



# **USAF COUNTERPROLIFERATION CENTER**

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RIA Novosti  
3 March 2009

## **Russian General says U.S. may have Planned Satellite Collision**

MOSCOW, March 3 (RIA Novosti) - A collision between U.S. and Russian satellites in early February may have been a test of new U.S. technology to intercept and destroy satellites rather than an accident, a Russian military expert has said.

According to official reports, one of 66 satellites owned by Iridium, a U.S. telecoms company, and the Russian Cosmos-2251 satellite, launched in 1993 and believed to be defunct, collided on February 10 about 800 kilometers (500 miles) above Siberia.

However, Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Leonid Shershnev, a former head of Russia's military space intelligence, said in an interview published by the Moskovsky Komsomolets newspaper on Tuesday that the U.S. satellite involved in the collision was used by the U.S. military as part of the "dual-purpose" Orbital Express research project, which began in 2007.

Orbital Express was a space mission managed by the United States Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) and a team led by engineers at NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center (MSFC).

According to the DARPA, the program was "to validate the technical feasibility of robotic, autonomous on-orbit refueling and reconfiguration of satellites to support a broad range of future U.S. national security and commercial space programs."

Orbital Express was launched in March 2007 as part of the U.S. Air Force Space Test Program's STP-1 mission. It tested a prototype servicing satellite (ASTRO) and a surrogate next generation serviceable satellite (NextSat). The demonstration program met all the mission success criteria and was officially completed in July 2007.

Shershnev claims the U.S. military decided to continue with the project to "develop technology that would allow monitoring and inspections of orbital spacecraft by fully-automated satellites equipped with robotic devices."

The February collision could be an indication that the U.S. has successfully developed such technology and is capable of manipulating 'hostile satellites,' including their destruction, with a single command from a ground control center, the general said.

<http://en.rian.ru/russia/20090303/120392490.html>

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China View  
5 March 2009

## **U.S. Experts Critical of Russian Officer's Suspicion over Satellite Crash**

WASHINGTON, March 4 (Xinhua) -- A former Russian senior officer's suspicion that the collision between a U.S. Iridium satellite and a Russian defunct satellite last month was manipulated by the U.S. is groundless, said Liz DeCastro, spokeswoman of the Maryland-based Iridium Satellite LLC, Wednesday.

"Iridium's satellite was operational and orbiting in its correct path, and in the wake of the collision, we have learned that the Russian satellite was derelict. Iridium had no advance warning of the collision", said DeCastro in an interview with Xinhua.

DeCastro said that the event was obviously unfortunate and it pointed to "the much larger need for international cooperation to ensure that all parties and countries with valuable assets in space have the means and resources to work together to protect those assets including means to predict close encounters with actionable accuracy."

"As to the statements made by the Russian military, there is no basis in fact to these allegations and we invite the Russian officials to contact directly the U.S. government," said the spokeswoman.

Former Russian major general Leonid Shershner on Tuesday told the daily Moskovski Komsomolez that the collision could have been deliberately caused by the U.S., which might be testing a new technology aiming to intercept and destroy satellites from rival countries. He also linked the crash with the Orbital Express project of the U.S.

Regarding the suspicion, Joan Johnson-freese, U.S. space expert and chairwoman of the National Security Decision Making Department at the Naval War College, told Xinhua that though the U.S. and some other countries are indeed conducting research and "in some cases testing of satellite technology to allow monitoring and inspection of orbital spacecraft," drawing any connection between it and the collision is "spurious at best."

"It is more likely simply deflecting attention to the U.S. and away from Russia," Johnson-freese said, adding that perhaps Russia is concerned about its legal liability.

U.S. defense expert John Pike, also director of GlobalSecurity.org, said the Russian officer or the report may have mixed two irrelevant things up.

"The U.S. satellite in the February collision was an Iridium communication satellite that has both military and commercial customers, though it has nothing to do with space weapons," Pike said.

According to Pike, Orbital Express, a satellite inspection system, does have some connection with anti-satellite weapons in that it could be used to inspect a foreign satellite from close range to help decide what type of mission the satellite could perform and whether it needed to be destroyed.

"One of the very first American anti-satellite weapons was called SAINT (Satellite Interceptor), which had both inspection and interception capabilities. But this system was never tested," Pike added.

The collision, which occurred on Feb. 10 some 800 km above Siberia, involved the 560-kg Iridium 33 commercial satellite launched in 1997 by the U.S., and the 900-kg Russia's Cosmos 2251 military satellite launched in 1993, and is the very first orbital satellite collision in the history of mankind.

[http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-03/05/content\\_10948043.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-03/05/content_10948043.htm)

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Press Trust of India  
March 05, 2009

## **Russia Developing Space Weapons: Official**

(Moscow) A top Russian defence official said on Thursday that his country was developing weapons to counter possible deployment of military equipment in the outer space by other powers.

"Russia will retaliate if any nation would begin deployment of weapons in the outer space. We already have key components for accomplishing tasks if the weapons are deployed in space," Deputy Defence Minister, Army General Vladimir Popovkin said.

General Popovkin, who is in charge of arms acquisition in the ministry, speaking at news conference here said: "Russia has always been for non-deployment of weapons in space, but when others are doing this, we cannot be just onlookers, and such work is underway in Russia. This is all I can tell you."

During the height of Cold War, both US and Soviet Union were working on space-based weapons, including killer satellites.

In 1970s the ex-USSR had launched its Salyut-1 orbital station, which was equipped with guns to down enemy satellites, Russian media had earlier reported.

The recent collision between a US Iridium communication satellite and defunct Russian spacecraft over Siberia was part of Pentagon's experiment to down enemy satellites. China and the US have also conducted tests to down satellites with the help of land-based killer missiles, the official said.

<http://www.ndtv.com/convergence/ndtv/story.aspx?id=NEWEN20090085898>

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Moscow Times

06 March 2009

## **U.S. Overestimating Russia's Clout with Iran**

By Nabi Abdullaev / Staff Writer

U.S. President Barack Obama has said he wants to work with Russia to eliminate a possible nuclear threat from Iran. But his administration may have exaggerated expectations about what Moscow can, in fact, deliver on the issue, Russian security analysts say.

Obama said this week that a secret letter sent to President Dmitry Medvedev three weeks ago expressed his readiness to discuss both missile defense and Iran's nuclear ambitions with Russia.

"Obviously, to the extent we are lessening Iran's commitment to nuclear weapons, then that reduces the pressure for, or the need for a missile defense system," Obama said Tuesday, referring to U.S. plans to place elements of a missile defense system in Central Europe, which have angered Moscow.

But beyond its veto power in the UN Security Council, Russia actually has little leverage in preventing Iran from developing a military nuclear program, said Alexander Khranchikhin, a prominent researcher with the Institute for Political and Military Analysis.

"Veto power in the security council is the only, and very limited, means Russia has to influence Iran," Khranchikhin said.

So far, Russia has primarily used its veto power in the council to block or soften international sanctions advanced by the United States against the Islamic republic.

Washington suspects Iran of developing nuclear technology for military purposes, while Tehran maintains that it needs nuclear power for energy. Russian and Iranian officials last week launched a test run of the Bushehr nuclear plant in Iran, which was built by Russia.

Russia's arms sales to Iran have also been a contentious matter among U.S. and Israeli officials.

In 2007, Russia supplied Iran with advanced Tor-M1 short-range anti-aircraft missile systems that Tehran reportedly deployed to guard its nuclear sites from possible air attacks.

Washington would like to see Russia back out of a contract to supply Iran with S-300 long-range surface-to-air missiles that could dramatically reduce the effectiveness of possible U.S. or Israeli airstrikes against Iranian nuclear targets, said Vladimir Yevseyev, a security analyst with the Institute of World Economy and International Relations at the Russian Academy of Sciences.

Russia had initially agreed to sell Iran the missiles, which are capable of tracking simultaneously up to 100 targets while engaging 12 at a range of up to 200 kilometers and a height of up to 27 kilometers.

