



USAF COUNTERPROLIFERATION CENTER

CPC OUTREACH JOURNAL

Maxwell AFB, Alabama

Issue No. 690, 27 February 2009

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International Herald Tribune

February 24, 2009

North Korea says It Will Put Satellite into Orbit

By Choe Sang-Hun

SEOUL: North Korea announced on Tuesday that it was preparing to shoot a satellite into orbit, in a launching that U.S. and South Korean officials have said would be a provocative test of the North's longest-range missile.

The North's announcement came days after Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton of the United States and Foreign Minister Yu Myung Hwan of South Korea urged it not to carry out the threatened launching, saying that the move would be "very unhelpful."

During her visit to Seoul last week, Clinton characterized the North Korean government's rule as "tyranny" but offered to normalize relations and provide economic assistance if Pyongyang abandoned its nuclear weapons program. Officials in the region were eagerly awaiting the North Korean response when the announcement came on Tuesday.

"The preparations for launching experimental communications satellite Kwangmyongsong-2 by means of delivery rocket Unha-2 are now making brisk headway," North Korea's Committee of Space Technology said in a statement carried by the state-run news agency, KCNA. It was the first official confirmation by North Korea of its activities at a missile-launching base at Musudan-ri, on its east coast.

It did not say when the launching would take place, but it was the clearest sign so far that it could happen soon.

In recent weeks, North Korea has insisted that it has the right to launch a scientific satellite - a cover that North Korea has adopted, analysts in the South say, to avoid UN sanctions and a potential U.S. attempt to shoot down its missiles.

After North Korea conducted its first nuclear test in 2006, the United Nations Security Council adopted a resolution urging it to stop all ballistic missile-related activities.

"It's really absurd and funny for North Korea, a country unable to feed its own people, to say it is developing a space program," said Kim Tae Woo, a senior analyst at the government-funded Korea Institute for Defense Analysis. "I think a missile launch is imminent, with all major preparations completed."

A long-range ballistic missile carrying a warhead and a rocket delivering a satellite look so similar that experts say it is difficult to distinguish them - until tracking technology detects a new satellite in orbit. After North Korea launched what it said was its Kwangmyongsong-1 satellite in 1998, the U.S. space authorities were unable to find it in orbit. Western officials believe that what North Korea actually did was test its Taepodong-1 missile.

Kim Jong Il has just been re-elected as the country's leader. He is expected to be re-affirmed in that position by the North's rubber-stamp Parliament sometime after the March 8 poll for new parliamentary delegates. Analysts in Seoul see Kim's re-election as a possible time for the North to launch its missile.

<http://www.ihf.com/articles/2009/02/24/asia/korea.1-436546.php>

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Yonhap News

N. Korea Vows to Enforce Satellite Launch, Citing Iran's Case

26 February 2009

SEOUL, Feb. 26 (Yonhap) -- North Korea has rejected international warnings and said "no one can stop us" from a planned satellite launch, citing Iran's recent successful launch of a satellite into orbit.

"The peaceful advance into space and its use is a just policy of our republic that matches with the current times, and no one can stop us from this," the North's state-run radio Korean Central Broadcasting Station (KCBS) said Wednesday night.

North Korea said on Tuesday it plans to launch an "experimental communications satellite" into orbit as part of its space development program.

While the North insists it is a satellite launch, intelligence sources in the United States and South Korea believe it could be a long-distance missile called Taepodong-2 that in theory can reach the U.S. western coast. In the statement titled "Everyone is entitled to the right to peaceful space use," the North said Iran's satellite launch "demonstrated its national power" and proved that "monopoly can no longer exist" in space development. Iran launched the Omid (hope) on Feb. 3 that was carried by an Iranian-made rocket. Its previous launch in August last year is believed by U.S. officials to have been a failure.

Experts say North Korea and Iran have jointly developed their missile program. A Seoul analyst, requesting anonymity, said several Iranian technicians visited North Korea to observe North Korea's 2006 test-launch of a long-range missile, which failed 40 seconds after blastoff.

South Korea and the U.S. view North Korea's satellite activity as a threat, as putting a satellite into orbit involves technology development also used in advancing long-range missile system. The U.S. called Iran's recent launch, early this month a "grave concern."

"The United States and Western countries are fussing around in chorus, saying Iran's satellite launch through a carrier rocket was to develop ballistic missile technology," the KCBS said, but Iran "is showing its will to actively push itself into the competition for space development."

It cited many developing countries like Vietnam, India, Thailand, Belarus and Venezuela running their own space program, saying North Korea is also entitled to a space program as a member of the international community.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2009/02/26/7/0401000000AEN20090226003900315F.HTML>

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Yonhap News

26 February

N. Korea Likely to have Improved Missile Fuel Technology

By Sam Kim

SEOUL, Feb. 26 (Yonhap) -- North Korea may have advanced its fuel type and injection systems for its long-range ballistic missile, allowing its leader Kim Jong-il greater freedom in choosing when to go ahead with a launch, officials and missile experts said Thursday.

North Korea said this week it is engaged in full-scale preparations to launch a space satellite that its neighbors believe is actually a missile capable of threatening Alaska and Hawaii.

It took the North Korean authorities several days to inject liquid fuel into a Taepodong-2 missile that crashed less than a minute after takeoff in a July 2006 test.

South Korean officials and experts say the fueling time could be reduced to a single day if the communist country has fully developed the capability to produce solid fuel for its long-range missiles.

"A launch would then be ready just as shortly as a firecracker," said Hong Il-hee, who leads research on rocket

thrusters at the state-funded Korea Aerospace Research Institute.

Solid fuel, which is thicker than jelly but softer than a tire, can be instantly loaded into a missile, allowing authorities to drastically cut the time needed for launch preparations.

North Korea appears to have obtained the knowhow to produce solid fuel for its short-range missiles. A part of the multi-stage Taepodong-2 missile tested in 2006 is believed to have contained solid fuel, even though it was mainly thrust by liquid fuel, South Korean intelligence officials say.

The North has produced "solid-fuel missiles that have great reliability, are easy to move around battlefields, have higher accuracy, potential," U.S. Gen. Burwell Bell said in 2006, describing the advancement as "a quantum leap."

"They are routinely testing these," he told the Congress then as head of the U.S. forces in South Korea.

About 28,500 American troops are stationed here as a deterrent against the North -- a legacy of the 1950-53 Korean War that ended in a truce rather than a peace pact.

Kim Byung-ryong, who studies arms acquisitions at South Korea's Agency for Defense Development (ADD), said solid fuel has "obvious strategic merits" compared to liquid fuel.

"Liquid fueling takes days, long enough for the enemy to know what's happening," he said, adding every country ultimately pursues solid fuel systems for all its rockets.

A South Korean official at the Ministry of National Defense cited a political motive behind the North's apparent pursuit of solid fuel technology for long-range missiles.

"We assume Kim Jong-il is monitoring outside developments to decide when to test-fire the suspected Taepodong-2 missile," he said. "When the right moment comes, he will want as little time lapse as possible between his order and the actual launch."

The official, who spoke on customary condition of anonymity, said he has yet to acquire substantial intelligence suggesting the North has perfected the solid fuel for its long-distance missiles.

Baek Seung-joo, a senior analyst with the state-run Korea Institute for Defense Analyses, said the North is likely to have obtained the technology given the amount of time that has passed.

North Korea took part in Chinese missile development in the early 1970s, purchasing various types of short-range missiles, including scuds, and retrofitting the imports since.

Japanese media reported in 2003 that Tokyo nabbed a pro-Pyongyang company that allegedly exported devices used to produce solid fuel to North Korea in the early 1990s.

"The fact that South Korea and the U.S. have yet to detect a fuel tank or drum at (North Korea's) missile base leads us to think of other possibilities," Baek said, suggesting the North could have developed an underground facility to store its solid fuel.

Kim Myung-min, who studies North Korean arms at ADD, said the North may even try to supply liquid fuel from below ground.

"The North deploys a range of tactics to jumble outside speculation," he said. "If the solid fuel technology hasn't been completed, the North may even consider digging a tunnel below and sticking pipelines connected to the missile on the ground."

But the task would involve considerable technical steps and costs, he said. Experts are also split on whether the North has reinforced its missile surface enough to bear the volatile and acidic liquid fuel over a lasting period of time.

A senior South Korean intelligence official told reporters early this month that the North appears to have improved its technology to expedite the injection of fuel into a Taepodong-2 missile.

"They have tried to improve (the missile) for the last couple of years, and we believe there has been improvement," the official said, declining to elaborate on intelligence matters.

