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Articles & Other Documents:

[U.S. Ahead of Moscow Treaty Schedule in Reducing its Nuclear Arsenal](#)

[Maintain Nuclear Deterrence](#)

[A Recipe for Survival](#)

[Biden to Take up Rudd's Nuclear Arms Push](#)

[U.S. Envoy Indicates Flexibility with Russia on Missile Defense](#)

[Obama Administration Takes Softer Stance on Missile Defense System in Czech Republic](#)

[North Korean Leader Empowers Army Confidants Ahead of Power Succession, Nuclear Maneuvers: Observers](#)

[Clinton Offers North Korea A Peace Map](#)

[Clinton, Heading Abroad, Takes Softer Tone on North Korea](#)

[N. Korea Dismisses Rumors of Upcoming Ballistic Missile Test](#)

[North Korea Threatens Missile Test](#)

[Clinton Criticizes Bush on N. Korea](#)

[Nuclear Submarines Collide in Atlantic](#)

[French Sub Unaware It Rammed Royal Navy Vessel in Mid-Atlantic Nuclear Crash](#)

[British and French Nuclear Submarine Collision 'As Serious as Sinking of Kursk'](#)

[Did France's Secrecy Cause a Nuclear Submarine Collision?](#)

[From New DNI, Moderate View on North Korea and Warning About Iran's Role in Afghanistan](#)

[Casey, Burr Form New Caucus on WMD Terrorism](#)

[Device Kills Biohazards from Letters](#)

[Iran Will Never Give In to the US](#)

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Washington Post
February 13, 2009

U.S. Ahead of Moscow Treaty Schedule in Reducing its Nuclear Arsenal

By Walter Pincus

The United States is more than two years ahead of the schedule set under the Moscow Treaty in reducing the number of its nuclear warheads operationally deployed on strategic missiles and bombers, according to congressional and administration sources.

There are fewer than 2,200 deployed warheads, the goal originally set to be reached by Dec. 31, 2012.

"The reduction was initially planned to be met in 2012, then 2010, but was achieved a few days ago," said Hans Kristensen, director of the nuclear information project of the Federation of American Scientists, who first disclosed the information on his Web site.

While not giving the exact number of deployed warheads, Rep. Ellen O. Tauscher (D-Calif.), chairman of the House Armed Services subcommittee on strategic forces, said Wednesday, "We are in compliance with the Moscow Treaty." She said reaching that goal early could support an effort by the Obama administration to get the Russians to go to even lower levels.

The total U.S. nuclear stockpile remains above 5,000 warheads, with the majority held in strategic reserve but available for deployment if necessary. There are probably 3,000 to 4,000 more warheads in storage awaiting dismantling, according to Kristensen.

Tauscher noted that the weakness of the 2002 Moscow Treaty was that while it limited the number of operationally deployed warheads, it left out those not connected to delivery systems and in storage. She said she expects the United States to push for improvements in the Moscow agreement. "We need to broaden the definitions and work with the Russians to account for everything," she said.

Kristensen said modest reductions in deployed warheads that began during the Clinton administration were expanded under President George W. Bush. "In the past four years, they have overhauled the strategic war plan," he said. "Strategic Command believes it can adequately meet the White House guidance with far less weapons."

Some experts think the Bush administration does not get enough credit for the reductions it has made in nuclear weapons. Robert S. Norris, a senior research associate at the Natural Resources Defense Fund, said yesterday, "It is little appreciated or known that the two Bush presidencies have gotten rid of three-quarters of the U.S. nuclear stockpile."

According to Norris, the United States had about 22,000 strategic and tactical nuclear warheads at the end of the Cold War. In 1991, President George H.W. Bush ordered the withdrawal of all tactical weapons and signed the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), cutting the total to approximately 11,000. "His son cut it in half again by the end of his administration," Norris said, "and this will be the baseline for further reductions during the Obama administration."

As the Bush administration was reducing deployed warheads, it was pressing Congress to approve funding for development of a new warhead under the Reliable Replacement Warhead program. The RRW was to be based on an old, tested design with no new testing needed before being deployed. It was to be more secure and reliable over the next decade than today's aging Cold War nuclear warheads, even those that had been refurbished. Congress, however, eliminated funding for the RRW in fiscal 2009, with members saying they would await results of the Obama administration's nuclear posture review.

Meanwhile, the Obama administration has proposed an aggressive arms-control agenda that includes reductions in nuclear weapons, Senate ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and renewal of the verification procedures of START, which run out at the end of the year.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/02/12/AR2009021203497.html>

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

Washington Times
LETTER TO EDITOR
February 13, 2009

Maintain Nuclear Deterrence

I am responding to the article "Air Force fails new nuclear reviews" (Page 1, Feb. 4). Nuclear deterrence is the foundation of our nation's security. The Minuteman intercontinental-ballistic-missile (ICBM) force is a critical part of that deterrence. Deployed across almost 35,000 square miles of the Great Plains, the missiles are operated, secured, maintained and sustained every minute of every day by almost 10,000 dedicated airmen. These airmen understand the awesome responsibility that comes with the nuclear-deterrence mission, and they accomplish their mission with great skill and professionalism.

As the reporter correctly pointed out, a number of disturbing incidents have caused us to re-examine every aspect of our nuclear mission. As a result, we are aggressively finding and fixing problems. Inspections are among the tools our commanders use both to identify problems and to see where we're making solid progress. The most recent inspections have shown us that we still have work to do; they also have shown us that our nuclear-deterrent force is safe, secure and fully capable of performing its mission.

Perfection is our standard. The demand for focus, attention to detail, discipline and dedication to the highest principles and standards surrounding nuclear weapons has not changed for the past 50 years. We make no excuses for the problems we have had. The U.S. Air Force is absolutely committed to restoring our nuclear enterprise as our top priority and will use tough inspections to help us do just that. We have had inspection failures in the past and likely will have them in the future. In the meantime, we will strive for perfection while we provide the responsive deterrent force America demands.

GEN. C. ROBERT KEHLER, U.S. Air Force, Commander, Air Force Space Command, Peterson Air Force Base, Colo.

Editor's Note: The article by Bill Gertz appeared in the *Current News Early Bird*, Feb. 4, 2009.

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/feb/13/maintain-nuclear-deterrence/>

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

International Herald Tribune
OPINION
Monday, February 16, 2009

A Recipe for Survival

By Mohamed ElBaradei

After two mostly wasted decades since the end of the Cold War, nuclear disarmament is again high on the international agenda.

President Obama has pledged to seek a world free of nuclear weapons - a legal commitment under the Non-Proliferation Treaty - and, as a first step, to negotiate further cuts in nuclear stockpiles with Russia. These two countries combined hold 95 percent of the world's nuclear arsenal.

Former statesmen are getting together to demand the scrapping of all nuclear weapons. After eight years in which arms control was not a priority for the United States, the fog has lifted. The challenge now is how to ensure that this new enthusiasm does not fizzle out.

The change of heart has been motivated not just by idealism but by a sober realization that the risk of nuclear weapons being used is increasing significantly.

Next time, the culprit could well be a terrorist group for whom the concept of deterrence, which helped the world until now to escape a nuclear Armageddon, is irrelevant.

The nonproliferation regime is starting to come apart at the seams. Sensitive technology thought to be the preserve of a few advanced countries has recently been acquired with alarming ease by others. Possession of nuclear weapons is still seen as conferring prestige and providing an insurance policy against attack, as Iraq and North Korea seem to demonstrate.

Nuclear weapon states, which between them have some 27,000 warheads, reinforce this message by modernizing their nuclear arsenals. To make matters worse, countries that master uranium enrichment can have a bomb within months if they so decide.

Fortunately, there is now an emerging consensus on what could and should be done:

- Bring the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty into force and ban the development of new nuclear weapons;
- Initiate negotiations on a verifiable Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty that would ban the production of material for nuclear weapons;
- Negotiate a successor for the START treaty between Russia and the United States, which expires this year, containing significant, verifiable cuts in their nuclear warheads. An initial target could be to cut to 1,000 or even 500 warheads on each side;
- Extend the warning time for possible nuclear attack. As an insane relic of the Cold War, Russian and United States leaders may have no more than 30 minutes to respond to an apparent attack that could be the result of computer error or unauthorized use;
- Develop a mechanism to put all facilities for enriching uranium and reprocessing plutonium under multinational control. This would give countries guaranteed supplies of fuel for peaceful nuclear power but not access to the material needed to build a weapon;
- Give the International Atomic Energy Agency sufficient legal authority, technological capabilities and resources to credibly verify the disarmament process and to ensure that non-nuclear-weapon states use nuclear energy exclusively for peaceful purposes. The IAEA and the Security Council together must be able to effectively deter, detect and respond to possible proliferation cheats;
- Radically improve the physical security of nuclear materials.