But Anatoly Isaikin, head of state arms monopoly Rosoboronexport, said last month that a political decision from the Kremlin was needed before proceeding with the missile deliveries, which U.S. and Israeli officials have fiercely opposed.

And with the deal effectively frozen, the deliveries are not much of a lever for Moscow to persuade Iran to halt its nuclear programs, said Khranchikhin of the Institute for Political and Military Analysis.

Both Yevseyev and Yevgeny Satanovsky, president of the Institute of Middle Eastern Studies, said neither Russia nor any other country would have much success in pressuring an economically self-sufficient Iran, with its rich

history and strong Shiite self-perception as God's chosen nation, to abandon its nuclear ambitions.

Only a military operation can stop Iran from going nuclear, and only the United States is capable of carrying out such an operation, Satanovsky said.

"One cannot pressure Iran into doing anything they don't want to, and it is impossible to buy them off," Satanovsky said.

Because U.S. forces would not be able to control Iranian territory following such an operation, Washington could seek Russia's help in ensuring stability in the region following the initial combat phase, Satanovsky said.

Such support from Russia, however, would demand a significant concession from Washington, such as recognizing the former Soviet Union as Moscow's sphere of influence -- an issue of much greater importance to Russia than the planned U.S. missile shield, Satanovsky said.

One possible track Russia could pursue in mitigating an Iranian nuclear threat is facilitating a gradual involvement of Iran in maintaining security in the region, said Yevseyev of the Institute of World Economy and International Relations.

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said Wednesday that Obama was ready to engage in talks with Iran for the first time since Washington cut ties with Tehran in 1981. "But we want to make sure it's constructive," she told The Associated Press.

She accused the Iranian leadership, however, of promoting terrorism and seeking to "intimidate as far as they think their voice can reach."

Iran's ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency, Ali Asghar Soltanieh, said Wednesday that his country was ready for direct talks with the United States, Russia, China and leading European countries.

If these countries "come in a civilized manner and sit at a negotiating table, then there will be a breakthrough," Soltanieh said, Bloomberg reported.

Analysts say, however, that no negotiations are likely to begin before Iranian presidential elections in June.

Analysts said talks with Iran probably would not start before June, when presidential elections will be held in Iran. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, well-known for his anti-American rhetoric, has said he will run for a second term.

<http://www.moscowtimes.ru/article/600/42/375106.htm>

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China View  
6 March 2009

## **Spokesman: Russia Ready to Discuss U.S. Missile Shield Proposals**

MOSCOW (Xinhua) -- Russia stands ready to discuss with the United States revised proposals for its missile defense system in Eastern Europe, a spokesman for Russian prime minister said on Friday.

"If the United States somehow reviews its original plan on deploying this shield in Europe or if we actually receive some concrete counteroffer from the United States, which takes into account Moscow's interests, then we will view this as an excellent sign, as this is what we have been talking about from the very start," spokesman Dmitry Peskov said in an interview with the Voice of Russia radio.

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on Friday invited Russia to join Washington's plan to deploy a missile defense shield in Eastern Europe, indicating that the Obama administration might not drop the Bush-era plan.

Former U.S. administration of George W. Bush planned to deploy 10 missile interceptors in Poland and a radar system in the Czech Republic which it claimed to protect its European allies from missile threat by "rouge state."

Moscow strongly opposes the plans, saying the move poses a threat to its security. Top Russian officials have repeatedly expressed their hope that U.S. President Barack Obama will not continue his predecessor's missile defense plans.

[http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-03/07/content\\_10964212.htm#](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-03/07/content_10964212.htm#)

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Washington Times

March 9, 2009

## **U.S., Russia Aim to Cut Nukes**

By Nicholas Kralev

GENEVA -- It's official - the U.S. and Russia want to revive arms control talks to cut their nuclear stockpiles.

Disarmament goals pronounced by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on the issue had not been heard from the one-time enemies in years.

"The right moment has come today, for the first time after the end of the Cold War, for making real progress in resuming the global disarmament process on a broad agenda," Mr. Lavrov said at the U.N. Conference on Disarmament in Geneva over the weekend.

Mr. Lavrov's comments were preceded by another bold statement by Mrs. Clinton during their meeting in this city, long associated with Cold War-era arms control negotiations.

"We are going to believe in arms control and nonproliferation as a core function of our foreign policy," Mrs. Clinton said Friday, adding that there was "a great deal of confusion and infighting and ideological position-taking regarding arms control and nonproliferation in the last administration."

Just a year ago, Mr. Lavrov delivered an unusually pessimistic speech at the Conference on Disarmament, a 65-nation body that has failed to produce any substantive results for years.

Russia and other countries blamed the George W. Bush administration's decision to scrap the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, which was necessary for the U.S. to begin developing a missile-defense system.

Mr. Clinton promised Mr. Lavrov that the Obama administration's priority will be completing a follow-on accord to the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) before it expires in December.

The agreement's official name is START I, though negotiations on its two successors were never finalized.

"We agreed to a work plan," Mrs. Clinton said after meeting with Mr. Lavrov. "We are going to create a very specific set of objectives and responsibilities. We hope to be in a position where we can present those to our two presidents before their meeting, so that they can then agree upon the instructions that should be provided to our negotiators."

President Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev are expected to meet on the sidelines of a global financial summit in London early next month.

"There's been some good preliminary work on START, and we intend to get fully immersed in that," Mrs. Clinton said. "We discussed some of the elements of what a new treaty would look like."

In spite of the secretary's enthusiasm, however, "no decisions on the particulars of the U.S. negotiating position have been made," said Daryl Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association (ACA) in Washington.

Unlike the Russians, the Americans have not appointed negotiators, he added.

After a visit to Moscow to discuss arms control issues and specifically START, Sen. Richard G. Lugar of Indiana, ranking Republican on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, urged Mr. Obama to name an ambassador-at-large for strategic negotiations with Russia.

One name that has been mentioned for a senior position in the field is Rose Gottemoeller, who is expected to become assistant secretary of state for arms control. A former deputy undersecretary of energy for defense nuclear nonproliferation, she was director of the Carnegie Moscow Center until recently.

Last summer, Ms. Gottemoeller made known her views on the future of START in an article in *Arms Control Today*, a magazine published by the ACA, and co-written by Alexei Arbatov, head of the Center for International Security at the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of International Economy and International Relations.

The article suggested that START be replaced by "an enhanced SORT," a reference to the 2002 Strategic Offensive Reduction Treaty, also known as the Treaty of Moscow, which was negotiated by the Bush administration.

The new accord would include SORT's basic premises, but with specific verification measures that do not exist in the 6-year-old document. Such measures can be found in START, but analysts deem many of them outdated.

"For the Russian side, the major goal would be to maintain a semblance of parity with the United States, while addressing the basic problem with SORT - the lack of acceptable counting rules and corresponding verification procedures," the article said.

"For the U.S. side, the major goal would be to maintain sufficient transparency with respect to Russian strategic nuclear forces, while making sure that force cuts would not be too expensive for the United States," it said.

The authors also suggested that "the upper limit allowed for strategic nuclear forces would be 1,700 deployed warheads, to be achieved by the end of 2012." SORT required that both countries reduce their arsenals to 1,700 to 2,200 warheads, and today they are at the higher end, Mr. Kimball said.

Although the Obama administration's official positions on START are still unknown, Russia has announced two major requirements.

"A future agreement should be legally binding," Mr. Medvedev wrote in a letter to the Conference on Disarmament, which Mr. Lavrov read to delegates on Saturday.

"It is of no less importance that the instrument should be forward-looking and should limit not only warheads but also strategic delivery vehicles, i.e. intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarine-launched ballistic missiles and heavy bombers," the Russian president wrote.

Diplomats in Geneva reacted positively to both Mr. Lavrov's and Mrs. Clinton's remarks, though some said that other accords should be taken up even while a replacement of START is being negotiated.

"There's no reason to wait for START to re-energize the Conference on Disarmament on a fissile material cut-off treaty," said John Duncan, Britain's ambassador to the conference.

