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Financial Times
April 4, 2009

US May Cede To Iran's Nuclear Ambition

By Daniel Dombey, in Washington

US officials are considering whether to accept Iran's pursuit of uranium enrichment, which has been outlawed by the United Nations and remains at the heart of fears that Iran is seeking nuclear weapons capability.

As part of a policy review commissioned by President Barack Obama, diplomats are discussing whether the US will eventually have to accept Iran's insistence on carrying out the process, which can produce both nuclear fuel and weapons-grade material.

"There's a fundamental impasse between the western demand for no enrichment and the Iranian demand to continue enrichment," says Mark Fitzpatrick, a former state department expert now at the International Institute for Strategic Studies. "There's no obvious compromise between those two positions."

The US has insisted that Iran stop enrichment, although Mr Fitzpatrick notes that international offers put to Tehran during George W. Bush's second term as president left the door open to the possible resumption of enrichment.

"There is a growing recognition in [Washington] that the zero [enrichment] solution, though still favoured, simply is unfeasible," says Trita Parsi, president of the National Iranian American Council. "The US may still have zero as its opening position, while recognising it may not be where things stand at the end of a potential agreement."

Mr Fitzpatrick adds: "Obviously, no country wants to flag its fallback positions in advance. As soon as you let your fallback position be known, it becomes the new position."

On Friday, Mr Obama summarised the US message to Iran as, "Don't develop a nuclear weapon" – a form of words that would not rule out a deal accepting Iranian enrichment. Mr Bush was much more specific in calling Iran to halt enrichment.

A series of UN Security Council resolutions since 2006 has forbidden Iran from enriching uranium, with the European Union, Russia and China backing US calls for Tehran to halt the process.

But Iran has sped up its programme during that time and has installed more than 5,500 centrifuges to enrich uranium and has amassed a stockpile of more than 1,000kg of low-enriched uranium – enough, if it were enriched to higher levels, to produce fissile material for one bomb. "Across the political spectrum in Iran, enrichment as a right has become a non-negotiable position," Mr Parsi said.

Asked last month whether the administration was considering allowing Iran to keep a limited enrichment capability, Robert Wood, a state department spokesman, said: "I don't know . . . Let's let the review be completed and then we can spell out our policies."

Some analysts say priority should be given to winning greater access for UN inspectors, to acquire more information about Iran's enrichment plant in Natanz and fill in gaps in knowledge on Iran's nuclear-related activities across the country.

That could provide warning of any move to enrich uranium to weapons grade levels at Natanz and ease fears of clandestine facilities.

Privately both US and Israeli officials say that even the current, more limited inspection regime at Natanz would provide sufficient warning of any "breakout" towards a nuclear bomb. Outside Natanz, by contrast, information on Iran's programme is diminishing.

Indicating possible space for negotiations, Dennis Blair, Mr Obama's Director of National Intelligence, said last month that he believed Iran had not yet made the decision to produce enough highly enriched uranium for a warhead for a bomb. He added: "Iran at a minimum, is keeping open the option to develop deliverable nuclear weapons."

The US line that Iran is seeking the capability to develop nuclear weapons – but not necessarily such weapons themselves – contrasts with Mr Bush's insistence while in office that it sought nuclear weapons.

Iranian regime insiders have said they would expect a compromise by the US on enrichment to be reciprocated. Such a move before the Iranian presidential elections in June would also be seen as a huge victory for President Mahmoud Ahmadi-Nejad, who has accused his internal critics of submitting to western pressures.

--Additional reporting from Najmeh Bozorgmehr in Tehran

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/87571cc6-206b-11de-b930-00144feabdc0.html>

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Daily Guardian

5 April 2009

Barack Obama Launches Doctrine for Nuclear-free World

Ian Traynor, Europe editor

Barack Obama put flesh on the bones of his utopian vision for ridding the world of nuclear weapons today, speaking hours after North Korea launched a long-range rocket.

In the first big foreign policy speech of his presidency, Obama told a crowd of tens of thousands gathered in morning sunshine in Prague that America, as the sole country ever to fire a nuclear weapon in anger, bore the moral responsibility for launching a new era of nuclear disarmament aimed at eliminating nuclear stockpiles.

