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Los Angeles Times
February 6, 2009

A.Q. Khan, Pakistani Nuclear Scientist, Freed by Pakistan Court

Khan admitted in 2004 to providing sensitive nuclear technology to rogue regimes. 'I will always be proud of what I did for Pakistan,' he says after being freed from house arrest.

By Mubashir Zaidi and Laura King

Reporting from Istanbul, Turkey, and Islamabad, Pakistan -- A Pakistani court today freed nuclear scientist A.Q. Khan from unofficial house arrest, capping a rehabilitation that began almost from the moment he confessed in 2004 to providing sensitive nuclear technology to rogue regimes around the world.

Khan, considered the father of Pakistan's nuclear program, held a jubilant impromptu news conference with his lawyer outside his home on a leafy, tree-lined street in the Pakistani capital. "I have got my freedom," he told reporters shortly after a ruling by the Islamabad High Court.

The full text of the ruling was not released, but a short statement confirmed that the court had declared Khan a "free citizen." His lawyer, Ali Zafer, said he had been cleared of all charges, but the court document made no such reference.

Pakistani officials suggested some restrictions on Khan's movements might remain in place. Prosecutor Amjad Iqbal Qureshi said the 72-year-old scientist, who suffers from a variety of ailments including prostate cancer, would be subject to unspecified "security measures," and his lawyer said he was willing to accept having guards for personal protection.

The issue is clouded by the fact that the government never formally acknowledged Khan was under house arrest, though guards outside his villa for the past five years have curtailed his comings and goings and screened his guests. Last year, however, Khan was allowed some limited travel privileges, including a trip to the port city of Karachi, and he began granting telephone interviews to Pakistani media.

While widely viewed in the West as a disgraced figure responsible for disseminating secret nuclear technology to dangerous regimes in Iran, North Korea and Libya, Khan is regarded by many Pakistanis as a national hero.

After confessing on Pakistani TV five years ago to his involvement in the international nuclear black market, Khan was pardoned by then-President Pervez Musharraf and largely confined to his home.

Pakistan has consistently refused to make Khan available for questioning by international nuclear regulatory authorities and other investigators, a policy that has been kept in place by the new civilian government.

Asked by reporters at his home today about his role in leaking atomic secrets, Khan said: "We don't want to talk about the past."

Repercussions of Khan's activities have continued to the present. As recently as last month, more than a dozen companies and individuals were sanctioned by the U.S. State Department over ties with his technology-smuggling network.

In interviews he granted during house arrest, Khan has been unrepentant, saying the Musharraf government was aware of his activities and he had been made a scapegoat. Today, he again described himself as a patriot.

"I don't care about the rest of the world," he said. "I care about my country.... I will always be proud of what I did for Pakistan."

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-pakistan-khan7-2009feb07,0,4151948.story>

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The Times (UK)
February 4, 2009

President Obama Seeks Russia Deal to Slash Nuclear Weapons

Tim Reid in Washington

President Obama will convene the most ambitious arms reduction talks with Russia for a generation, aiming to slash each country's stockpile of nuclear weapons by 80 per cent. The radical treaty would cut the number of nuclear warheads to 1,000 each, The Times has learnt. Key to the initiative is a review of the Bush Administration's plan for a US missile defence shield in Eastern Europe, a project fiercely opposed by Moscow.

Mr Obama is to establish a non-proliferation office at the White House to oversee the talks, expected to be headed by Gary Samore, a non-proliferation negotiator in the Clinton Administration. The talks will be driven by Hillary Clinton's State Department.

No final decision on the defence shield has been taken by Mr Obama. Yet merely delaying the placement of US missiles in Poland and a radar station in the Czech Republic — which if deployed would cost the US \$4 billion annually — removes what has been a major impediment to Russian co-operation on arms reduction. Any agreement would put pressure on Britain, which has 160 nuclear warheads, and other nuclear powers to reduce their stockpiles.

Mr Obama has pledged to put nuclear weapons reduction at the heart of his presidency and his first move will be to reopen talks with Moscow to replace the 1991 US-Soviet Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (Start), which expires in December. Under that pact, the two countries have cut their respective stockpiles from roughly 10,000 to 5,000.

"We are going to re-engage Russia in a more traditional, legally binding arms reduction process," an official from the Administration said. "We are prepared to engage in a broader dialogue with the Russians over issues of concern to them. Nobody would be surprised if the number reduced to the 1,000 mark for the post-Start treaty."

Efforts to revive the Start talks were fitful under Mr Bush and complicated by his insistence on building a missile defence shield. "If Obama proceeds down this route, this will be a major departure," one Republican said. "But there will be trouble in Congress."

The plan is also complicated by the nuclear ambitions of Iran, which launched its first satellite into space yesterday, and North Korea, which is preparing to test a long-range ballistic missile capable of striking the US. Mr Obama views the reduction of arms by the US and Russia as critical to efforts to persuade countries such as Iran not to develop the Bomb.

http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/us_and_americas/article5654836.ece

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The Guardian (guardian.co.uk)
February 4, 2009

David Miliband Sets Out Six-Point Plan to Rid World of Nuclear Weapons

The foreign secretary's move came amid reports that Barack Obama is planning talks with Russia on a new agreement to replace the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, with the possible aim of reducing stockpiles to 1,000 warheads on each side. Miliband outlined his proposals in a policy paper designed to add momentum to British efforts to reinvigorate the disarmament process, which has stalled over the last decade amid worries about proliferation to states such as North Korea and Iran and the potential acquisition of nuclear weapons by terror groups.

In a speech in January last year, Gordon Brown pledged to put the UK "at the forefront of the international campaign to accelerate disarmament amongst possessor states, to prevent proliferation to new states, and to ultimately achieve a world that is free from nuclear weapons." The UK will next month host a conference on minimising the proliferation risks associated with the expansion of civil nuclear power expected as economies around the world seek to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Britain has unilaterally cut its operationally available nuclear arsenal by 20% to fewer than 160 warheads – equivalent to a 75% reduction on the UK's cold war-era explosive power. While the US, France and Russia have also made significant reductions, Miliband said today that further progress would require action on three fronts: watertight anti-proliferation measures, an international legal framework for reduced arsenals in existing nuclear states, and new solutions to the challenge of moving from small numbers of warheads to a nuclear weapon-free world.

He set out six steps to achieve these goals:

- Securing agreement among signatories to the non-proliferation treaty for the implementation of tougher measures to prevent the spread of weapons to more states or terror groups.
- Working with the International Atomic Energy Agency on helping states develop civil nuclear energy in ways which are safe and secure and minimise the risk of military use.
- Starting new negotiations between the US and Russia on "substantial" further reductions in their arsenals, together with efforts by other nuclear states including Britain to keep their own forces to "an absolute minimum".
- Bringing the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty into force by securing ratification in nine further states: the US, China, Iran, North Korea, Israel, India, Pakistan, Indonesia and Egypt.
- Starting negotiations without preconditions on a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty, which could prohibit the further production of weapons-grade uranium and plutonium.
- Beginning a strategic dialogue between the five nuclear weapon states – the US, Russia, China, Britain and France – to lay the groundwork for the ultimate elimination of all arsenals and measures to prevent the re-emergence of nuclear weapons.

Britain is carrying out work on how to verify nuclear disarmament and is proposing a five-nation conference later this year to discuss confidence-building measures. A Foreign Office policy paper, *Lifting the Nuclear Shadow*, published by Miliband today, said that nuclear weapons remain "potentially the most destructive threat to global security". And it stated: "Although the challenges are considerable, progress on these six steps would mark a decisive break from the deadlock of the past decade. Making progress will require the active engagement of the entire international community.

"The UK is working to build a broad coalition of governments, international organisations, non-governmental organisations and businesses which share the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons and to forge agreement on how we will work together to make it happen." John Sauven, the chief executive of Greenpeace, said: "Until the government puts plans to replace Trident on hold, anything they say about ridding the world of nuclear weapons is severely undermined.

"Over 100 military and defence experts, backed by the Obama administration, are calling for a new global programme to eliminate nuclear weapons. But our government seems determined to scupper this major new initiative by replacing Trident and tying Britain into nuclear rearmament for the next 40 years. "Blowing billions on

replacing a cold war relic like Trident is insane. It undermines efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons and totally ignores the fact that the greatest long-term security threat we face is climate change. "This money could make the UK, and the world, a safer place by tackling these threats. But only if it is invested in real solutions, such as a transition to a low-carbon economy as well as more investment in conflict resolution."

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2009/feb/04/miliband-nuclear-weapons>

Full text of report @ <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/nuclear-paper.pdf>

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Süddeutsche Zeitung (sueddeutsche.de)

February 4, 2009

Five Steps towards Abolishing Nuclear Weapons

Mohamed El Baradei

Only when global nuclear powers take seriously the responsibility of reducing their arsenals will it be possible to eliminate the most destructive weapons ever created. To reduce the incentive for other countries to acquire nuclear material, we have to guarantee their access to nuclear energy. But most importantly, we must create a more balanced international system.

Imagine this: a country or group of countries serves notice that they plan to withdraw from the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in order to acquire nuclear weapons, citing a dangerous deterioration in the international security situation. "Don't worry," they tell a shocked world. "The fundamental purpose of our nuclear forces is political: to preserve peace and prevent coercion and any kind of war. Nuclear weapons provide the supreme guarantee of our security. They will play an essential role by ensuring uncertainty in the mind of any aggressor about the nature of our response to military aggression."

Withdrawing from the NPT is a drastic step, but every state party to the Treaty has the right to do so, giving a mere three months' notice, if it decides that "extraordinary events" have jeopardized its supreme interests. The international uproar that would follow such a move is predictable. Yet the rationale I have just cited to justify nuclear weapons is taken from NATO's current Strategic Concept.

A similar rationale underpins the military doctrines of the other states with nuclear weapons. So the obvious question is: if leading world powers believe their security depends on having weapons that could annihilate our entire planet, and if they keep modernising and upgrading their nuclear arsenals and even conducting research into their actual use, how can we credibly expect other nations - in the name of maintaining international security - to refrain forever from seeking the same weapons?

The simple answer is that we cannot. The only way to prevent nuclear weapons from spreading and ultimately being used is to abolish them. At the same time, we must build an inclusive and equitable international security system in which no country feels the need to rely on nuclear weapons.