Recent statements by the Obama administration give us hope that some of these measures can be adopted quickly. However, the deep-rooted causes of the insecurity that have plagued the world for decades need to be addressed simultaneously if durable security is to be attained.

First, poverty and inequality. The links between poverty, repression and injustice, on the one hand, and extremism and violence, on the other, are clear for all to see. We must learn to value all human life equally. Developed countries - quick to react when the lives of their own citizens are at stake - give the clear impression that they do not really care about the lives of the world's poor.

Second, festering conflicts. The Middle East, home to the world's most perilous and intractable conflict, will never be at peace until the Palestinian question is resolved. What compounds the problem is that the nuclear nonproliferation regime has lost its legitimacy in the eyes of Arab public opinion because of the perceived double-standards concerning Israel, the only state in the region outside the NPT and known to possess nuclear weapons.

Iraq and Libya are unlikely to be the last countries in the Middle East to be tempted to acquire nuclear weapons. Concerns about current and future nuclear programs in the region will persist until a lasting peace is achieved and all nuclear weapons in the area are eliminated as part of a regional security structure. The Obama administration's pledge to engage in direct diplomacy with Iran, without preconditions and on the basis of mutual respect, and to seek a grand bargain, is long overdue.

Third, the weakness of international institutions. The most pressing threats facing the world, such as weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, the global financial crisis and climate change, can only be addressed through collaborative global action.

For that we need multilateral institutions. We must overcome the cynicism that has too often characterized government attitudes to the UN. The UN and related agencies must be given adequate authority and funding and put in the hands of leaders who have vision, courage and credibility.

Above all, we need to halt the glaring breach of core principles of international law such as limitations on the unilateral use of force, proportionality in self-defense and the protection of civilians during hostilities in order to avoid a repeat of the civilian carnage in Iraq and, most recently, in Gaza.

A convincing response to these challenges requires a new system of security. The Security Council, often paralyzed and with its authority dwindling due to frequent discord, needs to be reformed to reflect the world of today and not of 1945. It should have a robust and well defined peacekeeping capability to prevent the massacre of innocent millions in places like Congo, Rwanda and Darfur. The Council should be systematically engaged in preventing and resolving conflicts, addressing root causes and not just symptoms.

Nuclear disarmament is key to our very survival. We now have another chance to create a saner, safer world by working to eliminate the nuclear sword of Damocles that hangs over all our heads. Let us not waste this opportunity.

Mohamed ElBaradei is director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

<http://www.iht.com/articles/2009/02/16/opinion/edelbaradei.php>

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

Sydney Morning Herald
February 16, 2009

Biden to Take up Rudd's Nuclear Arms Push

Anne Davies in Washington

AUSTRALIA'S initiative to drive a new round of nuclear disarmament talks has met a receptive ear in the Obama Administration, which is likely to give the running on the issue to the Vice-President, Joe Biden, Australia's chief negotiator on the issue, Gareth Evans, said on Saturday.

The Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, announced last year that he wanted Australia to lead the debate on reducing nuclear arsenals and ensuring that the new nuclear non-proliferation treaty, which is due to be renegotiated in 2010, had real teeth.

He appointed Mr Evans, a former foreign minister, to be co-chairman of the International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament, an Australian initiative that is being co-chaired by Japan.

After a shaky start, it seems likely that the Australian initiative will yield results under the new US Administration.

"We have a very serious level of buy-in," Mr Evans said after meetings in Washington on Friday and Saturday.

"I was sceptical that this was something Australia could offer in terms of influencing the issue. I am now completely persuaded that this commission is seen as potentially helpful in changing the terms of the international debate.

"I don't want to claim too much, but I think we have helped crystallise their thinking. We have high-level attention. This is a quite important visible role for Australia."

Mr Evans met Mr Biden, the National Security Adviser, Jim Jones, the Deputy Secretary of State, James Steinberg, and the chairman of the Senate foreign relations commission, John Kerry, to outline the commission's five-point strategy for reducing the nuclear threat.

After the meeting he said it was clear that "the President gets it" and that "we will have a much saner discussion about what needs to be done".

Mr Evans said that the Bush administration had been focused on non-proliferation in relation to North Korea and Iran and that focus was likely to continue under the new Administration. But he said the Obama Administration was likely to focus on what had been missing: "a serious good faith exercise" in demonstrating that the US was serious about reducing its own nuclear arsenal, a key part of the non-proliferation treaty.

In the 1980s, steps were taken under the START Treaty to reduce the number of nuclear warheads held by the two main nuclear powers, the US and the Soviet Union, to 6000 nuclear warheads and 1600 delivery missiles. But progress by the two nuclear powers, which account for more than 80 per cent of all nuclear warheads, stalled over the past decade. START is due to be renewed in December, offering a chance to tackle the nuclear issue anew.

One of the main problems facing the US in its insistence that countries such as Iran give up their nuclear ambitions is that both the US and Russia have failed to adhere to their part of the non-proliferation agreements by reducing their arsenals.

It is likely Mr Biden will take responsibility for the issue, a signal that it will be given a high priority in the Obama Administration.

Mr Evans said he believed Russia was also keen to make progress on disarmament and non-proliferation, although he acknowledged there were complicating factors, such as the US push to locate a missile defence system in Eastern Europe.

<http://www.smh.com.au/world/biden-to-take-up-rudds-nuclear-arms-push-20090215-884g.html>

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

Washington Post
February 14, 2009

U.S. Envoy Indicates Flexibility with Russia on Missile Defense

By Karen DeYoung

A more cooperative relationship with Russia that helps reduce the nuclear threat from Iran would be "one of the factors" influencing the Obama administration's decision on when and whether to install a missile defense system in eastern Europe, a senior U.S. diplomat said this week.

"The United States is quite open to the possibility of new forms of cooperation" on a defense shield, and is "interested in a thorough discussion of the whole range of security issues with Russia," Undersecretary of State William Burns said on a visit to Moscow.

"If through strong diplomacy with Russia and our other partners we can reduce or eliminate that threat, it obviously shapes the way at which we look at missile defense," Burns said.

His comments followed an offer last week by Vice President Biden to push a "reset button" on relations with Russia following a lengthy period of contention over missile defense and a range of other issues. In an interview with the Russian Interfax news agency at the end of his visit late Thursday, Burns, a former U.S. ambassador to Moscow, said the administration hopes to take advantage of "this moment of opportunity . . . to try to translate those good intentions and that positive rhetoric into practical progress."

An administration official in Washington called Burns's remarks, which were posted on the U.S. Embassy Web site in Moscow, "entirely consistent with the way we've been talking about missile defense and trying to engage the Russians. If we're able to work with the Russians to diminish the threat from Iran, we need to consider how to proceed with potential deployment of the systems."

Russia sharply protested agreements signed by the Bush administration to install missile defense components in Poland and the Czech Republic, charging that the program was a threat to its own security. Obama has said he is reviewing the Bush-initiated defense shield to determine if it is technologically feasible and affordable.

Burns extended the olive branch even further than Biden in the wide-ranging interview. He said President Obama is looking forward to what will be his first meeting with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev at a G-8 summit in London in early April, and that Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton will meet with her Russian counterpart "in the very near future," before the London summit.

Among the range of issues on which the United States was interested in cooperating with Russia, Burns mentioned nuclear proliferation, Afghanistan, global economic issues and "ways in which we can structure our relationship in ensuring that we work together more systematically."

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/02/13/AR2009021303179.html>

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

CharlotteObserver.com
February 14, 2009

Obama Administration Takes Softer Stance on Missile Defense System in Czech Republic

By Byron Asher, McClatchy Newspapers

PRAGUE, Czech Republic -- The Obama administration has begun to indicate that it's willing to reconsider the Bush administration's push to deploy a ballistic missile defense system in the Czech Republic and Poland - if Russia helps curb Iran's push to develop nuclear weapons.

Echoing Vice President Joe Biden, who said the new administration wants to push a "reset button" on U.S.-Russia relations, Undersecretary of State William Burns told the Interfax news agency in Moscow last week that, "The United States is quite open to the possibility of new forms of cooperation" with Moscow on missile defense, Iran and "the whole range of security issues with Russia." His remarks are posted on the Interfax Web site.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is to meet her Russian counterpart, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, in Geneva, Switzerland next month, paving the way for the first meeting between President Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev at the Group of Eight economic summit in London in early April.

