Europe.

The official was quoted as saying Russia had taken the step because Washington was not "pushing ahead" with the Bush administration's proposal to deploy an antimissile system in Poland and the Czech Republic to defend against

what the Bush administration had said was a threat from countries like Iran. Asked about the Interfax report, NATO said through a spokesman that if confirmed, "it would be a positive step."

In Washington, a State Department spokesman, Robert A. Wood, would not confirm that there had been any contact by the Russian government on a suspension of the missile deployment. But he said of the Russian news report: "It's a positive development. We look forward to cooperating, as we've said for quite some time — cooperating with Russia on missile defense."

The Kremlin has sharply criticized the Bush antimissile system, contending that it was aimed at Russia. Bush administration officials had sought to soothe Russian concerns, but the issue had damaged relations between the countries. While the official quoted by Interfax said the United States was not going forward with the antimissile plan, the Obama administration is, in fact, only reviewing the plan and has not publicly rejected it.

It would seem unlikely that the Kremlin would offer the concession of shelving the missile plan without first obtaining a promise from the Obama administration that the American plan had been canceled. While the Kremlin remained silent about the issue on Wednesday, Itar-Tass, the government-run news agency, quoted an unnamed senior defense official as saying that any such reports in the Russian media about the Kremlin pulling back were "pure fiction, total nonsense."

The unnamed official suggested that it would be a mistake for the Russians to withdraw their threat unilaterally while the issue was still playing out. In an interview with Bloomberg News on Monday, Prime Minister Vladimir V. Putin indicated that he was hopeful that the Obama administration would reject the Bush plan. "We have heard signals concerning antimissile defense, and we know that people close to Mr. Obama say they should not hurry and the issue demands further analyses," Mr. Putin said. "We are glad to hear such statements. Beyond that, our proposal on developing those systems is still on the agenda."

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/29/world/europe/29missiles.html>

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