Fortunately, there is growing momentum behind the idea that eliminating all nuclear weapons is not just a Utopian ideal, but both possible and necessary. Not only the Kissinger-Shultz-Nunn-Perry quartet in the United States, but also other eminent figures such as Mikhail Gorbachev, Helmut Schmidt, Fernando Cardoso, and Desmond Tutu have called for them to be scrapped. I am greatly encouraged that President Obama has made a firm commitment to making the elimination of all nuclear weapons a central tenet of his policies. So what do we need to do as an international community to build on the new momentum?

First, resume disarmament negotiations between the United States and the Russian Federation. Despite major cutbacks in the last 20 years, there are still some 27,000 nuclear warheads on the planet, 95 percent of which are held by these two countries. An initial target could be to cut to 1,000, or even 500, verified warheads on each side. This needs to be accompanied by the long-overdue entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and early negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty that would verifiably ban the production of material for nuclear weapons.

Second, we need to establish a mechanism for multinational control of the production of fissile material. This would counteract an emerging phenomenon of more and more countries becoming "nuclear-weapon-capable" states, possessing the technology that could be used to make nuclear weapons in a matter of months, if they so chose. A multinational assurance-of-supply mechanism is a must to ensure that countries that want peaceful nuclear energy have guaranteed supplies of nuclear fuel without having their own uranium enrichment or plutonium reprocessing technology. For any such mechanism to succeed, however, it must be universal, equitable, and apolitical.

Third, we need to significantly improve the physical security of nuclear materials throughout the world. More than 1,500 incidents of illicit trafficking and other unauthorized activities involving nuclear or radioactive material have been reported to the IAEA. And this may be just the tip of the iceberg. The biggest risk we face is that a terrorist group could acquire nuclear or radioactive material which they would certainly use, as the concept of deterrence is irrelevant to them. All countries must therefore make securing these materials one of their highest priorities.

Fourth, the IAEA's legal authority, technological capability, and resources need to be substantially strengthened so it can credibly verify that countries are not secretly developing nuclear weapons and help to ensure that nuclear energy is used with the highest standards of safety and security. A high-level independent panel that issued a report on the future of the Agency last year said the budget should be doubled by 2020 and called for an immediate cash injection of 80 million dollars to rebuild its dilapidated infrastructure.

Fifth, we need a return to a security system rooted in effective multilateralism. The Security Council must be drastically reformed so the world can rely on it as the primary body for maintaining international peace and security, as foreseen in the UN Charter.

States with nuclear weapons should demonstrate that they plan to live up to their legal and moral obligation to abolish all nuclear weapons. In particular, the five nuclear-weapon states party to the Treaty must show that they are serious about their 40-year-old legal commitment to scrap all nuclear weapons by taking at least some of the steps I have outlined, before next year's NPT Review Conference. The division between nuclear weapon "haves" and "have nots" is not sustainable in the long term.

Concerns have been raised as to whether eliminating all nuclear weapons could actually have a destabilising effect and make major conventional conflict more likely. No one is suggesting that we will get to zero nuclear weapons overnight. This, however, is no justification for not drastically reducing the number of nuclear weapons in the world and taking concrete steps to diminish, rather than enhance, their role in military doctrines. Finally, it should not be beyond the ingenuity of humankind to figure out how to make the world safer without nuclear weapons, not least by taking a hard look at the root causes of insecurity and inequity. The world has already banned the possession or use of both chemical and biological weapons. It would be a tragedy on an unimaginable scale if we cannot do the same for the most horrific weapons ever invented.

Mohamed El Baradei is Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency. This article reflects his personal views.

Translation: Süddeutsche Zeitung

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<http://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/629/457290/text/>

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International Herald Tribune
Tuesday, February 3, 2009

Seoul Fears North Korea may Test Missile

By Choe Sang-Hun

SEOUL: North Korea has been moving what appear to be components of a long-range missile to a newly constructed launch site, a South Korean official and news reports said Tuesday, raising fears that the Communist state might test-fire a missile.

The North Korean move, first reported by the South Korean news agency Yonhap and the Japanese newspaper Sankei Shimbun, came amid concern among analysts in Seoul that Pyongyang might attempt some sort of military provocation to help make its nuclear program a foreign policy priority for the new U.S. administration.

North Korea has launched missiles when it has wanted to raise tensions in order to win political or economic concessions. In recent weeks, it has said that its military had assumed an "all-out confrontational posture" and that it had scrapped all nonaggression pacts with South Korea.

Recent spy satellite images showed a train carrying a long, cylindrical object, believed to be a missile, to a new launch site on North Korea's western coast, Yonhap reported, quoting an unnamed government source.

"We detected such a movement in the last week of January," a South Korean official said, commenting on the Yonhap report. He spoke on condition of anonymity, because he was not authorized to discuss the issue with reporters.

The object is believed to be a Taepodong-2 missile, Yonhap said. The missile is designed to fly at least 6,700 kilometers, or 4,200 miles, far enough to reach North America, and carry a payload of 650 to 1,000 kilograms, or 1,400 to 2,200 pounds, according to the South Korean Defense Ministry.

North Korea test-fired the missile in July 2006. But it was considered a failure, with its rocket fizzling out shortly after blast-off.

While not ruling out the possibility of a missile test, analysts and officials in Seoul noted the North often "puts on a show" at its military facilities to stir up uncertainty among its neighbors.

It would take North Korea at least a month to complete preparations for a Taepodong-2 launch, Yonhap and Sankei Shimbun said.

"It's our policy not to comment on military intelligence matters," Park Seong Woo, spokesman for the Office of Joint Chiefs of Staff of the South Korean military, said Tuesday. "But we will say that we are closely monitoring North Korean moves."

Washington has accused North Korea of being a primary proliferator of missile technology in the Middle East. However, it remains unclear whether North Korea has mastered the technology needed to arm the missiles with the nuclear weapons it is believed to have built.

The North has sharply increased its criticism of South Korea since President Lee Myung Bak took office a year ago. Lee has halted his predecessors' generous aid shipments to North Korea.

On Tuesday, Lee spoke with the U.S. president, Barack Obama, by telephone. They reaffirmed their commitment to the U.S.-South Korea alliance and agreed to work together to end North Korea's nuclear threat, their offices said. Obama also said Secretary of State Hillary Clinton would visit South Korea in the middle of this month, Lee's office said.

<http://www.iht.com/articles/2009/02/03/asia/north.1-421675.php>

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London Times
February 3, 2009

North Korea 'Prepares to Test Long Range Missile'

RICHARD LLOYD PARRY, IN TOKYO

North Korea is preparing to test fire a long range missile capable of striking the United States, according to media reports in South Korea and Japan this morning.

The Yonhap News Agency in Seoul quoted South Korean officials who described satellite image showing a long cylindrical object being transported on a train through the North Korean countryside. The sinister object has been identified as a Taepodong-2, an intercontinental missile with a range of more than 4000 miles, capable of crossing the Pacific and striking targets in Hawaii or Alaska.

It is impossible to confirm independently reports from North Korea, one of the world's most isolated and hardline dictatorships, where government of information is almost total. But the country is known to have an active missile

programme, as well as nuclear warheads – although crucially it probably does not have the technology to mount a nuclear device on a long range missile.

The unnamed sources quoted by Yonhap said that any test launch was unlikely for at least a month or two. The train appeared to be heading from a missile factory in North Pyongan province in the country's north-west to a newly constructed launch site on the west coast.

Pyongyang's last long range missile launches in 2006 and 1998, from a base in the east, caused shock across the region, particularly in Japan, where there is a deep sense of vulnerability to North Korean attack. The apparent preparations for a launch, which are easily discernible by spy satellites, may be intended by the government as a way of asserting itself as it prepares to resume nuclear disarmament negotiations with the new US government of Barack Obama.

The news comes just a fortnight before the 67th birthday of the country's "Dear Leader" Kim Jong Il – a day which is sometimes celebrated with gestures regarded as proud national or military achievements.

North Korea bought its first Scud missiles during the 1960s from the Soviet Union and China. Over the years, scientists in North Korea enhanced the original Soviet technology, but all were inaccurate, mechanically unreliable, and had ranges of only a few hundred miles.

A breakthrough came with the development of the Nodong missile, with a range of up to 800 miles. It is still an inaccurate weapon, but it could potentially be used to carry nuclear or chemical warheads. This was the weapons said to have been purchased in blueprint form by Benazir Bhutto, then the Prime Minister of Pakistan, in 1993.

North Korea's most shocking ballistic gesture came in 1998 when it test-fired a new three-stage long-range missile into the Pacific Ocean. The course of the so called Taepodong took it over the north coast of Japan; even more alarmingly, its range approached that of an intercontinental ballistic missile.

North Korea's Scuds are able to reach all of South Korea, its Nodongs could attack Japan, and the Taepodong 2, which is believed to be in development, has the potential to threaten even Australia.

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article5647653.ece>

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The Korea Herald
Tuesday, 3 February 2009

N.K. Prepares to Test Taepodong-2

North Korea is preparing to test-fire a long-range ballistic missile from a new launch base near the western coast, a South Korean government source said yesterday.

South Korean and U.S. intelligence authorities have recently spotted a train carrying what is believed to be a Taepodong-2 missile from a munitions factory in Pyongyang to the land-based launch site at Dongchang-ri, said the source who spoke on condition of anonymity.

"Intelligence authorities recently noticed that a train carrying cylinder-shaped material is moving from Pyongyang to Dongchang-ri. Given the length of the loaded material, it is believed to be a Taepodong-2 missile," the source said.

The source said the North may launch it in a couple of months.

Taepodong-2 is a multi-stage intercontinental ballistic missile capable of traveling up to 6,000 kilometers and carrying a payload of up to 500 kilograms. It is considered able to deliver nuclear warheads as far as Alaska and the west coast of the United States, according to weapons experts.

North Korea test-fired a Taepodong-2 missile in 2006, but the missile crashed after 40 seconds of flight.

The North has reportedly been constructing a new rocket-launch facility at Dongchang-ri, Cheolsan, North Pyongan Province, which is larger than its main missile base at Musudan-ri on the eastern coast. The site, whose construction appears to be near completion, can be used for bigger missiles and satellite projectiles, according to South Korean data.