Experts believe North Korea is believed to have some 600 Scud short-range missiles and about 100 Rodong missiles. It has also developed the Taepodong-1 that can fly up to 2,500 kilometers.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2009/02/26/58/0401000000AEN20090226006600315F.HTML>

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International Herald Tribune
February 26, 2009

N. Korea Lashes Out Over Missile-Test Warnings

The Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea: North Korea lashed out Thursday at critics warning it not to test a long-range missile, saying it would punish those trying to disrupt its plan to send what it calls a satellite into orbit.

The latest harsh words from Pyongyang came as senior U.S. officials said Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton plans to send her new envoy on North Korea to meet with negotiators in Asia trying to revive stalled nuclear disarmament talks.

North Korea announced earlier this week that it was preparing to shoot a communication satellite into orbit as part of its space program. The U.S., South Korea and other neighboring countries believe the launch may be a cover for a missile test-fire, saying the action would trigger international sanctions.

On Thursday, the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of (North) Korea accused South Korea of "trumpeting about 'sanctions'" against its satellite launch, saying outsiders will know "what will soar in the air in the days ahead."

"If the puppet warmongers infringe upon our inviolable dignity even a bit ... we will not only punish the provokers but reduce their stronghold to debris," the committee said in a statement carried by the country's official Korean Central News Agency.

Kim Myong Gil, minister to the North's U.N. mission in New York, also told reporters in Atlanta on Thursday that his country would implement "the satellite launch as scheduled," saying timing of its launch remains to be seen, according to South Korea's Yonhap news agency. The report said Kim was in Atlanta to take part in an international academic forum.

Analysts say the North's planned launch is seen as a bid for President Barack Obama's attention as international talks on its nuclear programs remained stalled for months and tensions with South Korea are at their highest level in a decade.

Thursday's statement from Pyongyang mainly targets the South Korean government of President Lee Myung-bak, who took office one year ago with a pledge to take a tougher line on the North. It didn't mention the United States.

U.S. officials said Thursday that Clinton was expected to announce that envoy Stephen Bosworth would soon travel to the capitals of four countries that have been working with Washington to get North Korea to give up its nuclear program — Russia, Japan, China and South Korea. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because an announcement was pending,

Bosworth, a former U.S. ambassador to South Korea, was named last week as the Obama administration's special representative for North Korea.

South Korea's Dong-a Ilbo newspaper reported Thursday that North Korea has built an underground fueling facility near its launch pad, making it harder for spy satellites to detect signs that a missile is being prepared for launch.

The facility was built at the Musudan-ni missile site on North Korea's northeastern coast either late last year or early this year, the newspaper reported, citing an unidentified senior South Korean official.

Analysts said satellite imagery taken last week revealed a flurry of activity at the Musudan-ni test site but no indication a rocket had been mounted on the launch pad. Once mounted, the rocket could take days to fuel.

Changes in commercial satellite images captured Wednesday by DigitalGlobe indicate progress toward a launch, said Tim Brown, director of Talent-Keyhole.com, an independent imagery analysis firm in the U.S. He predicted a launch within weeks.

In 1998, North Korea test-fired a long-range Taepodong-1 ballistic missile over Japan and then claimed to have put a satellite into orbit. In 2006, the country also test-launched a longer-range Taepodong-2 missile believed capable of reaching Alaska, but it plunged into the ocean shortly after liftoff. The North is believed to be working on an upgraded Taepodong-2 capable of reaching the U.S. west coast.

The U.N. Security Council passed a resolution in 2006 prohibiting Pyongyang from ballistic activity. South Korea says it would consider either a satellite or missile launch a threat and violation of the U.N. ban since both use similar rocket delivery systems.

Associated Press writers Kwang-tae Kim in Seoul, Pamela Hess in Washington and Anita Chang in Beijing contributed to this report.

<http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2009/02/26/asia/AS-NKorea-Missile.php>

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The Australian
February 28, 2009

Japan May Aim to Down North Korea Missile

Peter Alford, Tokyo correspondent

JAPAN is considering trying to knock out a North Korean missile if it approaches Japanese territory, Defence Minister Yasukazu Hamada said yesterday.

Under questioning by reporters as North Korea intensified preparations for a long-range missile launch, Mr Hamada did not say whether activating Japan's ballistic missile defence system was a serious option - but it was under consideration.

"The Defence Ministry has long been considering such a thing," Mr Hamada said.

"It's not something we have to comment on in one way or another just because we have a situation like this."

The Japanese BMD system was developed in co-operation with the US and limited testing has produced mixed results.

There would be serious diplomatic and international legal ramifications if a Japanese anti-ballistic missile was launched against what North Korea insists will be a communications satellite launch for its so-called peaceful space program.

The three-stage Taepodong-2 ballistic missile the North Koreans have under development, and are expected to test within a fortnight, can carry either a warhead or a small satellite.

A Seoul newspaper, quoting South Korean government sources, yesterday reported North Korean technicians had started testing missile-tracking radar and other electronic monitoring equipment at the launch site, Musudan-ri, on the northeast coast.

Similar activity started about two weeks before both of the previous long-range missile launches, in 1998 and July 2006.

A South Korean news agency, Yonhap, also reported a senior official at North Korea's UN mission, Kim Myong-kil, confirming that final preparations for a launch were under way.

The launch was "not an issue subject to negotiations" between North Korea and the US or other countries, Mr Kim said, but "our independent right".

It was North Korea's Taepodong-1 test in 1998 that forced a previously unwilling Japan to join the US in BMD development.

The inter-operable Japanese and US systems are based on two levels of missile defence and the powerful Aegis ship-borne radar and missile guidance technology. The first layer, which would be used in the case of a North Korean missile approaching Japan, is targeting it with SM-3 interceptor missiles from Aegis destroyers.

The task is extremely demanding, likened to "shooting a bullet with a bullet", and in the two Japanese tests so far, one interceptor struck its target and the other missed.

<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,25115828-2703,00.html>

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RIA Novosti

Iran Plans to have 50,000 Cat Natanz in 5 years

25 February 2009

TEHRAN, February 25 (RIA Novosti) - Iran's nuclear chief said on Wednesday the Islamic Republic had 6,000 operating centrifuges at a uranium enrichment facility at Natanz and was planning to install a total of 50,000 over the next five years.

"We have 6,000 working centrifuges at present and we are planning to increase their number next year," Vice President Gholamreza Aghazadeh, who is also the head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, said.

He reiterated that the Islamic Republic would continue pursuing nuclear technology to generate electricity, despite international demands to halt its controversial nuclear program.

"We have a plan for the next five years. It envisions the installation of 50,000 centrifuges over this period," he said.

"It is time for the West and the U.S. to acknowledge and accept the fact that Iran is a nuclear power. Even if they refuse to do so, Iran will remain a nuclear power," Aghazadeh added.

Iran is under three sets of relatively mild UN Security Council sanctions over its nuclear program. Western powers led by the United States, along with Israel, accuse Tehran of attempting to develop nuclear weapons.

Iran insists it plans to use enriched uranium fuel produced at Natanz in its first domestically-built nuclear power plant, in the town of Darkhovin, which is scheduled to become operational in 2016.

Meanwhile, the head of Russia's state nuclear power corporation Rosatom Sergei Kiriyenko announced earlier on Wednesday that Russia had completed the construction of Iran's first nuclear power plant at Bushehr and was due to start a series of pre-launch tests at the facility.

The announcement triggered an immediate response from Israel's Foreign Ministry, which said the completion of Iran's first nuclear power plant was "bad news" for the whole world.

The plant in south Iran, which Russia undertook to finish as part of a 1998 contract, was originally scheduled to go on line at the end of 2006, but the date has been pushed back several times.

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20090225/120306698.html>

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London Times

February 25, 2009

Tehran Begins Test Run of Nuclear Plant Despite Weapons Fear

Tony Halpin in Moscow

Iran moves a step closer to joining the nuclear club today by beginning a test run of its Russian-built atomic power plant. Officials in Tehran said that the Bushehr plant would undergo operational tests during a visit by Sergei Kiriyenko, the head of Russia's state atomic energy corporation.

Mr Kiriyenko is travelling to Iran to discuss completion of the \$1 billion (£695 million) project, which is running almost three years behind schedule after repeated delays caused by disputes over payment. Iran's atomic energy organisation said that the power station was now expected to start work in the first half of this year. Russia said that today's test would not involve nuclear fuel.

Tehran insists that its nuclear programme is purely for civilian purposes to overcome electricity shortages in its economy. But the United States and European Union suspect that Iran is secretly building a nuclear bomb and the United Nations Security Council has imposed sanctions over the regime's refusal to suspend uranium enrichment.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) will meet next week to consider the latest report by the director-general, Mohamed ElBaradei, on Iran, amid continuing concern over the Islamic republic's intentions. The IAEA reported last week that inspectors had discovered an additional 209 kilograms (461lb) of low-enriched uranium, a third more than was previously thought to be held. The find took Tehran over the threshold of the "nuclear breakout capacity" of a tonne of fissile material, the amount that is sufficient to make a bomb.

