



# **USAF COUNTERPROLIFERATION CENTER**

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**Issue No. 694, 13 March 2009**

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Wirtualna Polska – Poland  
10 March 2009

## **The Future of the Shield Questioned**

Warsaw Business Journal

The US administration has sent signals to Russia that it would consider abandoning its anti-missile shield project in Central Europe in return for Moscow's support in pressuring Iran to end its nuclear program. The offer was reportedly included in what the media have called US President Barack Obama's "secret letter" to his Russian counterpart, Dmitry Medvedev.

In response to media reports, the Obama administration explained that the contents of the letter had been inaccurately described. No secrecy was involved and the missile shield was mentioned among several other topics during a regular exchange of correspondence between the US and Russian presidents, after the latter congratulated Obama on his inauguration, American authorities claimed.

However, the fact that the Washington is discussing the shield with the Russians could, in and of itself, be a sign that the missile defense plans will be scrapped.

"If successful, putting something on the table that doesn't exist and might not ever exist would be a perfect play by Obama," said Bohdan Szklarski, an expert on American issues. He pointed out that the shield project is still at a preliminary stage and nobody is sure if it will work or how much it will finally cost.

On the other hand, he underscored that Russia's influence on Iran shouldn't be overestimated. The development of Iran's nuclear program would likely be possible even without Russian support.

Washington sees Russia as a crucial element in solving its problems with Iran, which, after all, is the reason the Bush administration wanted to site the missile shield in Central Europe in the first place. Moscow has consistently taken umbrage to the idea of US interceptor missiles being located on the territory of its former satellites, and the new US administration doesn't consider the undoubtedly costly shield a priority, especially given the country's current economic situation.

"What is sad about all this from the Polish perspective is that, first - if this offer really took place - we learned about it from the media. And second, that the US and Russia would talk over our heads," said Szklarski.

However, he saw a net profit in Poland's involvement in the shield project. "If this was a tool for upgrading the quality of our defense system and acquiring investments in the army, then the government achieved its goal," he concluded.

<http://finanse.wp.pl/kat,47674,title,The-future-of-the-shield-questioned,wid,10926348,wiadomosc.html?ticaid=17a54>

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Newsweek  
March 16, 2009  
[Periscope](#)

## **False Starts for Star Wars**

By Mark Hosenball

The Obama administration has a complex relationship with the long-gestating antimissile program known as Star Wars. On the one hand, it has used Star Wars as a bargaining chip to deal with thorny diplomatic issues. Last month, Obama sent a letter to Russian President Dmitry Medvedev suggesting that if he works with Washington to block Iran's nuclear program, then the United States might kill a George W. Bush plan to put a missile-defense system in Poland. Soon after, Adm. Timothy Keating, top U.S. commander in the Pacific, told ABC News that the Pentagon was prepared to use Star Wars to shoot down an anticipated North Korean rocket test. At the same time, Obama's position on Star Wars deployment is skeptical; the White House Web site says he'll proceed with it only pending "positive" evidence that it works. And that's the rub. Effectively, so far, it doesn't.

According to a recent Pentagon report sent to Congress and obtained by NEWSWEEK, current technology falls well short of "positive" results. Written by an independent Defense Department evaluator, the report says test results from a primitive antimissile system deployed in Alaska are "insufficient to demonstrate an operational ... capability"; at best, the system might work in an "emergency" on "simple ... ballistic missile threats" from North Korea. As for the system that the Bush team hoped to deploy in Eastern Europe, the report characterizes it as a "concept defined ... through analysis, laboratory testing and/or legacy models and simulations." In other words, it's still on the drawing board. (A spokesman for the Pentagon's Missile Defense Agency conceded that the system for Eastern Europe would need fresh testing.)

Administration sympathizers say that while Obama is no antimissile-program enthusiast, he also wants to avoid looking as if he's giving in to Russia. As for North Korea, two administration officials, who asked for anonymity when discussing a sensitive issue, say Keating was way out of line to suggest that Obama might use the system now to thwart North Korea, noting that the president has been trying delicately to engage Kim Jong Il's regime. (A spokesman for Keating declined to comment.) "The White House," said one of the officials, "was not pleased."

<http://www.newsweek.com/id/188188>

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New York Times  
OP-ED CONTRIBUTOR  
March 12, 2009

## **Defensible Missile Defense**

By Theodore Postol

Cambridge, Mass. -- IN his recent letter to President Dmitri Medvedev of Russia, President Obama offered to modify the previous administration's plans for a missile defense system in Europe. He was right to do so. A continued impasse with Russia might have prevented future arms reductions, created divisions with our European allies, done irreparable harm at the 2010 review of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and impaired efforts to deal with Iran's growing potential to become a nuclear weapons state.

President Obama has correctly shown skepticism about the missile defense system promoted by the Bush administration: its performance is unproven, it requires unending additional resources and it faces problems that cannot be solved with existing science. Russia, for its part, has long perceived missile defense as a threat to its security — a concern the administration chose to ignore, worsening tensions with Moscow.

Fortunately, there is a "designer" missile defense that would answer President Obama's hesitations and allay Russia's fears. And unlike the Bush missile defense, it would actually be able to deal with the threat of ballistic missile attacks from North Korea and Iran if such a threat ever emerged.

This is a proposal I've developed and analyzed with a variety of American and Russian experts and the idea itself is simple. The defense system would shoot down Iranian or North Korean long-range missiles as they slowly accelerate from their launching sites. It would take advantage of the fact that long-range missiles built by Iran or North Korea would be large and cumbersome, have long powered flight times and could take off only from well-known launching sites.

The defense would have fast-accelerating interceptors that could home in on and destroy the large, slow and fragile ICBMs. The interceptors would weigh about a ton and could achieve a top speed of five kilometers per second in tens of seconds. They would be carried by stealthy unmanned airborne vehicles that look like B-2 bombers, but are smaller and carry much smaller, though still substantial, payloads. Such vehicles already exist.

Only two of these armed drones, controlled by remote teams of operators, would be needed to patrol within several hundred kilometers of a launching site. At these ranges, it would be possible to shoot down an ICBM, with its nuclear warhead, so that the debris falls on the territory of the country that launched it. Only five drones would be needed to maintain a continuous patrol for extended periods. But the system would have to operate only when satellites and reconnaissance aircraft indicate that an ICBM is being prepared at the launching site.

Unlike the provocative, unworkable defense planned by the Bush administration — with its two radars of insufficient range in the Czech Republic and Southern Europe and its 10 interceptors in Poland — this alternative defense would be technologically feasible, and could be developed, built and deployed near the areas of concern in a relatively short time. And it would be effective almost immediately on deployment.

This system would provide an extremely intimidating and highly effective defense against Iran and North Korea, but would pose no threat to Russia or China. Their missiles are far too numerous and dispersed over such large areas that the defense would have little or no chance to engage them. In addition, pieces of it could even be developed and operated in tandem with Russia.

A specialized and focused missile defense of this type could also be forged into an international tool to rid the world of nuclear weapons. It could, for instance, be used by the United Nations Security Council to extend the internationally accepted concept of “no flight zones” to include launching areas for long-range ballistic missiles.

The Obama administration should study and consider this concept as a serious alternative to the dangerous and senseless path we have been on.

*Theodore Postol is a professor of science, technology and national security policy at M.I.T.*

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/12/opinion/12postol.html?ref=opinion>

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RIA Novosti

## **New Mobile Topol-M Battalion Put on Combat Duty in Russia**

March 10, 2009

MOSCOW (RIA Novosti) - A missile battalion equipped with mobile Topol-M (SS-27 Stalin) ICBMs has been put on combat duty in central Russia, a spokesman for the Russian Missile Forces (SMF) said on Tuesday.

The first two Topol-M mobile missile battalions, equipped with six road-mobile systems, had already been put on combat duty with the 54th Strategic Missile Division near the town of Teikovo, about 150 miles (240 km) northeast of Moscow.

"Another missile battalion equipped with mobile Topol-M missile systems and comprising three launchers and a command unit has been put on combat duty with the Teikovo missile division in the Ivanovo Region," Col. Alexander Vovk said.

The SMF commander, Col. Gen. Nikolai Solovtsov, earlier said that Russia's Topol-M ballistic missiles would be put on combat duty on schedule despite the current global financial crisis. He added that the division will be up to full strength by 2010.

Topol-M missiles are the mainstay of the ground-based component of Russia's nuclear triad. As of the beginning of 2009, the SMF operated 50 silo-based and six road-mobile Topol-M missile systems.

The missile, with a range of about 7,000 miles (11,000 km), is said to be immune to any current and future U.S. ABM defense. It is capable of making evasive maneuvers to avoid a kill using terminal phase interceptors, and carries targeting countermeasures and decoys.