The Seoul government is closely analyzing the North's moves, sources said. Officials believe the move came in conjunction with the communist regime's recent threats against Seoul.

On Jan. 17, the North's military threatened a "posture of all-out confrontation" against South Korea. Last Friday, the North's Committee for the Peaceful Reunification for Korea declared that Pyongyang would scrap all accords with Seoul on ending inter-Korean confrontation, including one on the Northern Limit Line, the de facto maritime border in the West Sea.

The North said the moves are in retaliation for Seoul's "hostile" policy toward it.

Military experts here say Pyongyang is highly likely to fire a missile, irrespective of type to prove its threats are not hollow.

A missile launch is an easier way for the North to do that than an armed clash on the NLL or the Demilitarized Zone.

The pundits also point out that through a launch the North could also attract U.S. attention. They explained that Pyongyang may use the launch to pressure the new U.S. government for quick actions.

"The Taepodong-2 missile is basically aimed at targets on the United States, so it would be a direct threat to the security of the United States. Regardless of the launch result, the missile would definitely draw U.S. attention," a Seoul government source said.

Baek Seung-joo, a North Korea expert at the state-run Korea Institute for Defense Analyses said Pyongyang is sending complex messages to the Obama administration.

"We have to note that North Korea moved the missile at the time zone when U.S. military satellites can spot it. Given that, the North appears to be testing the Obama administration's policy on the North and use long-range missile issue as leverage for negotiation," Baek said.

By Jin Dae-woong

http://www.koreaherald.co.kr/NEWKHSITE/data/html_dir/2009/02/04/200902040036.asp

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YONHAP News
5 February 2009

N. Korea Believed to have Revamped Missile Technology: Source

By Sam Kim

SEOUL, Feb. 5 (Yonhap) -- North Korea is believed to have improved its missile technology to expedite the technical procedure for test-firing its most advanced missile, a South Korean intelligence source said Thursday.

Citing classified information, the source said the communist state has also revamped its launch pad on the east coast -- the site of two high-profile missile tests in 1998 and 2006.

"They have tried to improve (the missile) for the last couple of years, and we believe there has been improvement," the source said.

North Korea test-fired its longest-range Taepodong-2 missile in 2006, sharply raising regional tensions. But outside intelligence officials say the missile crashed shortly after take-off.

"We do not believe it would take as long as then" for Pyongyang to get ready to test-fire what is believed to be another Taepodong-2 missile, the source said.

The source refrained from discussing how much the procedure could be shortened. South Korean defense officials had estimated earlier this week that preparations for a launch could take a month or two.

The Taepodong-2 model is capable of traveling up to 6,700 kilometers, putting Alaska and the U.S. West Coast within its striking distance, according to weapons experts.

"The North is likely to have revamped its technology related to the fuel storage and engine parts," said Baek Seung-joo, a senior researcher at the state-run Korean Institute for Defense Analyses.

The intelligence comes as North Korea continues to step up its harsh rhetoric against South Korea.

Relations between the two hit one of their lowest levels in decades after South Korean President Lee Myung-bak took office early last year with a tougher stance on the North.

North Korea has reacted bitterly to him, declaring all cross-border agreements null and warning of an armed clash near a western sea border where naval clashes turned deadly in 1999 and 2002.

Analysts say the North Korean moves are also aimed at influencing U.S. President Barack Obama, whose foreign policy priorities are beginning to take form.

"What matters just as much as technical timing is the political timing," Baek said, adding North Korean leader Kim Jong-il will consider political factors in deciding whether he will push ahead with the missile maneuver.

North Korea has conducted missile tests whenever it deemed it necessary to raise tension and pressure its partners in international talks aimed at dismantling its nuclear weapons programs.

The six-nation talks, which include the two Koreas, the U.S., Russia, Japan and China, remain deadlocked as the North refuses to accept a U.S. proposal for verification methods.

The source added it remains unknown whether the North has developed the technology to mount a nuclear warhead on the missile believed to have a 500 kilogram payload.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2009/02/05/40/0401000000AEN20090205008000315F.HTML>

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FAS Strategic Security Project Blog, DC
3 February 2009

Chinese Submarine Patrols Doubled in 2008

By Hans M. Kristensen

Chinese attack submarines sailed on more patrols in 2008 than ever before, according to information obtained by Federation of American Scientists from U.S. naval intelligence.

The information, which was declassified by U.S. naval intelligence in response to a Freedom of Information Act request from the Federation of American Scientists, shows that China's fleet of more than 50 attack submarines conducted 12 patrols in 2008, twice the number of patrols conducted in 2007.

China's strategic ballistic missile submarines have never conducted a deterrent patrol.

Highest Patrol Rate Ever

The 12 patrols conducted in 2008 constitute the highest patrol rate ever for the Chinese submarine fleet. They follow six patrols conducted in 2007, two in 2006, and zero in 2005. China has four times refrained from conducting submarine patrols since 1981, and the previous peaks were six patrols conducted in 2000 and 2007

While the increase in submarine patrols is important, it has to be seen in comparison with the size of the Chinese submarine fleet. With approximately 54 submarines, the patrol rate means that each submarine on average goes on patrol once every four and a half years. In reality, the patrols might have been carried out by only a small portion of the fleet, perhaps the most modern and capable types. A new class of nuclear-powered Shang-class (Type-093) attack submarines is replacing the aging Han-class (Type-091).

Few of the details for assessing the implications of the increased patrol rate are known, nor is it known precisely what constitutes a patrol in order for U.S. naval intelligence to count it. A request for the definition has been denied. It is assumed that a patrol in this case involves an extended voyage far enough from the submarine's base to be different from a brief training exercise.

In comparison with other major navies, twelve patrols are not much. The patrol rate of the U.S. attack submarine fleet, which is focused on long-range patrols and probably operate regularly near the Chinese coast, is much higher

with each submarine conducting at least one extended patrol per year. But the Chinese patrol rate is higher than that of the Russian navy, which in 2008 conducted only seven attack submarine patrols, the same as in 2007.

Still no SSBN Patrols

The declassified information also shows that China has yet to send one of its strategic submarines on patrol. The old Xia, China's first SSBN, completed a multi-year overhaul in late-2007 but did not sail on patrol in 2008.

The first of China's new Jin-class (Type-094) SSBN was spotted in February 2008 at the relatively new base on Hainan Island, where a new submarine demagnetization facility has been constructed. But the submarine did not conduct a patrol the remainder of the year. A JL-2 missile was test launched Bohai Bay in May 2008, but it is yet unclear from what platform.

Two or three more Jin-class subs are under construction at the Huludao (Bohai) Shipyard, and the Pentagon projects that up to five might be built. How these submarines will be operated as a "counter-attack" deterrent remains to be seen, but they will be starting from scratch.

<http://www.fas.org/blog/ssp/2009/02/patrols.php>

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Washington Times

February 4, 2009

Pg. 1

Exclusive

Air Force Fails New Nuclear Reviews

By Bill Gertz

Air Force nuclear units have failed two inspections in the past three months, providing fresh evidence that the military service that jarred the world in 2007 by mistakenly transporting live nuclear weapons across the United States continues to suffer lapses in its management of intercontinental ballistic missiles.

Jennifer Thibault, a spokeswoman for the Air Force Space Command, said the failed "surety" inspections at Wyoming and Montana bases in November and December involved "administrative and paperwork issues." In all, three Air Force nuclear-missile units and two strategic-bomber units failed such inspections in 2008.

Despite the problems, the Air Force said it is making progress addressing issues with the security and handling of nuclear-tipped missiles that came to light after two embarrassing episodes in 2006 and 2007 prompted a widespread review and management changes.

"While we missed the mark in certain areas during the last three inspections of our ICBM wings, overall, we've seen that our airmen are highly capable of operating, maintaining and securing our nuclear forces," Miss Thibault told The Washington Times.

James Schlesinger, the former defense secretary who headed a recent task force on nuclear-weapons management, said Tuesday the continuing problems affect U.S. credibility worldwide - both in deterring attacks and assuring allies of protection - but he said he thinks the Air Force is committed to fixing the problems.

"Whatever the size of the nuclear force is, it has to be run with zero defects," Mr. Schlesinger said in an interview. "We've got to get back to that if we want to have any credibility in the international scene."

The most recent surety-inspection failure took place at the 90th Missile Wing at F.E. Warren Air Force Base in Wyoming from Dec. 2 to Dec. 17. The base is in charge of 150 Minuteman III missiles that are on alert 24 hours a day.

Air Force officials said the 90th was given failing grades by inspectors from the Space Command and the Defense Technology Security Administration for not properly documenting tests on missiles, which require strict monitoring.

The Wyoming base was at the center of one of the two prior nuclear mishaps that cast embarrassment on the Air Force. Nuclear-missile units at F.E. Warren mistakenly transported four Minuteman III forward sections containing sensitive components to Taiwan on two occasions, in October and November 2006. The components were recovered, but the mistake exposed larger security shortfalls.

A subsequent security breakdown allowed live nuclear weapons to be flown improperly from Minot Air Force Base in North Dakota to Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana in August 2007.

The incidents prompted Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates to form an eight-member Task Force on Nuclear Weapons Management that produced two reports critical of the Air Force's handling of nuclear missiles. On-site inspections were made stricter and have divulged additional problems, officials confirm.

The two other nuclear-surety-inspection failures took place last year at the 341st Missile Wing at Malstrom Air Force Base, Montana, from Oct. 26 to Nov. 10, and at the 91st Missile Wing at Minot Air Force Base from Jan. 22 to Jan. 30, 2008. Both wings also handle 150 nuclear-tipped Minuteman IIIs deployed in underground silos.

Miss Thibault declined to provide details of the inspection failures because of the sensitivity of the information.

Surety inspections are held every 18 months and measure whether troops are prepared to fire missiles during a two-week testing period.

"Nuclear Surety Inspections (NSI) are extremely detailed and demand the absolute highest standards of compliance and accountability [to pass]," Miss Thibault said.

The Air Force defines nuclear-surety inspections as reviews of all nuclear-weapons-related material, people and procedures that "contribute to the security, safety, and reliability of nuclear weapons and to the assurance that there will be no nuclear-weapon accidents, incidents, unauthorized weapon detonations, or degradation in performance at the target."

Last year, the tests were made more rigorous, Miss Thibault said, following the critical report by the task force on nuclear weapons.