His presidency, Obama declared, would see "America's commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons".

While critics and cynics are likely to call the commitment idealistic and impossible to achieve in the face of resistance from the seven other states known to have nuclear arms, Obama acknowledged the goal might not be realised in his lifetime. But he broke new ground with a list of specific policy departures, aimed at injecting nuclear disarmament with a momentum not seen for decades.

Obama said he would downgrade the role ascribed to nuclear weapons in the US's national security doctrines. He pledged he would press the US Senate "immediately and aggressively" to ratify the comprehensive test ban treaty never fully endorsed by the Americans. "It is time for the testing of nuclear weapons to be banned," said the president.

He called for a strengthening of the 1968 nuclear non-proliferation treaty, the bedrock of global efforts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, and revealed that Washington would host a global summit on nuclear security within a year.

The president called for a new global ban on the production of weapons-grade fissile materials and for the establishment of an international "fuel bank" that would supply and monitor enriched uranium for civil nuclear power generation and seek to avoid the risk of "rogue states" diverting material from peaceful to weapons programmes.

Obama reaffirmed last week's agreement in London with the Kremlin to launch a new arms control process and to reach agreement on a new strategic arms reduction treaty (Start) cutting warheads by around one third by the end of this year. He also called for a new international effort to secure "loose nukes" and "vulnerable nuclear material" within four years.

Obama's initiatives aimed at ushering in a new era of nuclear arms reduction were coupled with several warnings on North Korea, Iran, missile defence, and the risk of terrorists obtaining a nuclear device.

He told the Czech Republic and neighbouring Poland that they could still host US missile defence facilities provided the missile shield project was deemed to be "proven and cost-effective" – two big ifs. He also stated there would be no need for missile defence facilities in Europe if Iran had demonstrably abandoned its suspect nuclear activities.

Tehran's activities, he said, "pose a real threat", while he reiterated offers of dialogue with Iran. If there was no threat from Iran, "the driving force for missile defence in Europe will be removed".

The discovery of the world's worst nuclear black market and clandestine Iranian and Libyan programmes five years ago highlighted the risk of terrorists being able to "buy, build or steal" a nuclear bomb. He said this was "the most immediate and extreme threat to global security."

Cloaking his concrete anti-nuclear proposals in ringing rhetoric and lofty oratory against the stunning backdrop of Prague Castle, Obama argued there was violence and injustice in the world that had to be confronted, but urged people not to succumb to choosing "fear over hope". He cited the examples of central Europe in defeating Soviet communism peacefully and the achievement of the Czechs and Slovaks in facing down Red Army tanks in 1968 and staging the velvet revolution 20 years ago – "bringing down a nuclear-armed empire without firing a shot."

Anticipating the criticism of his ambitious vision, Obama said he was not naive and that there was no quick or easy fix to the nuclear dilemma, but that the existence of thousands of nuclear weapons was the Cold War's deadliest legacy and something had to be done about it. While the danger of nuclear war had faded, the risk of nuclear attack had increased. "Some argue that the spread of these weapons cannot be stopped," said the president. "Such fatalism is a deadly adversary."

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/apr/05/nuclear-weapons-barack-obama>

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New York Times
April 6, 2009

Obama Seizes on Missile Launch in Seeking Nuclear Cuts

By HELENE COOPER and DAVID E. SANGER

PRAGUE — Hours after North Korea's missile test, President Obama on Sunday called for new United Nations sanctions and laid out a new approach to American nuclear disarmament policy — one intended to strengthen the United States and its allies in halting proliferation.

"In a strange turn of history, the threat of global nuclear war has gone down, but the risk of a nuclear attack has gone up," Mr. Obama told a huge crowd in Prague's central square. "Black market trade in nuclear secrets and nuclear materials abound. The technology to build a bomb has spread."

And yet, he said, too few resources have been committed to developing a strategy to stop terrorist groups like Al Qaeda that are "determined to buy, build or steal" a bomb.

Mr. Obama said that his administration would "reduce the role of nuclear weapons" in its national security strategy, and would urge other countries to do the same. He pointed to the agreement he reached last week with President Dmitri A. Medvedev of Russia to begin negotiations on reducing warheads and stockpiles, and said the two countries would try to reach an agreement by the end of the year. He also promised to aggressively pursue American ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, which in the past has faced strong opposition in Congress.