It is also shielded against radiation, electromagnetic pulse, nuclear blasts, and is designed to survive a hit from any form of laser technology.

<http://en.rian.ru/russia/20090310/120499264.html>

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Pravda

10 March 2009

# Russia Cancels Sale of Su-33 fighters to China to Prevent Their Pirate Copies

Source: Pravda.Ru

A large arms deal between Russia and China has not taken place over a possible violation of intellectual property rights. Russia has refused to sell Su-33 deck-based fighter jets to China, *The Moskovsky Komsomolets* newspaper wrote.

The talks about the deal began quite a while ago. China intended to buy up to 50 jets for its aircraft carriers, although the country originally wanted to buy only two Su-33 jets on a trial basis. This intention became the bone of contention in the talks between the two countries: Russia believed that the Chinese customers could copy the Russian technology for the production of their own clones of the Russian fighters.

Russia had a motive to think so, the newspaper wrote. In 1995, China received a license for the production of 200 Su-27 fighters of specific modification, complete with Russian avionics, radars and engines. However, Russia terminated the agreement for the purchase of 95 planes in 2006, because Chinese aircraft-makers began to produce a similar fighter, although it was equipped with Chinese avionics and systems.

To put it in a nutshell, China has an experience of cloning the fighters of Russia's renowned Sukhoi jets. The problem was discussed at the 13<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Russian-Chinese Committee for Military Cooperation in December. It is obviously highly unprofitable for Russia to let cheaper Chinese analogues of its reputable jets appear in the region.

Russia declined China's offer to increase the purchase to 14 jets: at least 24 aircraft must be shipped to overbalance the production of planes.

It is too early to say that the problem has been entirely solved. China is extremely interested in the deck-based aircraft for its aviation. The nation plans to complete its conventional destroyer in 2010 and pass into service a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier in 2020. It is worthy of note that China used to purchase a number of incomplete Soviet vessels of a similar class, which were also reportedly used to copy Russian defense technologies.

China purchased a fair amount of used and incomplete aircraft carriers of the Soviet production within 25 years, BFM business portal said. China could reportedly use the vessels to borrow Russian defense production technologies.

Russia officially notified China at the end of April 2008 that the production of J11 fighter jets, the copies of Russia's Su-27SK fighters, was a violation of international agreements. Moscow promised to launch legal proceedings to defend its intellectual property. If China learns to build its own version of Russia's Su-27, the country will easily oust Russia from the arms markets of third world countries. Russian experts believed that it would take the Chinese about ten years to develop their own aircraft engine, but China made it a lot faster.

Russia has delivered 76 Su-27SK to China since 1992, and sold the license for the production of 200 more jets in 1995. China started building its own J11 planes in 1996 with the use of Russian spare parts, *The Moskovsky Komsomolets* wrote.

The modernized J11 fighter of the Chinese production, presumably made of Chinese spare parts, was outfitted with the enhanced Chinese radar and could carry made-in-China missiles to strike ground targets in the beginning of the 2000s. In 2007, China demonstrated the first prototypes of J11B model, which was almost a complete copy of the Su-27SMK jet.

The Russian economy loses up to \$2 billion every year on the pirate production of various modifications of the renowned Kalashnikov assault rifle, Russia's major defense export enterprise, Rosoboronexport said. The USSR used to hand over a number of licenses for the production of Kalashnikov rifles and its modifications to 18 countries. All of them expired at the end of the 1980s and in the beginning of the 1990s.

The Sukhoi Su-33 (NATO reporting name 'Flanker-D') is a carrier-based multi-role fighter aircraft produced by Russian firm Sukhoi beginning in 1982. It is a derivative of the Su-27 'Flanker' and was initially known as the Su-27K. The main differences from the Su-27 are that the Su-33 can operate from aircraft carriers and is capable of aerial refueling.

[http://english.pravda.ru/russia/economics/10-03-2009/107208-russia\\_china-0](http://english.pravda.ru/russia/economics/10-03-2009/107208-russia_china-0)

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China View

## **Japan Calls on DPRK to Refrain from Launching Action**

10 March 2009

TOKYO (Xinhua) -- Japanese Defense Minister Yasukazu Hamada on Tuesday urged the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to refrain from any attempt of launching a satellite or a missile, warning that it would destabilize East Asia.

"I believe it's important for the government to call on North Korea (the DPRK) to refrain from an action that would damage peace and stability of the region," Hamada was quoted as saying at a regular press conference.

The DPRK says that it is to send up a communication satellite as part of a peaceful space program while countries such as the United States, Japan and South Korea believe that it may in fact plan to test-fire a long-range ballistic missile "Taepodong-2".

In response to the DPRK's warning on Monday that it will launch a war on the territories of the United States, Japan and South Korea, if its "peacefully-purposed" satellite launching is intercepted, Hamada said that Japan will prepare itself to tackle the launching "in an appropriate manner."

"We must be preparing ourselves to do what we have thought of" to ensure Japan's security, he said.

But the defense ministry will deal with the matter in a "calm manner," he added.

[http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-03/10/content\\_10983303.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-03/10/content_10983303.htm)

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RIA Novosti

## **N. Korea Joins Space Treaty, Convention - Russian Ministry Source**

12 March 2009

MOSCOW (RIA Novosti) - North Korea has informed Russia that it has signed up to an international treaty and convention on space, a Russian Foreign Ministry source said on Thursday.

"The Foreign Ministry of Russia, being a depositary state, received on March 5 notification that North Korea has joined the 1966 space treaty," the source said.

The source said Pyongyang also told the Russian ministry that UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon had been informed of the country's joining the 1974 Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space.

North Korea's official news agency said earlier that the government has informed the International Maritime Organization and other related global bodies that the country will launch a satellite-carrying rocket between April 4 and 8.

A South Korean Foreign Ministry official said that despite Pyongyang's joining the agreements, the launch would be considered a breach of UN Security Council Resolution 1718, which prohibits the country from launching ballistic missiles.

The communist state announced plans last month to launch a satellite using a three-stage rocket from the newly constructed Musudan-ri launch pad on the country's northeast coast.

However, Seoul and Washington believe the real purpose of a satellite launch would be to test a long-range Taepodong-2 missile, which is thought to have a range of 6,700 kilometers (4,100 miles) and could possibly reach Alaska.

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

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

In 2005 Pyongyang announced that it had nuclear weapons and in July 2006 test-launched a Taepodong-2 long-range missile and later staged an underground test of a nuclear device. On July 15, 2006, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1695, which forbids North Korea from developing ballistic missiles.

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

Some analysts believe the impoverished country is not capable of developing a domestic space program, and that the planned rocket launch was simply an attempt to draw the attention of U.S. President Barack Obama's new administration to the issue of the stalled six-party talks on its controversial nuclear program.

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

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20090312/120530546.html>

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Wall Street Journal

13 March 2009

## **North Korea Sets Window in April for Rocket Launch**

By EVAN RAMSTAD

SEOUL -- North Korea announced Thursday that next month it will launch its newest rocket -- which many outside the country suspect is a long-range missile -- giving other countries three weeks to decide whether to shoot it down or deal with the matter in another way.

The launch, slated for some time between April 4 and 8, would violate two United Nations resolutions passed in 2006 to penalize North Korea after it last test-fired a long-range missile. Pyongyang says its new rocket will carry an experimental communications satellite to space and that it has a right to engage in such research.

Many analysts outside North Korea say the new long-range missile could reach the continental U.S.

Military and intelligence analysts in South Korea, Japan and the U.S., through satellite monitoring, spotted preparations for the launch at North Korea's main missile test site in a remote mountainous part of the country's northeast region in late January.

Since then, leaders of the countries that have bargained with North Korea since 2003 to give up nuclear-weapons research efforts -- China, Japan, Russia, South Korea and the U.S. -- have warned it not to launch another rocket. Military officials in Japan and the U.S. said they are ready to shoot the rocket down if ordered.

North Korea's authoritarian government since the early 1990s has used provocative acts in weapons development -- such as missile launches and the firing up of nuclear reactors -- to seek monetary payments, food assistance and security guarantees from other countries.

Following the North's statement on Thursday, Japan said it "would not tolerate" any action by Pyongyang that raises tension in northeast Asia.

"Even if it is a satellite launch, there is an international understanding that it would violate U.N. Security Council resolutions," said Yasuhisa Kawamura, a spokesman in Japan's Foreign Ministry.

Before the North's statement, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, describing her meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi in Washington on Wednesday, said the two countries "will discuss a response if we are not successful in convincing them not to go forward with what is a very provocative act."

A statement earlier this week by another senior Obama administration official signaled the U.S. is unlikely to try to shoot down North Korea's rocket. Dennis Blair, the national intelligence director, told a Senate panel on Tuesday: "I tend to believe that the North Koreans announced that they would do a space launch and that's what they intend."