While it could take months and even years to enrich the uranium to weapons-grade material, the development has raised fears about Iranian ambitions to new heights.

Russia has refused to abandon the Bushehr project, which it started in 1998. It argues that no evidence exists of an Iranian weapons programme and that the Islamic state has the same right as other countries to develop civil nuclear energy. Iran had provided written assurances not to use uranium supplied by Russia for any purpose other than civil energy and all spent fuel would have to be returned to Russia for reprocessing. Russia delivered 82 tonnes of low-enriched uranium to Iran last year, which is under IAEA supervision.

Alexei Borodavkin, Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister, told the Islamic Republic News Agency this month that Moscow saw no reason to change its policy towards Iran. He insisted that Bushehr would be completed and put into operation.

Relations between Russia and Iran present a key challenge for President Obama. The United States needs Russian help in transporting essential supplies to Nato forces in Afghanistan and it can not afford to alienate Moscow as it pushes to restrain Iran's nuclear activities. However, co-operation over Iran will also be an early test of Moscow's willingness to find common ground with the US.

Fears that Russia may sell advanced anti-aircraft systems to Tehran are already causing concern in the US and Israel, which have refused to rule out a military strike on Iran's nuclear installations if diplomacy fails.

Iran's Defence Minister visited Moscow last week amid reports that Russia was ready to sell S300 air-defence systems, which have a range of 150 kilometres (95 miles) and can intercept jets at low altitudes. Moscow has already supplied 29 Tor-M1 missile-defence systems to Tehran in a 2005 deal worth \$700 million.

Russia's defence ministry denied that it had sold "offensive weapons" to Iran. Kommersant newspaper reported, however, that Moscow had already signed a contract but was holding back delivery as a response to American overtures for an improved relationship.

The new US Administration has signalled that it is willing to accommodate Russian concerns over the planned American missile-defence shield in Eastern Europe. Since the shield is principally aimed at threats from Iran, any deal would be likely to involve Russian support for efforts to prevent Tehran from acquiring a nuclear bomb.

http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/middle_east/article5799150.ece

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Daily Pakistan
25 February 2009

Russia Sees No Concern Over Nuclear Iran

WRITTEN BY WWW.DAILY.PK

There is no room for Western concern over Russia's nuclear cooperation with Iran, says the head of the Rosatom State Atomic Corporation. Sergei Kiriyenko, in a joint Wednesday press conference with head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization (AEO) Gholam-Reza Aqazadeh in Bushehr, addressed Western opposition to Moscow's nuclear cooperation with Tehran.

"Cooperation between Iran and Russia is based on international norms and conventions and it should be said that nothing is being done outside the non-proliferation framework," explained the Russian nuclear official in response to a question by Press TV's correspondent Gisoo Misha Ahmadi.

Kiriyenko added that those who seek to make excuses to hinder the Iranian nuclear program should "lose all hope as they witness the level of progress at the Bushehr power plant."

"Russia's cooperation with Iran in building the Bushehr power plant is not subject to any political games," he stressed.

The remarks came after Iran's Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki, in an interview with RIA Novosti, suggested the West had launched a misinformation campaign against the Iranian nuclear program to force an end to Russia's nuclear presence in Iran for competitive reasons.

"Certain powers have sought to question the nature of Tehran-Moscow nuclear cooperation. It should be noted that their objective is to vie with Russia for Iran's nuclear market," Mottaki said in early February.

The West argues that Iran has sufficient oil and gas reserves for power generation and that it therefore needs no nuclear reactors.

However, Kiriyenko said Russia believes that under the supervision of the UN nuclear watchdog and while observing the non-proliferation rules any country can avail itself of the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

"We believe that the structure in the Bushehr plant itself is in total conformity with the Non-Proliferation," said the Russian official.

He added that Russia's cooperation in building the Bushehr plant removes every doubt about Iran's nuclear intentions, as the whole project is transparent in its entirety.

"Anyone who thinks this project can be used for the proliferation of nuclear weapons can come here and see for themselves."

The start-up of the Bushehr plant is considered as a leap forward in Iran's efforts in developing nuclear technology, which the country insists it intends to use for peaceful purposes.

On the first day of the test run of the plant in the southwestern city of Bushehr Aqazadeh said the power plant would become operational in nearly seven months.

Without providing an exact timetable, the Iranian official said if the test stage goes "smoothly", the plant would become operational "sooner".

<http://www.daily.pk/world/middle-east/9534-russia-sees-no-concern-over-nuclear-iran-.html>

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New York Times
February 26, 2009

Iran to Begin Tests at Nuclear Station

By NAZILA FATHI and ALAN COWELL

TEHRAN -- Iran started tests at its first nuclear power plant in the southern port of Bushehr on Wednesday, despite intense international pressure over its nuclear program.

Officials said that simulated fuel rods made of lead were used instead of nuclear fuel to test the 1,000 megawatt, Russian-built plant, the ISNA student news agency reported.

"Virtual fuel rods contain lead instead of uranium," Mohammad Saeedi, the deputy head of Iran's Nuclear Energy Organization told reporters. "After these tests we can enter the launching process."

The head of the Russian nuclear agency, Sergei V. Kiriyenko, who was visiting Iran for the occasion, said that the construction stage was over.

"We are now in the pre-commissioning stage, which is a combination of complex procedures," ISNA quoted him as saying. The long-delayed plant was nearing its "final stages before launching," he said, but added that it was not clear when nuclear fuel rods would be inserted.

"We do not have a specific schedule for that yet," he said.

Moscow has supplied the nuclear fuel for the plant under arrangements with the United Nations nuclear agency, the International Atomic Energy Agency. The agency said in a report last week that Iran planned to begin loading nuclear fuel in the second quarter of 2009.

The fuel is currently under I.A.E.A. seal.

Construction of a nuclear facility by a German company began in Bushehr in the mid-1970s but was suspended after the 1979 Islamic revolution. Moscow agreed in 1994 to complete the facility, based on a Russian design.

The project was delayed by Western pressure over Iran's nuclear program and by the complexities of combining German and Russian designs.

The United States and some Western countries accuse Iran of having a covert nuclear weapons program. Iran contends that it seeks only to produce nuclear energy and its program is peaceful.

Russia sent its first shipment of enriched-uranium fuel rods to the Bushehr plant in December 2007 just two weeks after the release of a United States intelligence report concluding that Iran stopped its nuclear weapons program in 2003 and had not restarted it as of mid-2007. The report subsequently generated much contentious debate about its accuracy.

Initially, the United States opposed Russia's role in building the Bushehr reactor and supplying it with fuel. But about two years ago, Washington reversed its position in return for Moscow's support in securing the first United Nations sanctions against Iran. Iran was also reported to have agreed to send spent fuel from Bushehr back to Russia.

More recently, much international attention has focused on Iran's desert enrichment plant in Natanz.

Iran has been the target of three sets of United Nations Security Council sanctions for refusing to halt enrichment. Iran says that it is only enriching uranium to low levels to produce fuel for its nuclear reactors. Highly enriched uranium could be used for making weapons.

Coupled with its nuclear program, Tehran has been pursuing a missile development project.

Earlier this month, Iran launched a satellite on a domestically-built rocket into orbit. Senior U.S. officials expressed concern, saying that Iran could use the rocket to deliver warheads.

In the first appraisal of Iran's nuclear program since President Obama took office, international inspectors have found that Iran recently understated by a third how much uranium it has enriched, United Nations officials said last week.

The officials also declared for the first time that the amount of uranium that Tehran had now amassed — more than a ton — was sufficient, with added purification, to make a bomb.

In a report issued in Vienna, the International Atomic Energy Agency said it had discovered an additional 460 pounds of low-enriched uranium, a third more than Iran had previously disclosed. The agency made the find during its annual physical inventory of nuclear materials at Natanz.

President Obama has conditionally offered Iran a dialogue about its nuclear intentions. Earlier this month, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the Iranian president, promised that if the United States is truly serious about changing the countries' relations, then Iran was ready to respond in kind.

"It is clear that change should be fundamental, not tactical, and our people welcome real changes," he said. "Our nation is ready to hold talks based on mutual respect and in a fair atmosphere."

Analysts in Tehran said the Iranian response did not preclude continued efforts to develop nuclear expertise which Iran says is its right under international law. The nuclear program is also seen by analysts as a means for Iran to reinforce its bargaining position in talks over the program and bolster its ambitions as a regional power.