The meetings come as concerns continue to mount about Iran's ballistic missile and nuclear enrichment programs, as Israeli hard-liners who consider Iran an existential threat gain ground and as Moscow grows more vocal about what it charges are U.S. encroachments on its spheres of influence in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. They also come, however, as falling oil prices and bad investments hammer the once high-flying Russian economy.

Treaties to approve the missile defense plans, which Russia opposes, were signed in 2008 in Prague and in Poland. Poland would be home to a missile interceptor base, and the Czech radar installation would be built about 50 miles from Prague.

Echoing doubts about the system, however, Biden and Clinton both said that technological and economic factors also might affect construction of the bases. Said Biden: "We will continue to develop missile defenses to counter a growing Iranian capability, provided the technology is proven to work and cost-effective."

While it's a secondary issue for the U.S., missile defense is one of the most important political issues for the Czech Republic, which two decades ago helped lead Eastern Europe's march from communism to democracy.

Cancelling the project just as Moscow has taken a more aggressive stance toward the former Soviet republics of Georgia and Ukraine would strain U.S. relations with the two East European countries that risked Moscow's wrath to accept it, and with others that also worry about a revanchist Russia.

"The potential U.S. missile defense European site is not just a dozen of anti-ballistic missiles and a radar," Russian First Deputy Prime Minister Sergey Ivanov said in Munich. "It is a part of the U.S. strategic infrastructure aimed at deterring Russia's nuclear missile potential."

The Bush administration argued that it wanted the radars and the missiles to deter and defend against an Iranian ballistic missile attack on the U.S. or the European Union, not as part of a plan to encircle and neutralize Russia.

Few Czechs, however, have bought that argument. Public opposition to the radar installation has hovered at around two-thirds of the citizenry since polling began in September 2006.

A new poll by the Czech-based Public Opinion Research Centre, released on February 11, found that 65 percent of Czech citizens oppose the base and 72 percent want a referendum on the subject. Moreover, the poll found, 77 percent of Czechs fear that the base could become the target of a military attack, and 67 percent are worried about a potential terrorist attack on it.

The Czech officials who brokered the 2008 deal with the Bush administration were warned that everything might change with the new administration, said Jiri Pehe, a political analyst and the director of New York University in Prague. Yet the Czechs ignored those warnings.

Jan Majcick, a spokesman for the No Bases Initiative, a Prague-based group opposed to the base, said that Czechs don't want to be associated with the aggressive American foreign policy of the last eight years.

Second, Majcick said, Czechs don't want foreign troops on their soil again, given the history of Nazi and Soviet occupation. Finally, he said, "Many people feel cheated" by the plans, which reportedly were in motion before 2006 parliamentary elections, but not announced to the public until afterward.

Byron Asher, a 2008 graduate of Brown University, is an intern with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty in Prague. He is the son of McClatchy Washington Bureau investigative editor James Asher.

<http://www.charlotteobserver.com/world/story/537987.html>

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

Siam Daily News
13 February, 2009

North Korean Leader Empowers Army Confidants Ahead of Power Succession, Nuclear Maneuvers: Observers

By Sam Kim

SEOUL, Feb. 12 (Yonhap) — North Korean leader Kim Jong-il appears to be expanding his country's military options and paving the way for power succession by promoting a loyal commander and his point man on nuclear weapons development, defense officials and experts said Thursday.

They also said the reshuffle, declared through the state media, is aimed at showing the world that Kim is in full control of his 1.2-million-strong — possibly nuclear-armed — military after a reported stroke last summer.

North Korea announced Wednesday that Kim Yong-chun, a ranking member of the National Defense Commission that controls the troops, was appointed as the communist state's defense minister.

Kim, 73, who led the North's joint chiefs of staff for nearly a decade until 2007, has been a key player in the country's nuclear weapons development, experts and defense ministry officials said.

Considered a hardliner who increased public appearances when relations between the Koreas turned tense, Kim has been rumored to openly back Kim Jong-il's second and third sons as successors.

"He understands his country's nuclear weapons from A to Z because he has long been in positions that required him to know how to incorporate those options in armed operations," Baek Seung-joo, chief analyst at the state-run Korea Institute for Defense Analyses, said.

North Korea conducted its first known atomic test in 2006. Despite a 2007 deal that promised a raft of economic and diplomatic benefits for its denuclearization, the North is refusing to accept a U.S. proposal aimed at inspecting its past nuclear programs.

The country retains a massive army despite a moribund economy, and is seen as preparing to test-fire a long-range missile in an effort to up the ante in its negotiations with the outside world.

North Korea also announced that General Ri Yong-ho, who had been in charge of the defense of Pyongyang, has taken over as chairman of the country's joint chiefs of staff.

South Korean officials and analysts generally declined to comment on the man believed to be in his early 60s because little information is available on him from the isolated state.

Yang Moon-soo, an analyst at the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul, said Ri could be Kim Jong-il's "insurance" against scenarios in which talks may falter with the new U.S. administration.

"The job of capital defense requires an outstanding grasp of tactical operations and abilities," Yang said. "Ri seems to have proved himself to Kim that he could well lead the armed forces if things go wrong with the U.S. and more saber-rattling is needed."

Yang added Ri's promotion could also be related to North Korea's increasing threats of an armed clash near the inter-Korean Yellow Sea border that Pyongyang has declared void.

Pyongyang said last month it was scrapping a non-aggression pact and other political deals with Seoul, accusing South Korean President Lee Myung-bak of pushing the peninsula to the "brink of war."

Baek cited internal politics to explain the appointment of Ri, whose meteoric rise up through the ranks over the past several years has been little less than remarkable.

Ri's presence among more than a thousand generals began to grow strong in 2006 when Kim's brother-in-law, Jang Song-thaek, re-emerged as a power elite, Baek said, adding it is "no coincidence."

Jang, 63, who married Kim's younger sister, was once reportedly purged, but stepped back into the North Korean political scene by accompanying the leader on his official visit to China that year.

He was even rumored to be a stand-in when Kim, who turns 67 next week, reportedly suffered a stroke last year. Baek said Ri could be Jang's pick as the leadership readies to engineer a power succession.

A South Korean official, who declined to be identified, said Ri is also a reasonable choice for Kim because he is rumored to have been a member of a group that helped Kim consolidate power after his father and North Korean founder, Kim Il-sung, died in 1994.

"If the rumor is true, Kim could depend on Ri again when he decides to transfer his power to one of his sons," the official said, noting Kim decided to appoint Ri even though his predecessor, Kim Kyok-sik, had served a little less than two years in the post.

South and North Korea remain in a technical state of war after the 1950-53 Korean War ended in a truce rather than a peace treaty.

<http://english.siamdailynews.com/asia-news/eastern-asia-news/korea-news/north-korea-news/north-korean-leader-empowers-army-confidants-ahead-of-power-succession-nuclear-maneuvers-observers.html>

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

Wall Street Journal
February 14, 2009

Clinton Offers North Korea a Peace Map

By Brenda Cronin

NEW YORK -- Secretary of State Hillary Clinton mapped out an ambitious foreign-policy objective for President Obama's administration, pledging aid to North Korea if Pyongyang agrees to abandon its nuclear program.

"If North Korea is genuinely prepared to completely and verifiably eliminate their nuclear-weapons program, the Obama administration will be willing to normalize bilateral relations and replace the peninsula's long-standing armistice agreement with a permanent peace treaty...", said Mrs. Clinton, in her first major foreign-policy address as secretary of state.

Mrs. Clinton gave her speech on the eve of her first trip abroad to Asia, which begins Sunday.

She will visit Japan, followed by Indonesia, South Korea and China. The global economic crisis, climate change and human rights will be on the agenda, Mrs. Clinton said.

In China, she said she will pursue a goal of a world "where Tibetans and all Chinese people can enjoy religious freedom without fear of prosecution." Mrs. Clinton also said the U.S. and China have an opportunity to work on clean-energy projects "that simultaneously protect the environment and promote economic growth."

Mrs. Clinton reserved her most pointed remarks for the matter of North Korea. She emphasized the new administration is committed to continuing six-party talks with Pyongyang. The collective negotiations -- by the U.S., China, Japan, Russia and South Korea -- aim to persuade North Korea to give up its pursuit of nuclear weapons in exchange for financial and other assistance.

While in Asia, Secretary Clinton said she will discuss with Japan, South Korea and China "how best to get the negotiations back on track.

"We believe we have an opportunity to move these discussions forward," she said in her remarks, at the Asia Society in New York.