*John Zarocostas contributed to this report.*

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/mar/09/us-russia-aim-to-cut-nukes/>

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London Times  
March 6, 2009

## **Passenger Flights Diverted after North Korea Threats**

RICHARD LLOYD PARRY IN TOKYO

International passenger flights have been diverted after the government of North Korea threatened military action against South Korean airliners in the latest escalation of verbal hostilities between the two enemies.

Both of South Korea's airlines, Korean Air and Asiana, have diverted flights from the east after a statement on North Korea's official media which implied a threat of attack against civilian aviation. It came in a statement denouncing a joint military exercise between South Korea and the US, which Pyongyang accuses of representing preparations for an invasion of the North.

"No one knows what military conflicts will be touched off by the reckless war exercises," said the statement on the state-run Korean Central News Agency on Thursday. "[North Korea] is, therefore, compelled to declare that security cannot be guaranteed for south Korean civil airplanes flying through the territorial air of our side and its vicinity, its territorial air and its vicinity above the East Sea of Korea, in particular, while the military exercises are under way."

The US statement described the statement as "distinctly unhelpful", and the South Korean government demanded that it be withdrawn. "Threatening civilian airliners' normal operations under international aviation regulations is not only against the international rules but is an act against humanity," a spokesman for the country's unification

ministry, Kim Ho Nyeon said in Seoul. "The government urges the North to immediately withdraw the military threat against civilian airliners."

Under an international agreement, North Korea receives €685 (£610) for each jumbo jet which passes through its airspace, but flights were diverted after yesterday's warning, adding as much as an hour to flight times and costing airlines an extra four million won (£1,800) per flight.

The US-South Korean exercises, code named Key Resolve and Foal Eagle, will begin on Monday and last for eleven days. They always draw bellicose denunciations from the North, but this year they take place at a time of increasing tension over the North's preparations for firing a long range rocket, which could potentially strike targets in the far western United States.

The North insists that it is a vehicle for the launch of a peaceful communications satellite; foreign governments say that, even if this is true, its potential for dual use as a missile makes any test launch a violation of UN resolutions.

"[The exercises] are dangerous actions for war that they may develop into an actual war any moment," KCNA said. "Under the touch-and-go situation where the north and the south are in full combat readiness and level their rifles and artillery pieces at each other, no one can guess what will trigger off a war."

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article5855946.ece>

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Telegraph.co.uk

09 March 2009

## **North Korea Threatens Full Scale War if Rocket is Intercepted**

By Richard Spencer in Beijing

It has also cut off its border and telephone links with the South in protest at military exercises by American and South Korean troops which began on Monday.

Plans for a launch were first picked up by satellite imagery, with foreign intelligence agencies saying it was a test of a long-range Taepodong-2 missile with the capacity to hit parts of the United States.

The United States said it would shoot down the missile if it headed towards its territory. Japan has suggested it might try to intercept any launch, even if the payload is a communications satellite as claimed by Pyongyang.

"If the enemies recklessly opt for intercepting our satellite, our revolutionary armed forces will launch without hesitation a just retaliatory strike operation," the general staff of the North Korean army said in a statement on state media. It singled out the United States, Japan and South Korea as targets.

"Shooting our satellite for peaceful purposes will precisely mean a war," it said.

The North has put its army on full alert in the face of the annual spring military joint exercises begun today by the South Koreans and Americans.

It shut the border point which allows South Koreans to visit a special industrial zone in the city of Kaesong which is funded and run by South Korean companies. The South said 726 people had been turned back.

"It is nonsensical to maintain a normal communications channel at a time when the South Korean puppets are getting frantic with the above-said war exercises, levelling guns at fellow countrymen in league with foreign forces," the North said.

Last week it also said it could not guarantee the safety of civilian aircraft which approached North Korean airspace during the exercises, causing airlines to adjust their routes.

This threat in particular is beyond the standard fare of North Korean rhetoric. It comes after six months of political uncertainty in relations between North Korea and the West, which had been improving slightly in the wake of a deal supposed to bring an end to its nuclear weapons programme.

Most western analysts linked the uncertainty to the stroke believed to have been suffered by the North's leader, Kim Jong-il, last August.



This weekend he emerged to cast his ballot in elections for the country's official parliament, in which he was a candidate.

Voting was expected to be unanimous. Only one candidate's name appeared on each ballot, and while it was theoretically possible to cross that candidate's name off, electors had to do so in a special booth, making clear they were dissenters.

The main focus of interest during these elections was rumours that Kim's youngest son, Kim Jong-woon, would stand.

There is as yet no clear sign of a succession to the leadership. If the rumours were confirmed, Jong-woon would be the only one of the three sons to have been appointed to any official position, a clear sign that he was being marked out.

But as yet no names of candidates other than Kim senior have been given to the outside world.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/northkorea/4960009/North-Korea-threatens-full-scale-war-if-rocket-is-intercepted.html>

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Irish Times  
March 07, 2009

## **Clinton Stands by Missile Defence Policy**

JAMIE SMYTH in Brussels

US SECRETARY of state Hillary Clinton has said missile defence would remain part of Europe's defence strategy if it proved to be technically feasible and cost effective.

She has also praised the governments and peoples of the Czech Republic and Poland for showing "visionary leadership" in agreeing to host the controversial system on their territory.

"We believe the US and Russia can co-operate on missile defence through joint research and even joint deployment in the future . . . it is intended to be a defensive response vis-a-vis Iran and other actors," Mrs Clinton told journalists in Brussels before flying on to Geneva to hold her first substantive talks with Russia foreign minister Sergei Lavrov.

The issue of missile defence has poisoned relations between Russia and the US, with Moscow viewing the system as a threat to its own security. This week a leaked letter from President Barack Obama to Russian president Dmitry Medvedev, suggested the US might sacrifice the missile shield if Moscow helped prevent Iran develop nuclear weapons.

Mrs Clinton's comments suggest the US could proceed with the controversial missile shield even though the new Obama administration has set out to restore relations with Moscow after the war in Georgia. Her dinner with Mr Lavrov last night was intended to try to ease tensions that reached a low during the latter days of the Bush administration.

In an interview with the BBC Mrs Clinton criticised the previous US administration's "confrontational approach" towards Russia. "How much that contributed to Russian behaviour I think is a legitimate question to ask," said Mrs Clinton, who added that there were areas – such as Georgia – where Washington and Moscow "just flat out disagree".

A Russian foreign ministry spokesman said one of the main tasks of the meeting between Mr Lavrov and Mrs Clinton was to "define the mood" of relations. "We await with cautious optimism the outcome of these talks," he told the Interfax news agency.

At a town hall style meeting with young people at the European Parliament earlier, Mrs Clinton also promised a break with past policies on climate change.

"Certainly the United States has been negligent in living up to its responsibilities," she said. "This is a propitious time . . . we can actually begin to demonstrate our willingness to confront this."

Mrs Clinton later told journalists that the US was committed to setting up a cap and trade system to reduce CO2 emissions and was investing in upgrades to its energy grids and green technology. She said it was very important

that China, which had recently surpassed the US as the world's largest emitter, had expressed a willingness to participate in the climate change talks in Copenhagen this year.

Reuters adds: Speaking after the meeting with Mrs Clinton last night, Mr Lavrov said Russia and the US would soon try to reach agreements on Iran and North Korea and that Russia would co-operate with a US-sponsored conference on Afghanistan.

<http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/world/2009/0307/1224242450056.html>

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London Times  
March 8, 2009

## **Obama says US is Losing War in Afghanistan and Hints at Taliban Talks**

Tim Reid in Washington and Michael Evans, Defence Editor

President Obama conceded today that the US was not winning the war in Afghanistan and opened the way for negotiations with moderate elements of the Taliban, much as America did with Sunni tribes in Iraq.

The new strategy, which comes as Mr Obama prepares to send an additional 17,000 US troops into Afghanistan, emerged after a frenetic 48 hours of American diplomacy in the region involving new overtures to Iran, Russia and the Muslim world.