"These inspections are tools that our commanders use to determine the readiness of their units to perform the mission to the standard we demand - perfection," she said. "We're seeing progress in ICBM nuclear surety."

As for the test failures, "unsatisfactory inspection results, in the sense of identifying discrepancies, are part of the fix and should not be interpreted as suggesting that the ultimate security or safety of the American people or our allies has been put at risk," Miss Thibault said.

The Defense Department task force report issued in October warned that the Air Force was not doing its job of securing and maintaining nuclear-missile forces. The report identified a "serious erosion of senior-level attention, focus, expertise, mission readiness, resources, and discipline in the nuclear weapons mission."

The Air Force responded by initiating 100 steps to improve nuclear-weapons problems.

Data from the report show that the Air Force failed on five of its 22 surety inspections in 2008. It was the fourth time since 1992 that at least five failing grades were issued, the report stated.

According to the report and the Air Force, the five inspections failures during 2008 included the three at the missile wings and two at strategic nuclear bomber wings.

By contrast, in 2006 and 2007, there were a total of 18 surety inspections, and all received passing grades.

"Over the past 10 years, inspection pass rates point to anomalies that indicate a systemic problem in the inspection regime," the report said. "Something is clearly wrong."

A second task force report, made public Jan. 9, stated that rigorous nuclear surety inspections are "critical to maintaining a credible U.S. deterrent."

"However, the task force believes a significant shortfall exists in the DoD nuclear surety inspection process," the report said.

Mr. Schlesinger, who headed the task force, stated in the October report that the Air Force in recent years focused too much on conflicts in the Middle East and Afghanistan. "Both inattention and conscious budget decisions have led to the atrophy of the Air Force's nuclear mission," he stated. "But the balance must be restored. Though reduced in scope, the nuclear mission remains essential."

The U.S. nuclear arsenal is still needed despite the demise of the Cold War for deterring nuclear threats to the United States and its allies, he said. The weapons must be maintained as a credible deterrent against nuclear powers such as China and Russia that are in the process of building up their nuclear forces, Mr. Schlesinger said.

The January task force report stated that one of the problems for the Air Force's nuclear weapons mission is that troops do not clearly understand the deterrence mission of the expensive and extremely powerful strategic weapons.

Unlike the Air Force, which has numerous problems with its nuclear mission, the Navy has sustained its commitment to nuclear forces but still is "fraying at the edges," the report said.

The task force "did not find in the Navy the kind of deterioration in morale that characterized Air Force nuclear units," the report said.

"The attitude in the Air Force was: 'We know that the president and secretary of defense don't give a damn about what we do,' " the report stated.

By contrast, a Navy ballistic missile submarine crew told task force investigators that while senior Navy leaders are disinterested in the strategic nuclear deterrence forces, the ballistic missile submariners remain highly motivated.

"The attitude in the Navy was: 'We know that the president and secretary of defense don't care - but we do,' " the report stated.

However, the final report also contained the conclusion that the problem of "the lack of interest in and attention to the nuclear mission and nuclear deterrence ... go well beyond the Air Force."

"This lack of interest and attention have been widespread throughout DoD and contributed to the decline of attention in the Air Force," the final report stated.

The report called for creating the position of assistant secretary of defense for nuclear deterrence, which would elevate nuclear issues that have been separated and downgraded as the result of a Pentagon reorganization during the Bush administration.

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/feb/04/air-force-fails-new-nuclear-reviews/>

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Marine Corps Times/ The Associated Press
Feb 4, 2009

Obama Eyes Pentagon Control of Federal Labs

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — The Obama administration is considering moving the nation's federal weapons complex, including New Mexico's Sandia and Los Alamos national laboratories, under military control, ending decades of civilian oversight.

The Albuquerque Journal, in a copyright story Wednesday, said an internal memo it obtained shows the administration is looking into turning over control of the labs to the Department of Defense. They currently are controlled by the Department of Energy.

The Office of Management and Budget memo, which carried no date, said such a change would not occur until at least 2011.

The chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, Sen. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., said Tuesday he told OMB chief Peter Orszag he had concerns about such a plan, which he called shortsighted.

"I will fight it tooth and nail if they intend to proceed with it," he said he told Orszag.

More than 20,000 New Mexicans work for Sandia and Los Alamos labs.

Civilian management stems from a World War II decision by J. Robert Oppenheimer, the top scientist on the secret Manhattan Project that built the world's first atomic bomb and led to the founding of Los Alamos lab. Oppenheimer had the weapons designed by civilian scientists rather than military officers.

After the war, government officials concluded the "ultimate weapon" should be left in civilian control.

A shift to military oversight “would be very dramatic,” said nuclear weapons historian Robert S. Norris of the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Norris said the Reagan administration tried unsuccessfully to move the weapons program to Pentagon control in the 1980s.

The OMB memo outlines plans for a study to be done by the end of September on costs and benefits of the proposal. The plan would move the National Nuclear Security Administration, an arm of the DOE that oversees the labs, to the defense agency. Congress created the NNSA in 2000 as a quasi-independent body but under DOE jurisdiction.

Former Sandia lab president C. Paul Robinson, in written responses last year to questions from members of the House Armed Services Committee’s Strategic Forces subcommittee, said he thought Pentagon management should be considered.

Robinson, a senior government adviser on nuclear weapons issues, said he’s long supported civilian control. But in recent years, long-term management has become a problem because of “short-term upheavals” as different administrations come and go, repeatedly changing the direction of the nation’s weapons program.

“The presence of a uniformed military could provide a continuity that has been lacking,” he told the subcommittee.

He said Tuesday the NNSA hasn’t worked.

The team that will study the possibility of a shift will include members from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the Department of Homeland Security, the State Department and “other major NNSA stakeholders,” the memo said.

http://www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/2009/02/ap_obama_labs_020409/

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Washington Times
February 6, 2009
Pg. 9

Senators Rip Plan to Shift Nuclear Labs to Pentagon

By Shaun Waterman, United Press International

President Obama's visit to the Energy Department on Thursday was in danger of being overshadowed by a growing row over a proposal to strip the department of one of its crown jewels - the agency which builds and guards the nation's nuclear weapons.

The White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has asked officials to evaluate the costs and benefits of moving the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) and the Los Alamos, Sandia and Lawrence Livermore National Laboratories it owns to the Defense Department.

Lawmakers from New Mexico, where two of the three labs are located, are girding for a showdown with the administration if it pushes ahead with the contentious plan, which will be evaluated as part of the fiscal 2010 budgeting process, and would, if approved, go ahead in fiscal 2011.

“I strongly disagree with the proposal,” said Sen. Tom Udall, New Mexico Democrat, in a statement, adding he had “expressed my opposition directly” to OMB Director Peter Orszag. An aide said Mr. Udall spoke Wednesday by phone with Mr. Orszag and was also seeking to raise the issue personally with new Energy Secretary Steven Chu.

Mr. Udall said moving the labs would interfere with efforts to broaden the scope of their activities to encompass other key national issues like nuclear nonproliferation, renewable energy and homeland security.

“For decades, these laboratories have provided world-class research and development, contributing not only to our national security but to countless innovations that have benefited our economy and our well-being,” he said.

“Moving the labs ... would change the fundamental mission and purpose of the labs, and would discourage exactly the kind of science that is now most needed.”

Sen. Jeff Bingaman, New Mexico Democrat, added that the plan reopened an issue that had been settled policy since the earliest days of the nation's nuclear weapons program under Robert Oppenheimer.

“The idea of whether the military or civilians would be stewards of our nuclear stockpile was debated as far back as 1946,” said Mr. Bingaman, chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. “It was decided then that it was best for civilians to have that control. I believe it remains the right decision today, and several blue-ribbon panels over the past 20 years bear that out,” he said.

Officials at OMB and the NNSA declined to comment on the proposal, but a copy of the memo was posted on the Web site of a private blogger on the Los Alamos laboratory. Its authenticity was independently confirmed by United Press International.

The memo says the evaluation should be co-chaired by the departments of Energy and Defense, and should involve consultation with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Homeland Security, the State Department and “other major stakeholders in NNSA operations.” It says the evaluation must be reported to OMB and the National Security Council in four stages, finishing by September.

“The Department of Energy has a very strong heritage of scientific leadership and ... managing complex scientific programs,” former NNSA Deputy Administrator William Tobey said. “Changing that would introduce a level of risk.”

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/feb/06/senators-rip-plan-to-shift-nuclear-labs-to-pentago/>

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London Times
3 February 2009

President Obama seeks Russia Deal to Slash Nuclear Weapons

Tim Reid in Washington

President Obama will convene the most ambitious arms reduction talks with Russia for a generation, aiming to slash each country's stockpile of nuclear weapons by 80 per cent.

The radical treaty would cut the number of nuclear warheads to 1,000 each, The Times has learnt. Key to the initiative is a review of the Bush Administration's plan for a US missile defence shield in Eastern Europe, a project fiercely opposed by Moscow.

Mr Obama is to establish a non-proliferation office at the White House to oversee the talks, expected to be headed by Gary Samore, a non-proliferation negotiator in the Clinton Administration. The talks will be driven by Hillary Clinton's State Department.

No final decision on the defence shield has been taken by Mr Obama. Yet merely delaying the placement of US missiles in Poland and a radar station in the Czech Republic — which if deployed would cost the US \$4 billion annually — removes what has been a major impediment to Russian co-operation on arms reduction.

Any agreement would put pressure on Britain, which has 160 nuclear warheads, and other nuclear powers to reduce their stockpiles.

Mr Obama has pledged to put nuclear weapons reduction at the heart of his presidency and his first move will be to reopen talks with Moscow to replace the 1991 US-Soviet Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (Start), which expires in December. Under that pact, the two countries have cut their respective stockpiles from roughly 10,000 to 5,000.

“We are going to re-engage Russia in a more traditional, legally binding arms reduction process,” an official from the Administration said. “We are prepared to engage in a broader dialogue with the Russians over issues of concern to them. Nobody would be surprised if the number reduced to the 1,000 mark for the post-Start treaty.”

Efforts to revive the Start talks were fitful under Mr Bush and complicated by his insistence on building a missile defence shield. “If Obama proceeds down this route, this will be a major departure,” one Republican said. “But there will be trouble in Congress.”