Mrs. Clinton also signaled that Pyongyang will have to cease recent measures such as suspending military and economic pacts with Seoul, adding, "It is incumbent upon North Korea to avoid any provocative action and unhelpful rhetoric toward South Korea."

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123455277512784883.html?mod=rss_US_News

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

New York Times

February 16, 2009

Clinton, Heading Abroad, Takes Softer Tone on North Korea

By MARK LANDLER

ELMENDORF AIR FORCE BASE, Alaska — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, en route to Asia on her inaugural foreign trip, struck a conciliatory tone toward North Korea on Sunday, saying the United States would have a “great openness” to the country if it gave up its nuclear ambitions.

“Our position is when they move forward in presenting a verifiable and complete dismantling and denuclearization, we have a great openness to working with them,” Mrs. Clinton said on her plane heading to Tokyo, the first stop on a tour of Japan, Indonesia, South Korea and China.

“It’s not only on the diplomatic front,” she said, adding that the United States had a “willingness to help the people of North Korea, not just in narrow ways with food and fuel but with energy assistance.”

Mrs. Clinton’s words did not represent a shift in United States policy, which is to offer the North Korean government economic aid and other incentives for abandoning its nuclear weapons program. But her tone was notably softer than previous pronouncements by American officials.

At the same time, she said the North Korean government needed to be more forthcoming about “the human tragedy” of Japanese citizens who had been abducted by the North in the 1970s and 1980s.

As Mrs. Clinton departed Washington, North Korea was casting a shadow over a voyage that sought to build solidarity between the United States and Asia on issues like the global economic crisis and climate change.

North Korea has engaged in bellicose talk toward the South, and there were reports on Sunday that the North was preparing to test a long-range missile.

Mrs. Clinton played down suspicions, long held by some in the Bush administration, that North Korea has a clandestine program to produce highly enriched uranium. What is not in dispute, she said, is that North Korea has plutonium, which it is using to manufacture nuclear weapons.

In China, Mrs. Clinton said, she would pursue a partnership on climate change. She suggested, though, that she did not intend to press Beijing to accept mandatory caps on carbon emissions, as President Obama supports.

She also praised the Chinese government for adopting a “robust” economic stimulus program. While she said she would raise human-rights concerns in Beijing, she does not plan to do so prominently.

Mrs. Clinton also said she would meet with the Russian foreign minister, Sergey V. Lavrov, in two weeks for what she said she hoped would be a “positive start.” She said the administration had made no decisions on whether to scale back a missile defense system in Eastern Europe that has caused tension between Moscow and Washington.

Mrs. Clinton’s choice of Japan for her first stop is heavily symbolic and meant to reassure the Japanese that they remain America’s central allies in Asia. Japan looms large in efforts to recover from the global economic crisis and has pledged up to \$100 billion in aid to the International Monetary Fund to help countries facing credit shortages because of the crisis.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/16/washington/16diplo.html>

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

RIA Novosti, Russia

N. Korea Dismisses Rumors of Upcoming Ballistic Missile Test

16 February 2009

MOSCOW, February 16 (RIA Novosti) - North Korea blasted on Monday media rumors that it was planning to test a long-range missile, describing a possible rocket launch as part of a domestic space program.

Intelligence sources earlier said North Korea was probably preparing to fire a long-range Taepodong-2 missile from the newly constructed Musudan-ri launch pad on the country's northeast coast.

"This is a vicious trick to put a brake on the wheel of not only the DPRK's building of military capability for self-defense, but also scientific research for peaceful purpose," the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said as the communist state celebrated the 67th birthday of leader Kim Jong-Il.

"Wait and you will come to know later what will be launched in the DPRK [North Korea]," it said, adding that North Korea has a sovereign right to space exploration.

Pyongyang has a history of testing long-range missiles under the guise of launching satellites.

It first tested a long-range missile in 1998, when it launched a Taepodong-1 over northern Japan and claimed that it carried a domestically-developed satellite.

In 2002, Pyongyang agreed with Tokyo to a moratorium on missile tests, but the secretive regime has continued research on ballistic missile technology.

In July 2006, North Korea test-launched its Taepodong-2 long-range missile and also staged an underground test of a nuclear device.

The Taepodong-2 reportedly has a maximum range of 6,700 kilometers (4,190 miles), which would make it capable of hitting the U.S. states of Alaska and Hawaii, as well as South Korea and Japan.

Experts believe the impoverished country is not capable of developing a domestic space program and the planned rocket launch was simply an attempt to draw the Barack Obama administration's attention to the issue of the stalled six-party talks on North Korea's controversial nuclear program.

However, KCNA said: "The DPRK has no need to draw anyone's attention and does not want anybody to interfere or meddle in the issue of the Korean peninsula."

The six-nation talks, involving North Korea, South Korea, Russia, Japan, China and the United States, were launched in 2003 after Pyongyang withdrew from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

Under deals reached in 2007, the reclusive communist regime began disabling a nuclear reactor and other facilities at Yongbyon under U.S. supervision in exchange for economic aid and political incentives.

In 2008, the United States removed North Korea from the blacklist of countries supporting international terrorism after Pyongyang gave assurances on verification measures, but made it clear that Iran and North Korea are still considered by Washington as dangerous.

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20090216/120154118.html>

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

International Herald Tribune
February 16, 2009

North Korea Threatens Missile Test

By Choe Sang-Hun

SEOUL: North Korea threatened on Monday to launch what its neighbors believe is a ballistic missile capable of reaching U.S. territory, just as Hillary Rodham Clinton was flying to Asia on her first overseas trip as U.S. secretary of state.

"One will come to know later what will be launched," the North's state-run news agency, KCNA, said, commenting on recent news reports in the region that the country has been readying its longest-range Taepodong-2 missile for a test launch from a base on its east coast.

North Korea made the statement on the 67th birthday of its leader, Kim Jong Il, who is widely praised at home for spearheading the country's "space development," a term the nation used in 1998 when it launched what it called a scientific rocket to put the country's first satellite into orbit.

But Western officials concluded that the "rocket" that flew over Japan and crashed into the Pacific was a Taepodong-1 missile. The launch unsettled neighbors because North Korea was feared to be developing technology to place nuclear warheads atop its missiles.

North Korea has been preparing to test a Taepodong-2 missile since January, Defense Minister Lee Sang Hee of South Korea said during a parliamentary hearing on Monday. In the past weeks, South Korean media have reported that North Korean engineers were putting together a 32-meter, or 105-foot-long Taepodong-2 missile at their Musudan launch site.

Analysts and government officials in the region have feared that North Korea may launch a long-range missile to help make its nuclear threats a top foreign policy issue for President Barack Obama of the United States. Separately, North Korea has also threatened a naval clash with South Korea on their disputed western sea border.

With its economy in shambles and isolated from most of the world, North Korea has often used its military threats to extract economic aid and diplomatic benefits from other countries.

On Friday, KCNA insisted that it had the right to pursue a "peaceful" space program and accused "hostile forces" in the region of spreading "the rumor" about a long-distance missile launch.

Kim, who was said to have suffered a stroke around last August, strives to live up to his main political promise to the country's impoverished 22 million people: turning North Korea into a "strong and great nation" by 2012, a year widely seen as the time when Kim may designate his heir, possibly from among his three sons.

<http://www.iht.com/articles/2009/02/16/asia/north.php>

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

Washington Post

February 16, 2009

Clinton Criticizes Bush on N. Korea

By Glenn Kessler

Washington Post Staff Writer

ELMENDORF AIR FORCE BASE, Alaska, Feb. 15 -- Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton cast doubt Sunday on a claim by the Bush administration that North Korea had a clandestine program to enrich uranium, and she said she will focus on getting the Pyongyang government to give up its stock of weapons-grade plutonium.

"There is a debate within the intelligence community as to exactly the extent of the highly-enriched-uranium program," Clinton told reporters traveling with her to Asia on her first voyage as the chief U.S. diplomat.

In a slap at her predecessors, Clinton made it clear she believes that the Bush administration's decision to walk away from an agreement negotiated during her husband's administration -- the 1994 Agreed Framework -- helped create the current crisis over North Korea's stash of nuclear weapons.

"The Agreed Framework was torn up on the basis of the concerns about the highly-enriched-uranium program," Clinton said. "There is no debate that, once the Agreed Framework was torn up, the North Koreans began to reprocess plutonium with a vengeance because all bets were off. The result is they now have nuclear weapons, which they did not have before."