It is a strategy based on the idea that if the United States shows it is willing to greatly shrink the size of its atomic arsenal, ban nuclear testing and cut off the worldwide production of bomb material, reluctant allies and partners around the world will be more likely to rewrite nuclear treaties and enforce sanctions against North Korea and Iran.

In his speech, he said North Korea's missile test illustrated "the need for action, not just this afternoon at the U.N. Security Council, but in our determination to prevent the spread of these weapons."

"Rules must be binding," he said. "Violations must be punished. Words must mean something." Those words were added to the end of a long-planned arms control speech hours before, after the president was awakened at 4:30 a.m. by his press secretary, Robert Gibbs, with news of North Korea's defiance.

The president quickly began talks with senior officials, including Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, his former rival who offered up the now famous "It's 3 a.m. and the telephone rings" campaign advertisement that was meant to show that Mr. Obama was not prepared to deal with an international crisis.

Mrs. Clinton talked to South Korean, Russian, Chinese and Japanese officials, administration officials said. Mr. Obama, meanwhile, got on the phone with Adm. Mike Mullen, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Gen. James E. Cartwright, the vice chairman. He also spoke by phone to Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates and huddled with Gen. James L. Jones, his national security adviser, before heading to Prague's central square to address the crowd there.

Despite his calls for action, it remained unclear exactly what the West would be able to do to punish North Korea. President George W. Bush pressed for similar sanctions after the North's nuclear test in October 2006, but they had little long-term effect.

At the United Nations Security Council on Sunday, members were at an impasse on whether to condemn the test. The United States and its main allies — Japan, France and Britain — were pushing for a resolution denouncing the launching as a violation of the 2006 sanctions, which demanded that North Korea suspend any activity related to the launching of ballistic missiles.

As talks continued after a three-hour emergency session ended inconclusively, diplomats said a main issue would be determining if the failed launching violated any resolutions.

“We think that what was launched is not the issue; the fact that there was a launch using ballistic missile technology is itself a clear violation,” said Susan E. Rice, the American ambassador.

China left its position ambiguous, although diplomats said that at the initial meeting it stressed that the North Koreans had a right like any other country to launch satellites. “Our position is that all countries concerned should show restraint and refrain from taking actions that might lead to increased tensions,” Yesui Zhang, the Chinese ambassador, told reporters.

Igor N. Schcherbak, the Russian envoy, said that his country did not think it was a violation of the previous resolutions banning ballistic missiles, but he left some wriggle room by saying that Russia was studying the matter.

In his speech, Mr. Obama said he still planned to continue with missile defense, but he tied the need for such a system to any Iranian acquisition of nuclear weapons. Russia opposes locating a defense shield in Poland and the Czech Republic, as current plans call for, and Mr. Obama has responded by pushing the Russians to stop Iran from getting a nuclear weapon.

Missile defense is a resonant issue in Prague, since the now-collapsed government of Prime Minister Marek Topolanek went to bat against popular opinion here to support the missile shield, only to have the Obama administration begin backing away from the plan. But Mr. Obama praised the government’s support, saying there was still a need.

“Let me be clear: Iran’s nuclear and ballistic missile activity poses a real threat, not just to the United States, but to Iran’s neighbors and our allies,” Mr. Obama said. “The Czech Republic and Poland have been courageous in agreeing to host a defense against these missiles. As long as the threat from Iran persists, we will go forward with a missile defense system that is cost-effective and proven.”

Despite his categorization of Iran and North Korea as threats, the new nuclear strategy as laid out in his speech sidestepped the question of exactly how to handle them, or the risk posed by Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal.

Those cases have proved to be some of the hardest in modern nuclear strategy. And they prompt a question that has haunted past administrations: How do you compel a country to stop its drive for nuclear weapons when sanctions fail and military action seems far too risky?

Past threats to isolate Iran were stymied first by high oil prices — which washed away the effects of modest economic sanctions — and then by Iran’s determination to enrich uranium no matter the cost. Mr. Obama has said he will try to engage Iran, but that has raised concerns both within the administration and among allies that the country’s nuclear program would be able to progress while talks proceeded.