Nazila Fathi reported from Tehran, and Alan Cowell from London.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/26/world/middleeast/26iran.html>

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Iran Tests Nuclear Plant, in Venture with Russia

By ROSHANAK TAGHAVI

TEHRAN -- Iran said it has begun a long-delayed test run of its first nuclear power plant, which Russia will provide the fuel for. The Obama administration said the collaboration makes a further case for Tehran to abandon its homegrown efforts at uranium enrichment.

Tehran says the tests could lead to full operations this year of the 1,000-megawatt plant near the southwestern city of Bushehr.

In an arrangement intended in part to allay international concerns about the use of nuclear materiel from the plant for weapons, Russia will provide the nuclear fuel for the reactor and take back the spent fuel. Iran says all operations will be monitored by inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency.

U.S. State Department spokesman Robert Wood on Wednesday said the arrangement "demonstrates that Iran does not need to develop any kind of indigenous ... uranium-enrichment capacity."

He called the arrangement "an appropriate mechanism for Iran to receive the benefits of the peaceful use of nuclear energy."

The U.S. has been trying through sanctions and talks to push Iran to drop what Washington says is a program to produce nuclear weapons. Tehran says it is exclusively for energy production.

Iran claims to have 6,000 centrifuges enriching uranium -- a process that could be used for nuclear energy or weapon production.

Israel's foreign ministry said the tests at Bushehr are "very bad news."

"The real issue here is the general Iranian program designed to obtain nuclear weapons. The Bushehr reactor is just one component of that program," a foreign ministry spokesman said, according to the Associated Press.

Iranian political analyst Saeed Laylaz said the test, much like recent satellite and test-missile launches by the Islamic republic, is intended to give Tehran firmer standing in any potential talks with Washington.

The Obama administration and Iran have expressed willingness to enter talks about the country's nuclear program, but no talks have been announced.

The tests were announced Wednesday in a ceremony attended by Sergei Kiriyenko, head of Rosatom, Russia's state nuclear company.

Testing, which will be done with lead instead of uranium, could take four to seven months, Iran Atomic Energy Organization chief Gholam Reza Aghazadeh said, the AP said.

—*Louise Radnofsky in Washington contributed to this article.*

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123560389683776661.html?mod=googlenews_wsj

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San Francisco Chronicle

February 26, 2009

Iran says Bushehr Nuclear Plant Test a Success

Thomas Erdbrink, Washington Post

04:00 PST Tehran ---The first nuclear power plant built in Iran was tested successfully by Iranian and Russian officials Wednesday, Iran said.

The power plant is projected to be fully operational by the end of the year.

"This, in simple terms, means that Bushehr power plant is completed today and its operation is definite," Gholamreza Aqazadeh, head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, told Iranian state television. "The political concerns about Bushehr plant are now completely addressed today."

The start of operations at the 1,000-megawatt light-water reactor near the southern Iranian port of Bushehr - built with Russian assistance under a \$1 billion contract - had long been delayed over financial ambiguities as well as construction and supply glitches.

The plant is a highly symbolic facet of Iran's controversial nuclear program. The United States, Israel and some European nations have charged that Iran is trying to produce nuclear weapons.

But Iranian leaders insist the country's nuclear ambitions are peaceful. Tehran points at regular energy shortages in the country as proof of the need for nuclear energy.

The test did not involve batches of low-enriched uranium supplied to Iran by Atomstroieksport, the Russian state company that is building the plant. Instead "virtual" fuel was injected in the reactor, officials said.

Western countries have criticized Russia over its support for the Iranian nuclear program. Russia says the plant is purely civilian, however, and cannot be used for any weapons program.

Russian officials say that once the uranium they have provided is used, the spent uranium has to be returned, so it cannot be used for other means.

Russia, together with China, has weakened Western-backed efforts in the U.N. Security Council to sanction Iran over its nuclear program.

<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2009/02/26/MN4E164UQT.DTL>

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Gulf Daily News – Bahrain

Iran Nuclear Vow

26 February 2009

BUSHEHR: Iran said yesterday it plans a nearly 10-fold expansion of its uranium enrichment capacity in the next five years, denying a UN report which said its nuclear activities had slowed. "We have neither slowed down nor accelerated our work," said Gholamreza Aghazadeh, head of the Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran.

He was speaking in southwestern coastal town of Bushehr where Iran is building its first nuclear power plant.

Earlier, Iran said it had carried out successful tests at the Russian-built plant, taking it a step closer to its launch.

The visiting head of Russia's state nuclear company, Sergei Kiriyenko, hailed "significant improvements" in Iran's first such plant.

Aghazadeh said Iran would over the next five years install 50,000 centrifuges used to enrich uranium at its Natanz plant in the central desert, up from the 6,000 he said were now running.

<http://www.gulf-daily-news.com/Story.asp?Article=244217&Sn=WORL&IssueID=31343>

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London Daily Telegraph

20 February 2009

Al-Qaeda Founder Launches Fierce Attack on Osama bin Laden

By David Blair in Cairo

Sayyid Imam al-Sharif, who goes by the nom de guerre Dr Fadl, helped bin Laden create al-Qaeda and then led an Islamist insurgency in Egypt in the 1990s.

But in a book written from inside an Egyptian prison, he has launched a frontal attack on al-Qaeda's ideology and the personal failings of bin Laden and particularly his Egyptian deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri.

Twenty years ago, Dr Fadl became al-Qaeda's intellectual figurehead with a crucial book setting out the rationale for global jihad against the West.

Today, however, he believes the murder of innocent people is both contrary to Islam and a strategic error. "Every drop of blood that was shed or is being shed in Afghanistan and Iraq is the responsibility of bin Laden and Zawahiri and their followers," writes Dr Fadl.

The terrorist attacks on September 11 were both immoral and counterproductive, he writes. "Ramming America has become the shortest road to fame and leadership among the Arabs and Muslims. But what good is it if you destroy one of your enemy's buildings, and he destroys one of your countries? What good is it if you kill one of his people, and he kills a thousand of yours?" asks Dr Fadl. "That, in short, is my evaluation of 9/11."

He is equally unsparing about Muslims who move to the West and then take up terrorism. "If they gave you permission to enter their homes and live with them, and if they gave you security for yourself and your money, and if they gave you the opportunity to work or study, or they granted you political asylum," writes Dr Fadl, then it is "not honourable" to "betray them, through killing and destruction".

In particular, Dr Fadl focuses his attack on Zawahiri, a key figure in al-Qaeda's core leadership and a fellow Egyptian whom he has known for 40 years. Zawahiri is a "liar" who was paid by Sudan's intelligence service to organise terrorist attacks in Egypt in the 1990s, he writes.

The criticisms have emerged from Dr Fadl's cell in Tora prison in southern Cairo, where a sand-coloured perimeter wall is lined with watchtowers, each holding a sentry wielding a Kalashnikov assault rifle. Torture inside Egyptian jails is "widespread and systematic", according to Amnesty International.

Zawahiri has alleged that his former comrade was tortured into recanting. But the al-Qaeda leader still felt the need to compose a detailed, 200-page rebuttal of his antagonist.

The fact that Zawahiri went to this trouble could prove the credibility of Dr Fadl and the fact that his criticisms have stung their target. The central question is whether this attack on al-Qaeda's ideology will sway a wider audience in the Muslim world.

Fouad Allam, who spent 26 years in the State Security Directorate, Egypt's equivalent of MI5, said that Dr Fadl's assault on al-Qaeda's core leaders had been "very effective, both in prison and outside".

He added: "Within these secret organisations, leadership is very important. So when someone attacks the leadership from inside, especially personal attacks and character assassinations, this is very bad for them."

A western diplomat in Cairo agreed with this assessment, saying: "It has upset Zawahiri personally. You don't write 200 pages about something that doesn't bother you, especially if you're under some pressure, which I imagine Zawahiri is at the moment."

Dr Fadl was a central figure from the very outset of bin Laden's campaign. He was part of the tight circle which founded al-Qaeda in 1988 in the closing stages of the war against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. By then, Dr Fadl was already the leader of Egyptian Islamic Jihad, an extremist movement which fought the Cairo regime until its defeat in the 1990s.

Dr Fadl fled to Yemen, where he was arrested after September 11 and transferred to Egypt, where he is serving a life sentence. "He has the credibility of someone who has really gone through the whole system," said the diplomat. "Nobody's questioning the fact that he was the mentor of Zawahiri and the ideologue of Egyptian Islamic Jihad."

Terrorist movements across the world have a history of alienating their popular support by waging campaigns of indiscriminate murder. This process of disintegration often begins with a senior leader publicly denouncing his old colleagues. Dr Fadl's missives may show that al-Qaeda has entered this vital stage.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/egypt/4736358/Al-Qaeda-founder-launches-fierce-attack-on-Osama-bin-Laden.html>

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Middle East Times
February 23, 2009

Rift Within Al-Qaida? Is Osama about to be Found?