Plutonium and uranium offer different routes to a nuclear weapon. North Korea's plutonium-based reactor at Yongbyon was frozen under the 1994 deal, though there were suspicions that its scientists had extracted enough plutonium for perhaps one or two weapons. When the Agreed Framework collapsed in 2002, North Korea restarted the reactor and obtained enough weapons-grade material for at least a half-dozen weapons.

North Korea conducted a nuclear test in 2006, prompting the Bush administration to begin aggressive diplomacy that resulted in the partial dismantlement of the reactor in exchange for energy aid. The aid mirrored what had been provided under the 1994 deal.

The stalled talks over the North Korean program will be a key topic of Clinton's discussions in Tokyo, Seoul and Beijing; she is also traveling to Jakarta, Indonesia, during her week abroad.

"My goal is the denuclearization of North Korea," Clinton said. "That means a verifiably complete accounting of whatever programs they have and the removal of the reprocessed plutonium that they were able to achieve because they were given the opportunity to do so."

"When they move forward" on ending the program, she added, "we have a great openness to working with them," including "a willingness to help the people of North Korea."

Clinton's remarks are certain to find favor in Asian capitals, where many officials thought the Bush administration had initially placed too much emphasis on the uranium issue.

After the 2006 test, the Bush administration also de-emphasized the uranium concerns, but senior officials raised it anew in the waning weeks of the administration, saying they had obtained new intelligence that cast doubt on North Korean denials.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/02/15/AR2009021501790.html?hpid=moreheadlines>

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

Guardian.co.uk
16 February 2009

Nuclear Submarines Collide in Atlantic

Rachel Williams, Richard Norton-Taylor and agencies

A Royal Navy nuclear submarine and a French vessel have been damaged in a collision deep below the surface of the Atlantic Ocean.

HMS Vanguard and Le Triomphant, which were carrying nuclear missiles on routine patrols, are reported to have collided while submerged on 3 or 4 February. Between them they had about 250 sailors on board.

The Ministry of Defence initially refused to confirm the incident, saying it was not policy to comment on submarine operations. This afternoon the First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Jonathon Band, issued a statement saying the two vessels hit each other while travelling at very low speeds and no one was injured.

"We can confirm that the capability remained unaffected and there has been no compromise to nuclear safety," he said. The MoD said the Vanguard returned to its base in Faslane, Scotland, with only "scrapes".

Defence officials told guardian.co.uk the two submarines collided in what they said was an extraordinary accident. "They can't see each other in the water," one official said, raising questions about the submarines' sonar and why they did not detect one another.

Opposition parties asked how the accident was possible. The SNP's Westminster leader, Angus Robertson, said: "The UK Ministry of Defence needs to explain how it is possible for a submarine carrying weapons of mass destruction to collide with another submarine carrying weapons of mass destruction in the middle of the world's second-largest ocean.

"In contrast to MoD secrecy, the French military authorities publicised details of the incident on a website. The MoD cannot hide behind operational secrecy and must make a statement on this as a priority."

The shadow defence secretary, Liam Fox, called the incident "extremely worrying".

The Liberal Democrat defence spokesman, Nick Harvey, said: "While the British nuclear fleet has a good safety record, if there were ever to be a bang it would be a mighty big one. The public entrust this equipment to the government confident that all possible precautions are being taken. Now that this incident is public knowledge, the people of Britain, France and the rest of the world need to be reassured this can never happen again and that lessons are being learned."

France's defence ministry said in a brief statement on 6 February that the Triomphant had struck "a submerged object (probably a container)" during a return journey from a patrol, damaging the sonar dome on the front of the submarine.

It said no crew members were injured and the nuclear security of the submarine had not been compromised.

Today the ministry confirmed that another sub was involved, saying: "They briefly came into contact at a very low speed while submerged."

After the accident, the French submarine returned to its base on L'Ile Longue, near Brest, under its own power and escorted by a frigate.

Vanguard, one of Britain's four V-class submarines that make up the Trident nuclear deterrent, each of which is capable of carrying up to 16 missiles, was said to have visible dents on its hull as it was towed home at the weekend. Inquiries are under way on both sides of the Channel.

Kate Hudson, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament chairwoman, described the incident as "a nuclear nightmare of the highest order".

"The collision of two submarines, both with nuclear reactors and nuclear weapons on board, could have released vast amounts of radiation and scattered scores of nuclear warheads across the seabed," she said. "The dents reportedly visible on the British sub show the boats were no more than a couple of seconds away from total catastrophe."

Hudson said it was the first time since the cold war that two nuclear-armed submarines were known to have collided.

"These dangers are inherent whilst the British government maintains its 1960s policy of having at least one nuclear - weapons submarine sailing round the Atlantic 24 hours a day, 365 days a year," she said. "HMS Vanguard is likely to be confined to port for months with a multimillion-pound repair bill. Gordon Brown should seize this opportunity to end continuous patrols."

Le Triomphant, which entered service in 1997, carries 16 nuclear missiles and is one of four nuclear-armed submarines in the French fleet.

Stephane Lhomme, a spokesman for the French anti-nuclear group Sortir du Nucleaire, said its network of activists was on alert for any signs of radioactive leaks near French shores.

"This reminds us that we could have a new catastrophe with a nuclear submarine at any moment. It is a risk that exists during missions but also in port," he said. "These are mobile nuclear reactors."

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2009/feb/16/nuclear-submarines-collide>

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

London Times
February 16, 2009

French Sub Unaware It Rammed Royal Navy Vessel in Mid-Atlantic Nuclear Crash

Charles Bremner in Paris, and David Brown

A French submarine was unaware it had rammed and damaged a British nuclear sub in a mid-Atlantic collision until it was informed by the Royal Navy.

HMS Vanguard and the French submarine *Le Triomphant* were both carrying nuclear ballistic warheads when they crashed in the Atlantic earlier this month.

Both navies said today that the collision had been unavoidable because the vessels were "running silently" to avoid detection by sonar.

Official inquiries have started in Britain and France into the incident which has raised concerns about the sharing of information between the allied navies.

The First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Jonathon Band, said the incident happened at low speed and none of the 250 crew on board the submarines were injured.

"Both submarines remained safe and no injuries occurred," he said. We can confirm that the capability remained unaffected and there has been no compromise to nuclear safety."

The French Navy claimed earlier this month that *Le Triomphant*'s bow sonar dome was probably damaged in a collision with a submerged shipping container while returning from patrol.

It only discovered it had hit British submarine after one of their regular exchanges of information with the Royal Navy.

HMS Vanguard returned its base in Faslane, western Scotland, on Saturday with dents and scrapes on its hull following the collision reported to have occurred on February 3 or 4.

Le Triomphant took three days to limp home to port in Brest, northwest France, with extensive damage to its Thales DMUX 80 sonar.

The French Navy confirmed today that the collision took place in the Atlantic on a routine patrol and at great depth but would not reveal the location for routine security reasons.

Captain Jérôme Erulin said such collisions were extremely unlikely but always possible between two submarines that are designed to evade detection.

“It was a brief contact at slow speed at the beginning of last week,” he added.

“These submarines are by definition very silent. The slow speed at the moment of the incident is their normal patrol speed. There was no human error.”

A senior Royal Navy source said today that the chances of two submarines collision in the mid-Atlantic were “very, very small”

“There has been no compromising of nuclear integrity whatsoever and neither has been there any reduction in our deterrent capability,” he said.

“Whatever speculation you have seen I can confirm neither of those has been affected.

The source said that submarines use “water space management” to separate themselves both geographically and in depth from other vessels when underwater.

“It is a well-established rules operated by Nato nations, and other nations when we exercise with them use the same rules, and they have built into them plenty of safety,” he said.

“It is remarkably difficult to detect a modern submarine with sonar and we work very hard with our own submarines, as do our allies, in making them as quiet as possible so they are not detectable.

“A submarine does not often go active – that is send out an echo – because it gives away a submarine’s position. So a submarine normally operates what we call passively, it does not transmit.”

Commodore Stephen Saunders, editor of *Jane’s Fighting Ships*, said: “This is a very serious incident. There are procedural issues that need addressing.

“We should not have submarines of friendly nations operating in the same area at the same time.”

Commodore Saunders said that the although there were reports of collisions between submarines during the Cold War neither side would own up to them.

“Nuclear submarines would not normally operate together and I can think of no operational reason why they would operate together.

“I can only assume they were both on patrol so there would be no intention for them to be in the same space.”

Nato countries share details of submarine patrols and agree which areas and depths their vessels will operate in to avoid the risk of collision.

However, France has opted out of Nato’s military command so doesnot fully share information, although it normally provides some details of its submarine operations.