The plan is also complicated by the nuclear ambitions of Iran, which launched its first satellite into space yesterday, and North Korea, which is preparing to test a long-range ballistic missile capable of striking the US.

Mr Obama views the reduction of arms by the US and Russia as critical to efforts to persuade countries such as Iran not to develop the Bomb.

http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/us_and_americas/article5654836.ece

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London Times
February 5, 2009

Russia Unclenches Fist over Nuclear Weapons

Tony Halpin in Moscow

Russia moved swiftly yesterday to extend a hand to President Obama over American plans for big cuts in nuclear weapons. Sergei Ivanov, the Deputy Prime Minister, said that Russia was ready to sign a new strategic missile treaty with the US.

“We welcome the statements from the new Obama Administration that they are ready to enter into talks and complete within a year, the signing of a new Russian-US treaty on the limitation of strategic attack weapons,” said Mr Ivanov, a hawkish former Defence Minister, who was once seen as a candidate to become the president of Russia.

Grigory Karasin, the deputy Foreign Minister, also hailed the initiative. The Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (Start) signed by the US and the Soviet Union in 1991 expires in December. It reduced stockpiles held by the two states from 10,000 to 5,000 but there has been little progress in negotiating a successor.

Talks faltered in part over President Bush’s enthusiasm for siting a missile-defence shield in Eastern Europe, a move that infuriated Russia. A delay in the programme could ease Russian concerns and pave the way for talks.

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/europe/article5663534.ece>

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LATimes.com
February 4, 2009

Woman Accused of Recruiting Female Suicide Bombers Held in Iraq

By Tina Susman

Reporting from Baghdad -- In the 72 hours before last week's provincial elections, U.S. and Iraqi forces targeted more than 100 people considered threats to peaceful balloting in the capital, the top American military commander in Baghdad said Tuesday. Iraqi officials also announced the arrest of a woman they said was responsible for recruiting dozens of female suicide bombers. At a news conference, Maj. Gen. Qassim Atta, an Iraqi military spokesman, showed a video of the woman, identified as Sameera Ahmed Jassim, in which she described recruitment methods.

There was no way to independently verify the video's authenticity, but the use of female suicide bombers has soared in the last year. More than 30 women blew themselves up in 2008, compared with eight in 2007, according to U.S. military figures. U.S. and Iraqi officials say Sunni Arab insurgents have run short of male recruits and turned to women for the missions.

Suspected suicide bombers were among those rounded up in the sweep conducted in the three days leading up to Saturday's elections, said Army Maj. Gen. Jeffery Hammond, commander of U.S. forces in Baghdad and the surrounding region. Hammond said attacks in his area of command had dropped 80% since June 2007, part of a nationwide decrease in violence that was highlighted by the peaceful voting for new governing councils in 14 provinces. No violence was reported in the capital, where Hammond said all 1,700 polling sites were checked by Iraqi and U.S. security forces before the vote.

"We also went into a 72-hour period prior to the election of deliberate targeting," Hammond said in his final media briefing before handing over control of the Baghdad region to newly arriving American forces. He said there were more than 111 targets, but he would not say how many were detained. "We felt they would have reached their comfort level and they could probably be comfortable thinking they could get away with an election attack," Hammond said, adding that the targets had been on security forces' radar for a while.

Security forces blanketed Baghdad during the voting, and a car ban was in effect from 10 p.m. Friday until 3 p.m. Saturday. Some officials, including U.N. special envoy Staffan de Mistura, have said a peaceful election and nonviolent acceptance of the results would prove that Iraq was past its sectarian war. President Obama said after the vote that the lack of violence suggested that many of the 145,000 troops now in Iraq could be home in a year. He made his comments during an interview Sunday with NBC.

Military commanders on the ground, however, have urged a cautious withdrawal, remembering the violence that erupted after the last elections, in 2005, when sectarian attacks flared across the country. Hammond said Iraqi forces' securing of the election "was the best performance I've seen" by Iraqi police and soldiers in his 15 months in the country. "Does it mean we're done here? No. It means we've made progress," he said. "Is it irreversible?" Hammond hesitated. "Uh, I don't know the best way to answer that," he said. "It's best to say it's a day at a time."

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-iraq-female-bombers4-2009feb04,0,7803445.story>

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Telegraph.co.uk
05 February 2009

Dick Cheney: Closing Guantanamo makes Terror Attack More Likely

By Our Foreign Staff

In a staunch defence of the controversial tactics of the Bush administration, he also said that the decision by the new US President to abandon "enhanced" interrogation techniques was also a mistake.

An unrepentant Mr Cheney said that the previous administration's anti-terror apparatus had prevented another incident on a par with the September 11, 2001, attacks.

"If it hadn't been for what we did - with respect to the terrorist surveillance program, or enhanced interrogation techniques for high-value detainees, the Patriot Act, and so forth - then we would have been attacked again," he told Politico. "Those policies we put in place, in my opinion, were absolutely crucial to getting us through the last seven-plus years without a major-casualty attack on the US."

He viewed the risk of a dirty bomb attack as high. The "ultimate threat to the country", was a "9/11-type event where the terrorists are armed with something much more dangerous than an airline ticket and a box cutter - a nuclear weapon or a biological agent of some kind" that is deployed in the middle of an American city that could kill perhaps hundreds of thousands of people.

Mr Cheney left office with an historically low approval rating of 13 per cent. He was identified with the most contentious aspects of the war on terror which critics said subverted justice and badly tarnished America's reputation overseas.

Although he did not personally criticise the new president, he said that the announcement on the first full day of his presidency that he wanted Guantanamo closed within a year would lead to criminals intent on harming the US being freed.

"If you release the hard-core al-Qaeda terrorists that are held at Guantanamo, I think they go back into the business of trying to kill more Americans and mount further mass-casualty attacks," he said. "If you turn 'em loose and they go kill more Americans, who's responsible for that?"

"When we get people who are more concerned about reading the rights to an al-Qaeda terrorist than they are with protecting the United States against people who are absolutely committed to do anything they can to kill Americans, then I worry," he added.

Protecting the country is "a tough, mean, dirty, nasty business," he said. "These are evil people. And we're not going to win this fight by turning the other cheek."

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/usa/barackobama/4514929/Dick-Cheney-closing-Guantanamo-makes-terror-attack-more-likely.html>

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New York Daily News

February 4, 2009

Spies Form Virtual Units on the Fly to Track Terror

When a cell of 10 Islamic militants stole into the Indian port city of Mumbai in November and began to unleash a fusillade of hell on two hotels, a train depot in rush hour and a Jewish center, US spooks scrambled to make sense of it all. About 20 analysts from across the globe immediately convened - not in the same room, but on two classified Web sites called Intellipedia and A-space.

Think of it as Wikipedia and Facebook for spies.

The first Mumbai entry was posted by a watch officer at the National Counterterrorism Center at the onset of the attacks, officials told The Mouth. Soon, analysts from across America's 16 spy agencies familiar with extremists in India and Pakistan logged on to A-space - a discussion site accessible to only a few thousand US intelligence analysts with the highest security clearances - to weigh who the attackers might be.

Analysts posted realtime satellite imagery and video depicting the carnage outside the Taj Mahal Hotel, which showed a sluggish response by Indian security forces. They also uploaded the first news photos of one young terrorist in Mumbai's rail station who was later nabbed alive - noting how professionally he carried his weapons, and how he was dressed as blandly Western as the 9/11 hijackers 7 1/2 years ago.

The ad hoc group of analysts, who did not all know each other - including at least one in a Far East military outpost - quickly agreed that a claim of responsibility by the unheard of "Deccan Mujahadeen" was malarkey. It was really the handiwork of Pakistan's Al Qaeda-affiliated Lashkar-e-Taiba.

"The analysts concluded it was LeT hours before that was made public," said one senior US intelligence official.

The Mumbai strikes were the first big test of the new system of collaboration using social networking tools put in place last fall by Directorate of National Intelligence chief technology czar Michael Wertheimer and his crew of savvy young spooks from the Myspace Generation. There are also Top Secret elements modeled on YouTube and Flickr.

One participant in the A-space Mumbai discussion even posted an ominous message titled, "Next Mumbai: Indian Mujahadeen." That terror group, typed the analyst a few days after the massacre of about 200 Indians, Americans and westerners, "has now threatened to carry out attacks on Mumbai, Agencies reported." While about 20 analysts were active in assembling, discussing and dissecting incoming intelligence and news reports on the mayhem which unfolded over three days, other simply watched and read. The sites logged more than 7,000 page views.

To avoid a repeat of politically-tainted intel on Iraq prior to the 2003 US invasion, policymakers and politicians are strictly banned from getting access to Intellipedia and A-space. About half of the roughly 9,000 intel analysts with high enough clearances have signed up to use it, officials said. "There's a lot of expertise and accumulated knowledge that doesn't fit easily on a piece of paper," Wertheimer told The Mouth in a recent interview at the DNI's Liberty Crossing complex in Virginia. Besides tossing around theories with other analysts, the users - who cannot post anonymously - plunge into secret databases previously off-limits to other spy agencies, though intel from the most sensitive human assets is verboten, he said. "What used to take months is taking days. What used to take hours is taking minutes," Wertheimer added.

Analysts now compare notes from across the continent - or oceans - about targets such as Chinese submarines and North Korean and Iranian nuclear facilities. But the biggest and most heavily-trafficked A-space page is devoted to the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, where the US is battling the Taliban and hunting Al Qaeda leadership, one source

said. Another page set up to collect intel on potential threats to President Obama's Inauguration events also attracted interest, when assets such as GoogleEarth imagery and other information feeds were added. "The last time there was an Inauguration (in 2004), you couldn't look at realtime traffic cams," marveled one official involved in the new program.

- James Gordon Meek

<http://www.nydailynews.com/blogs/dc/2009/02/spies-form-virtual-units-on-th.html#more>

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International Herald Tribune
Tuesday, February 3, 2009

Russia, Belarus to Create Joint Air Defense System

The Associated Press

MOSCOW: Russia and Belarus will create a new military system to monitor and defend their air space, the Kremlin said Tuesday strengthening cooperation between the two uneasy allies who are deeply suspicious of U.S. plans to put a missile defense shield in Europe.

The deal reflects the former Soviet neighbors' mistrust of Western intentions. It also reflects their shared opposition to NATO's expansion into former Soviet turf and U.S. efforts to build missile defense sites in Belarus' neighbor Poland and the Czech Republic.