The fresh approach to Tehran is causing significant concern in Israel and the Arab world over fears that Mr Obama is making too many concessions to Iran at a time when his own officials say it now has enough enriched uranium to make one nuclear weapon.

Mr Obama's admission of the dire situation in Afghanistan followed an invitation to Iran by Hillary Clinton, the US Secretary of State, to participate in a US-headed regional conference on Afghanistan later this month.

The offer was part of a broad arc of diplomacy in recent days that marks a decisive shift away from the Bush administration's more hardline approach to the region.

Asked during an interview with The New York Times if the US was winning in Afghanistan, Mr Obama replied "no". He pointed to the success of peeling away Iraqi insurgents from al-Qaeda in Iraq, and said there may be "comparable opportunities" with the Taliban, although he warned that the situation there was "more complex" than in Iraq.

The British government has made it clear to Washington that it also supports contacts with the Taliban, and that moves have already been made by Western officials to talk to lower-ranking Taliban fighters.

It is part of a new strategy to try and unblock the stalemate that military commanders believe is undermining the whole campaign.

The invitation to Iran to attend the Afghan conference, on March 31, sets up the first face-to-face meeting between the Obama Administration and Iranian officials.

It fulfils a campaign promise by the president to talk to Tehran without first demanding that it suspends its uranium enrichment programme, which the West suspects is part of a project to develop nuclear weapons.

The Obama Administration, which is due to complete a review of Iran policy shortly, is also considering joining current talks between Britain, Germany and France – the EU3 – and Iran, The Times has learnt.

Meanwhile, Mr Obama dispatched two envoys to Damascus over the weekend, triggering the first serious talks between senior US officials and their Syrian counterparts in more than four years.

Jeffrey Feltman, a senior State Department official, and a White House national security official Dan Shapiro, met Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Moualem. Mr Feltman said the US wanted to see "forward momentum" on peace talks between Syria and Israel, and said Syria could help Middle East stability.

At the same time Mrs Clinton pushed a broad diplomatic engagement with Russia during a meeting with its foreign minister Sergei Lavrov in Geneva. She even handed him a large red plastic button with the word "reset" – what Mr Obama says he wants to achieve with US-Russian relations.

Yet in an extraordinary lapse, the button also had a Russian word peregruzka above it, which was meant to read "reset". Mr Lavrov had to tell Mrs Clinton that it actually translated as "overcharge", raising questions about the quality of Russian linguists inside her State Department.

Mrs Clinton and Mr Lavrov talked about the need for a new nuclear arms reduction treaty, and how Russia can help in persuading Iran to abandon its alleged nuclear weapons programme.

Mrs Clinton also repeated the Obama administration's overtures to Moscow about how a US missile shield in Eastern Europe will not be needed if there was no nuclear threat from Tehran.

The White House also announced that Mr Obama will travel to Turkey next month, making good on another campaign promise to deliver early on a speech in a major Muslim country.

Some Western diplomats are concerned about Washington's new efforts with Moscow, so soon after Russia's invasion of Georgia and its clear ambition to widen its influence in the region.

Yet Mrs Clinton insisted: "We are being extremely vigorous in our outreach because we are testing the waters, we are determining what is possible, we're turning new pages and resetting buttons, and we are doing all kinds of efforts to try to create more partners and fewer adversaries."

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article5869476.ece>

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Boston Globe  
March 9, 2009

## **Polish Leader Appeals for Missile Shield**

By Associated Press

WARSAW - Poland's president said yesterday he believes the United States will honor its agreement to build a missile defense base in his country, adding that scrapping the project to improve ties with Russia would be an unfriendly gesture toward Poland.

"A deal was signed and I think that regardless of which administration is in power in the United States, agreements are going to be implemented," President Lech Kaczynski said on TVN24 television.

President Obama acknowledged last Tuesday that he sent a letter to Russian counterpart Dmitry Medvedev that said curtailing Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons would lessen the need for a US missile defense system in Eastern Europe, a project Moscow sharply opposes.

The letter was widely interpreted as a signal that the Obama administration might be willing to give up missile defense as part of a security deal with Russia.

The former administration of George W. Bush signed a deal with Poland last summer to place 10 missile defense interceptors at a base in the northern part of the country. The system, which aims to counter potential future threats from Iran, would also include a radar base in the neighboring Czech Republic.

Moscow has vehemently opposed the prospect of US military installations being built so close to its borders. In response, the Kremlin has threatened to station Iskander missiles in the Kaliningrad exclave, which borders Poland.

Since taking office in January, Obama has said he wants to "reset or reboot" relations with Russia, and has announced a full-scale review to decide the fate of missile defense.

Kaczynski, a staunch supporter of hosting elements of a global US missile defense system, sees hosting the base as a way to further boost Poland's alliance with the United States.

[http://www.boston.com/news/world/europe/articles/2009/03/09/polish\\_leader\\_appeals\\_for\\_missile\\_shield/](http://www.boston.com/news/world/europe/articles/2009/03/09/polish_leader_appeals_for_missile_shield/)

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Washington Times  
March 10, 2009

## **Prague Looks for Obama's Missile Stance**

By Betsy Pisik,

NEW YORK -- Czech President Vaclav Klaus said Monday that he is seeking a sign from President Obama as to whether the U.S. will uphold its agreement to deploy missile defenses in the Czech Republic and Poland.

Mr. Klaus, an advocate for the deployment, told The Washington Times that he is eager to learn whether Mr. Obama will be as committed to the U.S. defense system as was President George W. Bush.

Mr. Obama is due to visit Prague after a summit of major industrial nations in London early next month.

"We're looking forward to having him in Prague," Mr. Klaus said. "I hope that will be a good opportunity to understand better his views."

In New York for an environmental conference, Mr. Klaus said the Obama administration's position on missile defense is "unknown."

"I understand all presidents have their domestic priorities, and I understand the economic problems are more important to him now," the Czech leader said.

The Obama administration appears much less enthusiastic than the Bush administration about deploying missile-defense components in Eastern Europe, a plan that Russia adamantly opposes.

Mr. Obama indicated in a recent letter to Russian President Dmitry Medvedev that there would be less need to deploy the radar and guidance systems in former Soviet satellite states if Russia helped prevent Iran from developing new long-range missiles and nuclear weapons.

Mr. Klaus won over a reluctant parliament to support the deployment of the anti-missile effort, but polls suggest that the Czech public opposes joining the defense system.

Poland's president warned on Sunday that any rethinking of the deployment would be received as a "not-friendly gesture."

"A deal was signed, and I think that regardless of which administration is in power in the United States, agreements are going to be implemented," Polish President Lech Kaczynski told a national television channel. "Missile defense is extremely important for Poland. ... Not from the point of view of our security from so-called rogue states, but for other political reasons, it is very, very important."

Russia contends that missile defense is aimed at its weapons, not against Iran, despite U.S. assurances to the contrary.

Mr. Klaus, whose country currently holds the rotating presidency of the European Union, said, "I know that it's a difficult project. It has many, many difficult layers or dimensions which must be resolved," including domestic opposition in his country as well as among some circles in the United States, ambivalence in Western Europe, and military and legal complications.

<http://washingtontimes.com/news/2009/mar/10/prague-looks-for-obamas-missile-stance/>

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Sunday Herald – Glasgow, Scotland  
10 March 2009

## **How the US Forgot How to Make Trident Missiles**

By Rob Edwards, Environment Editor

PLANS TO refurbish Trident nuclear weapons had to be put on hold because US scientists forgot how to manufacture a component of the warhead, a US congressional investigation has revealed.

The US National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) "lost knowledge" of how to make a mysterious but very hazardous material codenamed Fogbank. As a result, the warhead refurbishment programme was put back by at least a year, and racked up an extra \$69 million.

According to some critics, the delay could cause major problems for the UK Trident programme, which is very closely tied to the US programme and uses much of the same technology. The US and the UK are trying to refurbish

the ageing W76 warheads that tip Trident missiles in order to prolong their life, and ensure they are safe and reliable. This apparently requires that the Fogbank in the warheads is replaced.