By CLAUDE SALHANI (Editor, Middle East Times)

This has not been a good week for al-Qaida and its top leadership. First, one of the founders of the number one terror group in the world has come out with a stunning attack on the current top leadership of al-Qaida, accusing

them of being immoral, corrupt and on the payroll of Arab intelligence services. And second, geographers from the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) believe to have narrowed down the possible hiding place of the organization's mastermind, Osama bin Laden, to three buildings in Pakistan.

Sayyid Imam al-Sharif, better known by his pseudonym of Dr. Fadl, has accused both bin Laden and his Egyptian deputy Ayman al-Zawahiri, of hijacking the cause and derailing the original ideology he helped establish almost two decades ago.

Does this unexpected turn of events herald the beginning of a major shift in the world of takfiri Islamists? Perhaps. In any case it is bound to have repercussions on many of those sitting on the fence of radical Islamism, teetering between falling prey to those calling for terrorist acts and those advocating that the killing of innocents is un-Islamic and goes counter to everything that the Koran and Islam stand for.

As for bin Laden and his entourage, they may have bigger problems than bad public relations. Using standard geographic tools, the kind used to locate endangered species and criminals on the lam, a group of researchers at UCLA claim they have narrowed bin Laden's hiding place to three possible buildings in the northwestern Pakistani city of Parachinar.

Before releasing the information to the public, Thomas W. Gillespie, the group's head researcher, a biogeographer from UCLA was quoted in the Los Angeles Times as saying he and his students first contacted the FBI with their findings. The FBI refused to comment on the report, stating they never talk about "an active investigation."

Sharif, who was nabbed in Yemen shortly after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks and extradited to Egypt, is serving time in Cairo's infamous Tora Prison for his part in trying to instigate a revolt in Egypt in the 1990s. He launched his surprise assault on his former comrades in arms from his cell, in a newly released book he wrote behind bars.

In his book Dr. Fadl condemns what he called the murder of innocent victims, saying it went contrary to Islam. He goes on to accuse the two top leaders of al-Qaida of being responsible for "every drop of blood that was shed or is being shed in Afghanistan and Iraq."

Sharif questions in his book the rationale behind the attacks by al-Qaida on the United States, asking how beneficial it might be to the cause of Islam in destroying "one of your enemy's buildings and he destroys one of your countries?"

He called the 9/11 attacks against the World Trade Center in New York and against the Pentagon near Washington, D.C. "immoral and counterproductive."

In a major change of policy from what seems to be the current takfiri modus operandi, Dr. Fadl opposes the use of terrorism by Muslims living in the West on the grounds that "it is not honorable," after they have invited you into their homes.

He is particularly harsh on bin Laden's number two, who according to a report published in the London Telegraph newspaper, Dr. Fadl has known for 40 years.

The Telegraph quotes the jailed Egyptian dissident saying that Zawahiri is a "liar who was paid by Sudan's intelligence service to organize terrorist attacks in Egypt in the 1990s."

The paper's Cairo correspondent quotes a 26-year veteran of Egypt's State Security Directorate, as saying that "Dr. Fadl's assault on al-Qaida's core leaders had been very effective, both in prison and outside."

As for finding bin Laden, using part guesswork, part detective work and working from satellite maps and images, the UCLA team concluded that the unwell bin Laden must have walked almost two miles before reaching Parachinar, a city with a population of half a million.

Scrutinizing every building through the use of satellite imagery, the group searched for one that would accommodate bin Laden and his party. They looked for buildings with walls at least 10 feet high to provide security and privacy; with at least three rooms and with continuous electricity needed to keep bin Laden's kidney dialysis machine functioning.

http://www.metimes.com/International/2009/02/23/rift_within_al-qaida_is_osama_about_to_be_found/3057/

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Dr. Fadl's Complaint

By Clifford D. May

In the 20th century, communists waged a struggle for global dominance, but there were conflicts within their ranks as well — disputes over strategy, ideology, and doctrine. Bolsheviks fought Mensheviks; Stalin quarreled with Trotsky (Stalin had the last word: an ice pick delivered to Trotsky's skull); Maoists broke with the Kremlin.

Nowadays, a new global struggle by a new breed of totalitarians aims not at establishing an international dictatorship of the proletariat, but rather Dar al-Islam, a world ruled by Muslims. Among these self-described jihadis there also are disputes over strategy, ideology, and doctrine.

Sayyid Imam al-Sharif — also known by the nom de guerre Dr. Fadl — may be the most influential Islamist you've never heard of. The *Telegraph*, a British newspaper, notes that he was “part of the tight circle which founded al-Qaeda in 1988 in the closing stages of the war against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.” He went on to lead an insurgency against Egypt which landed him in Tora prison in southern Cairo where he has since spent his days thinking and writing.

In 2007, he published *The Document of Right Guidance for Jihad Activity in Egypt and the World*. In an in-depth report, Daniel Lav, of the invaluable Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), boils Dr. Fadl's “guidance” down to this: The jihadist movement has “strayed from the proper practice of jihad as laid down in Islamic law.”

That brought a furious response from Ayman al-Zawahiri, who was once Dr. Fadl's disciple and is now Osama bin Laden's top deputy. He wrote *A Treatise Exonerating the Nation of the Pen and the Sword from the Blemish of the Accusation of Weakness and Fatigue* which alleges that Dr. Fadl was forced to criticize al-Qaeda by CIA and Jewish torturers. Al-Zawahiri also disputes Dr. Fadl's contention that the jihadi movement is militarily and financially unprepared to wage a successful war against the West.

Now Dr. Fadl has returned fire with a new book: *Exposing the Exoneration*. In it, he comes to a conclusion that would not make him popular at Hollywood parties. “Every drop of blood that was shed or is being shed in Afghanistan and Iraq is the responsibility of bin Laden and Zawahiri and their followers,” he writes. “Was it not al-Qaeda that lit the fuse of sectarian civil war in Iraq, through [the actions of al-Qaeda in Iraq commander] Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, who killed the Shi'ites en masse? . . . Can the mentality that caused the loss of an Islamic state that existed in reality, in the Taliban's Afghanistan — can this mentality be expected to establish an Islamic state in Iraq — in reality, and not on the internet? And have the Islamic peoples become guinea pigs upon whom bin Laden and al-Zawahiri try out their pastime and sport of killing en masse?”

Dr. Fadl also finds fault with the attacks of 9/11/01. “Ramming America has become the shortest road to fame and leadership among the Arabs and Muslims,” he observes. “[T]o cross the ocean to go to your enemy in its own home and destroy one of its buildings, and [in retaliation] it destroys the Taliban state — and then you claim to be a mujahid — only an idiot would do such a thing.”

Perhaps more surprisingly, Dr. Fadl demonstrates that he is not an ends-justifies-the-means kind of guy. He believes that Islamic rules apply even to those who would be Islamic rulers. For example, he criticizes Muslims who settle in the West and then take up arms against their hosts. “If they gave you permission to enter their homes and live with them, and if they gave you security for yourself and your money, and if they gave you the opportunity to work or study, or they granted you political asylum,” he writes, then it is “not honorable” to “betray them, through killing and destruction.”

Lav notes that Dr. Fadl challenges al-Zawahiri to a kind of Islamic duel — “a ritual exchange of curses (mubahala), in which each side invites Allah's curse on the party that is lying.” Dr. Fadl then adds insult to injury: “Some people pay money for fame, or to promote themselves or their product, but al-Zawahiri pays in the blood and lives of his brothers, and leads them to waste away in prison, for his own media fame.”

Al-Qaeda's interpretation of Sharia law is not just incorrect, according to Dr. Fadl — it is a “criminal school of belief.” For example, he argues that Islamic jurisprudence does not provide unrestricted permission to use human shields or to indulge in indiscriminate killing of non-combatants. “The number of Muslims whose death and dispossession al-Qaeda has caused in a number of years, in Kenya, Afghanistan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Algeria,

Pakistan, and elsewhere, is far greater than the number killed or dispossessed by Israel in Palestine and neighboring countries in 60 years," he writes. "So all the talk of al-Qaeda defending Muslims is a tall tale."

Slamming al-Qaeda's leaders for accusing any Muslim who criticizes them of serving the "Crusaders and Zionists" (that is, Christians and Jews), Dr. Fadl goes so far as to imply that al-Qaeda's leaders are themselves apostates for claiming authority that belongs to God alone: "Allah, may He be praised, says that the Muslims' misfortunes are because of themselves, and bin Laden and al-Zawahiri say they are because of America. Let the Muslims consider who they are going to follow: Allah, or bin Laden and al-Zawahiri?"

