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RIA Novosti
01 April 2009

Russia, U.S. Ready to Cut Nuclear Arsenals Below 1,700 Warheads

LONDON (RIA Novosti) - The Russian and U.S. presidents announced on Wednesday that negotiators would immediately start talks on a new strategic arms reduction treaty that could cut existing nuclear arsenals below 1,700 warheads.

"We agreed to pursue new and verifiable reductions in our strategic offensive arsenals in a step-by-step process, beginning by replacing the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty [START] with a new, legally binding treaty," Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and U.S. President Barack Obama said in a joint statement after a meeting in London.

"We are instructing our negotiators to start talks immediately on this new treaty and to report on results achieved in working out the new agreement by July," the statement said.

The START-1 treaty, signed in 1991, obliged Washington and Moscow to cut nuclear warheads to 6,000 and their delivery vehicles to 1,600 by each side. The treaty expires December 5.

In 2002, an additional agreement on strategic offensive reductions was concluded in Moscow. The agreement, known as the Moscow Treaty, envisioned cuts to 1,700-2,200 warheads by December 2012. However, that treaty is largely thought to be less effective than the START treaty.

The presidents agreed that the new arms reduction treaty should cut the arms to levels lower than those envisioned in the Moscow Treaty.

Russia and the United States possess 90% of the world's nuclear weapons.

Moscow, which proposed a new arms reduction agreement with Washington in 2005, expects the United States to agree on a deal that would restrict not only the numbers of nuclear warheads but also place limits on all existing kinds of delivery vehicles.

Moscow also insists on the effective use of control mechanisms and procedures, "which the previous administration ignored categorically," according to Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20090401/120863111.html>

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Washington Post
April 1, 2009

Transcript: Obama, Medvedev Deliver Remarks on Nuclear Weapons Reduction

CQ Transcripts Wire

SPEAKERS:
PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA
RUSSIAN PRESIDENT DMITRY MEDVEDEV

[*] PRESIDENT OBAMA: Let me just make a brief comment. I am very grateful to President Medvedev for taking the time to visit with me today. I'm particularly gratified because prior to the meeting our respective teams had worked together and had developed a series of approaches to areas of common interest that I think present great promise.

As I've said in the past, I think that over the last several years the relationship between our two countries has been allowed to drift. And what I believe we've begun today is a very constructive dialogue that will allow us to work on issues of mutual interest, like the reduction of nuclear weapons and the strengthening of our nonproliferation treaties; our mutual interest in dealing with terrorism and extremism that threatens both countries; our mutual interest in economic stability and restoring growth around the world; our mutual interest in promoting peace and stability in areas like the Middle East.

So I am very encouraged by the leadership of the President. I'm very grateful that he has taken the time to visit. I am especially excited about the fact that the President extended an invitation for me to visit Moscow to build on some of the areas that we discussed on today. And I have agreed to visit Moscow in July, which we both agreed was a better time than January to visit.

And my hope is that given the constructive conversations that we've had today, the joint statements that we will be issuing both on reductions of nuclear arsenals, as well as a range of other areas of interest, that what we're seeing today is the beginning of new progress in the U.S.-Russian relations. And I think that President Medvedev's leadership is -- has been critical in allowing that progress to take place.

So thank you very much.

PRESIDENT MEDVEDEV: (As translated.) I would like to sincerely thank President Obama for this opportunity to meet him and to meet this time in person. And, indeed, we had an opportunity to compare our views on the current relations and current situation in the world. And we had an opportunity to agree upon certain common values that we need to foster in our relations, and provide for further areas for cooperation in progression of our relations.

I can only agree that the relations between our countries have been adrift over the past years. As President Obama has said, they were drifting, and drifting in some wrong directions. They were degrading, to some extent.

That is why we believe that since such a situation was not to the benefit of the United States or Russia Federation, to say nothing about the global situation, we believe that the time has come to reset our relations, as it was said, and to open a new page in progression in the development of our common situation.

Indeed, it was said that we are prepared to cooperate further in such areas as the nonproliferation of WMDs limitation of strategic weapons, countering terrorism, and improving economic and financial situation and the overall economic situation in the world. It is important to note that there are many points on which we can work. And indeed there are far more points in which we can -- where we can come closer, where we can work, rather than those points on which we have differences. Thus, by bringing our positions closer we can attain significant progress and, much more importantly, further our achievements.

I share the view of President Obama who said that our teams have worked really well in preparation of this meeting, and the declarations, the two declarations, which we are adopting are just another proof of that. And those are a declaration on the strategic weapons, and the declaration on the general framework of relations between Russia and the United States, which set good grounds for our further interaction.

We will be very glad to host President Obama, to greet him in Moscow in July. Indeed, July is the warmest time in Russia and in Moscow, and I believe that will be exactly the feature of the talks and relations we are going to enjoy during that period in Moscow. And of course we have set out certain objectives and certain goals and tasks we need to work through in order to get better prepared for this meeting. And indeed I am convinced that is a good opportunity for this interaction.

Well, indeed, so we are convinced that we'll continue successfully our contacts, in particular today, where we were not only discussing international issues or bilateral items of interaction; we were also discussing education, which probably not everybody -- where we have come to an understanding that we're reading the same textbooks while in these subjects. And this will set us further for interaction.

After this meeting, I am far more optimistic about the successful development of our relations, and would like to thank President Obama for this opportunity.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/04/01/AR2009040101599.html>

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RIA Novosti
02 April 2009

IAEA Chief Welcomes Nuclear Reduction by U.S., Russia

VIENNA (RIA Novosti) - The head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) welcomed on Thursday the newly announced U.S. and Russian commitment to reduce their nuclear arsenals.

Mohamed ElBaradei said in an IAEA statement that he believed Wednesday's joint statement by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and U.S. President Barack Obama on starting talks on a new strategic arms reduction treaty demonstrated their leadership and "finally moves us beyond the Cold War mentality."

Obama and Medvedev met on Wednesday for the first time as world leaders gathered in London for the G20 summit. After their bilateral talks, they issued a joint statement on immediately beginning talks on a replacement for the START agreement on strategic arms control, which expires in December 2009.

"As leaders of the two largest nuclear weapons states, we agreed to work together to fulfill our obligations under Article VI of the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and demonstrate leadership in reducing the number of nuclear weapons in the world," read the joint statement published Wednesday on the White House web site.

The two presidents also vowed to put an end to nuclear weapons testing.

ElBaradei said the two presidents' initiative would help to create the impetus necessary for strengthening commitment to IAEA agreements, and would also lead to an improvement in the system of security.

The IAEA head also welcomed the U.S. and Russian presidents' decision "to promote the safe and peaceful use of nuclear energy for all countries."

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20090402/120878035.html>

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Daily Telegraph
2 April 2009

G20 Summit: US and Russia Agree to Cut Their Nuclear Arsenals

By David Blair, Diplomatic Editor, and Toby Harnden, US Editor

Mr Obama's first meeting with President Dmitry Medvedev of Russia, on the margins of the G20 summit in London, showed a significant thaw between the two powers.

The leaders agreed in principle to reduce their strategic nuclear warheads. Talks on a new disarmament treaty will begin "immediately", with the aim of replacing an existing accord which expires in December. Mr Obama and Mr Medvedev pledged to review progress in July.

The two leaders have "decided to move further along the path of reducing and limiting strategic offensive arms," said their joint statement. The era when Russia and America "viewed each other as enemies" was "long over".

Mr Obama said he was "very encouraged" by his meeting with Mr Medvedev, adding: "What we're seeing today is the beginning of new progress in the US-Russian relationship".

Russia's economy has been gravely weakened by the fall in the oil price, which has tumbled from a peak of \$147 per barrel last summer to about \$50 today. Deprived of this windfall, the Kremlin finds it harder to pose as a rival to America.

Moreover, Russia has a vital interest in reaching a new agreement on nuclear disarmament. The Moscow Treaty, signed by America and Russia in 2002, allows each country to deploy a maximum of 2,200 strategic warheads.

But Russia's arsenal is so dilapidated that it may soon be impossible for the Kremlin to maintain anything like that number. While Russia is believed to have a total stockpile of about 10,000 weapons, more than 70 per cent are

probably non-operational. Many of the deployed warheads are reaching the end of their life cycles and will soon have to be withdrawn.

Even without another disarmament agreement, Russia's nuclear arsenal will probably drop towards the possible new limit of 1,500 warheads. Mr Medvedev wants to make sure that America does the same, hence his willingness to reach a deal.

Washington's arsenal is in far better shape than Russia's. Of a total stockpile of 5,200 nuclear weapons, more than half are operational. America presently deploys 2,200 strategic and 500 sub-strategic warheads - and it will have little difficulty in sustaining this number.

By setting a lower limit, Russia can avoid the risk of falling far behind America and ensure that it maintains nuclear parity.