He added the technology to launch a rocket is indistinguishable from that of a long-range missile.

In 1998, when North Korea launched a long-range missile that landed in the Pacific Ocean, Pyongyang declared it had sent a satellite into space. Analysts never found such a satellite. North Korea didn't try to disguise its 2006 missile launch in that manner.

Its insistence that this new rocket is designed for space travel is widely seen as an effort to blunt any attempt by the U.S. or Japan to shoot it down -- a capability the countries didn't have until recently. Earlier this week, North Korea's military issued a statement that said, "Shooting our satellite for peaceful purposes will precisely mean a war."

Also in the past week, North Korea applied to join two space-related treaties under U.N. auspices, a spokesman for South Korea's foreign ministry said Thursday. Seoul views those moves as more effort by Pyongyang to gain cover for the missile launch, the spokesman said.

[http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123684282721605721.html?mod=googlenews\\_wsj](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123684282721605721.html?mod=googlenews_wsj)

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International Herald Tribune  
March 12, 2009

## **UN Chief: N Korea Launch is 'Undesirable'**

The Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS: Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said Thursday that a North Korean satellite or missile launch threatens peace and stability in the region and is "undesirable."

North Korea told two U.N. agencies earlier Thursday that it plans to launch a communications satellite between April 4-8, apparently to fend off worries that it planned to test its long-range missile technology.

"This will threaten the peace and stability in the region," Ban told a press conference. "I hope they will abide by the relevant Security Council resolution and return to the six-party talks and fully and faithfully implement the agreement of the six-party talks."

A 2006 U.N. Security Council resolution bans North Korea from ballistic missile activity, and talks on dismantling North Korea's nuclear program are stalled.

North and South Korea remain divided and relations have deteriorated since conservative President Lee Myung-bak took office a year ago in the South. The North barred overland border crossings on Monday and cut off the only remaining military hot line between the two Koreas to protest joint U.S.-South Korean drills under way across the South despite Pyongyang's warnings that the maneuvers could trigger war.

Ban, who was South Korea's foreign minister before taking the helm of the U.N. in January 2007, expressed hope that bilateral relations between the two Koreas would "be improved."

"Under such conditions, this really becomes a source of great concern, not only of the Korean people or people in the region. This will not be desirable to the maintenance of regional peace and security," he said.

"I sincerely hope that they will be faithfully abiding by the Security Council resolution and implement all these issues through dialogue," Ban said.

<http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2009/03/12/news/UN-UN-North-Korea.php>

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Guardian.co.uk  
13 March 2009

## **Japan Warns It May Shoot Down North Korean Satellite Launcher**

Justin McCurry in Tokyo

Japan today threatened to shoot down a satellite that North Korea plans to launch early next month if it shows any signs of striking its territory.

Tokyo's warning that it would deploy its multibillion-dollar missile defence system raised tensions in the region after North Korea said that it had identified a potential "danger area" near Japanese territory along the rocket's flight path.



The regime told the International Maritime Organisation that the missile would be launched during daylight between 4 and 8 April, and that its boosters would fall into the Sea of Japan – about 75 miles (120km) from Japan's north-west coast – and the Pacific Ocean.

Officials in Tokyo said they reserved the right to destroy any threatening object in mid-flight, despite North Korean warnings that it would consider such a move an act of war.

"Under our law, we can intercept any object if it is falling towards Japan, including any attacks on Japan, for our security," Takeo Kawamura, the chief cabinet secretary, told reporters.

Despite repeated assurances from Pyongyang that the rocket is a vital part of North Korea's space programme, other countries in the region suspect the hardware is a Taepodong-2 ballistic missile.

South Korean intelligence has reported a build-up of activity in recent days near the missile's launch pad at Musudan-ri base on its neighbour's north-east coast.

Any missile launch, even one intended to put a satellite into orbit, would represent a snub to the US administration, which has repeatedly invited the communist state to return to negotiations over its nuclear weapons programme.

Last month the US secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, urged the north to cancel the launch, which US officials say would be in violation of a 2006 UN security council resolution.

The South Korean foreign ministry said in a statement: "If North Korea goes ahead with the launch, we believe there will be discussions and a response by the security council on the violation of the resolution."

The UN secretary-general, Ban Ki-moon, said a missile or satellite launch would "threaten the peace and stability in the region."

After Japan's transport ministry ordered airlines and shipping companies operating in the area to take precautionary measures, Japan Airlines and All Nippon Airways said they would alter flight paths on several European and other routes.

Speculation has been mounting for weeks that North Korea was about to put its hitherto unreliable missile technology to the test. The regime suffered a setback in 2006 when a Taepodong-2 missile – theoretically capable of reaching Alaska – blew up moments into its flight.

Japan has intensified efforts to protect itself against conventional missile attacks since 1998, when the north test-launched a long-range rocket over its territory without warning.

In response, Japan and the US have jointly developed a ballistic missile defence system that includes interceptor missiles on board ships and Patriot missiles dotted around Tokyo.

But experts believe that a rocket capable of launching a satellite into orbit may be too high to intercept.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/mar/13/north-korea-japan-nuclear-missile>

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Washington Post

March 11, 2009

## **U.S., Israel Disagree on Iran Arms Threat**

By Peter Finn

Washington Post Staff Writer

Iran has not produced the highly enriched uranium necessary for a nuclear weapon and has not decided to do so, U.S. intelligence officials told Congress yesterday, an assessment that contrasts with a stark Israeli warning days earlier that Iran has crossed the "technological threshold" in its pursuit of the bomb.

Director of National Intelligence Dennis C. Blair said that Iran has not decided to pursue the production of weapons-grade uranium and the parallel ability to load it onto a ballistic missile.

"The overall situation -- and the intelligence community agrees on this -- [is] that Iran has not decided to press forward . . . to have a nuclear weapon on top of a ballistic missile," Blair told the Senate Armed Services

Committee. "Our current estimate is that the minimum time at which Iran could technically produce the amount of highly enriched uranium for a single weapon is 2010 to 2015."

The five-year spread, he explained, is a result of differences in the intelligence community about how quickly Iran could develop a weapon if it rekindled a weapons program it suspended in 2003.

Lt. Gen. Michael D. Maples, director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, told the Senate panel that Iran is "keeping open that option."

Iran recently announced its first space launch and said Sunday that it had successfully tested an air-to-surface missile with a 70-mile range. Maples said the launch of the Safir space vehicle "does advance their knowledge and their ability to develop an intercontinental ballistic missiles," but he and Blair said there may be no connection between the country's development of missiles and any ambition to have nuclear weapons.

"I believe those are separate decisions," Blair said. "The same missiles can launch vehicles into space. They can launch warheads, either conventional or nuclear, onto . . . land targets, and Iran is pursuing those -- for those multiple purposes. Whether they develop a nuclear weapon which could then be put in that . . . warhead, I believe, is a . . . separate decision which Iran has not made yet."

Israeli officials have a different view of Iran's goals.

"Reaching a military-grade nuclear capability is a question of synchronizing its strategy with the production of a nuclear bomb," Maj. Gen. Amos Yadlin, Israel's chief of military intelligence, told cabinet ministers, according to a senior Israeli official briefing reporters in Jerusalem. "Iran continues to stockpile hundreds of kilograms of low-level enriched uranium and hopes to use the dialogue with the West to buy the time it requires in order to move towards an ability to manufacture a nuclear bomb."

Blair said Israel was working from the same facts but had drawn a different interpretation of their meaning.

"The Israelis are far more concerned about it, and they take more of a worst-case approach to these things from their point of view," he said.

A similar difference of opinion surfaced last week, when Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Mike Mullen said he thought that Iran had enough fissile material for a nuclear weapon and Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates said on the same day that Iran was "not close to a weapon."

Blair was asked about the Chinese military and specifically a weekend incident in the South China Sea involving a U.S. ocean surveillance ship and five Chinese vessels in international waters. The intelligence chief called it the most serious episode between the two nations since 2001, when tensions rose over a collision between Chinese fighters and a U.S. surveillance aircraft in roughly the same region.

"They seem to be more militarily aggressive," Blair said, adding: "I think the debate is still on in China whether, as their military power increases, they will be used for good or for pushing people around."

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/03/10/AR2009031003626.html?hpid=sec-nation>

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China View

## **U.S. says Iran is keeping Option to Develop Nuclear Weapons**

11 March 2009

WASHINGTON, March 10 (Xinhua) -- Iran "is keeping open the option to develop" nuclear weapons, the U.S. director of national intelligence said Tuesday.

In testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Dennis Blair said "although we do not know whether Iran currently intends to develop nuclear weapons, we assess Tehran at a minimum is keeping open the option to develop them."

"Iran does not currently have a nuclear weapon" because it lacks weapons-grade highly enriched uranium, but it could obtain enough as early as 2010, Blair said.