Neither the NNSA nor the UK Ministry of Defence would say anything about the nature or function of Fogbank. But it is thought by some weapons experts to be a foam used between the fission and fusion stages of a thermonuclear bomb. US officials have said that manufacturing the material requires a solvent cleaning agent which is "extremely flammable" and "explosive". The process also involves dealing with "toxic materials" hazardous to workers.

Over the last year the Government Accountability Office (GAO), which reports to the US Congress, has been investigating the W76 refurbishment programme. An unclassified version of its final report was released last week. The GAO report concluded: "NNSA did not effectively manage one of the highest risks of the programme - the manufacture of a key material known as Fogbank - resulting in \$69m in cost over-runs and a schedule delay of at least one year that presented significant logistical challenges for the navy."

For the first time, the report described the difficulties faced by the NNSA in trying to make Fogbank. A new production facility was needed at the Y-12 National Security Complex at Oak Ridge, Tennessee, because an old one had been demolished in the 1990s.

But vital information on how Fogbank was actually made had somehow been mislaid. "NNSA had lost knowledge of how to manufacture the material because it had kept few records of the process when the material was made in the 1980s, and almost all staff with expertise on production had retired or left the agency," the report said.

The GAO report also accused the NNSA of having an inconsistent approach to costing the W76 refurbishment programme. The total cost was put at \$2.1 billion in 2004, \$6.2bn in 2005 and \$2.7bn in 2006.

To John Ainslie, the co-ordinator of the Scottish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, it was "astonishing" that the Fogbank blueprints had been lost. "This is like James Bond destroying his instructions as soon as he has read them," he said. "Perhaps the plans for making Fogbank were so secret that no copies were kept. The British warhead is similar to the American version, and so the problems with Fogbank may delay Aldermaston's plans for renewing or replacing Trident."

The NNSA's principal deputy administrator, William Ostendorff, said that the agency "generally agrees" with the findings of the GAO report. He stressed that NNSA was strengthening its management procedures. He added: "As with many processes that implement increased rigour, there is a need for identification of increased funding in order to increase the fidelity in project risk assessment."

UK sources suggested, though, that the US and UK designs were not identical. All the details of exactly how nuclear weapons are put together are classified as top secret in both countries.

A spokesman for the Ministry of Defence told the Sunday Herald: "It is MoD policy not to comment on nuclear warhead design. To do so would, or would be likely to, prejudice national security."

<http://www.sundayherald.com/news/heraldnews/display.var.2494129.0.0.php>

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Los Angeles Times  
March 7, 2009

## **U.S. Cyber Security Director Quits**

By Associated Press

Washington — The head of the nation's cyber security center has resigned amid persistent turf battles and confusion over the control and protection of the country's vast computer networks and systems.

Rod Beckstrom's decision to step down as director of the National Cyber Security Center comes as the White House is conducting a broad 60-day review of how well the government is using technology to protect everything from classified national security data to key financial systems and air traffic control.

In a blunt letter to Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano, Beckstrom complained about a shortage of money for the center and a clash over whether the National Security Agency should control cyber efforts. The role of the NSA in protecting domestic computer networks has triggered debate, particularly among privacy and civil liberties groups who oppose giving such control to a U.S. spy agency.

Intelligence officials argue, however, that they must be involved in order to adequately defend the country and its networks.

Beckstrom's letter was dated Thursday, and said his resignation would be effective March 13.

Homeland Security Department spokeswoman Amy Kudwa said the department was working with other federal agencies, specifically the NSA, to protect civilian networks, and is reaching out to the private sector to find additional ways to improve cyber security.

President Obama last month ordered the review of the nation's cyber security and put former Bush administration aide Melissa Hathaway in charge of the effort. Hathaway has been meeting with industry leaders, Capitol Hill staffers and other experts about what the federal government's role should be in protecting information networks against an attack.

As a candidate, Obama criticized President Bush's cyber security efforts and suggested that as president he would have a cyber advisor who would report directly to him.

It was not known whether that is still the plan. On Thursday, Obama named a federal chief information officer, Vivek Kundra, to work in the White House. Kundra is to have a role in overseeing the ability of computer systems to speak to one another and the security for the federal government's vast information databanks.

<http://www.latimes.com/technology/la-na-cyber7-2009mar07.0,4754164.story?track=rss>

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Washington Post

March 10, 2009

## **A Struggle over U.S. Cybersecurity**

By Brian Krebs

The resignation of the federal government's cybersecurity coordinator highlights a power struggle underway over how best to defend the government's civilian computer networks against digital attacks.

Rod A. Beckstrom resigned the post Friday after less than a year on the job, citing a lack of funding and the National Security Agency's tightening grip on government cybersecurity matters.

Beckstrom is director of the National Cyber Security Center -- an organization created last March to help coordinate such security efforts across the intelligence community. But recently, Beckstrom said, efforts have been underway to fold his group into a facility at the NSA.

Beckstrom said in an interview over the weekend that his group was formed to coordinate the various agencies' efforts but not to be controlled by the NSA.

"This is a coordination body and it resides alongside or above the other centers, but certainly not below them," Beckstrom said. "In my view, it is very important that there be independence for the [center], and that it be able to carry out its role."

The Obama administration is in the midst of a 60-day review of the government's cybersecurity initiative, with recommendations on next steps expected sometime next month.

Philip Lieberman, president of Lieberman Software, a Los Angeles-based security software maker, said the new administration faces a tough job balancing privacy and civil liberties issues with the real need to help secure the Internet, a major engine of the world's economic activity.

"Obama has a real firecracker on his hands that he's going to need to put out real fast," Lieberman said. "Right now, no one is really running the insane asylum when it comes to cyber."

Beckstrom said he decided to leave roughly 10 days ago, after learning that orders were canceled for computers, network equipment, furniture and office space in Arlington slated for his group. While he officially reports to Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano, Beckstrom said he has not yet had a meeting with her.

"Once you lose your space, have no money and no chance to meet with your boss, and decisions are being made about your future with no consultation, it's time to go," Beckstrom said.

A former Silicon Valley entrepreneur and author with no government experience, Beckstrom was seen as an unorthodox pick by many Washington insiders. "He brought a completely different perspective, which in one way could have been his undoing," said a senior member of the intelligence community, speaking on the condition of anonymity.

The Bush administration created Beckstrom's office shortly after it launched the "comprehensive national cyber security initiative," an effort to help shield government networks from online attack. That program is expected to cost at least \$6 billion in 2009 and more than \$30 billion over the next few years.

Beckstrom's resignation comes as the NSA is being groomed to take a front-seat position in driving the government's cybersecurity programs. Last month, Adm. Dennis C. Blair, the director of national intelligence, told the House Intelligence Committee that the NSA was the proper agency to be given purview over protecting military and government networks. Traditionally, the role of protecting civilian networks has fallen to the DHS.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/03/09/AR2009030901213.html?hpid=news-col-blog>

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International Herald Tribune  
March 8, 2009

## **Iran Reportedly Test-Fires New Missile**

Reuters

By Fredrik Dahl

Iran has test-fired a new air-to-surface missile, Iranian media reported Sunday, in the Islamic Republic's latest display of its military capability.

The missile test was carried out despite the offer by the administration of new U.S. President Barack Obama to engage Iran in direct talks if it "unclenches its fist."

Iran's Fars News Agency said the domestically produced missile had a range of 110 km (70 miles) and was designed for use by military aircraft against naval targets.

"Now these jet fighters have acquired a new capability in confronting threats," the semi-official news agency said.

Citing Iran's Defence Ministry, state Press TV said the country had "successfully armed some of its frontline fighter jets with ... long-range air-to-surface missiles."

Iran often stages war games or tests weapons to show its determination to counter any attack by foes such as Israel and the United States.

Israel and Washington accuse Tehran of trying to develop nuclear bombs. Iran says its nuclear program is a peaceful drive to generate electricity so that the world's fourth-largest oil producer can export more of its crude and gas.

Israel, believed to be the only nuclear-armed Middle East state, has said Iran's nuclear plans threaten its existence and has not ruled out military action if diplomacy fails to end the dispute.