Mr Obama, who met his Russian counterpart in Winfield House, the official residence of the US Ambassador beside Regent's Park, agreed to visit Moscow in July. A senior White House official described the talks as a "very significant breakthrough" and said that Mr Medvedev saw the chance to make a new start with a President "not bound by the past eight years or the Cold War".

Another US official stressed the importance of a future agreement on disarmament. "For a long time we've been out of the business of doing verifiable treaties," he said.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/financetopics/g20-summit/5089956/G20-summit-US-and-Russia-agree-to-cut-their-nuclear-arsenals.html>

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Wall Street Journal
MARCH 31, 2009

Iran, Syria Got Indirect U.S. Nuclear Aid

By SIOBHAN GORMAN

WASHINGTON -- Four countries designated by the U.S. as terrorism sponsors, including Iran and Syria, received \$55 million from a U.S.-supported program promoting the peaceful use of nuclear energy, according to a report by Congress's investigative arm.

Iran received more than \$15 million from 1997 to 2007 under the International Atomic Energy Agency's Technical Cooperation program, according to the Government Accountability Office report set to be released Tuesday. An additional \$14 million went to Syria, while Sudan and Cuba received more than \$11 million each, it said.

The U.S. is the largest funder of the United Nations body's program and provided \$20 million in 2007, or about a quarter of the budget, the report said.

The Technical Cooperation program funds some projects with a direct connection to nuclear energy, but many other projects it funds have no such link. Recent examples include projects to improve livestock productivity and eradicate the tsetse fly in Africa.

The GAO said it was concerned that some of the projects could provide expertise useful both for peaceful purposes and for the development of nuclear-weapon capabilities. The U.S. Energy Department, which reviews these proposed projects for the State Department, examined 1,565 such proposals between 1998 and 2006 and found that 43 of them had some degree of proliferation risk. The IAEA approved 34 of them, the report found.

Iran says it is developing nuclear fuel for peaceful purposes, but the U.S. fears it is seeking a nuclear weapon. Syria is under investigation for alleged covert nuclear activities, and U.S. officials have said a Syrian site bombed by Israel in 2007 was a nuclear facility.

U.S. oversight of the IAEA program is weak, the report said. Officials at the State and Energy departments often know only the titles of proposed projects, it said. The State Department division dedicated to monitoring the program shrank in 2005 by two-thirds to five employees.

A top IAEA official at the Technical Cooperation program told the GAO that the program aims to engage as many countries as possible and "there are no good countries and there are no bad countries," the report said. The IAEA also said confidentiality agreements often prevent it from providing details about the projects for which countries are seeking aid.

IAEA spokesman Peter Rickwood said he wasn't able to reach an official to comment before press time. A State Department spokeswoman said she couldn't comment because she hadn't had time to review the report. Sen. Daniel Akaka, a Democrat from Hawaii who requested the report, said he is troubled by the findings. "Just knowing the title of a project alone is insufficient," he said.

The report recommends Congress prohibit the State Department from funding projects in countries that sponsor terrorism, but the State Department opposes this. In a written response to the report, State officials said withholding U.S. money wouldn't stop the programs from being funded and would discourage other countries from fulfilling obligations.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123845791330271707.html>

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Financial Times

Published: April 2 2009

Washington Sees Time as Ally in Disarming Tehran's Nuclear Plan

By Demetri Sevastopulo in Washington

Robert Gates, US defence secretary, has said it is unlikely that Israel will this year launch an attack on Iran to prevent Tehran from developing a nuclear weapon.

Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's new prime minister, this week warned as he was sworn in that the greatest danger to Israel was Iran's attempt to develop nuclear weapons.

But in an interview with the Financial Times, Mr Gates said the US and Israel had enough time to persuade Tehran to abandon what is widely perceived to be a nuclear weapons programme.

Asked whether Iran would cross a nuclear "red line" this year, he replied: "I don't know, I would guess probably not.

"I think we have more time than that. How much more time I don't know. It is a year, two years, three years."

Mr Gates said he did not expect Israel - which believes the US estimate is too sanguine - to take military action this year. "I guess I would say I would be surprised . . . if they did act this year."

Israel raised the spectre of war last year by conducting a large scale military exercise that some experts saw as a practice run for an attack on Iran. That prompted Admiral Mike Mullen, the chairman of the US joint chiefs, to make an unusual public warning to Israel not to act following a visit there.

Speaking before Barack Obama, US president, meets Nato leaders in France and Germany this weekend, Mr Gates urged Europe to boost its commitment to Afghanistan in line with the new US strategy.

Mr Gates, who has been frustrated on several missions to Europe to raise more combat troops, said the US was looking for resources that would be more politically palatable with the European public. He urged Europe to provide money for the expansion of the Afghan army, civilian experts in areas such as agriculture, health and clean water, and trainers for the Afghan police.

"We're interested in providing trainers for the Afghan national police and here the Europeans really have some special skills."

Mr Gates conceded that his own high-profile appeal for European leaders to convince their publics that success in Afghanistan was crucial for their own security had not borne much fruit. "I have not seen the kind of effort that I would have hoped for in terms of European governments trying to persuade their people that attacks such as those that took place in Madrid and London . . . emanated from the Afghan-Pakistani border area," he said.

"This problem out there is as big a threat to the Europeans as it is to us. The British do a good job of making that case . . . but on the continent I have not seen that kind of effort."

Mr Gates suggested that having a new US president would make it easier for Europe to provide resources for Afghanistan. "There is a point that needs to be made, which is that the Europeans for all of the commentary, including from me . . . have done a lot."

Mr Gates called for contributions to a \$500m (€378m, £357m) "starter fund" to raise the size of the Afghan army from 80,000 to 134,000 soldiers. The US expects the expanded army will cost about \$2bn-\$3bn a year to maintain. Washington last year asked Tokyo to provide \$20bn to fund expansion, but Japan opted to provide money for police training.

Mr Gates agreed with criticisms that some allies were not letting the Afghan security forces take the lead in operations - considered crucial for their training - but he said the US also needed to do better. "We have tried to do a lot in terms of partnering with the Afghans and putting the Afghans out front but . . . we need to do more of that and particularly as they increase their numbers."

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/da3a9bde-1f1c-11de-a748-00144feabdc0.html>

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New York Daily News
April 2nd 2009

General Petraeus Warns Israel May Strike Iran First Over Nuclear Fears

By James Gordon Meek
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

WASHINGTON - Iran's nuclear saber-rattling so worries Israel that the Jewish state may strike its archenemy first, the top U.S. general in the Middle East warned Wednesday.

"The Israeli government may ultimately see itself so threatened by the prospect of an Iranian nuclear weapon that it would take preemptive military action to derail or delay it," Army Gen. David Petraeus said in a written statement given to Congress.

Not a single member of the Senate Armed Services Committee expressed alarm - or even asked the head of the U.S. Central Command about it - during a hearing.

The former top Iraq war commander said Iran "continues its development of nuclear capabilities and missile systems that many assess are connected to the pursuit of nuclear weapons and delivery means."

Petraeus said Tehran's actions make it "a major concern."

He also cited Iran's clandestine operations to destabilize Lebanon, Gaza, Iraq and Afghanistan.

http://www.nydailynews.com/news/us_world/2009/04/01/2009-04-01_general_petraeus_warns_israel_may_strike.html

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Wall Street Journal
April 2, 2009

Oil-Rich Arab State Pushes Nuclear Bid with U.S. Help

By Jay Solomon and Margaret Coker

ABU DHABI -- The mating of the words "nuclear" and "Persian Gulf" normally sets off alarm bells in Washington. Yet this oil-rich Arab state just across the gulf from Iran is on a crash course to develop nuclear power with U.S. backing.

Dozens of American engineers, lawyers and businessmen have converged on Abu Dhabi in recent months to help the United Arab Emirates get the Arab world's first nuclear-power program running by 2017. "I don't know anyone else who has rolled out a nuclear program of this magnitude this fast," says Jeffrey Benjamin, an American engineer who in October was named project manager for Emirates Nuclear Energy Corp., which oversees Abu Dhabi's nuclear program.

Even as the U.S. remains determined to block Iran from developing nuclear weapons, President Barack Obama sees the U.A.E. program as a "model for the world," according to a senior White House official, and by mid-April could

move to present a bilateral nuclear-cooperation treaty to Congress for approval. The ability to make electricity through nuclear power is a long way from the ability to build weapons -- and, proponents say, the agreement could make bomb-making harder.

The treaty, signed by former President George W. Bush during his last week in office, would allow American firms to engage in nuclear trade with the U.A.E. To build support, the U.A.E. is agreeing to buy approved nuclear fuel on the international market, rather than enriching uranium or reprocessing plutonium, both of which can be made into weapons-grade material. It will also open its facilities to random international inspections.