Perhaps trying not to overload a Pakistani government that has shown itself to be overwhelmed by daily political and terrorist attacks, Mr. Obama made only oblique mention of a concern voiced frequently inside the White House: That Al Qaeda and other terrorists view Pakistan’s arsenal of 60 to 100 weapons as the ultimate goal of a campaign to destabilize that government.

On the North Korean issue, President Bush’s six-party talks, a process that Mr. Obama has embraced, set up a diplomatic framework. But they still failed to prevent the country from harvesting the fuel for six or eight weapons, testing one device, and advancing plans to test missiles.

The diplomatic challenge was underscored again while North Korea was preparing its latest missile test. In London last week, Mr. Obama raised the imminent test with President Hu Jintao of China, whom the United States has relied on to influence the North. A senior administration official, briefing reporters, said he believed the Chinese had expressed concerns to the North, urging it to halt the flight.

If so, Beijing was ignored — as it was twice in 2006, when it told the North not to conduct missile tests and then its nuclear test. That suggests, one of Mr. Obama’s aides said Sunday, “that either the Chinese aren’t trying very hard, or the North Koreans aren’t listening very well.”

Helene Cooper reported from Prague, and David E. Sanger from Vienna. Neil MacFarquhar contributed reporting from the United Nations.

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/06/us/politics/06prexy.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=Cooper%20Sanger&st=cse

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Washington Post

April 6, 2009

After Launch, Obama Focuses On Disarmament

By Michael D. Shear and Colum Lynch

Washington Post Staff Writers

ANKARA, Turkey, April 6 -- President Obama arrived in Turkey on Sunday night as global condemnation of North Korea gave way to intense diplomatic debate about how to punish the rogue nation for the brazen weekend launch of a rocket over Japan and into the Pacific Ocean.

As Obama prepared to address the Turkish parliament Monday, the U.N. Security Council met in an emergency session. Despite the urging of the United States and Japan, the 15-member council could not agree on a statement criticizing North Korea's rocket launch. China and Russia said they were not yet convinced that Pyongyang had violated any U.N. rules, according to council officials.

The council adjourned after three hours and agreed to continue negotiations on a resolution in the coming days. "Every state has the right to the peaceful use of outer space," said Russia's deputy U.N. envoy, Igor Shcherbak.

"I think we are now in a very sensitive moment," Chinese Ambassador Zhang Yesui told reporters after the meeting. "Regarding the reaction of the Security Council, our position is that it has to be cautious and proportionate."

The launch, and the concerns it raised, threatened to overshadow Obama's first visit to a Muslim country as president, during which he will meet with the Turkish president and prime minister and pay homage to the country's culture with visits to its most important monuments and mosques.

In Prague on Sunday, Obama condemned the North Korean launch as a "provocative" act and used the incident as a fresh reminder of the world's dangers. He promised a broad new government effort to reduce the threat of nuclear weapons and eventually rid the world of them.

Speaking in Hradskany Square, a hilltop plaza outside Prague Castle, just hours after the launch, Obama announced that he would immediately seek U.S. ratification of a ban on nuclear testing, convene a summit in Washington to stop the spread of nuclear material within four years and advocate for a nuclear fuel bank to allow peaceful development of nuclear power.

"Rules must be binding. Violations must be punished. Words must mean something," he said after referencing the North Korean launch. "The world must stand together to stop the spread of these weapons."

The Sunday launch sent a three-stage Taepodong-2 missile from a base on North Korea's east coast over the Sea of Japan and the Pacific Ocean, crossing Japanese airspace on the way. Japanese radar lost contact with the rocket when it was about 1,300 miles east of Japan.

About four hours after the launch, North Korea said that it had put a communications satellite into orbit and that it was transmitting patriotic music, including a celebratory tune about North Korea's leader titled "Song of General Kim Jong Il."

The United States and South Korea, however, said that the satellite had not reached orbit. The U.S. military's Northern Command said on its Web site that "the payload itself landed in the Pacific Ocean."

North Korea claimed in 1998, when it launched a Taepodong-1 missile, that it had succeeded in putting a satellite into orbit and that it also transmitted patriotic songs. The U.S. government later said that assertion was false.