Israel's military intelligence chief was quoted Sunday as saying that Iran has sufficiently mastered nuclear technology to be able to produce a bomb if it chooses.

Iran has said it would respond to any attack by targeting U.S. interests and Israel, as well as closing the Strait of Hormuz, a waterway between the Gulf and the Sea of Oman through which about 40 percent of the world's traded oil is shipped.

One Western defence analyst said he believed the missile test was a signal by Iran that "we can severely disrupt traffic" in the Gulf if attacked.

"That's what would be the frightening thing for the West and the Middle East," Andrew Brookes of the International Institute for Strategic Studies think-tank in London said by phone.

The U.S. State Department declined to comment on the Iranian press reports.

Military experts say Iranian missiles often draw on technology from China, North Korea or other countries.

"They've taken Chinese missile technology and converted and developed it to take out ships," said Brookes. "It is not a new development, it has been going on for some years."

The air-to-surface missile's range of 110 km would be far less than that of the surface-to-surface Shahab missile, which Iranian officials say can travel about 2,000 km, enabling it to reach Israel and U.S. bases in the Gulf.

A top Iranian military commander last week said that Iranian missiles could now reach Israeli nuclear sites. Iran has often said it has missiles able to reach the Jewish state but had not previously mentioned such specific targets.

(Additional reporting by Hashem Kalantari in Tehran and Thomas Ferraro in Washington; Writing by Fredrik Dahl; Editing by Dominic Evans)

<http://www.iht.com/articles/reuters/2009/03/08/africa/OUKWD-UK-IRAN-MISSILE-TEST.php>

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Jerusalem Post

Mar. 8, 2009

## **Yadlin: 'Iran Crossed Nuclear Tech Threshold'**

Herb Keinon

In a chilling indication that Iran's arms program is advancing steadily, Israel acknowledged for the first time that Teheran had mastered the technology to make a nuclear bomb on the same day that the Iranians announced they had successfully tested a new air-to-surface missile.

Iran has "crossed the technological threshold," and its attainment of nuclear military capability is now a matter of "incorporating the goal of producing an atomic bomb into its strategy," OC Military Intelligence Maj.-Gen. Amos Yadlin told the cabinet on Sunday.

"Iran is continuing to amass hundreds of kilograms of low-enriched uranium, and it hopes to exploit the dialogue with the West and Washington to advance toward the production of an atomic bomb," he said.

Yadlin said the Islamic republic hoped to use the expected dialogue with the Obama administration to buy time to procure the amount of high-enriched uranium needed to build a bomb.

"Iran's plan for the continuation of its nuclear program while simultaneously holding talks with the new administration in Washington is being received with caution in the Middle East," the intelligence chief said. "The moderates are worried that this approach will come at their expense and will be used by the radical axis to continue to carry out terror activities and rearm. In contrast, those in the radical axis are saying that despite the change in the Americans' stance, they will continue to act against them."

Yadlin's assessment brought him into line with a similar assessment made last week by Adm. Mike Mullen, the chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, who said Teheran had enough fissile material to build a bomb now.

But in an indication of just how subjective the question of Iran's progress toward a bomb has become, US Defense Secretary Robert Gates took issue with Mullen, saying the Iranians were not "close to a weapon at this point."

The UN's International Atomic Energy Agency also said last week that it had been mistaken in earlier reports and now had evidence that Iran had enough enriched uranium to make a nuclear weapon.

Yadlin's rather dramatic statement was not made in public, but was part of the security briefing he gave at Sunday's cabinet meeting. One government official said that the point of releasing the information now seemed to be to impress upon the international community the urgency of the matter.

"He wanted to ring the alarm bells, to make it clear that everyone understood that Iran was continuing with its enrichment," the official said.

The official pointed out that Yadlin had used the phrase "mastered the technology" in regards to Iran, not that it had reached a "point of no return."

Israel made a decision a few years ago not to talk anymore about a "point of no return," since that implied that Iran could not be stopped - an impression the Iranians were keen on making, but which Israel did not want to play into, the official said.



Even though the Iranians have apparently mastered the technology for creating a nuclear weapon, it has still not done so and is probably still a couple of years away from that, he said. Consequently, Teheran could still be stopped.

The Iranians were clearly overcoming certain technological issues, and it was a matter of time before they would be able to enrich the uranium needed for a weapon, the official said.

"The idea behind Yadlin's statement was to shake people up, to show that the Iranians were still making progress," the official speculated.

Two weeks ago, Iran's nuclear chief, Vice President Gholam Reza Aghazadeh, announced that 6,000 centrifuges were now operating at the enrichment facility in Natanz. He said Teheran hoped to install more than 50,000 centrifuges there over the next five years.

With the amount of centrifuges it is using in the enrichment process, Iran could add about 100 kg. of uranium to its stockpile each month, or even more, considering that it is setting up additional ready-to-go centrifuges every day.

Even 100 kg. would give it an estimated low-enriched uranium stockpile of just over 1,100 kg. - the minimum experts believe is required to yield the 25 kg. of highly enriched weapons-grade uranium needed to build a bomb. But unless the Iranians have a nuclear facility that is completely hidden from the world's view, the international community would know when Teheran began to create the high-grade uranium needed for a nuclear weapon, because it would have to kick the IAEA inspectors out of the country to do so.

Reuters, meanwhile, quoted Iran's Fars News Agency on Sunday as saying the Islamic republic had test-fired a new air-to-surface missile, in the country's latest display of military power. According to the report, the missile - produced domestically and with a range of 110 km. - was designed for use by military aircraft against naval targets.

"Now these jet fighters have acquired a new capability in confronting threats," Reuters quoted the semi-official news agency as saying.

The missile has a far shorter range than the surface-to-surface Shihab and is believed to be meant to disrupt sea traffic in the strategic Straits of Hormuz, through which 40 percent of the world's oil must travel.

<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1236269373103&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>

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Los Angeles Times

March 9, 2009

## **Iran Tests Air-To-Surface Missile**

By Borzou Daragahi

Reporting from Beirut — Iran has test-fired a precision air-to-surface missile with a 70-mile range, a news agency reported Sunday, a capability that could threaten ships in the Persian Gulf.

Iran's semiofficial Fars New Agency cited unnamed Iranian military experts saying the 1,100-pound missiles mounted on jet fighters include an "automatic guidance capability" and a "special warhead" for destroying large ships.

The U.S. Navy keeps dozens of warships off the Iranian coast in the Persian Gulf to escort oil tankers and serve as a check against Iran's ambitions.

The U.S. and Israel, among others, are concerned about Iran's uranium enrichment program, which they suspect is being used to produce fuel for an eventual nuclear bomb. On Sunday, Israel's top military intelligence officer, Maj. Gen. Amos Yadlin, said at a closed Cabinet meeting that Iran now had the expertise and materials needed to produce atomic weapons, according to an Associated Press report.

Tehran insists nuclear weapons violate Iran's Islamic principles and says its program is meant for energy production.

Israeli and U.S. officials have raised the possibility of military action to halt or slow Iran's progress in amassing nuclear technology if efforts at diplomatic outreach fail.

Iran has scrambled to upgrade its capabilities in anticipation of a possible war. The head of the Revolutionary Guard said last week that Iran had missiles that could reach Israel's nuclear sites in case of war. Iran has also been trying to obtain sophisticated Russian S-300 anti-aircraft missiles to defend against or discourage a U.S. or Israeli attack.

The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, a neoconservative think tank close to Israel, said in a report last week that the Jewish state probably would attack Iran if it were about to get the S-300s, which Moscow has not delivered.

News of the test was not carried by Iran's official news agency.

The report prompted tough words from Republican Sen. John McCain.

"Time after time after time the Iranians have been belligerent and even very hostile in their reactions to our efforts" at diplomatic outreach, he told Fox News.