Finally, Dr. Fadl provides what may be a key insight into how we should fight this war. He says that whenever infidels defeat Muslims, there can be only one explanation: Allah has allowed that as a punishment for the Muslims' sins. Worth remembering the next time someone tells you that winning battles gets us nowhere, that it only makes martyrs of the militants.

— *Clifford D. May, a former New York Times foreign correspondent, is the president of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a policy institute focusing on terrorism.*

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<http://article.nationalreview.com/?q=YjAwYWQwMjhlYWw2MTNjYTI5OWU2ZjhhMDlmMTM4ZGM=>

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Gulf News – United Arab Emirates

February 23, 2009

Lockheed Nears \$7b System Deal

Bloomberg

Dubai: Lockheed Martin Corp, the world's largest defence company, said a \$7 billion (Dh25.7 billion) agreement to sell an advanced missile defence system to the United Arab Emirates may be reached within 18 months.

"The US government is fully behind selling THAAD to the UAE," said Dennis Cavin, vice president for international air and missile defence strategic initiatives, in an interview in Abu Dhabi yesterday. Delivery would begin after 2012.

The Terminal High-Altitude Area Defence weapon (THAAD) system is capable of shooting down medium-and long-range ballistic missiles. The US Defence Department announced the proposed sale on September 10, saying it will "improve the security of a friendly country."

Middle Eastern states are seeking weapons systems such as missile defence technology because of "an increased awareness of risks and security requirements," said Jim Jamerson, Lockheed Martin president for the Middle East and Africa. Better relations between the US and Iran won't lessen the need for missile defence, added Jamerson, who was attending a military technology conference in the country.

The order would be the first foreign sale of the THAAD system. Bethesda, Maryland-based Lockheed Martin said in December it would sell Patriot Advanced Capability-3 missiles to the UAE for use in the Patriot air defence system. The order placed by the US Army and the UAE includes 172 of the PAC-3 missiles and 42 launcher modification kits. Lockheed Martin and partner Raytheon Co, along with the US government, are in talks to sell the missiles to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, Cavin said. "They are also in talks with Qatar, which is seeking to develop missile defence capability," Cavin said.

<http://www.gulfnews.com/business/General/10288964.html>

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The Hill

February 24, 2009

Rep. Tauscher Asks Gates to Rethink Missile Defense

By Roxana Tiron

Rep. Ellen Tauscher (D-Calif.) is urging Defense Secretary Robert Gates to spend more money in the fiscal 2010 budget on countering immediate ballistic missile threats rather than on futuristic programs seeking to address long-range missile attacks.

"The threat from short-and medium-range missiles represents the overwhelming ballistic missile threat to the United States' interests, its deployed forces and friends and allies around the world," Tauscher, chairwoman of the House Armed Services Strategic Forces panel, wrote to Gates on Feb. 23.

"Given the need to fund other high priority defense programs, reductions to the missile defense programs may be required."

Tauscher stressed, however, that given the expected budget constraints, doubling the number of the Army's Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) interceptors and of the Navy's Standard Missile-3 (SM-3) interceptors, should be the Pentagon's "highest priority within the missile defense budget." In her letter to Gates, she said that the Pentagon's Joint Staff also reached the conclusion that they needed more interceptors to meet the needs of the troops fighting in several theaters of war.

Congress, and in particular Democrats both in the House and Senate, have been at odds with the Pentagon over favoring investments in proven missile defenses rather than long-term, futuristic systems aimed at defeating long-range ballistic missile threats. Some of those systems have experienced development and testing issues.

"I fully agree with President Obama's position that we should only deploy missile defenses that have been sufficiently tested and proven to work," Tauscher, a House leader in missile defense issues, wrote to Gates. "Theater missile defense systems, such as Patriot PAC-3, THAAD and Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense, meet the president's criteria."

Tauscher and her subcommittee have worked over the last several years to boost funding in those areas. Her subcommittee will hold a hearing Wednesday on the future of missile defense testing.

In her letter to Gates, Tauscher urged the Pentagon to look into the option of upgrading more of the Navy's Aegis cruisers and destroyers to be able to conduct ballistic missile defense operations. "This assessment should be a priority," she stressed. She added that deploying a land-based version of the SM-3 missile, which is currently a naval capability, would have the potential to "expand missile defense coverage" for the U.S. military and its allies around the world.

<http://thehill.com/leading-the-news/rep.-tauscher-asks-gates-to-rethink-missile-defense-2009-02-23.html>

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Bloomberg.com
February 24, 2009

Pentagon Tester Lacks 'High Confidence' In U.S. Missile Defense

By Tony Capaccio, Bloomberg News

The Pentagon's weapons tester says he doesn't have "high confidence" that the Boeing Co.-managed U.S. missile defense would be effective against even a rudimentary North Korean missile.

Testing against the possible trajectories and altitudes of a North Korean missile has been limited and hasn't generated enough data to run the thousands of computer simulations needed to predict performance, Charles McQueary wrote in his annual report to Congress.

"Additional test data collected under realistic conditions is necessary to increase confidence," he wrote.

North Korea is preparing to test a long-range missile, possibly within two weeks, according to a U.S. intelligence official. The Stalinist state today announced plans to launch a satellite; South Korea's defense minister said the regime may instead be preparing a long-range missile test.

The U.S. is concerned about the potential for North Korea to develop missiles capable of reaching Alaska or even the western coast of the American mainland. The test would be North Korea's first since a failed launch in July 2006.

Thomas Fingar, deputy director of national intelligence, told Congress last year that the likelihood of North Korea successfully delivering a missile against the U.S. "would be low absent successful testing." The intelligence

community stands by that assessment, Ross Feinstein, spokesman for Director of National Intelligence Dennis Blair, said today.

Michael O'Hanlon, an analyst at the Brookings Institution in Washington who tracks North Korean military developments, said the U.S. has "the upper hand overall" against the threat of a missile attack, although "it's always possible" that North Korea "could build countermeasures that would fool our system."

Defense analysts presume that any missile fired successfully by North Korea would carry decoys intended to fool interceptor warheads. According to McQueary, the U.S. defense probably wouldn't be effective even without the distraction of decoys.

Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Senator Carl Levin, who heads one of the panels that approves funding for missile defense, said McQueary's assessment is "troubling" and "not surprising."

"The Missile Defense Agency was allowed to cut corners" as the Bush administration accelerated deployment of an initial system in late 2004, Levin said Jan. 28 in an e-mail.

"I would say we've got to slow that down and properly test it," Levin, a Michigan Democrat, told reporters Jan. 30.

McQueary will testify before a House Armed Services Committee panel that is reviewing the missile defense program. U.S. Government Accountability Office and Missile Defense Agency officials will also testify. The agency last year estimated the ground-based program would cost at least \$37.3 billion.

The Ground-based Midcourse Defense system is a network of interceptor missiles linked by satellites, radar and communications networks. Chicago-based Boeing is the prime contractor. Northrop Grumman Corp., Raytheon Co. and Orbital Sciences Corp. are the top subcontractors.

The U.S. since mid-2004 has placed 24 interceptors in silos at Fort Greely, Alaska, and Vandenberg Air Force Base, California. That number will grow to 44 interceptors.

Richard Lehner, spokesman for the Missile Defense Agency, and Jessica Carlton, spokeswoman for Boeing, offered assessments of the system that were more upbeat than McQueary's.

The interceptors are designed "to combat a simple threat from North Korea and Iran, and that's a capability the nation has never had, and now we do," Lehner said. "We continue to incorporate ground tests into our modeling and simulation with very good results."

Carlton said Boeing believes its track record of eight successful intercepts in 13 attempts, including a test on Dec. 5, indicates a system "ready to defend the U.S. homeland."

<http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=conewsstory&refer=conews&tkr=BA%3AUS&sid=afc4fyAJ1Tg>

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DailyNews.com
25 February 2009

U.S. Missile Defense to Complete Test Review by May

By Andrea Shalal-Esa

WASHINGTON, Feb. 25, 2009 (Reuters) — After years of criticism that it was spending billions on an anti-missile defense system without adequate testing, the U.S. Missile Defense Agency on Wednesday said it had launched a comprehensive review of its testing plans and would complete it by May 2009.

Lt. Gen. Patrick O'Reilly, who took over as director of the Pentagon agency in November, told lawmakers he thought it was important to carefully map out a long-term plan for testing the various weapons involved in missile defense, rather than just providing those details on a two-year basis.

"We're working with the operational test communities -- not just MDA, but the independent reviewers -- to put together a comprehensive testing program that does convince everyone of (the) capabilities and limitations of these missile defense systems," O'Reilly said after a hearing of the strategic forces subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee.

He said the review had already revealed some shortcomings, not just in the testing plans, but also in the modeling and simulation needed for the various weapons programs.