Regardless of the fate of the satellite, the launch showed North Korea's significant progress in rocket engineering, compared with the failed test in 2006 of the same kind of missile, analysts said. That year, North Korea conducted its first nuclear test.

But North Korea remains years away from building a missile that can reach the U.S. mainland and from designing a nuclear warhead small enough to be transported on such a missile, the analysts said.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton called the foreign ministers of Japan, China and Russia on Sunday morning to confer about the launch. Later, she and Czech Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg presented a statement condemning the missile launch to foreign ministers attending a European Union-U.S. lunch. The statement was approved.

Analysts said the launch was an unwelcome problem for the Obama administration.

"This really is a complication they wish they hadn't had," said Jack Pritchard, who was special envoy to North Korea in the first term of President George W. Bush. He added that the new administration had hoped to resume six-nation talks over North Korea's nuclear program but that Pyongyang now would probably drop out, citing the international reaction to the launch.

Diplomats said they expect a lengthy negotiation over a formal response to the crisis. The United States, France and Britain favor a resolution condemning the North Korean launch as a violation of Security Council Resolution 1718, a 2006 agreement that bans Pyongyang from conducting nuclear tests or launching ballistic missiles. The new resolution also calls for stronger enforcement of a travel ban and an asset freeze on officials involved with the rocket program.

Japan, which feels most threatened by the launch, is pressing for a tougher reaction, including unspecified additional sanctions. U.S. diplomats have made it clear that they want a measured response, including the imposition of some penalty, but one that leaves the door open to the resumption of the six-party talks.

A Senate official said that "we're entering into a very rough period" with North Korea, in which that country would suspend its cooperation with the multilateral talks, perhaps expel international nuclear inspectors and possibly start reassembling nuclear facilities that had been dismantled.

Still, the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the matter openly, said: "The key here, in terms of response to the missile, is to keep our eye on the ultimate objective, which is a Korean Peninsula that is at peace and nuclear-free. . . . We should not have an overreaction to this missile test, because it does us no good to have the denuclearization process set back just because of this satellite launch attempt."

The launch served as a reminder of the difficulty in restraining nations from developing nuclear weapons and the missiles to deliver them.

"I state clearly and with conviction America's commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons," Obama said to a crowd of about 20,000 in the Czech Republic's capital.

Using the former Soviet satellite as a backdrop, Obama effectively made nuclear disarmament the centerpiece of his rapidly evolving foreign policy, reviving an issue that has lain mostly dormant since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and, before that, the end of the Cold War.

Last week, Obama announced plans to negotiate a new arms-reduction treaty with Russia by the end of this year. But the proposals he outlined Sunday go beyond that announcement. The president called nuclear weapons the "most dangerous legacy" of the Cold War era and committed himself to a long campaign to rid the world of them.

Obama made no mention of some related campaign promises, including taking nuclear weapons off a hair-trigger alert. He also left details of his anti-nuclear program unclear.

During the campaign, Obama promised to seek ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty as soon as practical, but he pledged Sunday to "immediately and aggressively" seek ratification of the treaty in the Senate. Obama aides provided no details about how the president might sway senators, who rejected it in 1999.

Many Czechs in the crowd appeared to approve of Obama's pledge to more aggressively pursue nuclear disarmament and of his promises to engage in more dialogue with foes of the United States, such as Iran.

"It was a historical moment, to have him speak here," said Michaela Dombrovská, 32, of Prague. "He's given us hope that America will lead us to more world peace. He's clearly thought up new and different ideas about how to get rid of nuclear weapons in an effective way."

At the same time, some cringed when Obama recommitted his administration to the Pentagon's global missile-defense shield as long as Iran poses a nuclear threat. A crucial component of the missile shield -- a radar tracking system -- would be based outside Prague under the terms of a treaty signed by the Czech government and the Bush

administration in July. But polls show that about 70 percent of Czechs are against the shield, and opponents have blocked the Czech Parliament from ratifying the agreement.

Several hundred marched against the missile shield plans through central Prague after Obama's speech. They carried balloons and placards, including one that read, "Yes We Can -- Say No to Missile Shield."