“I would be surprised if the French did not give an indication, or some sort of attempt to give an indication, about the extent of their operations,” said Commodore Saunders.

HMS Vanguard, which was launched in 1992, is one of four British submarines that carries the 16 Trident ballistic nuclear missiles with up to eight warheads. At least one of the submarines is on patrol at all times.

The 14,335-tonne *Le Triomphant*, which entered service in 1997, carries 16 nuclear missiles, with six warheads, and is one of four nuclear-armed submarines in the French fleet.

The incident is the most serious underwater collision since the USS San Francisco hit an undersea mountain in the Pacific head-on in 2005, killing one sailor and injuring 24 others.

Dr Liam Fox, Shadow Defence Secretary, said today that it was a “relief” that no-one had been injured in the latest collision.

“For two submarines to collide whilst apparently unaware of each other’s presence is extremely worrying,” he said. “Hopefully lessons have been learned to prevent anything like this ever happening again in the future.”

Nick Harvey, the Liberal Democrat defence spokesman said: “The public entrust this equipment to the Government confident that all possible precautions are being taken.

"Now that this incident is public knowledge, the people of Britain, France and the rest of the world need to be reassured this can never happen again and that lessons are being learned."

Angus Robertson, the SNP leader in Westminster, said: "The MoD cannot hide behind operational secrecy and must make a statement on this as a priority."

John Ainslie, co-ordinator of Scottish CND, said that the all nuclear submarines would immediately be confined to base.

The French anti-nuclear group Sortir du Nucleaire (Get Out of Nuclear) criticised the military authorities for taking several days to reveal the collision. "It seems clear that, once again, the first reflex of the nuclear lobby is to hide the truth," it said.

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article5746690.ece>

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

Telegraph.co.uk

British and French Nuclear Submarine Collision 'As Serious as Sinking of Kursk'

16 February 2009

By Caroline Gammell and Thomas Harding

Dents and scrapes were clearly visible on each submarine, while the French vessel completely destroyed its sonar dome in the incident which took place in heavy seas on the night of February 3 and 4.

The Vanguard, Britain's first Trident class submarine, returned to Faslane on the Clyde on Saturday, while Le Triomphant took three days to get home to L'Ile Longue, near Brest in north west France.

Investigations were launched on both sides of the Channel as the two countries tried to work out how such a seemingly simple error could have been made.

Although both are fitted with state-of-the-art technology aimed at detecting other submarines, it appears neither saw the other until it was too late.

One theory being considered was that their respective anti-sonar devices - which hide submarines - were just too effective in concealing one from the other.

Only two people out of a 135-strong crew on a nuclear Trident submarine such as Vanguard know the precise location of the vessel, the captain and the navigator.

A senior British submariner source said: "We are embarrassed about this but let's see what the inquiry shows."

First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Jonathan Band said the submarines collided at low speed.

"Two submerged SSBN, one French and the other UK, were conducting routine national patrols in the Atlantic Ocean," he said.

"Recently, the two submarines came into contact at very low speed. Both submarines remained safe and no injuries occurred.

"We can confirm that the capability remained unaffected and there has been no compromise to nuclear safety."

A French naval source said the £50 million figure for repairs was "conservative" and would be met by the French and British taxpayer.

The badly damaged sonar dome should have detected the Vanguard but Le Triomphant's crew of 101 claimed to have "neither saw nor heard anything".

A French naval spokesman said: "The collision did not result in injuries among the crew and did not jeopardise nuclear security at any moment."

Kate Hudson, from the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, said the collision could have unleashed a radioactive disaster: "This is a nuclear nightmare of the highest order.

"The collision of two submarines, both with nuclear reactors and nuclear weapons onboard, could have released vast amounts of radiation and scattered scores of nuclear warheads across the seabed.

"This is the most severe incident involving a nuclear submarine since the sinking of the Kursk and the first time since the Cold War that two nuclear-armed subs are known to have collided."

The Kursk sank in 2000 with the loss of its entire 118-man crew.

Miss Hudson called on the Government to bring an end to its policy of deploying at least one nuclear submarine at sea at all times.

SNP Westminster leader Angus Robertson demanded a Government statement into what went wrong.

"The UK Ministry of Defence needs to explain how it is possible for a submarine carrying weapons of mass destruction to collide with another submarine carrying weapons of mass destruction in the middle of the world's second-largest ocean."

Liberal Democrat defence spokesman Nick Harvey called for an internal inquiry with the partial publication of its conclusions to reassure the public.

"Now that this incident is public knowledge, the people of Britain, France and the rest of the world need to be reassured this can never happen again and that lessons are being learned."

Shadow Secretary of State for Defence, Dr Liam Fox, said the crash showed the inherent danger of military operations.

"For two submarines to collide whilst apparently unaware of each other's presence is extremely worrying.

"Hopefully lessons have been learned to prevent anything like this ever happening again in the future."

The UK submarine service has been badly undermanned for some time with technicians in particular shortage.

The Vanguard, which went into operation in 1994, is one of Britain's four nuclear-powered submarines. Alongside Le Triomphant, it is capable of carrying up to 16 nuclear-armed Trident missiles.

A senior naval officer said: "Manning in the submarine service is in a parlous state and is recognised by the Navy Board as a serious risk to the maintenance of the strategic deterrent and the nuclear submarine service.

"At the moment is it not a pretty picture and I am not convinced it will get better in the short term."

Shortages are particularly evident among Warfare Officers and in the Strategic Weapons Systems department.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopics/politics/defence/4640673/British-and-French-nuclear-submarine-collision-as-serious-as-sinking-of-Kursk.html>

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

Time

Feb. 16, 2009

Did France's Secrecy Cause a Nuclear Submarine Collision?

By Eben Harrell / London

A collision between a British nuclear-powered submarine carrying multiple nuclear warheads and a French nuclear submarine armed with a similar payload may have been the result of lack of communication between France and NATO nations, according to a former British submarine commander whose revelations were partially corroborated by an official at the French navy.

Sometime on Feb. 3 or 4, the British HMS Vanguard and France's Le Triomphant collided in the mid-Atlantic. The accident probably happened because the two submarines were not aware of each other. NATO operates a traffic control system that alerts allied nations to the deployment zones of friendly submarines. The system is designed to avoid collisions. But because France is not part of NATO's military command structure, it does not provide information on the location of its mobile nuclear arms to that system, according to Julian Ferguson, who commanded one of Britain's four V-class nuclear submarines until retiring in 2006. (See a graphic of the global nuclear arms balance.

"There is a system for operating areas that are reserved for American, British, Norwegian, Dutch and Canadian communities and if you want to go into someone's area of influence you tell them what you are doing. But if you are not in the NATO military structure you don't have to do that," says Ferguson.

The French Navy confirmed to TIME that it does not give the positions of its nuclear armed submarines to NATO forces: "France does not supply any information regarding the position of its nuclear arms or submarines carrying them, because France considers its nuclear arsenal the most vital element in its defense capabilities," says Jérôme Erulin, spokesman for France's Navy.

NATO sources told TIME that France is not alone in withholding information about nuclear-armed submarines — the Brits and Americans keep the location of their strategic deterrent secret too. In a prepared statement, a NATO spokesman said: "France uses the same procedures with regard to its submarine fleet as all other allies."

But Ferguson says the French are particularly secretive due to their position outside NATO's command structure. And past policy-level discussions suggest a concern over a lack of communication. In 1994, Britain and France discussed closer co-operation between their navies and a possible carve-up of deployment zones for their nuclear submarine patrols. It took until September 2000 for arrangements to be formalized in the U.K.-French Bilateral Defense Cooperation Agreement. That agreement called for port visits for British and French nuclear-armed submarines and regular exchanges on nuclear policy. (See pictures of the French President visiting the U.K.

But it's unclear whether it included the exchange of information about nuclear armed submarine positioning, and many arms experts say it probably did not. "The fact that the collision occurred at all indicates that the two allies need to talk more," says Hans Kristensen, who monitors NATO's weapons for the federation of American scientists.

While the intersection of two sonar-equipped nuclear submarines in a vast ocean may seem an unlikely event even without communication, there are environmental anomalies in the Atlantic that make a collision more likely, according to Ferguson. Submarines on a deterrent mission, for instance, tend to congregate in places where they are unlikely to be found by other submarines and spy-planes. "There are oceanographic factors in which you can be on either side of an ocean front where the temperature is slightly different on your side than the others. Where the gulf stream comes across the Atlantic is a prime point of this. Sometimes these barriers can be quite hard — no sound penetrates at all. And if your business is hiding than you would hide in that vicinity. There is an added risk that given the environmental factors maybe you don't hear another submarine in time to do something about it."