"We've learned a lot from this process," O'Reilly said.

O'Reilly declined comment on reports that the Obama administration planned to cut missile defense spending in the fiscal 2010 budget by about \$2 billion from \$9.4 billion in 2009 and said discussions were still under way in the Pentagon.

Asked about the impact of such a large cut on the goals of the missile defense program, O'Reilly told reporters much would depend on whether the cuts were aimed at one specific program or across the board.

The Obama administration is due to unveil a broad plan for its 2010 budget on Thursday, including \$537 billion for defense, excluding war spending. But details for specific Pentagon programs are not expected until March or April.

<http://www.newsdaily.com/stories/tre51p094-us-missile-usa/#>

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RIA Novosti

Poland Sticking to U.S. Missile Shield Commitments - Top Brass

25 February 2009

MOSCOW, February 25 (RIA Novosti) - Poland is sticking to its commitments on the deployment of U.S. missile shield elements on its territory, but the U.S. administration has to decide on the timeframe, a senior Polish military official said on Wednesday.

Washington has agreed plans with Warsaw and Prague to deploy 10 interceptor missiles in Poland and a radar in the Czech Republic by 2013. The United States says the defenses are needed to deter possible strikes from "rogue states" such as Iran.

Russia has consistently opposed the missile shield as a threat to its national security and the balance of security in Europe. President Dmitry Medvedev threatened in November to retaliate if the U.S. plans went ahead by deploying Iskander-M missiles in the country's westernmost exclave of Kaliningrad, which borders NATO members Poland and Lithuania.

"Russia is against the missile shield, but the missile shield is not against Russia. We [Poland] have signed an agreement with the United States and are ready to deploy American interceptor missiles. But the implementation of the agreement depends on the U.S. The Americans should decide when they are ready to do this," Deputy Defense Minister Stanislaw Komorowski said in an interview with Russian popular daily Vremya Novostei.

U.S. President Barack Obama indicated earlier that he may put on hold his predecessor George Bush's plans concerning the third site for Washington's global missile defense system, which he said needed more analysis.

Komorowski also said that Poland is a full-fledged NATO member as it has been in the organization for 10 years now, adding that Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski would be a good candidate to replace NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, whose five-year term expires this year.

"We are by far not new members of the alliance, but its participants. Poland has sent some 3,000 peacekeepers on various missions abroad," he said.

Speaking about perspectives for Georgia and Ukraine to gain membership to the alliance, Komorowski said it is possible, but "in the distant future."

"One day Georgia will become a NATO member. But it needs Georgia to be ready for this and for us [NATO] to be ready to accept it [Georgia]. This is in the distant future, but it is in the future. The same goes for Ukraine," he said.

Last December, European NATO members led by Germany blocked U.S.-backed bids by Ukraine and Georgia to join programs leading to membership in the Western military alliance. The refusal was welcomed by Russia, which strongly opposes the alliance's expansion into the former Soviet Union.

Relations between Russia and NATO last year reached their lowest point since the Cold War after the brief military conflict between Moscow and Tbilisi.

In response to NATO's decision to halt cooperation, Russia put on hold a number of programs, including the Partnership for Peace program, a high-ranking visit to Moscow, some joint naval training and NATO visits to Russian ports.

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20090225/120286160.html>

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RIA Novosti

Poland Confirms Plans to Deploy U.S. Patriot Missile Systems

26 February 2009

WARSAW, February 26 (RIA Novosti) - U.S. Patriot air defense systems will be placed in Poland regardless of the prospects of the deployment of a U.S. missile defense base in the country, the Polish foreign minister said.

Radoslaw Sikorski met with U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in Washington late on Wednesday to discuss the placement of a U.S. base with at least 10 missile interceptors in Poland.

"I was especially pleased when the U.S. secretary of state said that the United States would implement what is most important for Poland - the political declaration signed as part of the missile shield deal," Sikorski said.

He added that the document included the placement of a U.S.-manned Patriot missile battery in Poland "initially as a temporary measure and later on a permanent basis."

Washington signed deals with Warsaw and Prague last year to deploy 10 interceptor missiles in Poland and a radar in the Czech Republic by 2013.

To clinch the deal, the United States accepted Poland's demands for extra security guarantees to offset potential risks of deploying a missile-interceptor base in the Central European country, including a Patriot missile air-defense system and greater military ties.

Washington has since moved to find a compromise on the missile shield dispute with Moscow, which opposes the plans, and has sought closer cooperation with Russia to prevent Iran from building nuclear weapons. The missile threat from Iran has been cited as a reason for deploying the new system in Central Europe.

Russia has consistently opposed the missile shield as a threat to its national security and the balance of security in Europe. President Dmitry Medvedev threatened in November to retaliate if the U.S. plans went ahead by deploying Iskander-M missiles in the country's westernmost exclave of Kaliningrad, which borders NATO members Poland and Lithuania.

U.S. President Barack Obama has indicated that he may put on hold his predecessor George Bush's plans concerning the European site for Washington's global missile defense system, which he said needed more analysis.

Sikorski said on Wednesday he did not know whether the missile shield plan would go ahead.

"The U.S. administration is still discussing the plans for a missile base in Poland. They have not decided yet," he said.

Patriot (MIM-104) is a theater air-defense system to counter tactical ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and advanced aircraft.

As well as the U.S., Patriot is in service in Egypt, Germany, Greece, Israel, Japan, Kuwait, the Netherlands, Saudi Arabia and Taiwan.

Patriot missile systems were successfully deployed by U.S. forces during Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003.

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20090226/120312409.html>

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RIA Novosti

Patriot Missiles in Poland Justify CFE Moratorium - Russian Analyst

26 February 2009

MOSCOW, February 26 (RIA Novosti) - The future placement of U.S. Patriot air defense systems in Poland is another reason for Russia to maintain its moratorium on a major arms reductions treaty in Europe, a Russian analyst said on Thursday.

Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski said on Wednesday that a battery of U.S.-manned Patriot systems would be placed in Poland regardless of the prospects for the deployment of a U.S. missile defense base in the country.

"It is another reason for us not to return to the Conventional Forces in Europe treaty [CFE]," said Vladimir Anokhin, vice president of the Academy of Geopolitical Problems, a Moscow-based think-tank.

Washington signed deals with Warsaw and Prague last year to deploy 10 interceptor missiles in Poland and a radar in the Czech Republic by 2013.

To clinch the deal with Warsaw, the United States accepted Poland's demands for extra security guarantees to offset the potential risks of deploying a missile-interceptor base in the Central European country, including a Patriot missile air-defense system and greater military ties.

Moscow strongly opposes the plans, calling them a threat to its national security.

Russia imposed a unilateral moratorium on the CFE treaty in December 2007, citing concerns over NATO's eastward expansion, a U.S. missile shield in Europe, and the alleged refusal of the alliance's new members to ratify the adopted version of the treaty.

Washington has since moved to find a compromise on the missile shield dispute with Moscow, and has sought closer cooperation with Russia to prevent Iran from building nuclear weapons. The missile threat from Iran has been cited as a reason for deploying the shield in Central Europe.

According to Anokhin, the possible deployment of Patriot missiles in Poland "will only complicate the current negotiations between Russia and Europe [on the CFE treaty], although the move itself would hardly threaten Russia's defense capability."

"We have no plans to attack Poland, so these guys [the Poles] are simply puffing their chests out, trying to create an image of an important country," the analyst said.

Patriot (MIM-104) is a theater air-defense system designed to counter tactical ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and advanced aircraft.

As well as the USA, Patriot is in service in Egypt, Germany, Greece, Israel, Japan, Kuwait, the Netherlands, Saudi Arabia and Taiwan. Patriot missile systems were successfully deployed by U.S. forces during Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003.

<http://en.rian.ru/russia/20090226/120320593.html>

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RIA Novosti

Russia to Continue Modernizing Its Nuclear Deterrent - Deputy PM

25 February 2009

MOSCOW, February 25 (RIA Novosti) - Russia will continue developing and modernizing its nuclear triad in 2009 despite the current global economic crisis, a deputy prime minister said on Wednesday.

Russia's state defense orders for 2009 are worth about 1 trillion rubles (\$28 billion), with money allocated to the Defense Ministry, as well as to more than 10 other ministries and agencies.

"The bulk of state defense orders in 2009 is allocated to the procurement of new weapons, R&D and modernization of existing arsenals, with priority given to the strategic nuclear triad, including the Strategic Missile Forces, the Navy and strategic aviation," Sergei Ivanov said in a speech to the lower house of Russia's parliament.

"It would certainly incur large expenses, but we do not have a choice, as we will have to continue developing and enhancing our nuclear deterrent," he said.