Lynch reported from the United Nations. Staff writers Blaine Harden in Tokyo, Mary Beth Sheridan in Washington and Craig Whitlock in Prague contributed to this report.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/04/05/AR2009040500021.html?hpid=topnews>

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New York Times
April 6, 2009

Obama's Nuclear Nonproliferation Plan Heralds Changes for DOE Labs

By KATHERINE LING, Greenwire

President Obama's plans for reducing the U.S. stockpile of nuclear weapons and production of fissile materials signal changes ahead for the nation's nuclear strategy and weapons labs.

"The basic bargain is sound: Countries with nuclear weapons will move toward disarmament, countries without nuclear weapons will not acquire them, and all countries can access peaceful nuclear energy," Obama said in a speech yesterday in Prague.

"If we are serious about stopping the spread of these weapons, then we should put an end to the dedicated production of weapons-grade materials that create them. That's the first step."

While much of the speech pointed to long-term goals, Obama said that in four years he aims to safeguard currently unsecured radioactive material on black markets through better detection of materials in transit and through "financial tools."

Obama particularly highlighted the U.S.-Russia collaboration, urging its expansion as well as the creation of new partnerships and higher standards. In a meeting last week, Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said they will begin negotiations in July to further reduce both nations' nuclear weapons stockpiles.

To further his goal, Obama said he will seek to "strengthen" the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty by providing resources for international inspections and establishing "real and immediate consequences for countries caught breaking the rules or trying to leave the treaty without cause." He will also boost support for the nation's Proliferation Security Initiative and the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism to make them into "durable international institutions." Obama's blueprint budget released in February shows an increase in funds for nonproliferation programs.

Obama also said he plans to host a global summit on nuclear security within the next year.

Obama said he will "aggressively" push for the Senate to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, which bans the testing of nuclear weapons. The United States has not tested a nuclear weapon since 1993 and has signed the treaty but has yet to ratify it, along with China, North Korea, Pakistan and several other countries.

Laura Holgate, vice president for Russia/new independent states programs at the Nuclear Threat Initiative, said Obama's commitment and focus on nuclear nonproliferation should turn nonproliferation initiatives from an ad hoc effort to "more institutionalized mechanisms for nonproliferation."

As for Obama's four-year goal on securing nuclear material, Holgate said it will be "tough" but worthy.

"There is a lot to be done, unfortunately," Holgate said. "I think there has been a lot of damage done to the U.S. stature in the world. I think we need to repair that damage. It's a lofty goal, a worthy one, [and] certainly a goal the U.S. cannot accomplish on its own."

DOE impact

All of these goals will have serious consequences for the Energy Department's nuclear weapons labs, which have been the subject of intense debate recently.

DOE's nuclear weapons programs -- including nonproliferation -- received \$9 billion in funds for the past two years, which is about one-third of the department's budget. Almost two-thirds of the budget is used to maintain the nation's nuclear weapons stockpile.

Efforts to shrink the weapons stockpile or Obama's decision to cancel work on the advanced nuclear weapon known as the "reliable replacement warhead" in his recent budget puts into question NNSA's size and budget for the future, said Philip Coyle, a senior adviser at the World Security Institute and a former top official for nuclear operations and testing in the Defense Department.

"Assumptions made about how many nuclear warheads might be produced in the future are key to sizing the NNSA production complex for the future," Coyle said at a recent congressional hearing. "Now that the Obama administration has made a decision to halt the RRW, the production workload for complex transformation can be cut in half," he said.

A small nuclear weapons stockpile will mean less work and less funding for the nation's laboratories -- an alarming scenario for the labs' thousands of scientists and other workers in places like New Mexico, California, Nevada, Tennessee and Idaho. Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) has said laying off the scientists in the labs could potentially be a national security threat, as scientists could be tempted to seek employment elsewhere.

The changing role of the labs and DOE's focus on renewable energy and technology have also prompted calls for a transfer of the nuclear weapons responsibility to the Defense Department or an independent entity. The Office of Management and Budget directed DOE, DOD and the National Nuclear Security Administration -- the independent agency under DOE that manages the nuclear stockpile -- to review such a move and report their findings in a report by September.