The U.A.E.'s push represents a test for nuclear-power advocates who want countries across the globe to go nuclear -- so long as they play by the rules. The U.S. and United Nations officials are championing the U.A.E. as a role model for other developing countries and as a counterexample to Iran. Tehran has repeatedly rebuffed international inspectors, while amassing large quantities of materials that can be used to build bombs. A spokesman at the Iranian mission to the U.N. says Iran's nuclear program is purely for civilian purposes, and says Tehran believes "peaceful nuclear programs" are the right of all signatures to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

Some U.S. lawmakers have threatened to block the U.A.E. deal, saying the risks of letting that country split the atom are too large. They cite the U.A.E.'s history as a transit point for sensitive military technologies to Iran, Iraq and Libya. They also make the slippery-slope argument: If one Arab country has nuclear power, others may pile in, and perhaps down the road, seek nuclear weapons as well. Both Saudi Arabia and Egypt have recently announced their desire to develop nuclear-power programs with U.S. assistance.

Western and Asian companies are already salivating at the chance for lucrative contracts with the U.A.E., which has set the end of April as the rough deadline for bids. General Electric Co. and Westinghouse Electric Co. are among the U.S. firms interested in the initial \$20 billion in reactor work, say officials familiar with the bidding process. GE and Westinghouse declined to comment.

Facing ambitious timelines set by officials bent on growth, Mr. Benjamin, the American engineer, and his colleagues rarely get far from the Emirates Nuclear Energy headquarters in downtown Abu Dhabi. Many live in an apartment building next to the office and exercise at the same gym. Mr. Benjamin lives three floors above his office.

Surge in Demand

The U.A.E. began exploring nuclear power three years ago as it faced a surge in electricity demand, say Emirati officials. The Persian Gulf country is a federation of seven states, among them Abu Dhabi, the capital, and Dubai. It has among the largest oil reserves in the world. But it's short of the natural gas that is used to fuel power and water-desalination plants, and imports most of its gas from neighboring Qatar.

Abu Dhabi's ruler, Sheik Khalifa bin Zayed al Nahyan, commissioned a white paper that concluded the country's electricity demand would reach 40,000 megawatts by 2020 from around 16,000 megawatts currently. Nonnuclear options, such as coal-fired plants, solar energy or alternative fuels, were seen either as insufficient to meet demand, too expensive or harmful to the environment.

"Nuclear power was seen both as practical and clean," says Hussain al Nowais, an Abu Dhabi industrialist who took part in the study.

The U.A.E.'s foreign minister announced Abu Dhabi's intentions to pursue nuclear power last May. Officials here say they believe the global economic downturn is temporary and are sticking to ambitious growth plans that assume rising electricity demand.

Bush Initiative

The Bush administration quickly emerged as a powerful partner. Former Bush officials say they wanted to tout the U.A.E.'s nuclear approach to developing nations and to pressure Iran to follow suit. Some former officials say they believed nuclear power was inevitably going to spread farther into the Middle East. A deal with Abu Dhabi could also set a precedent by binding a key economic powerhouse to U.S. technologies and international standards.

"This is the kind of counterexample to Iran we need to actively support," says Jackie Wolcott, a former U.S. envoy who helped negotiate the pact Mr. Bush signed in January.

David Scott is one of the Americans helping to build the nuclear program in the U.A.E. Mr. Scott served as the National Security Council's director for the Arabian Peninsula and North Africa during President Bush's first term. In 2006, he became the director of economic affairs for Abu Dhabi's Executive Affairs Authority, which is run by the crown prince.

Frenzied Growth

On a recent morning, Mr. Scott was in a helicopter over Abu Dhabi, pointing out the frenzied growth of skyscrapers and apartment blocks that he hopes will soon be powered by nuclear energy. Mr. Scott, a graduate of Utah's Brigham Young University, has worked for the U.S. military, the State Department and Occidental Petroleum Corp. On weekends, he and his family ride wakeboards on Abu Dhabi's turquoise waters.

Also in the helicopter was Mohamed al Hammadi, the chief executive of the Emirati nuclear company. Mr. Hammadi was tracking the flight path using the global-positioning system on his cellphone. The 33-year-old, a graduate of the Florida Institute of Technology and a native of Abu Dhabi, said he hardly recognized the town he grew up in.

"Most of this was just desert," said Mr. Hammadi. The Louvre and Guggenheim museums are building branches on an island next to Abu Dhabi's downtown waterfront. A Formula One racetrack built on another nearby island will stage its first event later this year. Farther away from the city, one of the world's largest aluminum smelters is under construction.

Mr. Hammadi's job includes choosing sites for the reactors that are in secure locations and away from population centers, but still close to desalination plants and the power grid. He'll also decide which designs the U.A.E. adopts. Plants must withstand sandstorms and summer heat that can reach 120 degrees.

Following the Western model, the U.A.E. has established an independent regulator to monitor nuclear safety. The regulator's first director general is set to be William Travers, a 58-year-old Florida native. In the 1980s, he was dispatched by the U.S.'s Nuclear Regulatory Commission to help clean up America's worst nuclear accident at Three Mile Island in Pennsylvania.

Mr. Travers oversees a staff of 30 American, Emirati and European officials that's expected to grow to more than 100 by 2013. The regulatory office is seeking to put in place licensing requirements so the U.A.E. can begin importing components for its nuclear reactors. Mr. Travers says he plans to retain his independence, which is one reason his offices have been literally walled off from the nuclear-energy company, even though they share the same floor. "What they want from me is a safety call," Mr. Travers says from his spartan office.

Emirati officials say they've started developing homegrown talent to run and maintain the reactors. Khalifa University, Abu Dhabi's largest technical school, is teaming up with European and U.S. colleges to create nuclear science and engineering degrees. The government is offering to retrain engineers already working in the nation's petroleum sector.

'Serve My Country'

"I want to see myself in a stronger position so that I can serve my country," said 30-year-old Fahad al Rumaithi, who's preparing for a degree in nuclear engineering after working for the Abu Dhabi Marine Operating Co. in Malaysia and South Korea. He said he spends his spare time reading engineering books on thermodynamics.

Most critics of the program, including some U.S. lawmakers and nonproliferation experts, believe the U.A.E. is unlikely to turn to nuclear weapons. But they have reservations about the country's past role in the flow of sensitive military technologies. The rogue Pakistani scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan used the port of Dubai to transfer centrifuge technologies to countries like Libya, according to American and U.N. officials. Mr. Khan's network grew to include nuclear sales to North Korea and Iran, before American and international investigators shut him down in 2003.

Iran has allegedly obtained materials for its missile program from front companies based in Dubai. Iran and the U.A.E. are trading partners, exchanging more than \$5.5 billion in goods in 2007, according to the European Union.

Some American lawmakers have said they want to block the U.S.-U.A.E. deal on the grounds that the U.A.E. hasn't done enough to combat the flow of funds and technology into Iran.

"If this is to be the model for future nuclear cooperation agreements, don't we want to get this right the first time?" asks Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen of Florida, the Republican vice chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Ms. Ros-Lehtinen wants more assurances that the U.A.E. will support U.S. efforts to confront Iran and that it won't pursue nuclear weapons.

U.A.E. officials say in the past they have been lax in monitoring the flow of sensitive technologies through the ports. But they say they have stepped up enforcement of U.N. sanctions against Iran and tightened business-license regulations for Iranian nationals. They have also signed on to U.S.-led efforts to track air and sea shipments to Iran.

Iranian Crackdown

Over the past three years, U.A.E. officials say, they have shut down 40 Iranian companies operating in Dubai over either export-control violations or lack of proper licenses. In the past six months, Emirati authorities have also blocked more than 10 shipments of goods for potential military use heading to Iran through Dubai, largely from Asia. "We will not allow anyone to use our territory to harm anybody else," said Yacub al-Hosani, a Foreign Ministry official.

The U.A.E. points to Iran's stepped-up rhetoric over Persian Gulf islands that are in dispute between Abu Dhabi and Tehran as evidence that its harder stance isn't going unnoticed.

Emirati officials say their nuclear program won't be derailed by international pressure. The country has already signed a nuclear-cooperation agreement with France, and has tentative deals with Japan and Britain. Companies such as France's Areva SA and Korea Electric Power Co. are preparing to make bids for contracts that could ultimately top \$40 billion.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123862439816779973.html>

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Global Security Newswire
March 31, 2009

North Korea Could Have Nuclear Warheads for Missiles, Expert Says

North Korea is believed to have between five and eight nuclear warheads that could be used on medium-range missiles that can reach Japan, one expert told Agence France-Presse today (see *GSM*, March 30).

"Intelligence agencies believe the North Koreans have assembled nuclear warheads for Rodong missiles, which are stored at underground facilities near the Rodong missile bases," said Daniel Pinkston, a senior analyst with the International Crisis Group. "It might be right, it might be wrong -- but if others believe it is true, it has implications for the psychological aspects of deterrence."