The United States cannot "rule out that Iran has acquired from abroad or will acquire in the future a nuclear weapon or enough fissile material for a weapon," the U.S. intelligence chief noted.

Iran's uranium enrichment program is questioned by many parties. Western countries like the United States claim that Iran intends to secretly develop nuclear weapons. The UN Security Council also requires Iran to suspend its uranium enrichment activity.

Iran has insisted that its nuclear plan is only for peaceful purposes, and has continued its uranium enrichment activity despite pressure from western countries and relevant UN resolutions and sanctions.

[http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-03/11/content\\_10987233.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-03/11/content_10987233.htm)

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RIA Novosti

## **Iran Missile, Nuclear Threat 'Real, Dangerous' - Russian Analyst**

12 March 2009

MOSCOW (RIA Novosti) - Russia and the West would be making a big mistake if they ignored or underestimated the potential missile and nuclear threat coming from Iran, a Russian military expert said on Thursday.

"Iran is actively working on a missile development program. I won't say the Iranians will be able to develop intercontinental ballistic missiles in the near future, but they will most likely be able to threaten the whole of Europe," said Maj. Gen. Vladimir Dvorkin, head of the Moscow-based Center for Strategic Nuclear Forces.

Some Western and Russian sources claim that Iran may be currently running a program, dubbed Project Koussar, to develop a totally different missile with a range of 4,000-5,000 km (2,500-3,300 miles).

"Iran has long abandoned outdated missile technologies and is capable of producing sophisticated missile systems," Dvorkin said at a news conference in RIA Novosti.

Iran successfully launched last year an upgraded Shahab-3 ballistic missile as part of a navy exercise, dubbed Great Prophet 3, in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz.

With a reported range of 2,000 kilometers and armed with a 1-ton conventional warhead, the Shahab-3 puts Israel, Turkey, the Arabian peninsula, Afghanistan and Pakistan within striking distance.

Western powers led by the United States, along with Israel, accuse Tehran of attempting to develop nuclear weapons and ballistic missile technology for their delivery. Iran says it needs its nuclear program for the peaceful generation of electricity and missile program for space exploration.

Iran has consistently defied international demands to halt its nuclear program and insists it plans to use enriched uranium fuel produced at a uranium enrichment facility at Natanz in its first domestically-built nuclear power plant, in the town of Darkhovin, which is scheduled to become operational in 2016.

Tehran announced in late February that it had 6,000 operating centrifuges at Natanz and was planning to install a total of 50,000 over the next five years.

Commenting on the Iranian nuclear program, Dvorkin said the potential danger of its military aspect was not the possibility of a nuclear strike against some countries, but the ability to assume a more bold approach in dealing with the international community after becoming a nuclear power.

"The real threat is that Iran, which is already ignoring all resolutions and sanctions issued by the UN Security Council, will be practically 'untouchable' after acquiring nuclear-power status, and will be able to expand its support of terrorist organizations, including Hamas and Hezbollah," the expert said.

He added that the possession of nuclear weapons by Iran could force non-nuclear countries to seek similar weapons and ballistic missile technologies thus starting a nuclear race and increasing the possibility of a nuclear conflict.

Dvorkin has had a role in writing all major strategy documents for the Strategic Nuclear Forces and the Strategic Missile Forces. As an expert in the field he participated in preparing the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty and the START I and START II pacts, and has made a significant contribution to formulating Soviet and Russian positions at negotiations on strategic offensive arms control and reduction.

<http://en.rian.ru/russia/20090312/120537431.html>

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## Syrian Nuclear Mystery Remains Unsolved

11 March 2009

MOSCOW (RIA Novosti political commentator Andrei Murtazin) - Last week, the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) met in Vienna to discuss the Iranian nuclear file and the Syrian nuclear mystery.

The IAEA has some misgivings about Syria's al-Kibar nuclear facility, reportedly bombed by the Israeli Air Force (IAF) on September 6, 2007. After IAEA experts found uranium particles at the scene of the attack, Damascus said that Israel had bombed a vacant plot belonging to an inter-Arab agricultural cooperative in the Deir ez-Zor Governorate, 450 km from the Syrian capital, and that uranium particles belong to missiles that had been used during the air strike.

Top IAEA officials remained unconvinced; what's more, Syria refused to admit another expert group to the suspicious facility.

Israel claims that the al-Kibar facility was, in fact, a nuclear reactor, built by Syria with assistance from North Korea. There is still no evidence to refute or to confirm this claim. However, immediately after the bombing Damascus did not raise an uproar and did not demand that the aggressor be punished.

Instead, construction machines demolished all the buildings at the al-Kibar facility. Damascus issued an official statement about the Israeli air strike only several weeks later.

One more fact that does not speak in favor of Syria: On August 1, 2008, Brigadier General Mohammad Suleiman, a close associate of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, was gunned down at a beach resort near the Syrian port city of Tartous. This happened ten months after the Israeli air strike when the IAEA wanted to ask Damascus some more questions. U.S. intelligence reports say that General Suleiman was responsible for the Syrian nuclear program.

The Syrian response to various suspicions and accusations is the central issue so far. Damascus is behaving very much like Iran does in a similar situation.

The IAEA Board of Governors said nothing new about the Iranian nuclear program. On March 3, the so-called Iran Six of international mediators, namely, Russia, China, France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States, addressed the Board of Governors and called on Tehran to fully cooperate on all contentious aspects of its nuclear program.

As usual, Tehran replied that the actions of the Iran Six trying to solve the Iranian nuclear-file problem could only harm the country's cooperation with the international community on this issue.

Nor did the first official meeting between Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in Geneva produce any new results. Lavrov reiterated the need for turning the Middle East into a nuclear-free zone and for eliminating all other weapons of mass destruction in the region.

Both sides once again expressed their concern about the Iranian nuclear program's military component and once again demonstrated their differences on the issue. It is common knowledge that Washington opposes this program in any form, while Moscow only opposes its military aspects.

Two weeks ago, Gholamreza Agazadeh, the Iranian Vice-President and Head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, said Tehran planned to install 50,000 operational centrifuges at the Natanz uranium enrichment facility in the next five years.

Russia, the United States, Europe and Israel deserve to know why Iran needs so much enriched uranium at a time when Moscow undertakes the delivery of nuclear fuel for the Bushehr nuclear power plant built by Russian power engineers and the disposal of used fuel.

Iran says enriched uranium is needed to guarantee the future of its nuclear program and to prevent dependence on the West and probably Russia. Thus a mystery surrounding Iranian centrifuges is not far off from a Syrian nuclear mystery.

But for Tehran's militant rhetoric, constant threats and verbal attacks against Israel, the United States and some Arab nations, the Iranian nuclear program would not cause so many questions on the part of the international community.

At the same time, Tehran is trying to turn Moscow into a guarantor of its nuclear and political security. Iran expands its contacts with Russia each time the situation becomes aggravated.

It is hardly surprising that the current visit of Sergei Kiriyenko, Head of Rosatom, Russia's state nuclear energy corporation, to Bushehr has coincided with the visit of Iranian Defense Minister Mostafa Mohammad Najar to Moscow.

Although diplomats tried hard to hush up the main purpose of Najar's visit, namely, the sale of S-300 surface-to-air missile (SAM) systems to Tehran, the Iranian media actively discussed the issue. Iran wants to use these SAM systems for shielding its nuclear facilities from Israeli missiles and warplanes.

Although the S-300 contract was initiated two years ago, Moscow is still in no hurry to implement it because of insistent U.S. and Israeli requests, therefore retaining leverage with Tehran. Owing to Russian efforts, the UN Security Council has not yet passed any tough sanctions against Iran, while Israeli warplanes have so far avoided hitting the incomplete Bushehr NPP and reducing it to heaps of twisted concrete and smoking rubble.

Although Russia does not build any NPPs in Syria, it sells weapons to Damascus. The administration of U.S. President Barack Obama has resumed negotiations with Syria for the first time since 2005. Two senior U.S. officials, namely, Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Asian Affairs Jeffrey Feltman and Daniel Shapiro, the head of the Middle East desk at the National Security Council, have just visited Damascus.

At a meeting with Syria's Foreign Minister Walid al-Muallem, both sides agreed on the importance of resumed Syrian-U.S. dialogue for mutual interests and regional peace and security, the Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) said.

Although no details of the talks were disclosed, it is obvious that Washington is trying to gradually reduce Iranian influence on Damascus. If it succeeds, then the IAEA would have no more questions for Syria.

Incidentally, claims to Tehran may disappear in exactly the same way.