The multiple, city-destroying warheads on the French and British submarines are not at risk of detonation from collision, Ferguson said. But had a nuclear reactor been damaged on either boat, it could have poisoned the crew and spread radioactive waste for miles across the Atlantic.

If in fact the collision could have been prevented by better communication between France and NATO, the revelation comes at a politically sensitive time: France is set to re-join NATO's military infrastructure in April. Its secrecy policy on the location of its nuclear-armed subs could come under fire before then, especially as the French say they will not budge on the issue. Explains Erulin of the French Navy: "Because this is so essential to France's strategic defense interests, this is something that will be maintained even after French is fully reintegrated into NATO's military command structure."

— With reporting by Bruce Crumley / Paris

<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1879777,00.html?cnn=yes>

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

Washington Post
February 16, 2009

From New DNI, Moderate View on North Korea and Warning about Iran's Role in Afghanistan

By Walter Pincus

In his first presentation to Congress last Thursday outlining the worldwide threats to the United States, Director of National Intelligence Dennis C. Blair offered a collection of facts and judgments that failed to make headlines but are worth remembering in the coming weeks and months.

Blair, in his rundown of North Korea's nuclear ambitions, said, "Pyongyang probably views its nuclear weapons as being more for deterrence and coercive diplomacy than for warfighting." He went on to say that the intelligence community's assessment is that "Pyongyang probably would not attempt to use nuclear weapons against U.S. forces or territory unless it perceived the regime to be on the verge of military defeat and risked an irretrievable loss of control."

That seemed like new, moderate language, given the Bush administration's rapid push almost seven years ago to have a missile defense system in place against a possible nuclear attack launched by North Korean leader Kim Jong Il. But a year ago, Blair's predecessor, Mike McConnell, used almost the exact same language in his prepared statement for the 2008 worldwide threat hearing. The difference is that McConnell talked not of Pyongyang's "nuclear weapons" but of its "capabilities."

The underlying thought, that Kim would not order the use of a nuclear weapon against U.S. forces or territory unless he faced imminent military defeat, is reminiscent of the CIA's comments in October 2002 to Congress: Despite what senior Bush officials were saying, agency analysts judged that Saddam Hussein would not turn over weapons of mass destruction to terrorists for use against the United States or use them himself unless the country was invaded and he faced military defeat.

Regarding Iran, Blair said Tehran is pursuing "multiple tracks" on neighboring Afghanistan. On the one hand, Iran has "focused on promoting a friendly central government in Kabul" by providing "political and economic support to the Karzai government." On the other hand, it is "developing relationships with actors across the political spectrum."

Blair's description of Iran's relationship with one of those actors, the Taliban, is most interesting. He said the intelligence community's judgment is that "Iran distrusts the Taliban and its return to power." Thus, he said, Tehran has opposed Afghan President Hamid Karzai's attempts to have reconciliation talks with the Taliban "as risking an increase in the group's influence and legitimacy."

But Blair also said Iran is providing the Taliban some "lethal aid," to help keep pressure on U.S. and NATO forces, to gather intelligence on what is going on, and as insurance in case the Taliban ends up controlling the country.

On the Palestinian territories, Blair said the competition between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority will get more intense, but he also forecast problems within Fatah, the secular nationalist movement that controls the West Bank.

He said this internal clash, which pits old-guard Fatah leaders against younger elements who want more reform, has worsened. As a result, the sides are arguing over the location and attendees for the long-delayed Fatah General Congress. Without a settlement, Fatah could fracture in the run-up to elections in 2009 or early 2010 for the Palestinian Authority president and legislature. Meanwhile, Blair said, there is no consensus on a replacement for the authority's president, Mahmoud Abbas, who has not groomed a successor.

In discussing the impact of disease and health worldwide, Blair described Russia as having "the overall worst health indicators of any industrialized country." Poor health in Russian children and falling birthrates are threatening Russia's military readiness. Blair said one result will be that Russia will have half as many eligible military recruits in 2018 as it had in 2005.

For Iraq, Blair listed several events that could halt or reverse the political and security progress being made.

First on the list, and described by Blair as "the greatest threat to government stability," would be the inability to solve internal boundary disputes, primarily in northern Iraq, where Kurds are facing off against Arabs and others around oil-rich Kirkuk.

Another threat is the perception, by the varied ethnic groups in Iraq, that the Shiite-dominated government has undertaken "a broad and enduring campaign of repression" that "could lead to widespread violence."

A third threat would involve a new infusion of foreign support to insurgent or militia groups to destabilize the government.

Finally, with declining oil revenue, the Iraqi government might face funding difficulties that could limit the modernization of its security forces, the expansion of public employment, and infrastructure development programs such as electricity, water and sewage.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/02/15/AR2009021501892.html>

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

U.S. Senator Robert Casey Press Release
February 12, 2009

Casey, Burr Form New Caucus on WMD Terrorism

WASHINGTON, DC- U.S. Senator Bob Casey (D-PA), a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and U.S. Senator Richard Burr (R-NC) today announced the creation of a bipartisan caucus to focus on the serious threat to our national security posed by potential terrorist acts employing weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The Senate Caucus on WMD Terrorism will highlight the challenges posed by terrorist groups acquiring nuclear, biological and chemical weapons and provide a forum for the discussion of appropriate policy responses to prevent, prepare for, mitigate and respond to such attacks.

“There is no greater national security danger to the American people than the threat of a terrorist group destroying an American city with a nuclear weapon. We know that groups like Al Qaeda possess the motivation, and too many states around the world maintain lax security over the fissile materials essential to a nuclear weapon,” said Senator Casey. “In forming this caucus, I want to establish a forum to better educate Senators on the scope of the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction and the very real policy steps we can take to mitigate this grave challenge.”

“Our nation and the world continues to face a serious threat from the use of weapons of mass destruction. In fact, a recent report from the Commission on the Prevention of WMD Proliferation and Terrorism said that a terror attack is likely somewhere in the world by 2013 using a weapon of mass destruction, most likely a biological agent. We must ensure the U.S. government continues to make the prevention of, and preparedness for, bioterrorism and other WMD threats a top priority. I am pleased to help form this new Senate caucus to focus on these important national and homeland security issues and make sure we are consistently improving our level of preparedness,” Burr said.

Within the United States Senate, numerous Committees exercise overlapping jurisdictions over the Executive Branch departments tasked with WMD terrorism prevention, preparedness, mitigation and response. The Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee, the Foreign Relations Committee, the Armed Services Committee, the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee and the Select Committee on Intelligence all oversee how the U.S. government organizes itself to detect, deter, defend, prepare for and respond to an act of WMD terrorism. But no one Senate committee encompasses jurisdiction over all dimensions of this enormous challenge.

The Senate Caucus on WMD Terrorism will comprise of an informal grouping of Members who recognize the urgency and depth of the threat posed to the United States and its citizens by acts of nuclear, biological and chemical terrorism and who seek a better understanding of feasible policy responses. It will organize occasional roundtables for Members and their staffs to hear from the leading experts in the field on proposed policy responses to prevent, prepare for, mitigate and respond to acts of WMD terrorism.

Members of the Senate Caucus on WMD Terrorism are Bob Casey (D-PA), Richard Burr (R-NC), Evan Bayh (D-IN), James Inhofe (R-OK), Saxby Chambliss (R-GA), Russ Feingold (D-WI), Joe Lieberman (ID-CT) and Johnny Isakson (R-GA).

<http://casey.senate.gov/newsroom/press/release/?id=CA4673D9-D962-49E8-8C9D-EC76638E365F>

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

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Device Kills Biohazards from Letters

BY DON BUTLER, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

Last Christmas Eve, a letter arrived at the U.S. Embassy on Sussex Drive. Inside was a suspicious white powder. About 100 American embassies around the world, as well as an array of state and federal offices in the United States, received similar envelopes.

The substances in the letters turned out to be benign. But had they been biological pathogens, "the impact would have been enormous," said Terry Breese, the embassy's chargé d'affaires.

Yesterday, the embassy hosted a demonstration of a product designed to neutralize those threats. The MailDefender, developed by Boston-based BioDefense Corp., is a dishwasher-sized stainless steel box capable that can detect and destroy anthrax, smallpox, ricin, plague, E. coli, influenza, HIV and botulism.

It's sort of a microwave oven with attitude. Once mail is placed in its "killing chamber," BioDefense's co-founder Jonathan Morrone told an invited audience of about 60, an internal wheel rotates for 45 minutes, blasting the letters with a mixture of microwave energy, ultraviolet and broad beam light, and infrared energy.