Pinkston declined to identify his sources within the international intelligence community.

Intelligence agencies have never publicly asserted that Pyongyang possesses a nuclear warhead. It is not believed to possess a warhead for its Taepodong 2 long-range missile, which the United States and other nations suspect North Korea might test early next month under the guide of a rocket launch (Agence France-Presse/[ChannelNewsAsia](#), March 31).

It remains unknown whether North Korea is yet capable of fitting the warheads on its missiles, Pinkston told the Associated Press.

The Stalinist state employs two underground storage sites for the Rodongs, Pinkston said.

"Rodong is the most likely weapon to be mounted with nuclear warheads," because the longer-range Taepodongs are not yet fully fielded, said missile analyst Kim Tae-woo of the Korea Institute for Defense Analyses in Seoul (Hyung-Jin Kim, Associated Press I/[Yahoo!News](#), March 31).

North Korea is believed to possess 200 Rodong missiles, which are designed to fly up to 800 miles.

North Korea would need one to two days for warhead assembly as it keeps plutonium and detonators in different locations, Pinkston told AFP (Agence France-Presse).

News reports from Japan indicate that Iranian missile experts arrived in North Korea early this month to help prepare the launch, Agence France-Presse reported Sunday. In a letter carried by the 15-person team, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad emphasized his support for space technology collaboration between the two nations (Agence France-Presse/[Australian](#), March 30).

The United States and other nations continued to prepare for next month's launch, AP reported.

Two U.S. destroyers carrying missile interceptors left South Korea yesterday, while South Korea also intends to put an Aegis-equipped warship off its east coast. Deployment of Japanese land- and sea-based missile defenses is nearly finished.

Leaders from the nations have indicated that they would only fire if the rocket or rocket debris poses a threat to their territories.

Pyongyang says it intends only to use a rocket to send a communications satellite into orbit. Satellite images taken as recently as Sunday do not provide firm evidence whether the three-stage launch vehicle on the launchpad at Musudan-ri is a rocket or a long-range missile, said analyst Tim Brown of Globalsecurity.org.

Washington and other capitals have said that any launch would constitute a violation of a 2006 U.N. Security Council resolution barring Pyongyang from conducting ballistic missile or nuclear tests. North Korea has threatened to abandon talks on its nuclear program if it faces additional U.N. sanctions (Jae-Soon Chang, Associated Press/[Yahoo!News](#), March 30).

"If North Korea did not have a desire of acquiring nuclear weapons, then I think North Korea's stated intention of launching a space launch vehicle would cause no qualms but the truth of the matter is North Korea does have a desire to develop nuclear weapons so this does precisely make it a very serious concern for them to acquire the technology to deliver nuclear weapons," South Korean President Lee Myung-bak told the *Financial Times*.

"It is also not in their interest to test-fire anything. In the short-term it might be beneficial for negotiating conditions, but in the long-term it won't be in their interest," he added (*Financial Times*, March 29).

South Korea has indicated that it might formally join the U.S.-led Proliferation Security Initiative, which seeks to interdict illicit WMD shipments on the high seas, if its neighbor goes ahead with a missile launch (see *GSN*, March 16).

Pyongyang yesterday warned Seoul against such a move, the Yonhap News Agency reported.

"If the South takes part in the multilateral operations, called the Proliferation Security Initiative, over our plan to launch a rocket, we will immediately take a stern countermeasure," according to the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland.

It added that South Korean involvement in the program would be a "violent challenge to our dignity and autonomous rights and an unpardonable crime to lead the whole nation into a nuclear war."

Seoul to date has been only an observer to the program in order to avoid angering North Korea, a known proliferator of missiles and other weapons (Yonhap News Agency, March 31).

A test that proves North Korea's long-range missile capabilities could prove lucrative to the regime, experts told the *Wall Street Journal*. Pyongyang is more likely to put the missiles on the open market than to use them itself, they said.

"The sale of this system to Iran probably means hundreds of millions of dollars into the coffers of North Korea," said analyst Bruce Bechtol. "This is all about proliferation" (Evan Ramstad, *Wall Street Journal*, March 31).

Meanwhile, Pyongyang intends to put two U.S. journalists on trial for unspecified "hostile acts" and entering the country illegally, the *Washington Post* reported yesterday.

Observers say that reporters Laura Ling and Euna Lee are likely to become bargaining chips as North Korea tries to quell Washington's objections to the upcoming launch (Blaine Harden, *Washington Post*, March 30).

http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20090331_6683.php

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Yonhap News
31 March 2009

N. Korea Warns of Military Response should Japan Intercept Its Satellite

SEOUL, March 31 (Yonhap) -- North Korea will see any interception by Japan of its satellite launch as an act of invasion and respond with its "most powerful military means," the country's state news agency said Tuesday.

"Should Japan dare recklessly intercept the DPRK's satellite, its army will consider this as the start of Japan's war of reinvasion more than six decades after the Second World War," the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said.

DPRK is the acronym of the country's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Japan colonized Korea for 36 years until its defeat in 1945, a source of deep animosity that North Korea still harbors towards its eastern neighbor.

The North Korean army will "mercilessly destroy all its interceptor means and citadels with the most powerful military means," the report warned.

North Korea has told international aviation and maritime agencies that it will send the experimental communications satellite into orbit some time between April 4 and 8 as part of its peaceful space development program.

The North also said the rocket's booster would fall into waters between the Korean Peninsula and Japan, while the second-stage booster will fall in the Pacific.

Japan had earlier suggested that it might shoot down the rocket, but now says it will intercept only if debris from the launch is likely to land in its territory.

South Korea and the United States have also said they oppose military responses to the rocket launch.

All three still insist, however, the imminent launch is a cover for testing its long-range missile technology and warn of U.N. sanctions. They have deployed warships capable of tracking or destroying missiles to seas near North Korea to monitor activities around the launch site.

"Japan is taking the lead in this racket though it has committed the biggest crimes against the DPRK," the North Korean report said.

"They blustered that they would 'intercept' the DPRK's satellite, counting on the support from their master," it said, referring to the U.S.

"But when their master flinched because of the strong stand of the Korean People's Army, they found themselves in such a miserable position as to modify their assertion by uttering that they would intercept it only when the debris of the multi-stage carrier rocket falls down on the land of Japan," it said.

The North said Tokyo's true intentions are wrecking the six-party talks aimed at ending its nuclear weapons program and justifying its own nuclear armament.

"Looking back on the history of the six-party talks, Japan has done only wicked and wrong things obstructive to the denuclearization of the peninsula since their very start," it said.

Japan has refused to send 200,000 tons of fuel oil, its share of the 1 million tons of fuel promised to North Korea in return for dismantling its nuclear facility, demanding Pyongyang account for its citizens abducted by the North in past decades.

The talks, grouping the two Koreas, the U.S., China, Japan and Russia, have been suspended since late last year due to a dispute over how to verify the North's past nuclear activity.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2009/03/31/53/0401000000AEN20090331008100315F.HTML>

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London Times

April 1, 2009

North Korea 'has Capacity for Nuclear Strike' on Seoul and Tokyo

Richard Lloyd Parry, Tokyo

North Korea already has the capacity to launch a nuclear missile strike against Seoul and Tokyo, even before the long-range rocket test that it is promising in the next few days, an international think-tank has reported.

According to the Brussels-based International Crisis Group, foreign intelligence agencies believe that the North has successfully miniaturised nuclear warheads to the extent that they can be mounted on tried and tested medium-range Nodong missiles. Such a development would seriously alter the balance of power between North Korea's large but poorly equipped military and the South Korean and US forces ranged against it.

It also suggests that the intense international anxiety being expressed about the imminent ballistic rocket test is misplaced. The *Taepodong 2*, which potentially has the range to strike Alaska or Hawaii, is in its earliest stages of development — and in any case appears to be the vehicle for a space satellite rather than a warhead.

“Pyongyang's inventory of short-range and medium-range road-mobile ballistic missiles poses a more imminent threat,” says the ICG report. “Although North Korea has not demonstrated the capability to assemble a miniaturised nuclear bomb for delivery with a ballistic missile, intelligence sources believe it has recently assembled and deployed nuclear weapons for the Nodong.”

Western military planners have long calculated that North Korea could never win an all out war with the US and South Korea — the only question is how much damage it could inflict before aerial bombing and land invasion disabled its military machine. With 13,000 artillery pieces buried close to the border between the two Koreas, and chemical and biological warheads, it was always understood that the North could inflict economically devastating conventional damage on the South Korean capital, Seoul.

If the new report is correct then North Korea's supreme leader, Kim Jong Il, may have the potential to kill millions of people in Japan, as well as the South, and to lay waste to US bases and airfields in both countries.

North Korea has announced that it will launch a satellite-bearing space rocket between April 4 and 8, and is keeping up the fusillade of fiery language in the face of foreign demands that it abandon its plans. Satellite photographs have revealed a large rocket in position on the launch pad at the Musudan-ri test site in the northeast of the country.