*The opinions expressed in this article are the author's and do not necessarily represent those of RIA Novosti.*

<http://en.rian.ru/analysis/20090311/120521838.html>

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Press Trust of India

## **'Pak's N-bomb Prevented India from Attacking it After 26/11'**

9 March 2009

Kolkata, Mar 9 (PTI) Pakistan's possession of nuclear weapons prevented India from attacking that country after the terror strikes in Mumbai and the attack on Parliament, former army chief Gen Shankar Roychowdhury has said. "Do nuclear weapons deter? Of course, they do. Pakistan's nuclear weapons deterred India from attacking that country after the Mumbai strikes," he told a seminar here on 'Nuclear Risk Reduction and Conflict Resolve.' It was due to Pakistan's possession of nuclear weapons that India stopped short of a military retaliation following the attack on Parliament in 2001, Roychowdhury said.

Stressing the need for nuclear disarmament, he said in 1988 the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi had proposed a 20-year plan for it.

Commissioner in the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission (WMDC) Lt Gen V R Raghavan said Pakistan's nuclear weapons were in safe hands.

"By all indications, Pakistan's nuclear weapons, are in safe hands and under tight control. But nobody can say what will happen if the system breaks down. There is concern in the West about whether the system in Pakistan can be sustained only through aid," Raghavan said on Saturday. PTI

<http://www.ptinews.com/pti%5Cptisite.nsf/0/44975AB7E2577539652575740022C9B7?OpenDocument>

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Times of India  
10 March 2009

## India Kicks Off Work on Advanced Missile Defence Shield

Rajat Pandit, TNN

NEW DELHI: Buoyed by the successful testing of its fledgling ballistic missile defence, India is pushing ahead with an ambitious version of the star wars project capable of shooting down incoming ICBMs in the 5,000 km range.

The phase-II of the BMD systems, likely to be deployed by 2014, will be an important part of India's defence as both China and Pakistan possess nuclear capable missiles. Once the BMD is in place it will place India in a fairly exclusive club alongside US, Russia and Israel.

India will be playing catch up with China which stunned the world by shooting down a weather satellite with a missile in January 2007. Putting in place a system capable of intercepting inter-continental ballistic missiles would enhance India's strategic prowess.

While a BMD system can be overwhelmed by a flurry of missiles or a low-flying cruise, it would be a important part of India's defence against the danger of ballistic missiles.

If the ongoing Phase-I BMD system is geared to tackling enemy missiles with a 2,000-km range, Phase-II is enhance capacities significantly. Plans are also afoot to have space-based surveillance systems to ensure a hostile threat can be detected even earlier than the present long-range tracking radars (LRTRs) used in the BMD system, which track the `enemy' missile as well as guide the `interceptor' missile in destroying it.

Sources said DRDO has told the government that while the Phase-I systems can be deployed from 2012 onwards, the Phase-II systems will come into operational play only from 2014 onwards at the earliest.

There will be another interesting spin-off from the indigenous two-tier BMD system, capable of tracking and destroying hostile missiles both inside (endo) and outside (exo) the earth's atmosphere. It will give India a potent anti-satellite (ASAT) weapon since technology required for "neutralisation" of a ballistic missile or a satellite is somewhat similar.

India, of course, has received presentations from the three countries which have operational BMD or anti-ballistic missile systems -- US (Patriot Advanced Capability-3), Russia (S-300V) and Israel (Arrow-2) -- as of now.

Though all three are hawking their systems to India, New Delhi has decided to go in for its own "home-grown" BMD system specifically designed to meet its security needs. Moreover, there are financial and feasibility concerns about importing foreign systems.

"We are cooperating with countries to bridge our technology gaps. US, for instance, has a different threat profile. Its systems will not be suitable for us. Our system has to cater for our own threat profile," DRDO chief controller for missiles, Dr V K Saraswat, said on Monday.

Dismissing PAC-3 as "an outdated system", the scientist said India's BMD system was "20-30% more capable" than it. He, however, acknowledged the BMD system had received some help from countries like Israel (LRTRs), France (fire-control radars) and Russia (seekers).

DRDO, of course, often promises more than it can deliver. This time, however, it sounds quite confident, especially after the third test of the Phase-I BMD system on March 6, when a two-stage exo-atmospheric interceptor missile intercepted an `enemy' missile at an 80-km altitude.

In the earlier tests, in November 2006 and December 2007, the enemy missiles had been "killed" at altitudes of 48-km and 15-km respectively. The next test, with both exo and endo interceptor missiles in an integrated mode, is slated for September.

"We will complete all our tests for Phase-I by 2010-2011. All BMD building blocks like long-range radars,

communication network, mission control centre and launch control centre are in place," said Saraswat.

"What we are now perfecting are Phase-I interceptor missiles, which fly at 4.5 Mach high-supersonic speeds. We are already working on Phase-II interceptors, which will have hypersonic speeds of 6-7 Mach," he added.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/India-kicks-off-work-on-advanced-missile-defence-shield/articleshow/4247009.cms>

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Wall Street Journal  
MARCH 10, 2009

## **Accused 9/11 Suspects Declare Themselves 'Terrorists to the Bone'**

By JESS BRAVIN

WASHINGTON -- Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and four others accused in the Sept. 11, 2001, conspiracy called U.S. allegations "badges of honor" and declared themselves "terrorists to the bone" in a written statement slated for public release Tuesday.

The six-page statement, dated March 1, was filed with a military judge at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, in response to nine charges filed by military prosecutors last year. Titled "The Islamic Response to the Government's Nine Accusations," the statement mocks American authorities for failing to foil the Sept. 11 plot and casts the U.S. as a terrorist aggressor whose own actions provoked the suicide hijackings that killed nearly 3,000 people.

The statement calls the conspiracy charge "laughable."

"Were you expecting us to inform you about our secret attack plans?" it says. "Blame yourselves and your failed intelligence apparatus and hold them accountable, not us."

"Also, as the prophet has stated: 'War is to deceive,'" it states, in one of several passages that assert religious sanction for al Qaeda attacks.

Responding to charges of attacking civilians, the statement cites as grievances not only the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, both of which occurred after the Sept. 11 attacks, but also U.S. policy going back to World War II. "Did you forget about your nuclear bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki," the statement reads.

In answer to the war crimes charge, the men refer to their own imprisonment in secret Central Intelligence Agency prisons, where U.S. officials acknowledge Mr. Mohammed and two other prisoners were subjected to waterboarding, or simulated drowning. Attorney General Eric Holder has described waterboarding as torture.

"We are the best example of such violations and your 'Black Sites' for torturing prisoners," the statement reads, adding the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq and Guantanamo Bay as further examples of prisoner abuse by the U.S.

The men respond to the allegation of providing material support for terrorism by condemning Washington's aid to both Israel and Arab and Muslim governments.

Not only is the U.S. the principal ally of "the terrorist state of Israel," it also "supports and finances the terrorist regimes that govern the countries of the Arab world, such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan," the statement says. (Pakistan is a predominantly Muslim country, but most Pakistanis are not ethnically Arab.)

The statement ends by praising the 19 suicide-hijackers and predicting America's demise. "You will be greatly defeated in Afghanistan and Iraq," it says, later adding: "Your fall will be just as the fall of the towers on the blessed 9/11 day."

The men call themselves "the 9/11 Shura Council." In addition to Mr. Mohammed, those charged include Ramzi Binalshibh, Walid bin Attash, Mustafa al-Hawsawi and Ali Abdul Aziz Ali, also known as Amar al-Baluchi.

The Bush administration filed charges against the men last year before a military commission in Guantanamo Bay. The Bush administration asserted that it would be difficult to successfully prosecute the men in federal court in part because that might force the U.S. government to disclose and defend the prisoners' treatment in CIA custody.

President Barack Obama suspended those proceedings in January pending a review of the Guantanamo detention and trial apparatus. Obama administration officials say their preference is to try alleged terrorists in federal court.

The statement, along with the defendants' other public remarks claiming responsibility for the Sept. 11 attacks, suggests that conviction in federal court may not pose as many hurdles as some officials once feared.

[http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123669703768883959.html?mod=googlenews\\_wsj](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123669703768883959.html?mod=googlenews_wsj)

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Chicago Tribune  
March 11, 2009

## **U.S. Sees Expansion of Al Qaeda**

By Greg Miller, Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Al Qaeda has expanded its presence in Afghanistan, taking advantage of the sinking security situation to resurface where it was forced to flee seven years ago, the nation's top military intelligence official testified Tuesday.

Lt. Gen. Michael Maples, director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, described Al Qaeda's efforts as part of developments behind the Obama administration's decision to order additional troops to the region.

Afghanistan is no longer the haven for Al Qaeda that it was leading up to the Sept. 11 attacks. But in testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Maples said, "I believe Al Qaeda's presence in Afghanistan is more significant, although still at a relatively minor scale, than we have seen in the past."

Maples testified with Dennis Blair, director of national intelligence.