Ivanov added that the government also prioritizes the development of space-based intelligence-gathering and communications systems with the goal to create a national air-and-space defense network.

President Dmitry Medvedev said last year that Russia would make the modernization of its nuclear deterrent and Armed Forces a priority in light of the recent military conflict with Georgia.

"A guaranteed nuclear deterrent system for various military and political circumstances must be provided by 2020," Medvedev said.

Russia's military expenditure has been steadily growing recently, and the country reportedly plans to increase the current defense budget of \$40 billion by 50% in the next three years.

<http://en.rian.ru/russia/20090225/120296193.html>

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The Economist

Proliferation

United in defiance

February 26th, 2009

From *The Economist* print edition

The Proliferation Chain that Links North Korea and Iran

THE final frontier is being assaulted by a couple of troubling pioneers. North Korean officials are boasting that they will soon launch a rocket that will lift a communications satellite into space. With this defiant spectacular, they seem to be cocking a snook at America, South Korea, Japan, China and Russia, who have been trying through six-party talks to curb North Korea's equally vaunted nuclear-weapons efforts. Meanwhile, earlier in February, Iran—suspected of harbouring similar nuclear ambitions to North Korea's, though it denies this—lifted its own small, supposedly home-made satellite into orbit too.

Both regimes trumpet their space prowess, and indeed such technological feats are not easy to achieve. But how do these "civilian" space efforts complement their terrestrial nuclear work? That is the question that deeply worries outsiders.

India showed the way: its supposedly civilian space programme sometimes won generous outside assistance, even as nuclear help was denied for fear of advancing its suspected weapons-building. As a result of the parallel effort, India now has missiles capable of delivering nuclear warheads on targets not just throughout Pakistan, but deep inside China too. Quite simply, the technology needed to lift a satellite off the launch pad and shield it from damage on its way into space is indistinguishable from that needed to launch a far-flying nuclear-tipped ballistic missile.

North Korea and Iran appear to be following suit. Kim Jong Il's regime claims to have first embarked on its space adventures in 1998, when it launched a Taepodong-1 rocket over an alarmed Japan, across the Pacific towards a startled America. Mr Kim even issued a stamp to celebrate what was said to have been the successful launch of a satellite that had since been warbling patriotic tunes back from space. Oddly, no one else ever picked up its signal. A failed missile test, concluded America, after watching the rocket plop down in the Pacific.

Whether the satellite was a figment of Mr Kim's imagination hardly matters. The latest promised test-launch will violate resolution 1718, which bans North Korea from all such activity. This was passed by the United Nations Security Council in 2006, unusually with China's backing, after North Korea first tried (but failed) to launch a still more capable missile and then conducted what is thought to have been its first nuclear test. Its determination now to carry on launching regardless has led to speculation in some quarters that the missile, assuming it launches successfully, could even be shot down by the new ballistic-missile defences that Japan and America have been frantically cobbling together to protect Japan from North Korea's missile threats.

Mr Kim seems to be using his missile preparations to grab the attention of the new Obama administration in America, and to raise the ante in the six-party nuclear talks. These have been stalled for months because of North Korea's refusal to accept proper verification of its nuclear programmes; that will remain the case—or so the other five parties suspect—until the regime in Pyongyang squeezes extra goodies out of the Americans.

The test, if it goes ahead, will also roughly coincide with an annual joint military exercise between America and South Korea, at a time when relations between South and North have deteriorated badly. The North Korean media claim, not for the first time, that the two Koreas are at "the brink of war", and that America is preparing a pre-emptive strike against the North.

Certainly Mr Kim is determined to look as threatening as possible. Writing in the *Washington Post* on February 19th, Selig Harrison, who is a frequent visitor to North Korea, said that the foreign-ministry and defence officials he talked to recently had left him with the impression that North Korea's stash of plutonium (which is exhibit-A in the six-party talks, though there are lingering concerns that Mr Kim has also dabbled in enriched uranium, another possible bomb ingredient) had already been "weaponised"—that is, converted into missile warheads.

If that is the case, then North Korea's "satellite" test will be doubly alarming. Although the 2006 nuclear test was thought to have fizzled, it may nonetheless have helped North Korea master a design for the sort of smaller warhead that a missile could carry.

But there is a further, bigger, worry even than Mr Kim's theatricals. North Korea and Iran have long been collaborating on building missiles; the two are thought to have worked together in Iran to improve on basic North Korean missile designs at times when it has been impolitic for the North to test for itself. Iran has learned a great deal from this work; recently it has been making strides in its own missile technology. No one knows whether this collaboration has included warhead or other nuclear work too (though North Korea appears to have helped Syria to build a suspected and almost completed plutonium-producing reactor, which Israel destroyed in an air raid in 2007).

Strutting its stuff

North Korea is evidently quite happy to brandish its bombs. It flounced out of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty back in 2003 after evidence emerged that it had been cheating on an earlier denuclearisation deal with America. Iran, by contrast, claims to be an NPT member in good standing. It insists that it has no use for nuclear weapons, and that all its nuclear activities, including a uranium-enrichment effort that continues to expand in defiance of UN Security Council resolutions and sanctions, are entirely peaceful in intent; the uranium, it says, is simply intended to fuel a future fleet of power stations.

Nothing if not brazen, it claims backhanded vindication in a controversial National Intelligence Estimate by America's spooks, which concluded a little over a year ago that Iran had indeed had a bomb programme, but that it had stopped in 2003 when its formerly secret uranium activities came to light. But what that report failed to explain clearly was that Iran was continuing work quite openly on the two other necessary components of a weapons programme: first, uranium enrichment (with a bit of time and redirection of piping, low-enriched uranium can easily be turned into the highly enriched sort needed for a bomb) and efforts to produce plutonium; and second, the efforts under way for the development of a missile that could carry a nuclear warhead.

Iran is the only country so far to have built a uranium-enrichment plant before having even a single working reactor that would need its uranium as fuel for the reactor core. Even a Russian-built reactor at Bushehr that is now being put through its technical paces before coming on-stream later this year will operate on Russian-supplied fuel. Nor does it have sufficient uranium ore of its own to sustain a large-scale enrichment effort. Since uranium exports to Iran are prohibited by UN sanctions, its only option eventually will be to import more of the stuff illegally, using the nuclear black market that enabled it to get secretly started in the uranium business.

Nonetheless, Iran has just passed another nuclear milestone. According to figures contained in a new report circulated to the 35-nation board of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the UN's nuclear guardian, ahead of a meeting that opens on March 2nd, Iran has accumulated an unexpectedly large amount of low-enriched uranium—enough, says the Washington-based Institute for Science and International Security, for Iran to be confident that, should it proceed with further enrichment, it will have sufficient material for a single nuclear weapon.

What is more, the agency reported a big discrepancy (about 30%) between the amount of uranium Iran had earlier said it was producing and the amount now stockpiled. It is often hard to guess the real output of enrichment centrifuge machines, like Iran's, in their first stages of operation. However, in the view of other experts, even rough calculations based on earlier figures should have told inspectors that the Iranian estimate was far too low. The IAEA is confident that all the enriched uranium is properly safeguarded. But safeguards are something Iran disregards when it suits.

There have long been suspicions that Iran may be engaged in a parallel, possibly military, enrichment effort: in April 2006 without notice to inspectors, it removed and then put back a cylinder of the gas from which enriched uranium of either sort is spun, so that inspectors briefly lost track of the material it contained. When they were subsequently measured, the cylinder's contents were deemed to be correct within an acceptable margin of error. But that does not rule out the possibility that a small quantity of the gas, calculated to fall within that error margin, was diverted to test some hidden centrifuges.

As the IAEA's latest report makes clear, Iran is also refusing them access, as required under its safeguards obligations, to the site where it is building its own plutonium-producing reactor, one that just happens to be ideally sized for making bomb material. And it will not answer increasingly pointed questions from inspectors about studies and other information provided by several governments that appear to show weapons-related work on uranium conversion, on high explosive testing for nuclear-trigger devices and—the evidence behind the doubts about Iran's "space" programme—on development work to redesign the inner cone of a re-entry vehicle for Iran's Shahab-3 missile, so as to accommodate a nuclear warhead.

North Korea's neighbours may be prepared simply to huddle together, trusting in the best efforts of diplomacy and missile defences. But countries in the vicinity of Iran are becoming more agitated. Israel's probable new prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, has said a nuclear Iran poses a far graver threat than the global recession.

So Barack Obama and his new team—he has now appointed special envoys to deal with both Iran and North Korea—don't have much time to show that their promised readiness to talk directly to Iran can produce results. And unless results are forthcoming, the long-running drama over Iran's nuclear ambitions could rapidly escalate into a global crisis.

http://www.economist.com/world/international/displaystory.cfm?story_id=13184981

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