State television reported today that US and South Korean aircraft had conducted “intensive” spying missions last month. “Should the US imperialist racketeers dare to intrude espionage planes into our territorial sky, interfering with our preparations for a satellite launch for peaceful purposes, our revolutionary forces will shoot them down unsparingly,” it said.

The US, Japan and South Korea say that, even if the rocket is a space vehicle rather than a missile, it has the capacity to be used for military purposes, and therefore violates United Nations Security Council resolutions. But even if it was loaded with a nuclear warhead, the *Taepodong 2* takes weeks to assemble, fuel and arm giving ample time for it to be destroyed on the launch pad.

The ICG argues that the true danger lies with shorter-range weapons, some of which are mobile and therefore difficult to detect. They include variants of the Scud, which could strike South Korea, and the Nodong which could reach much of Japan. Pyongyang also has a short-range tactical weapon called the Toksa or Viper, which is highly accurate up to 120km. The Musudan, which can be transported by road, could reach US bases on the Pacific island of Guam.

US intelligence sources say that the North has been basing some of its Nodongs close to the Chinese border in the hope that the US would hesitate to strike them for fear of angering Beijing.

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article6015449.ece>

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RIA Novosti
02 April 2009

Russia Urges N.Korea to Show Restraint in Rocket Launch

MOSCOW (RIA Novosti) - Russia urges North Korea to show restraint with its upcoming rocket launch and related activities, the Foreign Ministry's spokesman said on Friday.

The spokesman's comments came soon after reports emerged that the North had deployed fighter planes to fend off any attempts to intercept the rocket, which it says will be putting a satellite into orbit.

"Restraint in rocket activities would help allay the international community's concerns, and build trust in the context of the six-party talks on the Korean nuclear problem," Andrei Nesterenko said.

He urged Pyongyang to avoid "fanning the flames" and escalating tensions in the region.

Last month, North Korea announced its plans to launch what it says is a communications satellite April on 4-8 from its Musudan-ri launch site. The U.S., Japan and South Korea, who have condemned the plans, believe that the secretive state is planning to test its Taepodong-2 long-range missile.

North Korea says its Kwangmyongsong-2 experimental satellite will be put into orbit for "peaceful purposes".

Russia and China have stopped short of condemning the launch.

Last Friday, Japan's Security Council gave its approval for the military to destroy the North Korean rocket should it pose a threat to Japanese security.

Japan's Kyodo reported that two Aegis guided-missile destroyers had set sail from Nagasaki en route to the Sea of Japan on Saturday to intercept the rocket if necessary.

On Tuesday the North's official news agency warned that if Japan intercepts the rocket, it will "consider this the start of Japan's war of re-invasion more than six decades after the Second World War, and mercilessly destroy all its interceptor means and citadels with the most powerful military means."

The Russian spokesman said: "We believe it is important not to make any rash conclusions" and to "refrain from making any evaluations until the incident occurs."

U.S. media quoted senior officials earlier on Thursday as saying the North had begun fuelling the rocket, suggesting that it will be ready for lift off in three or four days' time.

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20090402/120883682.html>

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Washington Post

April 2, 2009

N. Korea Ratchets Up Threats as It Readies Missile for Launch

By Blaine Harden

Washington Post Foreign Service

TOKYO, April 2 -- Amid reports that it is fueling a missile for launch as soon as this weekend, North Korea escalated threats on Thursday against a worried neighbor, warning it would attack "major targets" in Japan if Tokyo shoots the missile down.

North Korea has shifted MIG-23 fighter jets to its east coast, near the missile launch site, according to South Korean media reports.

In London for the G-20 summit, President Obama criticized the launch on Wednesday as a "provocative act" that would violate a U.N. resolution and trigger a response from the U.N. Security Council. The leaders of Japan and South Korea agreed in London that the launch, if it occurs, should be addressed by the Security Council.

The three countries have dispatched ships with anti-missile systems to monitor the launch, which they describe as a test of a long-range ballistic missile that could fly as far as the western United States. North Korea is trying to miniaturize nuclear warheads to fit atop its growing arsenal of missiles, U.S. intelligence officials have said.

North Korea says the missile is part of a peaceful research effort to put a communications satellite into orbit.

Based on satellite photographs, experts say the missile appears to be carrying a satellite payload. No country has said it would try to shoot it down, unless it poses a threat.

But North Korea, judging from its near-daily warnings of retaliation and war, is growing increasingly agitated -- at U.S. surveillance flights, foreign ship movements and threats of U.N. sanctions.

In what it called an "important report," North Korea's official news agency said Thursday that "Japanese reactionaries, the sworn enemy of the Korean people, are perpetrating the most evil doings over North Korea's projected satellite launch for peaceful purposes."

Last week Japan ordered land- and sea-based anti-missile systems to destroy debris from the North's missile, if it fails in flight and falls on Japan. The announced flight trajectory of the missile takes it high over northern Japan, but the likelihood of anything dropping from the sky and hitting the country is quite remote, Japanese officials say.

North Korea, though, says Japan is being reckless. In its warning on Thursday, it said that if Japan intercepts the missile, "the Korean People's Army will mercilessly deal deadly blows not only at the already deployed intercepting means but at major targets."

North Korea has about 200 mid-range Nodong missiles that are capable of striking nearly every part of Japan, according to the Defense Ministry in Tokyo.

Citing U.S. military officials, CNN said Wednesday that North Korea has begun to pump fuel into the missile, a process that means it could be launched within three or four days. Officials in Japan and South Korea would not confirm the report.

Among the many threats that it has issued in recent days, North Korea has said it would walk away from talks with the United States and four other countries over ending its nuclear program if its missile launch is criticized in the U.N. Security Council.

Although it is one of the poorest countries in Asia, North Korea has made itself into the "greatest supplier of missiles, missile components and related technologies" in the developing world, according to a 2008 report for the U.S. Army War College's Strategic Studies Institute.

It has sold missiles to Iran, Pakistan, Syria, Egypt, Libya and Yemen -- and received hundreds of millions of dollars, according to the Center for Nonproliferation Studies in Monterey, Calif.

North Korea warned Monday that it will interpret as a "declaration of war" any move by South Korea to join the U.S.-led Proliferation Security Initiative, a multi-nation effort begun during the Bush administration to intercept shipments of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction by countries such as North Korea.

The warning might backfire. South Korean government officials said Thursday they were leaning toward joining the anti-proliferation group. For nearly six years, South Korea has declined a U.S. invitation to participate.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/04/02/AR2009040200600.html>

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Yonhap News

2 April 2009

N. Korea will Retaliate Against Any Attempt to Intercept Rocket: Military

SEOUL (Yonhap) -- North Korea's military warned Thursday it will attack "major targets" in Japan should Tokyo shoot down a satellite it plans to orbit as early as this weekend.

The warning comes as leaders of South Korea, the United States and Japan are meeting at the G-20 summit in London, with North Korea's rocket launch high on the agenda of their bilateral talks. The three have threatened to bring Pyongyang to the U.N. Security Council for sanctions if it goes ahead with the launch announced as scheduled between Saturday and Wednesday.

Government sources in Seoul said on Thursday that North Korea has sent a fleet of fighter jets to the east coast near Musudan-ri, the launch site in North Hamgyong Province.

"It is the Japanese reactionaries, the sworn enemy of the Korean people, who are perpetrating the most evil doings over the DPRK (North Korea)'s projected satellite launch for peaceful purposes," the North's military said in what it called "an important report," carried by the official Korean Central News Agency.

"If Japan recklessly 'intercepts' the DPRK's satellite for peaceful purposes, the KPA (Korean People's Army) will mercilessly deal deadly blows not only at the already deployed intercepting means but at major targets," it said.

Warships capable of tracking and intercepting the North Korean rocket have been deployed to waters between the Korean Peninsula and Japan. Washington and Tokyo had earlier hinted at a possible interception, but they now say they won't do so unless the rocket threatens their territory.

North Korea has repeatedly warned of retaliation, saying it may quit the six-party nuclear talks if its satellite launch is referred to the U.N. Security Council. Pyongyang also warned it would view as a "declaration of war" South Korea's participation in the U.S.-led Proliferation Security Initiative, a multilateral effort to interdict shipments and the transfer of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction by countries like North Korea.

"It is a legitimate right of a sovereign state in which no one can interfere to use space for peaceful purposes," the North's military said.

It also claimed that North Korea sent cable notices on March 21 banning access to its airspace that will be affected by the launch to civil aviation authorities in the U.S., Japan, Russia, China, Switzerland and South Korea.

"However, only Japan is making much ado as if something serious had happened, finding fault with even the DPRK's above-said advance notice and terming the launch of 'Kwangmyongsong-2,' the DPRK's experimental communications satellite for peaceful purposes, a 'hostile act,'" it said.