Blair sought to clarify the intelligence community's views of Iran's nuclear ambitions after recent comments from senior military officials created confusion about whether Tehran has acquired enough nuclear material to make a bomb. "We assess now that Iran does not have any highly enriched uranium," Blair said.

Iran has stockpiled low-enriched uranium that could fuel a nuclear power plant or be refined for a bomb.

Asked whether Iran intends to take that step, Blair said: "We assess that Iran has not yet made that decision."

Iran's ambitions in Afghanistan are also uncertain. Iran's Shiite leaders "don't want to see a Taliban-dominated Afghanistan," Maples said, referring to the Sunni regime that protected Al Qaeda.

But U.S. intelligence officials believe Iran has provided support to the Taliban in an effort to destabilize the country and threaten U.S. forces.

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/chi-intelmar11.0.7197662.story>

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London Times  
March 12, 2009

## **Taleban Chief Released from Guantanamo to Target British Troops**

CATHERINE PHILP, DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT, MICHAEL EVANS, DEFENCE EDITOR, AND TOM COGLAN IN KABUL

The Taleban commander responsible for increasingly sophisticated bomb attacks on British soldiers in Afghanistan is a former detainee of Guantánamo Bay released from prison in Kabul last year by Hamid Karzai's Government, The Times has learnt.

Abdullah Ghulam Rasoul was held in Guantánamo for six years before being released to Afghan authorities in December 2007, after a US military review board decided unanimously that he was no longer a threat.

British and Taleban officials have told The Times that Rasoul has since resurfaced as Mullah Abdullah Zakir, the Taleban's new operations chief in Helmand and the architect of a new offensive against British troops.



Since he took over, the “asymmetric” threat from the Taleban has risen dramatically, with greater numbers of more sophisticated and powerful roadside bombs used against British troops. “He is a serious player,” one Whitehall official said.

Although Rasoul was released from Guantánamo after convincing interrogators that he had never held military command, Taleban officials told The Times that he had been a high-ranking commander close to the Taleban’s supreme leader, Mullah Omar.

The disclosure will complicate further President Obama’s efforts to persuade countries to take in Guantánamo detainees and allow him to close the camp within a year as promised.

Rasoul was captured in the chaos of the Taleban surrender at Kunduz, northern Afghanistan, in December 2001. He was in the lead car of a convoy of senior Taleban leaders, carrying a Kalashnikov and two Casio watches later identified as key components of home-made bombs. Rasoul denied that the watches were his, but it now appears likely that they were evidence of his expertise in bombmaking.

British officials believe that he is the mastermind behind the deadly surge in roadside bombings in Helmand since spring 2008, when he was released from Pul-e-Charkhi prison, Kabul.

Forty-four British troops have been killed in roadside bombings since 2008 and 18 in direct exchanges of fire. In 2007 15 Service personnel were killed by bombs and 15 in direct fire. British officials and Taleban sources said that Rasoul was believed to be based in Quetta, Pakistan. “He is back in Helmand since his release,” a Taleban commander told The Times. “He is in the border area now, sometimes in Pakistan and sometimes in Afghanistan. He is a very big commander.”

Rasoul, known as Detainee 008 in Guantánamo, is the latest in a line of former inmates and released Taleban prisoners to return to the fight in Afghanistan, including Maulavi Ghulam Dastagir, who was released on the personal orders of President Karzai.

Rasoul was one of 13 Afghan prisoners flown home to Kabul on December 12, 2007. On his return, he was placed in Block D of the Pul-e-Charkhi maximum security prison, renovated by the Americans for the detention of prisoners transferred from jails at Bagram and Guantánamo.

He was released early in 2008, soon after President Karzai appointed a high-level commission to rule on the detainees’ fate. The circumstances of his release remain unclear.

Taleban sources told The Times that even if the Americans had not discovered Rasoul’s identity his Afghan interrogators should have done. “In the time of the Taleban government he was the commander of Taleban forces in Takhar province,” a Taleban official told The Times. “He was one of Mullah Omar’s deputies.”

Before September 11, 2001, Takhar was the front line between Taleban forces and the Northern Alliance.

Rasoul was caught in nearby Kunduz in December 2001 from a car that he claimed to be driving for another Taleban leader, “Mohammed” — an apparent reference to Mullah Mohammed Fakil, his commander, who was attempting to surrender to the Northern Alliance.

Fakil, the Taleban’s deputy defence minister, accused of some of the regime’s worst atrocities, remains in Guantánamo, classified as too dangerous to release.

Sixteen pages of documents detailing Rasoul’s detention and interrogation at Guantánamo Bay offer tantalising clues into his personality.

He did not confess to being a senior military commander, although the details sometimes wavered. Some of his denials were astonishingly brazen: that the Kalashnikov was forced on him; that he was carrying the watches for a commander who had no pockets; that he had never heard of Osama bin Laden and did not know that the Americans were bombing Afghanistan; that he came to Kabul in 1997, when the Taleban seized power, merely “to see the city”.

As the years of incarceration dragged on, he grew wearier, more sullen, and palpably annoyed with being asked the same questions. “I don’t want to talk about the Kalashnikov,” he barked at one hearing of the board reviewing his status.

During one hearing in 2005, the interrogator noted that he was wearing an orange jumpsuit, by then only worn by non-compliant inmates involved in a disciplinary process. Rasoul said that he had argued with guards “because they disrespected my Koran”. The guards’ allegedly deliberate mistreatment of the Muslim holy book sparked hunger

strikes in Guantánamo, in which Rasoul appeared to have participated: records of Detainee 008's weight show that it plummeted in September 2005, at the height of the hunger strikes.

Another dispute was over cleanliness. "I was trying to get permission to take a shower daily," he complained. "Right now I am taking one within every three days."

He claimed that he relished the punitive solitary confinement. "I don't want anyone to talk to me, I am happy here."

He did admit to having joined the Taleban twice in the course of seven years — once, under duress, in 1995, and the second time in 1997, to get proper medical treatment for injuries sustained in a bombing.

The full text of the decision to release him has not been declassified, but documents show that the decision was unanimous. Factors favouring his release included his professed ignorance of Osama bin Laden, his assertion that he had been conscripted into the Taleban and had never been to a training camp and his promise that he intended to return to a peaceful life in Afghanistan.

"I want to go back home and join my family and work in my land and help my family," he said.

[http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/us\\_and\\_americas/article5888427.ece](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/us_and_americas/article5888427.ece)

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Guardian.co.uk  
12 March 2009

## **US Officials Investigate Suspected Terror Recruitment in Minnesota**

McClatchy newspapers

Minneapolis has become the focus of a wide-ranging FBI investigation into a terrorist group's recruitment of young immigrant men for service in Somalia's ethnic and religious warfare.

The group, Al-Shabab, an al-Qaida offshoot, is suspected of being involved in the disappearance of as many as 20 young Somali-Americans who have vanished from their homes in the Minneapolis-St Paul area of Minnesota and turned up with the radical Islamist group in Somalia.

Federal counterterrorism officials told a US Senate committee yesterday that the recruitment represents a potential security threat to the United States. If recruits were to be indoctrinated abroad and later returned to America, they could "provide al-Qaida with trained extremists inside the United States", said Andrew Liepman, deputy director of intelligence in the National Counterterrorism Centre of the Directorate of Intelligence.

"We have seen al-Qaida franchise itself around the world," said Senator Joseph Lieberman, the Connecticut independent who chairs the committee. But he also said there is no evidence of the radicalisation of the Somali-American community generally.

Philip Mudd, an assistant director of the FBI's National Security Branch, said that the mostly impressionable youths recruited in Minnesota and in other Somali communities around the US seem more likely to become "cannon fodder" than high-level terrorist operatives. Mudd told the committee that some recruits are as young as 12 years old.

The concerns were highlighted by the case of Shirwa Ahmed, a 27-year-old college student from Minneapolis who is believed to be the first US citizen to become a suicide bomber. Ahmed blew himself up in Somalia in October in an attack that killed up to 30 people.

The homeland security committee investigating recruitments heard yesterday from two leaders of the Twin Cities Somali community. Osman Ahmed said his suspicions were first aroused one day last November, when school officials in Minneapolis reported that his nephew, Burhan Hassan, a good student at Roosevelt High, had missed all his classes.

"That, to us, sounded strange," Ahmed testified. "We were stunned."

Ahmed, president of the Riverside Plaza Tenants Association in Minneapolis, testified alongside Abdirahman Mukhtar, a youth programme manager at the Brian Coyle Community Centre, which serves as a resettlement hub for the city's growing Somali community.

It's a community that was deeply shocked by the story of Shirwa Ahmed, said Mukhtar, who went to Roosevelt High with the deceased bomber. "It goes against Somali culture," said Mukhtar. "It is also inherently anti-Islamic."