The letters come out undamaged. But any pathogens they contain are "cooked" and rendered harmless, said BioDefense CEO Michael Lu.

The MailDefender sells for \$89,000, Mr. Lu said, but that translates into only pennies per letter -- a bargain considering the massive disruption even hoax attacks can cause. "This is a product you can't afford to be without," he said.

Governments and corporations have been dealing with the threat of contaminated mail since 2001, when anthrax-laced envelopes killed five people in the United States.

While there have been few genuine attacks since then, hoax attacks have continued unabated since 2001. Last year, according to BioDefense, there were 15,000 of them in the United States and Canada. Most don't make the news, said company executive Paul Jursberg, but "this happens all the time."

Just last month, white powder was found in more than a dozen envelopes sent to the Wall Street Journal, and Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz received similar mail. Both were hoaxes.

Cleaning up a legitimate biohazard attack is exceptionally expensive, sometimes costing as much as the cost of the building. But even hoaxes force mass evacuations and traumatize employees who handle the suspect envelopes.

Keith Taylor, a former security adviser to the British cabinet who is director of BioDefense's European operations, said there's an unwarranted level of complacency about bioterrorism.

"It's really, really serious and it's really, really important," he said. "This is a real threat."

Earlier versions of the MailDefender are in use at the United Nations in New York, the U.S. Department of Justice and the Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Washington. There are none in Canada yet, but the company has acquired a Canadian distributor, Doro Inc., and expects a lively interest.

Yesterday's audience included representatives of more than a dozen Ottawa embassies, the RCMP, federal government departments and security agencies, the City of Ottawa, several private companies and The Ottawa Hospital.

BioDefense is marketing a modified version of the MailDefender to hospitals as a safe and inexpensive way of disposing of their hazardous wastes, which can be carted off with regular garbage after treatment.

Mr. Lu was inspired to invent the MailDefender after he and Mr. Morrone narrowly escaped death on Sept. 11, 2001. The two were supposed to be in a meeting on the 78th floor of the World Trade Center when the airplanes hit, but were running late. "We see this basically as a product defending our freedom and way of life," he said.

Eventually, Mr. Lu hopes to develop a much smaller and cheaper version that can be marketed for home use.

<http://www.ottawacitizen.com/Technology/Device+kills+biohazards+from+letters/1281240/story.html>

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

Telegraph.co.uk
13 February 2009

Iran Will Never Give In to the US

By Con Coughlin

It has taken 30 years, but after decades of intense hostility and mutual recrimination which, on more than one occasion, have come close to provoking all-out war with the West, the hardline regime that controls Iran appears to have made its first conciliatory gesture towards the country that it is more used to demonising as the Great Satan.

Even as President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was making his first tentative steps towards opening a dialogue with the new administration of Barack Obama this week, thousands of diehard supporters of Ayatollah Khomeini were chanting their familiar slogans of "Death to America" and "Death to Israel" as they gathered around Khomeini's mausoleum to mark the 30th anniversary of his Islamic revolution.

Hatred of the West and its core values of liberalism and democratic government have been one of the key motivating factors that have sustained Iran's revolution since Khomeini overthrew the Shah in February 1979. The revolution's contempt for beliefs such as freedom of speech was graphically illustrated by the *fatwa* Khomeini issued 20 years ago today on Valentine's Day against the author Salman Rushdie following publication of *The Satanic Verses*, which was deemed to have blasphemed the Prophet Mohammed. The fatwa was one of Khomeini's last acts before he succumbed the following June to the ill health that dogged him during the final years of his life.

But even now, as the heirs to Khomeini's revolution struggle to resolve the country's mounting isolation, the legacy of Khomeini's uncompromising brand of radical Islam still dominates the political, social and religious fabric to the extent that it will ultimately determine how far Iran is prepared to travel down the path to reconciliation with the West.

Mr Ahmadinejad, who has made himself something of an international pariah by his calls for Israel's destruction, took the first, faltering steps down that path when he declared that Iran is prepared to enter a dialogue with the Obama administration "based on mutual respect and in a fair atmosphere."

Given the new American president's desperation to find some way of resolving the crisis between Iran and the West over its nuclear programme, that should not be too difficult to arrange, particularly as Mr Obama has pledged that, so long as Iran is prepared to "unclench its fist", Washington is prepared to extend the hand of friendship.

Certainly, Mr Obama's approach constitutes a radical departure from the "axis of evil" rhetoric that defined the former Bush administration's attitude towards Iran. And Mr Ahmadinejad, who faces a difficult re-election campaign in June, is too astute a politician to pass up such an opportunity to take the heat out of the nuclear crisis.

But before the Americans or Iranians get carried away about the prospects of a diplomatic breakthrough, it is important to remember that Mr Ahmadinejad's room for manoeuvre is extremely limited, because the Khomeini legacy makes compromise on key areas of policy, particularly the nuclear programme, out of the question.

In the last year of his life, Khomeini went to great lengths to ensure that his vision of radical Islam, which he wanted to be exported throughout the Muslim world, would be maintained long after his death. Apart from arranging for Ali Khamenei, one of his most devoted followers, to succeed him as the country's spiritual guardian, Khomeini made a number of declarations committing successive governments to policies that would inevitably put Tehran on a collision course with the West.

By far the most controversial of these edicts, and one which lies at the heart of the current crisis, was Khomeini's insistence that Iran should develop nuclear weapons.

The origins of Iran's nuclear programme can be traced back to the Shah who planned to build 20 nuclear power plants. Iran's nuclear programme had been the most ambitious in the Middle East, but initially Khomeini cancelled all development, regarding it as a symbol of the former regime's attempts to Westernise the country.

Khomeini's interest in nuclear weapons was driven by the traumatic experience of the eight-year war with Iraq, whose dictator, Saddam Hussein, used chemical weapons to devastating effect against advancing Iranian troops. As the war neared its end in the summer of 1988, and Saddam's ruthless tactics obliged Khomeini to accept a humiliating ceasefire, the ayatollah resolved that the upholders of the Islamic revolution should never again find themselves in such jeopardy.

On 16 July 1988 Khomeini wrote a letter to Iran's military and political leaders, the contents of which have never before been published. Khomeini argued that Iran should do everything to acquire the military capability – including nuclear weapons – to make sure that it did not find itself in the same humiliating position the next time the country went to war.

"If we have at hand the instruments which we will obtain over five years, it is possible for us to have the power to carry out destructive operations," Khomeini wrote. "If we have... the ability to create noticeable quantities of laser and atomic weapons which are the requirements of war in this day and age, I can say that by God's will we could carry out an offensive operation."

This letter remains the *raison d'être* of Iran's nuclear programme, and why the hardline conservatives who run the country have no intention of giving in to American demands to freeze its illicit uranium enrichment activities at Natanz.

The jury might be out as to whether Iran has an active military nuclear programme, but what is not in doubt is that, if the rate of enrichment activity is maintained, by the end of this year it will have sufficient enriched uranium to build an atom bomb – if it chooses.

What is also not in doubt is that Iran was, until 2003, actively working on developing nuclear weapons, and that most of the progress in this area was made when the so-called moderates – such as former president Mohammed Khatami – were in power. The entire political and religious establishment of the Islamic republic is committed to acquiring nuclear weapons.

The other fundamental pillar of Khomeini's legacy that makes it difficult for the regime to reach an accommodation with the West is the role the late ayatollah assigned to the Revolutionary Guards, the storm-troopers of the Islamic revolution. Apart from upholding the principles of the revolution, the Guards are charged with disseminating it to the four corners of the globe.

One of Ayatollah Khamenei's first acts as leader was to establish the Quds Force, an elite unit whose task is to export revolution. Iran's home-grown brand of revolutionary Islam has spread throughout the Islamic world: helping the Taliban with roadside bomb attacks against British soldiers, supporting radical Shia militias in Iraq and providing the radical Palestinian Hamas militia with missiles to attack Israel.

However much Mr Ahmadinejad and his hardline clerical supporters might talk about opening a dialogue with the West, the chances of those talks resulting in significant improvement in relations will be slight so long as Iran's rulers remain committed to the principles and objectives of Khomeini's revolutionary legacy.

This article is based on Con Coughlin's new book 'Khomeini's Ghost' (Pan Macmillan), which is published next week and is available from Telegraph Books for £23 +£1.25 p&p.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/columnists/concoughlin/4615163/Iran-will-never-give-in-to-the-US.html>

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