The statement also urged the U.S. to "immediately withdraw its already deployed armed forces" and South Korea to stop "disturbing the said launch."

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2009/04/02/41/0401000000AEN20090402005700315F.HTML>

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London Times
April 2, 2009

North Korea Fuels Rocket Ahead of Launch

Richard Lloyd Parry in Tokyo

Military and civilian authorities across north-east Asia were on alert today, with reports that North Korea has begun to fuel a long-range rocket in advance of its scheduled firing in the next few days.

Meanwhile the North Korean military threatened instant retaliation if any steps were taken to shoot the rocket down.

The CNN news channel quoted senior US military sources as confirming that the rocket was in the final stages of launch preparations and could be fired as early as this weekend. A South Korean newspaper reported that North Korea's most up to date jet fighters had been deployed to protect the launch site at Musudan-ri in the north-east of the country.

"Our revolutionary armed forces ... will not hesitate to mount retaliatory strikes if hostile forces show the slightest signs of moving to shoot down our satellite," said a statement by North Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff. "If the brigandish US imperialists dare to infiltrate spy planes into our airspace to interfere with our peaceful satellite launch preparations, our revolutionary armed forces will mercilessly shoot them down."

The statement promised to launch a retaliatory "thunderbolt of fire" against any action by Japan, which has deployed elements of its ballistic missile defence shield in case the Taepodong 2 rocket should misfire and threaten its territory. The rocket's planned trajectory would take it across northern Japan but so far up in the atmosphere that it should not present any physical threat.

The civilian authorities in the areas beneath the missile's flight path have set up an emergency centre to co-ordinate their response to any misfiring. Towns and villages across the prefecture have installed hot lines connecting them to the office of the prime minister, Taro Aso, in Tokyo. Teachers have been ordered to keep radios and televisions on at all times starting Saturday in case of emergency announcements.

Batteries of Patriot guided-missiles have been moved to Akita and neighbouring Iwate prefecture, to intercept the rocket in the unlikely event that it falls out of the sky. "We believe a flying object from North Korea is unlikely to land in our territory," said the governor of Akita Prefecture, Sukeshiro Terata. "Yet, we must be prepared just in case."

The South Korean government repeated its demand that the North cancel the firing of the rocket, which North Korea says is not a weapon, but the launch vehicle for a satellite. "Whether it is a satellite or a missile, the technology is the same," the South Korean Lee Sang Hee said in parliament yesterday, "Even if it is a satellite, the technology behind it can be converted for use on a missile. That is the view shared by South Korea and the United States."

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New York Times
April 3, 2009

N. Korea Is Said to Be Fueling Rocket

By CHOE SANG-HUN

SEOUL: As North Korea prepares to launch as early as Saturday what it calls a rocket carrying a communications satellite but what Washington calls an intercontinental ballistic missile, the world is watching. And watching, for now, seems about all it can do.

On Thursday, as CNN reported that North Korea had begun fueling the rocket — a strong indication that the launch would come off as scheduled, between Saturday and Wednesday — President Obama and his South Korean counterpart, Lee Myung-bak, agreed on the need for a “stern, united” international response.

But with two American journalists detained and facing criminal indictment in Pyongyang, the United States all but ruled out the possibility of shooting down the rocket — an action that if successful, could provoke Pyongyang into quitting already sputtering nuclear disarmament talks and if not, would embarrass the Pentagon.

Japan dispatched interceptor missiles to the coast facing the North. But like the United States, it admits that it can intercept only if the rocket fails and tumbles toward its territory.

“We will surely win,” the North Korean leader, Kim Jong-il, said during his recent birthday party, according to the March 28 edition of Rodong Sinmun, Pyongyang’s main state-run newspaper. Rodong then explained Kim’s tactic: “If our sworn enemies come at us with a dagger, he brandishes a sword. If they train a rifle at us, he responds with a cannon.”

Among North Korea watchers, Mr. Kim’s tactic is known as “brinkmanship.” It is a term they often use to explain politics behind the North’s rocket launch and its detention and impending indictment of Laura Ling and Euna Lee, both reporters of San Francisco-based Current TV, who were arrested by North Korean soldiers at the border with China on March 17.

The collapse of the Communist block in the early 1990s left North Korea with few friends. Since then, North Korea, a dictatorship armed to the teeth but unable to feed its own people without foreign aid, has specialized in provoking the international community for survival.

Whenever it failed to get concessions in negotiations or there were changes of governments abroad, the North raised tensions, wrangling an invitation to talks and extracting fresh aid while never giving up its trump card, its nuclear weapons program.

That is what it did when it withdrew from the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty in 1993 and began stockpiling plutonium; when it held an American for three months for illegally crossing its border from China in 1996; when it tested its first ballistic missile over Japan in 1998; when its warships clashed with the South Korean navy in 1999 and 2002; or when it tested its first nuclear device in 2006.

These movements forced reluctant governments in Washington and Seoul to the negotiating table for talks that often resulted in more aid to North Korea. In return, North Korea agreed to work toward ending its nuclear program — a promise it quickly stalled or reversed. It had to, experts say, because the nuclear card is its only major bargaining chip.

North Korea was forced to recalibrate its strategy again after President Lee Myung-bak, a conservative, came to power in Seoul a year ago, ending a decade of no-strings-attached largess from the South. Meanwhile, Barack Obama took office in Washington in January, giving Mr. Kim a reason to grab Washington’s attention anew.

Since last year, the North has called Mr. Lee a “traitor” and his aides “pro-American flunkies” and “malicious confrontational maniacs.” It has cut off dialogue with Seoul and stalled six-nation nuclear disarmament talks. A month ago, it began assembling what Washington believes is its Taepodong-2 missile at a launching pad on its northeast coast.

Then an unexpected bonanza for the Pyongyang regime rolled in the persons of Ms. Ling and Ms. Lee. The regime is now preparing to put them on trial on charges of “hostile acts” against the Communist state, a crime punishable by up to 10 years of hard labor in one of the North’s notorious prison camps.

“The journalists considerably weakened their government’s leverage against the North,” said Kim Tae-woo, a North Korea expert at the Korea Institute for Defense Analysis in Seoul.

All in all, Washington has few good options, experts said.

“North Korea has little to lose in this game,” said Kim Yong-hyun, a North Korea specialist at Dongguk University in Seoul. “It’s a repeating pattern: Once again, North Korea’s brinkmanship is working.”

Washington says that the launch is a provocative test of a ballistic missile with the potential of carrying a warhead to the western coast of the United States, and that it violates a United Nations resolution that bans the North from all such tests. But an American effort to punish the North at the Security Council will bog down in a haggling with China, the closest the North has to an ally, over whether the North is entitled to launch a satellite, analysts said.

Any such move by the United States, North Korea warns, will also compel it to quit six-party talks on ending its nuclear weapons program — Washington’s top goal in dealing with Pyongyang.

South Korea, too, has few ways to pressure Pyongyang, except perhaps reducing \$1.8 billion worth of annual trade, the second largest volume of trade the isolated country has after China. But the South is perpetually divided between those who want to discipline the Pyongyang regime and those who fear such a tactic would only worsen the North’s isolation and add to the deprivation of their relatives still living there.

Tokyo has made the fate of a dozen Japanese kidnapped by North Korea an overriding priority in dealing with the North. Although popular, that policy has seriously curtailed Tokyo’s flexibility to engage the North in the nuclear and missile disputes.

Mr. Kim is said to have suffered a stroke last August. By confronting the United States and Japan, he wants to enhance his credentials as a military leader as he seeks to get himself re-elected by his rubber-stamp parliament, which convenes next Thursday, analysts said.

The two American journalists provide Pyongyang with convenient leverage to attract a high-level envoy from Washington following the rocket launch. But for now, the North will focus on the successful launching of the rocket, which will give the necessary lift to Mr. Kim’s domestic reputation.

“If the launch does take place, the best outcome for the international community is simply for it to fail,” said Daniel Pinkton, an analyst with International Crisis Group, a Brussels-based policy group.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/03/world/asia/03korea.html?hpw>

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New York Times

April 4, 2009

North Korea Continues Rocket Launch Preparations

By CHOE SANG-HUN

SEOUL — Determined to demonstrate its latest missile technology both to U.S. policymakers and perhaps to potential buyers in the Middle East, North Korea pressed ahead with final preparations on Friday to launch as multistage rocket.

The countdown could begin as early as Saturday morning. North Korea says its rocket will blast off between Saturday and Wednesday, sometime between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. local time and warned aircraft to stay clear of its easterly trajectory over northern Japan and toward the Pacific.

Weather forecasts say it will be cloudy with no strong winds over the Musudan-ri launch site on North Korea’s coast, meaning the North can launch the rocket anytime during the period.

Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso said Thursday that a Saturday launch was likely.