Despite the alarm, both Somali and US officials say the problem represents the anguish of a few vulnerable youths, not the radicalisation of the broader Somali community, which numbers more than 100,000 in the Twin Cities.

"Somali youth talk more about March Madness [the US college basketball tournament], Kobe Bryant, and the NFL draft than they do about Shirwa," Mukhtar told the Senate homeland security committee. "Many do not know much about him."

While cases like Shirwa Ahmed's and Burhan Hassan's have made Minneapolis the focus of the FBI's investigation, Somali youths have also been recruited in Columbus, Ohio and larger cities such as Seattle and San Diego.

Lieberman said the problem illustrates not only the stresses within the immigrant community, but also the decentralisation of the global jihadist movement.

Foot-soldiers from America and other western countries are "a public relations bonanza for them," testified Liepman, of the National Counterterrorism Centre of the Directorate of Intelligence.

While the relatively inexperienced Somali-American youths are of limited value as rank-and-file militia in Somalia, they possess American passports and represent a potential security threat for the United States.

But some experts caution that Al-Shabab's focus so far has been on Somalia and the US-backed Ethiopian forces that have been occupying the war-torn nation.

"The threat requires careful law enforcement, but should not be overblown," said Ken Menkhaus, a political scientist who has researched Somalia at Davidson College in North Carolina.

Local and federal law enforcement officials say they have been focusing on the group's recruitment and fundraising activities in Minnesota. But fear of getting their kids into trouble has prevented some Somali parents from cooperating with US investigators. "It's a very closed community," Mudd said.

According to Osman Ahmed, one of the first to cooperate with authorities, speaking openly has also invited the wrath of other Somali leaders who fear that the publicity will damage their community.

"We have been threatened for just speaking out," said Osman Ahmed. Some Somalis, he said, fear that if they talk to the FBI, they or their children will be sent to Guantánamo as suspected terrorists.

Those youths who disappeared, like his nephew, also appear to have been brainwashed with fear and misinformation, he said. He said the story of his nephew is typical.

Burhan Hassan, 17, was an infant when his family fled Somalia. But to stay in touch with the culture of his parents, he studied Islam at the Abu-Bakar As-Saddique mosque in Minneapolis. There, Osman Ahmed said, his nephew appears to have made contact with a "minority group" that exposed his nephew to extremist ideologies.

Osman Ahmed said that while he is not blaming the mosque itself, "these kids have no perception of Somalia except the one that was formed in their minds by their teachers at the Abu-Bakar Centre."

Mosque officials have denied teaching violence or encouraging young Somalis to take part in the fighting in their homeland.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/mar/12/somalia-minnesota-terrorism>

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Los Angeles Times  
March 12, 2009

## **American Somali Youths aren't seen Posing Major Risk**

By Rebecca Cole

Reporting from Washington — There is no evidence that radicalized Somali American youths who have disappeared over the last two years are being trained abroad to attack the United States, intelligence and law enforcement officials told members of a Senate panel Wednesday.

Although worrisome, their apparent recruitment by the Shabab , a militant group linked to Al Qaeda, is more likely to signify that they are motivated to help their country fight against Ethiopians, who invaded the country in 2006.

"We do not have a credible body of reporting right now that leads us to believe that these American recruits are being trained and instructed to come back to the U.S. for terrorist acts," said Andrew Liepman, deputy director of intelligence at the National Counterterrorism Center. "Yet obviously we remain concerned about that, and watchful."

Liepman and others testified at a Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee hearing held to look into the disappearance of 12 to 20 young Somali Americans who are believed to be with the militant group.

Of particular worry is the recruitment of citizens who hold U.S. passports, which offer access to American soil and the ability to establish sleeper terrorist cells.

In October, suicide bomber Shirwa Ahmed, an American, took part in a series of coordinated attacks in Somalia. That, along with the disappearances from a closely knit Somali community in Minneapolis, has sparked concerns that the Shabab is targeting the area.

"What can we expect next?" asked Sen. Joe Lieberman (I-Conn.), committee chairman. "They could return to the U.S. at any time -- fully radicalized and trained in the tactics of terror -- to launch attacks here, bringing to our cities the suicide bombings and car bombings we have so far escaped."

Philip Mudd, an assistant director at the FBI, told the committee that the number of Americans thought to be recruited by the Shabab is relatively small.

"I would talk in terms of tens of people," he said. "It sounds small, but every terrorist potentially is somebody who could throw a grenade into a shopping mall."

Mudd also cautioned that the count may not be accurate, due to the reluctance of families to report missing relatives for fear they would be branded a terrorist and barred from returning to the U.S.

"I am sure there are people we are missing," he said.

A former United Nations advisor in Somalia told the committee that U.S. government silence on the 2006 Ethiopian offensive into Somalia inflamed anti-Americanism among many Somalis.

Some Somalis felt that the U.S. countenance of the Ethiopian invasion was retribution for the 1993 deaths of 18 U.S. soldiers there.

Kenneth Menkhaus, a political science professor at North Carolina's Davidson College said that for Somali militants, the final straw came in May, when an American airstrike killed the leader of the Shabab, seen as the main resistance group.

"Al Shabab announced that from that point, it would target all U.S., Western and U.N. personnel and interests," Menkhaus said. Although the Shabab has links to Al Qaeda, Menkhaus said the group sees the ties as a marriage of convenience.

"They are not as strong as they once were and likely to get weaker," he said.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-terror12-2009mar12,0,5040682.story>

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Lubbock Avalanche-Journal  
March 10, 2009

## **Super Wipe: Tech Researchers Create Innovative Product used in Chemical Attacks**

By Marlina Hartz - AVALANCHE-JOURNAL

A decontamination wipe created at a Texas Tech institute now seems destined for the pockets of thousands of U.S. soldiers and emergency workers, its makers say.

The wipe - a thin layer of carbon encased in absorbent fibers - is part of a new, model portable kit that a national lab designed for people to use after a chemical attack to clean equipment, skin and even sensitive eyes and wounds.

The U.S. government called years ago for a new decontamination system to replace limited products now in use.

The Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory introduced the low-cost kit - developed with money from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security - on Monday in its periodical, Science & Technology Review.

The pocket-sized packet contains the wipe, a yellow sponge saturated with skin decontamination lotion and a step-by-step instruction card. It would cost about \$30 and could be stored inside a freezer bag.

Within minutes, a victim of a chemical attack or a first responder could rip open the packet, wipe the decontaminated area with the dry wipe to remove the bulk of the chemical and scrub the affected surface with the lotion-saturated sponge, neutralizing the chemical agent and decontaminating hard-to-reach areas, such as cracks in the surface of the skin, according to the S&TR article. The used wipe and sponge could be resealed inside their original bag, halting the spread of toxins.

"I think it's a done deal. This is the product of the future, and I'm going to have it for my family," said Ron Kendall, the director of the Tech Institute for Environmental and Human Health, where the wipe was invented.

The Lawrence Livermore lab is associated with the University of California and is located in Livermore, Calif., about 48 miles east of San Francisco.

### **A limited system**

Currently, the U.S. military relies on a skin decontamination lotion invented by the Canadian defense department to protect personnel in the event of a chemical attack.

The lotion is phasing out an older decontamination method, a packet that contains a stiff pad filled with carbon powder, said the Tech wipe's primary inventor, Seshadri Ramkumar, an associate professor of environmental toxicology and the head of the Non-woven and Advanced Materials Laboratory at the Institute for Environmental and Human Health.

But the lotion and the pad have drawbacks.

The pad is a logistical nightmare, Ramkumar said. Once unfolded, clouds of fine, black carbon float from it. The dust can settle in nooks and crannies and cause breathing problems if inhaled, Ramkumar said. A second wipe is needed to clean up the mess. But the fly-away carbon is not just a housekeeping problem: There's a chance it could contain traces of the chemical it was used to clean, thereby spreading the area of contamination, he said.

The lotion, on the other hand, could harm sensitive equipment such as computers, cell phones and military vehicles, the associate professor said.

The Department of Defense called for a solution in 2003 and the Lawrence Livermore lab - one of the few labs in the nation authorized to handle lethal chemicals - committed to finding it, said William Smith, a chemical engineer at the lab and the leader of the team that developed the kit.

Several years earlier, Ramkumar had obtained Department of Defense funding to explore military applications for nonwoven materials.

Nonwovens are made chemically, mechanically or thermally and can be up to 20 times cheaper to produce than wovens. A slew of products on the market are made this way, including diapers, disposable cleaning wipes, dryer sheets and envelopes.

Ramkumar, nicknamed Ram, made a name for himself in the textiles field at the age of 26. At the University of Leeds in England, he invented an artificial finger capable of measuring the quality of a fabric. The Indian native, the only-child of a retired teacher and accountant, came to Tech 10 years ago.