[http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-iran-missile9-2009mar09\\_0,3328751\\_story](http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-iran-missile9-2009mar09_0,3328751_story)

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Boston Globe  
March 9, 2009

## **Israel Says Iran has Capability for Bomb**

By Mark Lavie, Associated Press

JERUSALEM - Iran is now capable of producing atomic weapons, Israel's top military intelligence officer said yesterday, sounding the highest-level warning that Israel's archenemy has achieved independent nuclear capability.

At a Cabinet meeting, the chief of military intelligence, Major General Amos Yadlin, did not say Iran already has an atomic bomb, participants said. However, he said, Iran has "crossed the threshold" and has the expertise and materials needed for one.

The participants spoke on condition of anonymity because the Cabinet meeting was closed. They said Yadlin told them that Iran continues to accumulate uranium for enrichment and hopes to exploit the Obama administration's intention to open a dialogue as a cover for developing nuclear weapons.

Yadlin's report on Iran's nuclear capability followed a similar assessment by the US military chief, Admiral Mike Mullen. He said a week ago that Iran has enough fissile material to build a bomb now.

Israeli officials have long identified a nuclear Iran as the most serious threat to the Jewish state. Iran's president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, has repeatedly called for destruction of Israel, and Iran has tested long-range missiles that could strike Israel.

Israel's long-held policy is that the world must cooperate to defuse the Iranian nuclear threat. While not directly threatening to destroy Iran's nuclear facilities, Israel has avoided taking the military option off the table.

Prime Minister-designate Benjamin Netanyahu, who is putting together the next Israeli government, for years has said that Iran represents a threat to Israel's existence. He is seen as more likely than other Israeli leaders to order an attack.

However, most analysts believe that wiping out the Iranian nuclear program is beyond the ability of Israel's military. In 1982, the Israeli air force destroyed Iraq's nuclear reactor in a lightning strike, but Iran's facilities are scattered across the country, some of them underground.

Iran says its nuclear program is solely for peaceful purposes.

President Obama has called for diplomatic contacts with Iran as a way of persuading its rulers to drop their nuclear ambitions.

In talks last week with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, Israeli officials raised concerns about Iran's intentions.

The Israeli prime minister, Ehud Olmert, said he did not object in principle to the idea of US-Iran talks, but he warned that Iran could use the contacts to stall while it readies its nuclear arsenal.

Last week, an Iranian leader declared that Iran's missiles can strike all of Israel's nuclear facilities. The main Israeli reactor is in the southern Negev desert, and a smaller research reactor is closer to the center of the country.

Also yesterday, Iranian media said Iran has test-fired a new air-to-surface missile, in the country's latest display of its military capability, Reuters reported. Iran's Fars News Agency said the domestically produced missile had a range of 70 miles and was designed for use by military aircraft against naval targets.

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China View  
9 March 2009

## **New Opportunity Arises for Resolving Iranian Nuclear Issue**

by Liu Gang

VIENNA, March 8 (Xinhua) -- A week-long meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)'s 35-nation board of governors dominated by the Iranian nuclear issue concluded here on Saturday.

In a joint statement issued at the meeting, six parities – the United States, Britain, France, China, Russia and Germany, expressed their readiness for direct dialogues with Iran for the first time, signaling new hope for solving the Iranian nuclear issue.

### **SOLUTION THROUGH DIALOGUES**

The joint statement issued by the six parties on the Iranian nuclear issue on March 3 has three implications: supporting the IAEA to further play its role in solving the Iranian nuclear problem; urging Iran to actively cooperate with the IAEA on the issue, and resolving the dispute through diplomatic means.

In a speech last Wednesday, Chinese Ambassador to the IAEA TangGuoqiang said solving the Iranian nuclear issue through negotiations is facing a new opportunity. All parties concerned should continue to boost their diplomatic efforts and fully demonstrate flexibility in order to open dialogues and negotiations at an early date and to seek a comprehensive and long-term solution to the issue.

It is widely agreed that the joint statement again confirmed the keynote for solving the Iranian nuclear issue through dialogues, indicating that in the context of the current international political and economic situation, all parties concerned are re-examining and adjusting their policies on Iran, a favorable signal on breaking the current deadlock.

### **BREAKING DILEMMA NEEDS TRUST**

The Iranian nuclear issue has attracted world attention for years. In January 2006, Iran declared restarting its nuclear fuel research after a suspense of more than two years, and has had an ever escalating confrontation with the West over the nuclear program.

Observers believe that the main reason for failures to break the nuclear deadlock is the lack of trust among related parties.

Iran said its nuclear program is only for improving its "energy structure", and as a member of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, it has the right to carry out uranium enrichment activities for peaceful purposes.

However, the United States and its major allies apparently will not allow the emergence of such a country as Iran to have the capability to produce enriched uranium. The former Bush administration even insisted that the ultimate intention of Iran's nuclear program was to possess nuclear weapons.

During the meeting, many countries have expressed the hope that Iran could "actively cooperate with the IAEA and the United Nations" to "clarify the claim that its nuclear program is for military use" as soon as possible and to implement the Additional Protocol of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

They also agreed that some western countries need to change its hostile attitude towards Iran, renounce the use of force as a threat, solve the problem through diplomatic means and conduct dialogues on an equal footing in a bid to build trust and push for the settlement of the nuclear issue.

### **U.S. OF VITAL IMPORTANCE**

The Obama administration has extended "olive branch" to Iran several times after coming into power, expressing its willingness to carry out open and direct dialogues with Iran.

U.S. Secretary of States Hillary Clinton also confirmed that to negotiate with Iran is among the priorities of the country's diplomatic policies.

In response, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said Teheran was ready for "fair talks" with the United States.

"The new U.S. administration has said it wants changes and follow the course of dialogue ... but the changes must be fundamental and not tactical."

Iran welcomes "true changes and is ready to hold talks but talks in a fair atmosphere with mutual respect," Ahmadinejad said.

Iran's Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani said the United States needs a change of strategy to pave the way for direct talks with the country.

Iran's representative to the IAEA Ali Asghar Soltanieh also said in Vienna that Iran is willing to negotiate with the United States about all issues "without any precondition".

Analysts say despite the easing of confrontation between the United States and Iran, the settlement of the Iranian nuclear dispute depends on further actions from both sides, especially the United States.

An IAEA official who declined to reveal his name believed that the new policies of the United States and European countries could be "negotiations together with pressure", meaning that the western powers will give Iran hope while continuing to keep pressure and even impose sanctions on the Islamic country.

At present, it's unlikely for Iran to give up its nuclear program and the United States and other western countries are also unwilling to accept an "Iran with nuclear". Big breakthrough on the Iranian nuclear dispute can be achieved only when both sides reach a compromise on whether to stop uranium enrichment or not, analysts say.

[http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-03/09/content\\_10976874.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-03/09/content_10976874.htm)

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Sydney Morning Herald  
March 10, 2009

## **Iran Buying Time, says Israel**

Jason Koutsoukis in Jerusalem

ISRAEL'S chief of military intelligence has warned that Iran was just "buying time" to enable it to develop nuclear weapons as reports emerged that the country successfully test-fired a precision air-to-surface missile on Sunday.

At a regular briefing of the Israeli cabinet's weekly meeting, Major-General Amos Yadlin said Iran's ability to reach a nuclear capability was just a matter of adjusting its uranium-enrichment strategy.

"Iran has stockpiled hundreds of kilograms of uranium at low levels of enrichment and is hoping to take advantage of the dialogue with the West to buy the time necessary to enable it to develop a nuclear bomb," General Yadlin said.

Last week the International Atomic Energy Agency released a report saying Iran had enriched sufficient uranium to develop a single nuclear bomb.

General Yadlin said the desire of the US President, Barack Obama, for dialogue with Iran was being cautiously received by other Middle East nations.

"Moderate Arab states believe that this will be used by Iran and Syria, who will waste time under the guise of talk, while continuing their support for terrorism," he said.

In November General Yadlin called for dialogue with Iran, which he said could halt its nuclear weapons program. At the annual lecture to honour Israel's late defence minister Moshe Dayan, he said diplomacy was "not appeasement" and "Iran will do anything not to be cornered into the position of Iraq or North Korea".