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said he and his Belarusian counterpart, Alexander Lukashenko, had brokered a deal that "will significantly increase the defense capability of Russia and Belarus."

The joint system to include five air force units and 10 air defense missile units will improve the two countries' ability to monitor their airspace, Russian air force chief Gen. Alexander Zelin was quoted by Russian media as saying.

But it is unclear if the force would have any sort of deterrent or offensive nature, possibly to attack or counter the U.S. missile defenses.

The U.S. missile defense plan was pushed hard by former President George W. Bush's administration, which said it would help protect Europe from ballistic missiles fired from Iran, for example. But Moscow said it would reduce Russia's missile deterrent capability, and it threatened to put medium-range missile in a region near Belarus' borders.

The fate of the U.S. project is less certain now that Barack Obama, who has signaled less enthusiasm for it, has taken office.

Belarus and Russia have been negotiating their joint air defense system for years, with Belarus reportedly lobbying for better terms and more generous Russian aid. The business daily Kommersant said Lukashenko had demanded new Russian weapons at subsidized prices and Russian orders from Belarusian defense industries.

Lukashenko appeared to corroborate that report, saying Tuesday that creating the joint air defense field should be part of a package toward "deepening military-technical cooperation."

Independent military analyst Alexander Golts said the deal carries little military meaning and is most likely aimed at adding substance to a weakening Russia-Belarus alliance. Lukashenko also may use the deal to push the Kremlin for more aid, he said.

"When Russia demands that Belarus pays off its debts, Lukashenko may point at this deal and say: 'How can you talk about money with us who protect you?'" Golts told AP in a telephone interview.

The Kremlin has been a key sponsor of Lukashenko dubbed "Europe's last dictator" by the United States and the European Union for his relentless crackdown on dissent. But the Belarusian leader made efforts last year to improve relations with the West, releasing opposition activists and making other overtures.

Russia has backed Belarus with cheap energy supplies and loans, and the countries have a union agreement that envisages close political and economic ties.

Belarus' Soviet-style, centrally planned economy has been hard hit by the global financial crisis, and Lukashenko last year secured a \$2 billion loan from Russia as well as a deal for Russian natural gas at a lower price than what other ex-Soviet nations pay.

Russia said Tuesday it would consider Belarus' request for another \$3 billion or so in credit, but did not elaborate.

Western loans, however, could help reduce Belarus' dependence on Moscow. In a sign of improving ties between Belarus and the West, the International Monetary Fund last month approved a \$2.46 billion loan to Belarus. Belarusian officials also hope for a \$1 billion loan from the World Bank.

<http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2009/02/03/europe/EU-Russia-Belarus.php>

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Ria Novosti
3 February 2009

Czech Diplomat Hopes for Missile Shield Cooperation from Russia

MOSCOW, February 3 (RIA Novosti) - The Czech ambassador to Russia said on Tuesday that he believed Moscow would eventually cooperate with Washington and its European allies on a missile shield in Europe. Moscow has strongly opposed U.S. plans to deploy 10 interceptor missiles in Poland and a radar in the Czech Republic by 2013 as a threat to its security and nuclear deterrence. Washington says the defenses are needed to deter possible strikes from "rogue states" such as Iran. "We will see whether or not the new American administration continues with this program," Miroslav Kostelka said.

"However, I believe this project would not be so bad for the U.S., Europe or Russia. I think we can expect excellent cooperation between the U.S., the Czech Republic, Poland, as well as the whole of Europe and Russia because this [missile defense] network does not pose any threat," the diplomat added. The missile shield issue is likely to be on the agenda of any meeting between Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and Barack Obama on April 2 in London, on the sidelines of a G20 summit. Moscow recently expressed hope that U.S. President Barack Obama's administration would "take a break on the issue of missile defense ... and evaluate its effectiveness and cost efficiency."

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20090203/119951933.html>

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Wall Street Journal (Europe)
FEBRUARY 5, 2009

How Europe's Companies are Feeding Iran's Bomb

By BENJAMIN WEINTHAL

While the U.S. has ratcheted up its efforts to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear arms, the Islamic Republic is reaping a windfall from European companies. These firms' deals aid a regime that is bent on developing nuclear weapons and which financially supports the terror organizations Hamas and Hezbollah.

The Austrian oil giant OMV is itching to implement a €22 billion agreement signed in April 2007 to produce liquefied natural gas from Iran's South Pars gas field; at last May's annual shareholder meeting, Chief Executive Officer Wolfgang Ruttenstorfer said OMV was only waiting for "political change in the U.S.A." Raiffeisen Zentralbank, Austria's third-largest bank, is active in Iran and, according to a story by the Journal's Glenn Simpson last February, has absorbed the transactions of key European banks that shut down their operations in Iran. And in late January Paolo Scaroni, CEO of Italian energy corporation Eni SpA, told the Associated Press that his firm will continue to fulfill its contractual obligations in Iran and feels no external pressure to sever ties with Iran's energy sector.

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Yet because of the sheer volume of its trade with Iran, Germany, the economic engine of Europe, is uniquely positioned to pressure Tehran. Still, the obvious danger of a nuclear-armed Iran has not stopped Germany from rewarding the country with a roughly €4 billion trade relationship in 2008, thereby remaining Iran's most important European trade partner. In the period of January to November 2008, German exports to Iran grew by 10.5% over the same period in 2007. That booming trade last year included 39 "dual-use" contracts with Iran, according to Germany's export-control office. Dual-use equipment and technology can be used for both military and civilian purposes.

One example of Germany's dysfunctional Iran policy is the energy and engineering giant Siemens. The company acknowledged last week at its annual stockholder meeting in Munich, which I attended, that it conducted €438 million in trade with Iran in 2008, and that its 290 Iran-based employees will remain active in the gas, oil, infrastructure and communications sectors.

Concerned stockholders and representatives from the political organization Stop the Bomb, a broad-based coalition in Germany and Austria seeking to prevent Iran from building a nuclear-weapons program, peppered Siemens CEO Peter Löscher with questions about the corporation's dealings with the Iranian regime. A Stop the Bomb spokesman questioned Siemens's willingness to conduct business with a country known for its human- and labor-rights violations, ranging from the violent oppression of women to the murder of gays to the repression of religious and ethnic minority groups. The spokesman referred to Siemens's Nazi-era history as an employer of forced labor from the Auschwitz extermination camp and asked how, in light of the corporation's Nazi history, the company could support an "anti-Semitic and terrorist regime" that threatens to wipe Israel off the map.

Mr. Löscher replied to the 9,500 stockholders in Olympic Hall that, "For Siemens, compliance and ethics have the highest priority, including where human-rights issues are involved." Yet, after further questions from the Stop the Bomb spokesman, he acknowledged that Siemens and its joint partner, Nokia, had delivered state-of-the-art communications surveillance technology to Iran last spring.

Information-technology experts say that the companies' "monitoring centers" are used to track mobile and land-line telephone conversations, and that their "intelligence platform" systems allow the Iranian secret service to track financial transactions and airplane movements. The technologies could also be used to monitor persecuted minority and dissident groups in Iran.

Siemens, the largest German trade partner of Iran, represents a window onto an opulent economic partnership between the two countries. German firms such as Mercedes-Benz, whose Web site lists an Iranian general distributor, and insurance giant Munich Re have also remained indifferent to the growing calls to isolate Iran economically. Yesterday, a Munich Re spokesman confirmed to me that the company insures goods in transit to Iran. This was the first such public disclosure by the firm.

And the deals just keep on coming. The Hannoversche Allgemeine newspaper, for example, reported in late January that the German engineering firm Aerzen secured a contract totaling €21 million to supply process gas blowers and screw-type compressors to a steel factory in Esfahan, Iran.

All of this is taking place while Iran is moving at an astonishing pace to process high-grade uranium for its atomic bomb. Iran's launch of its first domestically produced satellite on Tuesday prompted an alarmed French Foreign Ministry spokesman Eric Chevallier to underscore the link between Iran's military nuclear capability and its compatibility with the satellite technology.

Trade and security experts assert that Iran cannot easily replace high-tech German engineering technology with that from competitor nations such as China and Russia. The hollow pleas by Chancellor Angela Merkel, who favors a policy of moral pressure to convince corporations to be "sensitive" about cutting new deals with the regime in Tehran, did not prevent her administration from approving over 2,800 commercial deals with Iran in 2008.

Transparency is badly needed in this area. The German Federal Office of Economics and Export Control (BAFA) refuses to disclose the nature of these agreements. Economics Minister Michael Glos, who oversees BAFA and is considered an advocate of trade with Iran, should reveal the names of the firms commencing trade with a country that sponsors terror organizations such as Hezbollah and Hamas. The German firms are hiding behind a wall of nondisclosure to avoid being blacklisted on the U.S. market.

The Merkel administration heavily subsidizes investments in Iran by providing German firms with €250 million in credit guarantees. A day before the International Holocaust Remembrance Day on Jan. 27, the German business daily Handelsblatt reported that Berlin intended to discontinue all credit guarantees supporting trade with Iran. After the report was picked up by the major media, Mrs. Merkel's spokesman quietly denied that the government had canceled the credit guarantees. This suggests that Berlin cynically leaked the story to Handelsblatt to polish its international image and repair strained relations with Israel, a country whose security Chancellor Merkel has deemed "nonnegotiable" for Germany.

There are other signs that Germany's political elites consider Iran just another trading partner. Former Chancellor Gerhard Schröder is scheduled to visit Iran in late February, just after 10 days of celebrations in the country honoring Ayatollah Khomeini and the radical Islamic state he ushered in 30 years ago. Mr. Schröder, who plans to attend the dedication of a foundation for supporting scientific research and has opposed the imposition of sanctions on the Iranian regime, surely will not use the opportunity to criticize Germany's booming trade relationship with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

In short, while Berlin claims it wants to discourage Iran from building a nuclear bomb, it has so far done little to actually stop the bomb. German legislation prohibiting trade with Iran, coupled with an immediate cessation of credit guarantees, would decisively setback, if not stop, Iran's nuclear weapons program and set an invaluable example for other EU countries to adapt for their own companies.

Mr. Weinthal is the Jerusalem Post's correspondent in Berlin.