Around 2001, he and a small team, which varied in size from six to eight graduate students, set to work on creating a non-woven, dry decontamination wipe at the Reese Technology Center, the home of the Institute for Environmental and Human Health.

"I just felt Ram was going to be successful and I was willing to put my money on it," Kendall remembered. "I knew this was a (Pentagon) priority and I knew if we could hit it, it would be tremendous for us."

## **Birth of a "multi-million-dollar industry"**

Reese is a shuttered military base on the outskirts of Lubbock, where old barracks and brick buildings have been converted into offices, classrooms and labs. Ramkumar's lab is a squat building set amid fields of yellowed grass on the edge of the base. Mounds of paper and overflowing cardboard boxes mask swaths of floor and desk in his office, but the busy associate professor doesn't do the bulk of his work there.

"Ram works 24-7," Kendall said with a knowing laugh from his office in a nearby building.

The inventor spends most of his time in his lab, which is much neater. Spools of fabric fill a shelf. A row of computers lines one wall. Lab equipment lines another.

The wipe born here first set Tech abuzz near the turn of 2008 when the Lawrence Livermore lab announced it was more effective at soaking up dangerous chemicals than 30 similar products. The news won headlines across the country and outside it, too.

The super-durable wipe is manufactured using needle-punch technology, a process that uses thousands of tiny needles to create tightly woven fabrics. Its carbon layer traps chemical vapors and the two fiber layers, which sandwich the carbon and can be made of cotton or other absorbent materials, can soak up even highly corrosive chemicals without falling apart.

The Lawrence Livermore lab tested the effectiveness of its wipe-plus-lotion kit against sulfur mustard - one of the four most dangerous chemical warfare agents in existence and one of the most difficult to remove, Ramkumar said. The German army used sulfur mustard against British soldiers during World War I.

The oily liquid sometimes smells like mustard, onions or garlic, but can also have no odor; it can quickly morph into a vapor, hence the name "mustard gas." In its liquid form, sulfur mustard can cause second- and third-degree burns.

The two-part kit proposed by Lawrence Livermore was more effective than existing decontaminations systems in treating it, the lab found.

Smith envisions it being used not just by the military. It could be stored in stadiums, ambulances, fire trucks and police cars, he said.

Before that happens, though, it must undergo further testing for safety, he said. To be approved by the Food and Drug Administration for medical use, it must be tested against more chemicals agents and toxic industrial compounds, he said.

Ramkumar believes it's only a matter of time, perhaps a few years, before the wipe is in the hands of the military.

"Saving somebody's life is the greatest thing which you can do as a human," he said.

The FDA process could be accelerated depending on the demand for the kit, Smith said.

Even alone, the wipe represents "a multi-million dollar industry," Kendall said.

A Waco-based company already manufactures it under the name Fibertect. The state of Oregon recently ordered a sample batch for its emergency workers, said Carey Hobbs, the president and owner of the company, Hobbs Bonded Fibers, Inc.

Meanwhile, Ramkumar and his team are trying to find additional applications for the wipe. If they can reduce its weight, it could be inserted into air filters in U.S. embassies, uniforms, military jets and tanks, Ramkumar and Kendall said.

Tech will receive about 10 percent of all proceeds from its sale, which university officials will invest in other research, they said.

[http://www.lubbockonline.com/stories/031009/loc\\_407367667.shtml](http://www.lubbockonline.com/stories/031009/loc_407367667.shtml)

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Washington Post  
11 March 2009

## **Sources: Margaret Hamburg to Head FDA**

By Lyndsey Layton

The Obama administration has tapped Margaret Hamburg, a physician and former New York City health commissioner with an interest in bioterrorism, to run the struggling Food and Drug Administration, according to people familiar with the choice.

Joshua Sharfstein, Baltimore's health commissioner, will serve as Hamburg's chief deputy, according to these sources. Sharfstein, 39, won national attention when he convinced the FDA in 2007 to restrict the use of over-the-counter cough and cold medications for young children. He successfully argued that government needed to limit their use in the face of mounting evidence that they can cause hallucinations, seizures, trouble breathing, heart problems and other complications, including death, and a lack of evidence that they work as intended.

The White House would not confirm the selections. Hamburg could not be reached for comment and Sharfstein declined to talk to a reporter.

Shaken by a series of alarming failures, the FDA desperately needs an infusion of strong leadership, money, technology and personnel -- and perhaps a major restructuring, say former officials, members of Congress, watchdog groups and various government reports.

With nearly 11,000 employees and an annual budget of more than \$2 billion, the FDA is charged with overseeing products that account for one-quarter of consumer spending in the United States, including over-the-counter and prescription medications, heart valves, stents and other medical devices, the blood supply and food.

But morale within the FDA, along with its credibility, has plummeted as the agency has been struggled to keep pace with its responsibilities and riven by accusations of ideological bias, a tilt toward industry rather than consumers, and internal dissension.

It has been lambasted on Capitol Hill for a series of foodborne illnesses, the most recent of which is an ongoing salmonella outbreak that has sickened 700 people and killed nine others. The agency has been slammed by its own scientists for approving medical devices without proper vetting. And it has been unable to keep up with imported goods pouring into the United States from around the world, including food, drugs and raw materials. That problem has been highlighted by the discovery of contaminated toothpaste from China; tainted pet food that killed hundreds of dogs and cats; and the fouled blood thinner heparin, which took the lives of at least 81 Americans and caused hundreds of serious illnesses.

Health advocates say Hamburg, 53, has the ability to restore competency to the agency.

"It's a brilliant choice," said Harvey V. Fineberg, president of National Academy of Sciences Institute of Medicine. "She is a person who will have the public interest foremost in mind."

She succeeds Andrew C. von Eschenbach, who left in January after being repeatedly accused by consumer groups of making policy that put a premium on politics and the concerns of industry at the expense of science and public health.

"We look forward to working with Dr. Hamburg to ensure that our country continues its leadership in scientific research and innovation across the world, bringing hope to patients and their families battling cancer and other life threatening disease," said Ellen Sigal, chair of Friends of Cancer Research.

Hamburg grew up on the campus of Stanford University, the daughter of two physicians. Her mother, Beatrix, was the first African-American woman to attend Vassar College and to earn a degree from the Yale University School of Medicine. She has credited her Jewish father, David, for teaching her to value education and to fight discrimination.

Hamburg graduated from Radcliffe College and Harvard Medical School, and completed her training at the New York Hospital/Cornell University Medical Center. She did research in neuroscience and neuropharmacology. From 1986 to 1988, she served in the U.S. Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, and from 1989 to 1990 she was assistant director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases at NIH, where her work focused on AIDS research.

In 1990, Hamburg became deputy health commissioner of New York City and was named health commissioner a year later. She created an aggressive tuberculosis control program and the country's first public health bioterrorism defense program.

In 1997, she became assistant secretary for planning and evaluation at the Department of Health and Human Services in the Clinton administration, where she created a bioterrorism program.

Since 2001, she has been vice president for biological programs at the Nuclear Threat Initiative, a think tank focused on the threat to public safety from nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons.

Hamburg is married to Peter Fitzhugh Brown, an artificial intelligence expert who is executive vice president and director of Renaissance Technologies Corp., a privately owned hedge fund. The couple have two children. Hamburg serves on the board of the Sidwell Friends School, which Obama's daughters attend.

[http://voices.washingtonpost.com/44/2009/03/11/sources\\_margaret\\_hamburg\\_to\\_he.html](http://voices.washingtonpost.com/44/2009/03/11/sources_margaret_hamburg_to_he.html)

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Global Security Newswire

## **Obama Signs Spending Bill to Sustain Nuclear Programs**

March 12, 2009

U.S. President Barack Obama yesterday signed an omnibus spending bill that includes funding for U.S. nuclear laboratory activities through September (see *GSN*, Feb. 27).

The law provides \$6.38 billion to maintain the U.S. nuclear stockpile and \$1.48 billion for nonproliferation efforts, including finding and securing loose nuclear materials, according to a release from New Mexico Senator Jeff Bingaman (D).

Meanwhile, Energy Secretary Steven Chu yesterday outlined the agency's basic nuclear security goals while testifying before the Senate Budget Committee on his fiscal 2010 budget request.

"To enhance our security, the budget increases our efforts to secure and dispose of nuclear material and invests in innovative technology to detect and deter nuclear smuggling and weapons of mass destruction programs. Under this budget, development work on the Reliable Replacement Warhead will cease, while we will continue to make investments to ensure the nuclear stockpile's safety, security, and reliability. We will also improve performance and accountability for the environmental legacy of the nation's nuclear weapons program," he told the Senate Budget Committee.

Fiscal 2010 begins Oct. 1 (Greg Webb, *Global Security Newswire*, March 12).

[http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw\\_20090312\\_5512.php](http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20090312_5512.php)

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