Israel's hawkish Prime Minister-designate, Benjamin Netanyahu, has indicated that dealing with Iran will be a priority for his government. He has warned that Israel would be prepared to do whatever was needed to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons.

Meanwhile, Israeli military sources yesterday discounted reports that Iran had successfully launched a missile with a 110-kilometre range, which could threaten ships in the Persian Gulf.

Iran's semi-official Fars news agency said the successful missile test had been conducted on Sunday.

News of the test was not carried by Iran's official news agency. Fars is considered close to the elite Revolutionary Guard military branch.

"We do not doubt Iran's intentions to upgrade its military capabilities but we do have doubts about how effective their weapons systems are," said an Israeli military spokesman.

"Until we see more definitive evidence of the missile launch, then we cannot be sure about the accuracy of the report."

Iran has scrambled to upgrade its military capabilities in anticipation of a possible war.

Last week the head of the Revolutionary Guards said Iran had missiles that could reach Israel's nuclear sites if war broke out.

<http://www.smh.com.au/world/iran-buying-time-says-israel-20090309-8td7.html>

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International Herald Tribune

## **Lahore Attack Heralds Spread of Taliban-Trained Groups to Pakistani Heartlands**

By Isambard Wilkinson in Lahore and Dean Nelson in New Delhi.

As the manhunt continued for the gunmen behind Tuesday's assault in the Punjab city of Lahore, fears grew that it may have been the work of extremists planning to extend their reach from remote tribal areas into the heart of Pakistan's cities.

Only last week, a report by detectives in the southern city of Karachi revealed that senior Taliban figures were stockpiling huge caches of arms in safe houses in slum neighbourhoods. A well-planned uprising could easily throw the city into chaos and spread panic throughout the country.

Tuesday's commando-style strike in Lahore left eight people dead and eight members of the Sri Lankan cricket squad injured, raising serious doubts over whether Pakistan will host international sporting fixtures again. It was also yet another sign of the political instability facing the nuclear-armed country, with the attack also laying bare the incompetence and squabbling in government.

This weekend, even the security institutions charged with finding the culprits remained at odds. The Pakistani interior ministry pointed the finger of blame in the direction of its old enemy, India, an allegation widely dismissed elsewhere as a conspiracy theory. Instead, detectives investigating the attack admitted that the trail might lie closer to home in the form of al-Qaeda and Taliban-linked militants - drawn from parts of Punjab province itself and also from the remote North West Frontier Province, which borders Afghanistan and has long been a militant stronghold.

Britain and American diplomats believe the militants' task was made easier by the actions of President Asif Ali Zardari, whose long-standing feud with political rival Nawaz Sharif led to the sacking of Mr Sharif's brother Shahbaz as chief minister of Punjab last month. His removal from office came just as he was credited with making progress in tackling a new rise in militancy in Punjab province, and left the security forces that should have prevented last week's attack lacking proper leadership.

"It is well-documented that recruits from southern Punjab are fighting in the the North-West Frontier Province and tribal areas," one senior Western diplomat told the Sunday Telegraph. "Extremist groups are exploiting the under-developed areas of the southern Punjab, particularly through their charity groups to recruit people.

"Shahbaz Sharif was moving to tackle the problem, but with the political upheaval it means that everything has to be studied over anew. Both sides are focusing on their political positions. It has distracted from the major issues."

Foreign Secretary David Miliband also warned that the squabbling would prevent Pakistan - nominally a Western ally - from tackling the wider problems of militancy in the region.

He called on the country's politicians "to unite against the mortal threat Pakistan faces, which is a threat from its internal enemies, not its traditional external enemies". He added: "This is a very grave situation and it's intimately linked to the situation in Afghanistan."

Southern Punjab, a backward, underdeveloped area run in many parts by traditional feudal families, is fast emerging as an important hub in al-Qaeda's global jihad, with many suicide bombers and gunmen recruited from the province.

Militant groups such as Lashkar-e-Toiba (Army of the Pure) which carried out last November's Mumbai attacks, have grown steadily in the area. They are also thought to have linked with Taliban groups in the North West Frontier Province and the lawless "tribal" areas close to the Afghan border, which remain fiefdoms of traditional clan chiefs rather than central government. Some of these Punjabi-manned groups have also established operating and training bases in the tribal areas, where they are known as the 'Punjabi Taliban.'

Their emergence has highlighted the steady spread of al-Qaeda and Taliban influence well beyond its strongholds in the tribal areas and into more 'settled areas' throughout the country - from the Swat Valley down through the southern Punjab cities and to Karachi, Pakistan's largest city.

It was the spread of militant influence beyond its tribal havens into Pakistan's mainstream which most alarmed Richard Holbrooke, President Barack Obama's new 'super-envoy' to Afghanistan and Pakistan when he visited the region last month.

During his visit to Pakistan, Holbrooke made a special visit to meet Nawaz Sharif and his brother Shahbaz, then chief minister of Punjab, to take their advice and learn of the progress they had made in challenging the rise of al-Qaeda-linked groups in the province.

The Mumbai-style attack on Lahore came just a few days after a government briefing in Islamabad at which British and other Western diplomats voiced their fears that Mr Zardari's dismissal of Shahbaz Sharif's provincial government in Punjab would take the focus away from terrorism and the government's eye off the ball. Yesterday saw further violence as eight Pakistani police and soldiers were killed by a booby-trapped car bomb in the north-west city of Peshawar. The bomb went off as the men approached to investigate a tip-off that a body was inside the vehicle.

The United States and Britain remain alarmed by Pakistan's attempts to blame India for the Lahore attack. Shortly afterwards, Pakistani officials leaked a secret report which had predicted that India's intelligence agency, the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) would attack the Sri Lankan cricket team to discredit Islamabad and isolate Pakistan from international cricket. Senior officials last week revealed that Pakistan's advisor to the interior ministry, Rehman Malik, told the visiting FBI director Robert Mueller that his own intelligence reports indicated Indian involvement.

Foreign diplomats believe this to be little more than a conspiracy designed to detract the blame from the Pakistani government's own doorstep.

Officials last week admitted "vivid security gaps" in their protection plan for the Sri Lankan tourists. Khusro Pervaiz, a senior provincial official, said that outer cordon of the Sri Lankan team's police escort was missing or did not respond and that the escort vehicles were not up to the job. The lapses not only left the cricketers and match officials 'sitting ducks,' as British referee Chris Broad angrily described their plight last week, they also allowed the gunmen to calmly walk away from the scene and escape without fear of being followed or shot.

Several, if not all the gunmen, remain at large, free to strike again, while Pakistani officials and Western diplomats face up to the new, and more chilling reality that al-Qaeda's jihadis are now a threat to the whole country.

The raids by Lahore's police on hostels throughout the city in the wake of Tuesday's attack yielded an arsenal of ammunition, AK47s and suicide vests from suspected militants and confirmed the readiness of militants in Pakistan's second largest city.

Detectives in Karachi are even more fearful. They believe Taliban fighters have infiltrated the city's three million-strong Pathan community – from the tribal areas bordering Afghanistan – and are poised to strike. A report to the city's Inspector General of Police warned that senior Taliban leader Hasan Mahmood was hiding in the city, and that militants have stockpiled huge amounts of arms and ammunition.

American and British diplomats do not believe the militants are yet poised take over Pakistan's major metros, but they do believe the Lahore attack highlights the need to tackle terrorism beyond their dusty havens along the Afghan borders.

Ali Hasan Dayan, Human Rights Watch and political analyst, said Lahore had never witnessed a terrorist attack on such a scale and that its people, who regard themselves as the country's liberal, metropolitan elite, were embarrassed.

"It's an attempt to impose a more isolated and inward-looking society in Pakistan," he said. "People are upset, embarrassed and frightened because what the attack says about Pakistan with its interface with the outside world. It challenges the assumption that terrorism is a problem restricted to the border."

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/pakistan/4953560/Lahore-attack-heralds-spread-of-Taliban-trained-groups-to-Pakistani-heartlands.html>

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