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The Middle East Times
February 04, 2009

What does Iran Need from Obama?

By ANTHONY ZEITOUNI

An Iranian woman holds a picture of Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei as she attends a demonstration at Tehran university in Tehran on Feb. 2. The U.S. president should send a letter offering warm relations to Khamenei and his people. The hard-line standpoint of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran in response to diplomatic overture from the U.S. administration of Barack Obama makes me fear what Ahmadinejad really does need from Obama and from America. In his most recent speech reacting to President Obama's call for the Iranians to "unclench their fist," Ahmadinejad called for the United States "to apologize" to the Iranian people "and to try to repair their past bad acts and the crimes they committed against Iran" and "stop supporting the Zionists, outlaws and criminals." In addition, the United States "should withdraw its troops from conflict zones around the world."

He insisted that this is the "fundamental" change in policy that the U.S. president needs to show if he wants to improve relations with Iran. If these statements are his bottom line, Ahmadinejad does not want to understand any action taken by America. Was the Iranian president confused when he said this? I think Ahmadinejad was talking to his fellow citizens and opening his candidacy for presidential elections by choosing a harsh and extremist theme for his campaign. As a former Iranian senior reformist recently told me in confidence: "Nobody listens to him in Iran," because "Ahmadinejad is living in a different world."

In his latest speech, celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, the Iranian president said, "The Islamic Revolution happened in Iran, but it is not limited to Iranian borders." The people of Iran are suffering from an economic crisis. Iran has a relatively low standard of living compared to some of its more prosperous neighbors. Iran's regime failed to set up a good and stable standard of living for the people during the past 30 years.

Meanwhile, Ahmadinejad lists his conditions for the Obama administration. The future of Iran's Islamic Revolution should be to provide for the people, not to sell them the controversial wishful thinking of Ahmadinejad. In a remarkable break with George W. Bush's policy; Obama seeks to engage Iran and to deal with Tehran directly. Susan Rice, the new U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, has said that the Obama administration will engage in "direct diplomacy" with Iran.

German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier welcomed the change by saying that "Obama has reached out his hand and shown readiness for direct talks with Iran." Steinmeier, who will host an official P-5 plus one meeting in Frankfurt this week to discuss Iran, hopes that "the Iranian leadership does not reject Obama's extended hand." Now, what is the best way for Obama to talk directly with Tehran? Giving that we are five months from the June elections in Iran, any action or outreach to be taken before elections should consider avoiding accidentally boosting Ahmadinejad's chances over more moderate leaders.

A direct letter from Obama to Iranian leaders and the people would be a good start. A clear American message, aimed at unfreezing U.S.-Iranian relations and opening the way for face-to-face talks, would be a symbolic gesture marking a change of tone toward Iran. In this address, Obama should give his assurance to the Iranian people that Washington does not want to destroy the Islamic regime, but rather, he simply seeks to alter its behavior. This letter should be directed to Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and his people, not just Ahmadinejad and his conservative allies. Obama can and should create a discussion inside the Iranian regime. "America" is a huge topic of debate in Iran's presidential elections. The Obama administration needs to act responsibly in the hope that the Iranian people see America's change and create their own change.

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http://www.metimes.com/Opinion/2009/02/04/what_does_iran_need_from_obama/2690/

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International Herald Tribune
Wednesday, February 4, 2009

Iran's Missiles: Don't go Ballistic

By Dinshaw Mistry and Charles D. Ferguson

Iran demonstrated its growing missile capabilities on Tuesday when it launched a satellite into orbit. But this should not force Europe and the United States to rush decisions on deploying a missile defense system in Europe.

Instead, a prudent assessment of Iran's missiles, and the important difference between its long-range and medium-range missile capabilities, should determine the best missile defense response.

The Bush administration sought to place 10 missile interceptors in Poland in order to defend both Europe and the United States against potential Iranian missile attacks. During the presidential campaign, Barack Obama supported missile defenses in Europe if they were proven to work.

But beyond just working, interceptors should be deployed in a way that offers the best defense against Iran's long-range and medium-range missiles.

Tehran has not yet tested long-range missiles that can strike the United States. In theory, by 2012 to 2015, when the interceptors were scheduled to be deployed in Poland, Tehran could build a few intercontinental missiles - perhaps derived from North Korea's Taepodong-2 missile - that can reach the United States. The 10 interceptors in Poland would be sufficient, but not entirely necessary, to tackle this threat, because interceptors in Alaska can also counter these missiles.

By contrast, Tehran has built dozens of short-range and medium-range single-stage missiles that can reach neighboring states and Israel. Tehran's satellite launching rocket is probably derived from these medium-range missiles, and demonstrates that Iran can now build two-stage missiles. Such multiple stage missiles would be capable of striking Europe, and Tehran could build many of these missiles in the next decade. This large number of medium-range missiles would overwhelm the 10 interceptors in Poland.

To counter this, Washington would have to place a larger number of interceptors in Poland, but this would begin to undermine Russia's nuclear deterrent, straining ties with Moscow.

Thus a different missile defense architecture for Europe, with interceptors in Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania or Albania (which would not undermine Moscow's deterrent), combined with interceptors based on Aegis-equipped warships in the Mediterranean Sea, would likely provide a better way to counter any future Iranian missile threat to Europe.

The United States, Russia and other European states should also pursue diplomatic options.

An arms control dialogue that secures an Iranian pledge to renounce building and testing new missiles would considerably reduce this threat. Flight test bans, for example, can be easily monitored. Monitoring capabilities such as the Azeri radar station would help.

In June 2007, U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates welcomed then-Russian President Vladimir Putin's offer to use this station. Any Iranian satellite launches could also be monitored to affirm that they are only derived from medium-range missiles rather than from any new long-range missile.

The new U.S. administration has an opportunity to take a new approach with Russia on missiles and missile defense. Though Russia was said to have backed down last week from threatening Poland with short-range missiles, the Russian Foreign Ministry quickly declared that deployment is still linked to whether the U.S. deploys interceptors in Poland.

Washington should not let Moscow's threats dictate U.S. missile-defense plans. Rather, the Obama administration should thoroughly assess ballistic missile proliferation as it plans missile defense responses, and should consider missile defense cooperation with Moscow based on mutual interests to counter real missile threats.

Dinshaw Mistry is an associate professor at the University of Cincinnati and author of "Containing Missile Proliferation." Charles D. Ferguson is a senior fellow for science and technology at the Council on Foreign Relations.

<http://www.iht.com/articles/2009/02/04/opinion/edmistry.php>

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Deutsche Welle
4 February 2009

Iran's New Missiles Add to Europe's Nuclear Worries

Iran alarmed the international community this week by using newly-developed missile technology to launch a satellite into space. Envoys from six countries are meeting in Germany on Wednesday to plan a response.

Envoys from six major powers are finding themselves confronted by a new twist in their attempt to get Iran to drop its nuclear weapons program: Iran has already developed the technology it would need to launch long-range missiles at Israel or southern Europe despite United Nations sanctions.

Iran announced on Tuesday, Feb. 3, that it had launched a rocket-propelled satellite into space, causing alarm on both sides of the Atlantic. "In the case of Iran, one of the biggest concerns we've always had is that any country that can put a satellite into orbit has thereby demonstrated that they can send a nuclear weapon to intercontinental distances," Rick Lehner, a spokesman of the US Missile Defense Agency, told AFP.

Countries sharpen criticism of Iran

Officials reacted by threatening more sanctions and even military action, if necessary. Iran is already under three sets of UN sanctions over its nuclear program. But that apparently has not stopped the country from developing its rocket technology and many experts fear Iran is similarly increasing its nuclear capabilities.

White House press secretary Robert Gibbs said the satellite launch "does not convince us that Iran is acting responsibly to advance stability or security in the region."

The United States, he added ominously, has pledged to use "all elements of our national power to deal with Iran."

If Iran's reports of the launch were correct it would be a "worrying development and a disturbing sign," Germany's Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier warned Tuesday as he met with his counterpart Hillary Clinton in Washington.

The West suspects Iran of wanting enriched uranium to build a nuclear weapon, a charge Tehran denies, claiming its nuclear work is for peaceful energy purposes.

A blow for diplomacy

"We have been trying for years to stop Iran from developing its own nuclear program and its own nuclear weapons. So far we have not succeeded," Steinmeier said. Yet finding a way forward will not be easy. The timing couldn't have been worse for Western allies hoping to start a dialogue with Iran on nuclear issues.

The announcement of the satellite launch came just a day before a long-planned meeting of senior diplomats from United States, Britain, Germany, France, China and Russia. They are in Frankfurt Wednesday to discuss Iran's nuclear program.

And the launch came less than a week before an important international security conference in Munich where many had hoped that the United States would talk directly to Iran, something which has not happened in 30 years. While President Obama had signaled his willingness to support direct diplomacy with Iran over the nuclear issue, if Tehran does not abide by UN resolutions "there must be consequences," Clinton said Tuesday.

A technology leap

The technology for launching satellites "is very similar to ballistic (missile) capabilities," said French foreign ministry spokesman Eric Chevallier. "We can't but link this to the very serious concerns about the development of military nuclear capability," Chevallier told reporters. Experts agree that the launch was a way for Iran to show off its rocket technology.

"In the face of world opposition and sanctions, Iran has joined a very exclusive club: those countries that have managed to orbit a satellite," Geoffrey Forden, research associate at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, wrote on armscontrolwonk.com.

Based on data released by the US space agency NASA and reports from amateur observers, Forden said it appeared the satellite was successfully sent into a relatively low orbit. But not all rocket technology is created equal. It remains unclear if Iran used a three-stage rocket similar to Soviet-era Scud missiles or if it had developed a two-stage rocket, Forden told reporters. Forden said some amateur observers believe Iran used a two-stage rocket, although there is no official confirmation.

One unnamed US official who works in national security told reporters that he did not find the satellite launch overly alarming. "It's certainly something to keep an eye on but it's not ringing any alarm bells," said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "Satellite technology is not new, and there are different levels of sophistication and I wouldn't put this in the category of advanced satellite technology at all," the official said.

Europe, Israel threatened

If Iran has long-range rockets, it means that the country could theoretically hit Israel or southeast Europe, experts say. "If it was a two-stage missile then they had a huge jump in technology and that would be very scary," MIT's Forden said. Israel's Defense Minister Ehud Barak said that any diplomacy between the US and Iran must be limited in time and backed up by "harsh sanctions and readiness to take action," if needed.

Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad reacted defiantly to the suggestion that the satellite launch served military goals, saying it carried a message of "peace and brotherhood" to the world. "This is a scientific and technical achievement and has no military aims," foreign ministry spokesman Hassan Ghashghavi told reporters.

<http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,4001129,00.html>

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Telegraph.co.uk
03 February 2009

Iran Looks Hostile

Telegraph View

The Iranian regime yesterday claimed it had successfully launched the country's first domestically built satellite into space. The very fact it saw fit to make the announcement to coincide with the Islamic revolution's 30th anniversary,

which is being celebrated nationwide, should be taken as a declaration of Tehran's intent to acquire the most sophisticated missile technology.

An element of doubt arises because Iran made a similar announcement last year, and the launch was later found to have been a failure. Even so, Tehran's claim that it has put its Omid satellite into orbit should raise concerns about the regime's ultimate objectives. Launching a satellite involves fixing a spherical object to the head of an advanced missile system, a procedure that is not dissimilar to launching an atom bomb, which also happens to be spherical in shape.

Apart from devoting much energy to the country's controversial uranium enrichment programme, which experts believe will soon give it the capability to build an atom bomb, Iran has also invested heavily in developing a potential delivery system for a nuclear weapon – were it ever to decide to build such a device.

Tehran insists Iran's intentions are peaceful. But the West has grave fears about its real motives. President Barack Obama has made an open appeal to Iran to unclench its fist and enter a new era in American-Iranian relations, a subject that was inevitably at the top of the agenda yesterday when David Miliband, the Foreign Secretary, had his first face-to-face meeting with Hillary Clinton, the new American secretary of state. But it is hard to imagine how this new beginning can be achieved so long as Tehran maintains its attitude of defiance.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/telegraph-view/4450735/Iran-looks-hostile.html>

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Tehran Times
Wednesday, 4 February 2009

Iranian Stealth Fighter will take to the Sky in Summer: Commander

Tehran Times Political Desk

TEHRAN – Iran's new stealth fighter will make its maiden test flight by the end of summer 2009, the commander of the Iranian Air Force stated on Tuesday. Hassan Shah-Safi told reporters on the sidelines of a conference on military industrial research in Tehran that military experts are now working on the project.

Asked on the number of Azarakhsh and Saegheh jet fighters produced, he said the Defense Ministry will produce these planes as much as needed. He also pointed out that Iran is currently attempting to increase the range of the air-to-air heat-seeking missile it has successfully tested.

http://www.tehrantimes.com/Index_view.asp?code=188509

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Washington Times
February 5, 2009
Pg. B1

Inside The Ring

By Bill Gertz

Al Qaeda hurt

U.S. intelligence analysts are putting the finishing touches on the annual threat briefing for Congress that will report that the al Qaeda terrorist group remains dangerous but is no longer the same organization that so devastatingly attacked the United States nearly eight years ago. The annual briefings to the House and Senate intelligence committees on the national security threats facing the country will be presented in testimony by the new director of national intelligence, Dennis Blair, and other intelligence leaders in the next several weeks.

According to U.S. officials, the briefing will reveal that al Qaeda has been damaged by U.S. military and intelligence operations, including the capture and killing of many of its leaders and the pursuit of those remaining. "Al Qaeda is hurt and hurt badly," said one intelligence official familiar with national security reports. "But it is still out there." He spoke on the condition that he not be named because of the sensitivity of the topic.

Intelligence agencies do not have detailed knowledge of al Qaeda plans for mass casualty attacks. The terrorist organization is far less centralized today than when it held large swaths of territory in Afghanistan before the U.S. military intervened there in October 2001 and toppled the Taliban government. The main redoubt for the group remains in small areas of Pakistan's ungoverned border regions. Other bases are in Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Somalia and the North African desert.

Other strategic threats remain in Iran, where nuclear "breakout" could occur; in Iraq, where a fragile stability is emerging; and in Afghanistan, where a major troop surge is planned to deal with a resurgent Taliban. North Korea also remains high on the threat list with indications that the regime in Pyongyang could carry out a series of saber-rattling missile tests, or even a second nuclear test, this year.

One new threat to be discussed in the briefing will be the deadly drug wars in Mexico that last year claimed more than 6,700 lives, and the rise of leftist, anti-U.S. regimes in South America. China's military buildup and the failure of the Beijing government to explain the buildup's goal will be addressed, along with the prospect that China is facing numerous domestic problems that could be heightened by the global economic recession. Intelligence leaders also are expected to address the impact of climate change, which is a major preoccupation for the Obama administration and many governments around the world.

Iran missile threat

The Pentagon regards Iran's launch Tuesday of its first satellite as a troubling development that is increasing the threat of Tehran's long-range missile program. "This is obviously a cause for real concern," Pentagon press secretary Geoff Morrell told Inside the Ring. "Not just for us but for our allies. The fact is that the technology used to get this satellite into space is dual-purpose technology that can also be used to advance their ballistic missile program and in particular their long-range ballistic missiles."

Iran's leaders have stated that they plan to develop intercontinental ballistic missiles, but so far, most of their long-range missile tests have been failures, Mr. Morrell said. "But they are clearly determined to develop that capability," he said. Iran's missile programs "represent a real threat to certainly everyone in the region and certainly to Europe," he said. The satellite launch indicates that the threat from Iran's missiles "may be growing," he noted.

Mr. Morrell said that in response to Iran's space and missile program, the United States is developing defenses and also continuing to try to deter Iran from building long-range missiles. "A space launch may seem innocent enough, but not when it is done by a country with designs on a long-range ballistic missile that threatens its neighbors," he said. Although the technology used by Iran appears to be relatively unsophisticated, Mr. Morrell said the real danger is that the technology used to launch the satellite can easily be used to develop more capable and longer-range ballistic missiles.

The satellite launch also could build momentum for a third U.S. missile-defense interceptor site in Poland and Czech Republic, although the Obama administration has not made its intentions regarding missile defense clear. "NATO has unanimously endorsed the development of a third site in Europe, and we continue to work with the Czechs and the Poles in bringing that to life," Mr. Morrell said.

Rick Lehner of the Pentagon's Missile Defense Agency said some experts who sought to play down the significance of the satellite launch missed the point of the Safir-2 rocket launch. "The fact that Iran can demonstrate rocket motor staging for acceleration and increased range; guidance and control; solid propellant and payload deployment represents a technological leap that is of great concern, since they can grow an ICBM capability from the Safir-2 technology," he said.

Chinese spy ring

A new book on the Chi Mak spy case presents new information on the case of a family ring that provided defense information to China. "Snake Fish: The Chi Mak Spy Ring," by lawyer and intelligence specialist Edward M. Roche, is based on trial documents and other records. It discloses that during the Mak trial, the FBI produced a translation of a letter written by Gu Wei Hao, an agent of the Chinese Ministry of Aviation, to former Boeing engineer Greg Chung, asking Mr. Chung to collect data on commercial airliners and the U.S. space shuttle and give the information to Chi Mak, who would then send it to China.

According to the book, Mr. Gu was related to Chi Mak's wife and supplied her with letters to Mak, who was convicted in May 2007 of conspiracy to provide China with embargoed defense technology and is serving a 24-year prison term. Mr. Chung, a naturalized U.S. citizen from China, was arrested in February 2008 and charged with economic espionage for China. His trial is scheduled for May in Southern California.

"By making linkages between the work of Chung at Boeing and the aerospace documents found at Chi Mak's house, the prosecution had confirmed an important linkage in their theory of the espionage ring," Mr. Roche stated. "The perception given to the jury no doubt was that Chi Mak was acting as a conduit for aerospace information flowing from the United States to China." Another detail disclosed in the book is that the U.S. government may have detected a 2004 telephone call inside China from Mak to his Chinese handler, Pu Pei Liang, who was identified in the book as a Chinese intelligence official. Mr. Roche stated that the phone call was used by prosecutors to bolster the conspiracy charges against Mak, his brother and three other family members.

The book also states that prosecutors suspected, but could not prove, that Mak passed classified information to China about the Navy's next generation destroyer, called the DDX. "A DDX document which contained detailed specifications about the DDX destroyer was found encrypted and deleted on Tai Mak's computer," he wrote. Tai Mak is Chi Mak's brother and pleaded guilty to conspiracy to violate export law as part of the ring. A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman, Liu Jianchao, told reporters in Beijing last year that the spying charges against Mr. Chung were "baseless" and the result of the U.S. government's "Cold War thinking."

China export agreement

The Commerce Department's Bureau of Industry and Security last month concluded an agreement with the Chinese government that will ease U.S. export controls on strategic goods to China. The agreement implementing the so-called Validated End-User program makes it easier for five companies with joint Chinese and foreign ownership in China to obtain militarily useful technology from the United States. "We are pleased to have reached this milestone agreement with China, one of our nation's most important trading partners," said outgoing Undersecretary of Commerce Mario Mancuso in a Jan. 13 statement, adding that the agreement aims to "streamline" exports by eliminating licensing requirements for the five companies. The easing of controls comes at a time when U.S. security agencies say China's efforts to covertly obtain U.S. technology with military applications is at an all-time high.

A counterintelligence report on foreign economic espionage stated that China was one of the main collectors involved in some of the 2,600 export-control investigations carried out in 2007. Chinese technology theft cases included the targeting of U.S. night-vision technology, warship information, microwave circuits and radar know-how. The Commerce Department had threatened to end the Validated End User program last month because China had refused to permit on-site inspections of the companies involved. According to a U.S. government official close to the issue, Commerce officials acceded to Chinese demands. A Commerce Department official could not be reached for comment. Two of the five companies were linked in the past to illicit Chinese technology acquisition, according to report by the private Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control.

"This program was ill-conceived and badly administered, and for it to be rescued now by the Commerce Department, there would have to be a lot more safeguards and assurances from the Chinese than we probably received," said Gary Milhollin, director of the Wisconsin Project and a critic of the program. A Chinese Embassy spokesman has said that easing export controls on China through the end-user program is in the mutual interest of both countries.

Bill Gertz covers national security affairs.

<http://washingtontimes.com/news/2009/feb/05/inside-the-ring-1050494/>

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