North Korea says it is launching an experimental communications satellite. But Washington and its allies see the test as a provocative demonstration of ballistic missile technology and an attempt to secure a place in President Barack Obama's crowded foreign policy agenda.

Neighboring governments were on heightened alert on Friday. They had navy ships with missile-tracking radar deployed in waters near North Korea. North Korea reportedly moved jet fighters closer to the launch site as it threatened to counter-attack if any government tried to stop the launch.

"It's too early to say for sure whether the object the North is launching is a satellite or a missile," said Lee Jong-joo, a government spokeswoman in Seoul. "But our principled position is that whether this is a missile or something else, it threatens peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula."

Unable to persuade the North to cancel its plan, Washington, Tokyo and Seoul focused on how to forge a unified front with China and Russia in penalizing the North in the United Nations after the launch and at the same time drawing it back to six-nation talks on ending its nuclear weapons program.

North Korea is banned from ballistic missile tests under two U.N. Security Council resolutions adopted in 2006 after it launched a ballistic missile and conducted its first nuclear test.

But if North Korea puts a satellite into orbit _ as it claims and as a growing number of analysts believe it will try to do _ then any U.S. attempt to introduce new sanctions in the Security Council will be hobbled by disputes over whether the North violated the 2006 resolutions, analysts said.

Mr. Aso told Chinese President Hu Jintao during the Group of 20 summit in London that if the launch went ahead, there should be a new U.N. resolution, the Yomiuri newspaper reported in its online edition. Mr. Hu showed "some understanding" but did not make a clear commitment, it said.

Grown used to the North's blustering and sabre-rattling, South Koreans and their financial markets have so far shrugged off the impending launch.

"Barring a last-minute technical glitch, it appears that they will go ahead and launch it," said a South Korean government official who spoke on condition of anonymity because he is not authorized to discuss the matter with journalists. "They are waiting for a call from Kim Jong-il to push the button."

Reuters quoted an unnamed U.S. defense official as saying: "They're doing everything consistent with the launch of a space vehicle on April 4."

For Mr. Kim, the North Korean leader, who suffered a stroke in August, a successful launch would demonstrate his country's mastery of key missile technologies.

Mr. Kim is also using the tensions he has stirred up to rally his hungry people amid dwindling foreign aid and to demonstrate to the outside world that he is still in charge, a threat that deserves U.S. attention, analysts said. In a sales pitch for his missiles, Mr. Kim may also have invited arms dealers from the Middle East at the launch site, they said.

"Evidence suggests that North Korea has had extensive dealings with Iran, Pakistan, Russia, Yemen and Libya on ballistic missiles and possibly even nuclear warheads," said a recent report from the Congressional Research Service in Washington.

Experts believe that the rocket North Korea is about to launch is derived from its Taepodong-2 missile that the North began developing in the 1990s. But they are not sure about its potentials and the North's ability to arm missiles with nuclear warheads.

The Congressional Research Service report said some analysts believe that the Taepodong-2 missile could deliver a 700 to 1,000 kilogram payload as far as 6,700 kilometers, within range of the Alaskan coast, as well as all U.S. military targets in Japan and Guam.

The North Korean rocket would weigh about 80 tons and could place a payload of 100 kilograms into orbit at 400 kilometers, David Wright, co-director of the Union of Concerned Scientists' Global Security Program, recently wrote, citing some inconclusive assumptions. When used as a missile, the same rocket could carry a 500-kilogram payload about 9,000 kilometers, far enough to reach San Francisco.

But "since it likely would be difficult for North Korea to build a first-generation warhead and heat shield with a mass of 500 kilograms, this wouldn't represent a true intercontinental nuclear capability," he said.

The North's first test of the Taepodong-2 missile failed in 2006 when it blew apart 40 seconds after launch.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/04/world/asia/04korea.html?ref=global-home>

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Strait Times – Singapore
April 1, 2009

US Issues Alert on Threat

WASHINGTON - COUNTER TERROR officials are warning police of a threat made by Pakistan's Taleban chief to attack the United States

Following a deadly assault on a police academy in Pakistan, Baitullah Mehsud vowed to amaze the world with an attack on Washington.

In response, federal authorities advised police and other law enforcement officials that Mehsud's threat was an aspiration rather than evidence of an imminent or specific threat against the United States.

FBI spokesman Richard Kolko says Mehsud has made similar threats in the past and there was no indication of anything imminent.

Mehsud, who has a US\$5 million (S\$7.5 million) bounty on his head from the United States, said he wanted to retaliate for US missile attacks on the militant bases on the border with Afghanistan. He also vowed to 'amaze everyone in the world' with an attack on Washington or even the White House.

Mehsud, who gave a flurry of media interviews Tuesday, has no record of actually striking targets abroad although he is suspected of being behind a 10-man cell arrested in Barcelona in January 2008 for plotting suicide attacks in Spain.

Pakistan's former government and the CIA consider him the prime suspect behind the December 2007 killing of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. And Pakistani officials accuse him of harbouring foreign fighters, including Central Asians linked to Al-Qaeda, and of training suicide bombers.

But analysts doubt that Taleban fighters carried off Monday's raid on the Lahore academy on their own, saying the group is likely working more closely than ever with militants based far from the Afghan frontier.

It's a constellation that includes Al-Qaeda, presenting a formidable challenge to the US as it increases its troop presence in the region, not to mention nuclear-armed Pakistan's own stability.

State Department spokesman Gordon Duguid said he had not seen any reports of Mehsud's comments but that he would 'take the threat under consideration.' -- AP

http://www.straittimes.com/Breaking%2BNews/World/Story/STIStory_357164.html

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Miami Herald

Taliban Warlord Threatens to Attack Washington

By SAEED SHAH
McClatchy News Service

LAHORE, Pakistan -- Pakistani warlord Baitullah Mehsud threatened to attack Washington and the White House, as he claimed responsibility on Tuesday for this week's assault on the police training academy in Lahore.

Mehsud leads the biggest faction of the Pakistani Taliban, an Islamic militia, operating in the lawless South Waziristan tribal region that borders Afghanistan. His group is the biggest challenge to the very existence of the Pakistani state, which has been under sustained attack by the Taliban and other extremists for months.

Fighters loyal to Mehsud also cross the border to battle U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan. Earlier this month, the U.S. put a \$5 million bounty on his head, describing him as a key commander of al Qaeda.

"We wholeheartedly take responsibility for this attack and will carry out more such attacks in future," said Mehsud, speaking with Reuters news agency by phone from his hideout. "It's revenge for the [U.S.] drone attacks in Pakistan."

The CIA operates pilotless "drone" aircraft that have repeatedly fired missiles at suspected militants in the tribal area including, more recently, the area under the control of Mehsud.

Mehsud warned the U.S. that, "You can't imagine how we could avenge this threat inside Washington, inside the White House." Separately, Mehsud told The Associated Press: ``Soon we will launch an attack in Washington that will amaze everyone in the world."

At least 12 people were killed on Monday when a squad of heavily armed militants stormed the police training school on the outskirts of Lahore, spraying it with gunfire and grenades. Nearly 100 were injured.

There was also a rival claim for the attack from a little-known group, Fedayeen al Islam, which previously took responsibility for the September bombing of the Marriott hotel in the capital, Islamabad.

Mehsud's proclamation of guilt, which jibes with the initial government investigation, was the one taken seriously, however.

By offering guns and employment to young members of his native Mehsud tribe, a powerful clan in South Waziristan, Baitullah Mehsud has built a following of thousands of armed supporters.

<http://www.miamiherald.com/news/5min/story/978043.html>

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Epoch Times
31 March 2009

Chinese Nuclear Tests Allegedly Caused 750,000 Deaths

Epoch Times Staff

On March 18, Japanese professor Takada Jun revealed at a nuclear forum that the Chinese regime carried out 46 surface nuclear tests from 1964 to 1996, causing 750,000 civilian deaths in surrounding areas.

At the "Chinese Nuclear Test Disasters on the Silk Road and the Japanese Role" symposium, sponsored by the Japanese Uyghur Association, Dr. Takada Jun, a professor at the Sapporo Medical University and a representative of the Japanese Radiation Protection Information Center, revealed the disastrous problems of China's nuclear tests. Dr. Takada said that the Chinese regime has never allowed any form of independent or outside environmental evaluation, analysis, or study of adverse affects on human health possibly cause by the tests.

Dr. Takada said that the 46 nuclear tests were carried out at the Lop Nur site in northwestern XinJiang Province, home of the Uyghur people. The tests had a cumulative yield of over 200 megatons. Though the area of the tests is sparsely populated, many cities on the ancient Silk Road trade route are downwind from Lop Nur and have been exposed to much nuclear fallout from the variety of tests conducted. Prior to 1981, the fallout from surface tests was a major contributor to an increase in the incidences of cancer and birth defects.

The professor also said that the largest surface detonation was a 4 megaton thermonuclear bomb, which was 10 times more powerful than the former Soviet Union's large-scale tests. The fallout from the test allegedly caused an estimated 190,000 deaths and 1,290,000 suffered from radiation poisoning within an area 136 times the size of Tokyo. According to an inside source, 750,000 people allegedly died as a result.

Chinese nuclear tests began on Oct. 16, 1964, with the above ground detonation of a 20,000-ton bomb, followed by a two-megaton surface explosions in 1967. The largest was a four-megaton explosion on Nov. 17, 1976. China changed to doing atmospheric tests in 1980 and underground tests from 1982 to 1996.

Takada said China is the only country in the world that carries out these large-scale surface tests in living areas.

The Director of the Japanese Uyghur Association criticized the tests. "The former Soviet Union would carry out nuclear tests in an enclosed barb-wired area, but the Chinese regime didn't even inform the local residents," he said. "The victims included not only the Uyghur people, but also Han Chinese. The authorities disregarded any semblance of humanity and treated the people living there as lab rats." He urged Japan, the first victim of nuclear weapons, to share the information with the rest of the world and help the victims.

In July and August of 1998, the British Channel 4 broadcasted a special documentary, "Death On the Silk Road." A team of doctors and filmmakers posed as tourists in order to assess the possible effects from the nuclear tests in China. From the interviews conducted in local villages, they found a large number of infants with cleft lips or mental retardation. Among the Uyghur people, many were suffering from malignant lymphoid leukemia. Incidences of cancer in Uyghur began rising in 1970 and by 1990, it was more than 30% higher than the national average. The cancer incidence in the capital city Urumqi doubled that of other areas during 1993 to 2000.

Based on data he collected in Kazakhstan near the Chinese border and his research on affects of nuclear fallout, Professor Takada also evaluated the impact in the area and published his findings in a book. He won an award for his contributions.

The experience of Professor Tamio Kaneko, a historian who visited the Xinjiang area, also supports the story. An expert in Asian history, Tamio filled his house with ancient relics from central Asia. But he didn't dare to bring back pebble samples in Lop Nur because they have hundreds or thousands of times more radiation than regular samples.

Kaneka recalled that while he was at the research site, his eyes watered profusely and bleed slightly. He also suffered from a sore throat and frequent nose bleeds. His tears won't stop in the Spring because of the pollen, a residual effect of the radiation.

Takada expressed his concern and anger over highly promoted tourism on the Great Silk Road. Tourist sites are actually in the radiation area, making travel highly risky to innocent people, especially those who visited before 1996.

Mr. Dili Anwar, a Uyghur exile living in England, said, "China conducts nuclear tests not only for itself, but also provides the testing site to Pakistan. We all know that Pakistan conducted a nuclear test one week after India's test. In fact, Pakistan had already tested twice in China before that."

<http://www.theepochtimes.com/n2/content/view/14535/>

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U.S. Department of Energy
31 March 2009

Department of Energy Announces Completion of World's Largest Laser

WASHINGTON, DC – The Department of Energy today announced that the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) has certified the completion of the historic effort to build the world's largest laser. Housed at the Department of Energy's Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, the National Ignition Facility (NIF) is expected to allow scientists to achieve fusion ignition in the laboratory, obtaining more energy from the target than is provided by the laser. The completion of NIF opens the door to scientific advancement and discovery that promises to enhance our national security, could help break America's dependence on foreign oil, and will lead to new breakthroughs in the worlds of astrophysics, materials science and many other scientific disciplines.

"Completion of the National Ignition Facility is a true milestone that will make America safer and more energy independent by opening new avenues of scientific advancement and discovery," said NNSA Administrator Thomas D'Agostino. "NIF will be a cornerstone of a critical national security mission, ensuring the continuing reliability of the U.S. nuclear stockpile without underground nuclear testing, while also providing a path to explore the frontiers of basic science, and potential technologies for energy independence."

NIF is a critical part of NNSA's mission of maintaining the safety and reliability of our nuclear deterrent without conducting nuclear testing. The United States has not deployed a new nuclear weapon in over 20 years, nor conducted an underground nuclear test since 1992. Instead, scientists at the NNSA maintain the warheads in the stockpile well beyond their original life by using sophisticated supercomputers and facilities that test the safety, security and reliability of U.S. weapons in NNSA laboratories.

With NIF, scientists will be able to evaluate key scientific assumptions in current computer models, obtain previously unavailable data on how materials behave at temperatures and pressures like those in the center of a star, and help validate NNSA's supercomputer simulations by comparing code predictions against observations from laboratory experiments.

Because of its groundbreaking advance in technology, NIF also has the potential to produce breakthroughs in fields beyond national security. It may help advance fusion energy technology, which could be an element of making the United States energy independent. It could also help scientists better understand the makeup of stars. It could also help scientists better understand the makeup of stars and giant planets both within and outside our solar system.

The stadium-sized NIF is capable of focusing all of its 192 individual beams, each about 40 centimeters square, into a spot about one-half millimeter in diameter at the center of its 10 meter diameter target chamber. NIF has the ability to deliver large amounts of energy with extreme precision in billionths of a second.

NIF has already produced historic scientific advances. Earlier this month, NIF became the first fusion laser in the world to break the megajoule barrier (a megajoule is the energy consumed by 10,000 100-watt light bulbs in one second) by delivering 1.1 million joules of ultraviolet energy to the center of its target chamber – more than 25 times more energy than the previous record-holder.

Learn more information about the National Ignition Facility.

Established by Congress in 2000, NNSA is a separately organized agency within the U.S. Department of Energy responsible for enhancing national security through the military application of nuclear science. NNSA maintains and enhances the safety, security, reliability and performance of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile without nuclear testing; works to reduce global danger from weapons of mass destruction; provides the U.S. Navy with safe and effective nuclear propulsion; and responds to nuclear and radiological emergencies in the United States and abroad. Visit the NNSA website for more information.

<http://www.energy.gov/news2009/7191.htm>

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Washington Times

EDITORIAL

April 2, 2009

Civilian Use?

It is a peaceful civilian effort to become energy independent. But a new report by government scientists reveals that Iran is either misguided or lying. Close examination of the Iranian energy market shows that this is at best a misguided quest, and far more likely a cover for a nuclear weapons program.

Why does a country with 90 years of oil reserves and 220 years of natural gas reserves need nuclear energy? A study entitled "The Economics of Energy Independence for Iran" in the March 2007 Nonproliferation Review stated, "If energy independence is the goal, the logical strategy is conservation and stewardship of national oil and natural gas resources."

But Iran is notably inefficient in utilizing its fossil fuels. Iran "flares" or burns off over eight percent of its natural gas, 17 times the flare rate in North America and equal to the energy output of four nuclear reactors like the one at Bushehr. Simple efficiencies in handling natural gas would make Iran more energy independent, without the political fallout from building a nuclear program. The report concludes that Iran's "investment in front-end nuclear fuel cycle facilities is not consistent with the economics of nuclear power." But it is consistent with a weapons program.

Iran's Atomic Energy Agency claims that it has uranium to last for decades, but the available facts say otherwise.

The Nonproliferation Review study found that Iran's uranium reserves are four-tenths of one percent of other fuel reserves. Even Iran's paltry coal reserves have six times the energy output of its uranium. Furthermore, Iran is quickly running through what limited uranium reserves it has. A February 2009 report from the Institute of Science and International Security notes that Iran is only operating one of its two uranium mines, adding "Iran could be close to exhausting its supply of uranium oxide while lacking the adequate resources to sustain indigenous commercial-scale uranium processing and enrichment." The report noted that the uranium shortfall underscored a "fundamental

inconsistency" in Iran's stated intentions to construct a "commercially viable, indigenously fueled, civil nuclear power industry." But there is enough uranium to sustain a nuclear weapons program.

Other reports underscore the fallacy of a nuclear-powered energy-independent Iran. In November 2008, the International Atomic Energy Agency estimated that Iran has used two-thirds of its original uranium stockpile dating back to the days of the Shah, but also noted that it is difficult to determine the precise scope of Iran's stockpile because Iran has refused to give the agency access to all of its uranium mining, milling, and enrichment facilities. The question remains why Iran would hide these and other aspects of its purportedly peaceful energy program. The report also noted that Iran has continued to defy the United Nations Security Council by continuing to enrich uranium necessary for a weapons program.

Iran's rationale of attaining energy independence through nuclear power is clearly unsustainable in the face of other less costly domestic options. Also, Iran would not have the domestic uranium production capacity necessary to sustain an independent nuclear power program.

We are driven to the conclusion that Iran is not seeking energy independence but desires a nuclear weapons capability. "Iran's progress in the nuclear field cannot be stopped," said Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei in his recent New Year's address to the nation. Maybe. But there is no credible economic justification for having started it in the first place.

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/apr/02/civilian-use-new-evidence-casts-doubt-on-irans-nuc/>

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