Lawmakers have been asking the administration to hold off on making any major decisions about the nuclear weapons labs until Obama officially releases his "nuclear posture review" in January 2010 -- although this could be a strong indication of what that report will find. They have also been emphasizing a lot of the other missions the labs work on, including nonproliferation and forensics (*E&ENews PM*, March 30).

Nuclear energy

Obama also emphasized that all countries that renounce nuclear weapons should have access to peaceful nuclear energy, listing the fight against global warming alongside the need to reduce nuclear weapons.

"We must harness the power of nuclear energy on behalf of our efforts to combat climate change and to advance peace opportunity for all people," Obama said.

The world must create an international fuel bank so countries can get fuel without having to enrich uranium themselves -- a road that could lead to the capacity to create nuclear weapons, Obama said. Obama introduced legislation supporting such a bank when he was a senator. The International Atomic Energy Agency recently achieved a \$100 million financial benchmark laid out by the Nuclear Threat Initiative, which will match it with \$50 million contribution (*E&ENews PM*, March 6).

The United Arab Emirates has been praised for its decision to move forward with a civil nuclear program by promising not to seek enrichment capabilities. President George W. Bush signed a civil nuclear agreement with the country last year but did not submit it to the Senate. The Obama administration is still considering the agreement.

But others are concerned about the two dozen countries previously without a reactor currently showing interest in nuclear power, including Algeria, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela.

<http://www.nytimes.com/gwire/2009/04/06/06greenwire-obamas-nonproliferation-plan-heralds-changes-f-10439.html>

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Wall Street Journal
5 April 2009

Kazakhstan Offers To Host 'Nuclear Bank'

By Jonathan Weisman and Marc Champion

PRAGUE (Dow Jones)--Kazakhstan, a former Soviet republic and nuclear weapons state, approached the White House in recent weeks to volunteer to host an international "nuclear fuel bank" where nations that renounce nuclear weapons can purchase fissile fuel for nuclear energy reactors, a senior White House official said Sunday.

President Barack Obama is seriously considering the offer.

The revelation puts weight behind Mr. Obama's embrace here of the nuclear fuel bank idea. Mr. Obama would like to establish a repository for nuclear fuel, much of it from retired nuclear warheads. That way, nations seeking nuclear power could access fissile material without developing nuclear enrichment capacities on their own or creating a market for such materials. The Bush administration had also entertained the idea but had opposed citing the bank in a neutral country under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Kazakhstan, where the Soviet Union tested its nuclear weapons and where Russia still launches its satellites, would represent the clearest sign yet that the Obama administration is ready to bend Moscow's way to win a partner in Mr. Obama's arms control agenda. After the Soviet Union broke up, Kazakhstan was left with a nuclear arsenal of its own, which it voluntarily gave up.

An EU diplomat in Prague familiar with the nuclear security issues said Kazakhstan made a lot of sense as a potential site for a nuclear fuel bank.

"This is one of the very few countries that had nuclear weapons and destroyed them. So Kazakhstan is a very interesting offer," the diplomat said, noting that the EU has given the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna 25 million euros to figure out how to structure such a fuel bank.

But it could also raise some eyebrows. The authoritarian government might not allow the kind of transparency such a venture might need.

"There hasn't been a final decision by President Obama," the senior administration official said, "but he is considering Kazakhstan to be the host."

<http://online.wsj.com/article/BT-CO-20090405-702833.html>

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China View
5 April 2009

Yonhap: S Korean Gov't Moving to Join Proliferation Security Initiative

SEOUL (Yonhap) -- South Korea is pushing for joining a U.S.-led anti-proliferation regime, Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), based on its own schedule, a South Korean official told South Korea's Yonhap News Agency on Sunday.

"We are moving based on our own schedule, but you can understand it as a plan already sitting on a conveyor belt," the official said, referring to the PSI.

The PSI is aimed at preventing the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) from gaining weapons of mass destruction by intercepting ships suspected of carrying either weapons or weapon materials, according to Yonhap.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-04/05/content_11134167.htm

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The Hindu – India
6 April 2009

“India Will Not Sign NPT in Present Format”

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee has reiterated India's commitment to non-proliferation but said New Delhi would not sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in its present format as it is discriminatory and in favour of the nuclear weapon states.

"Our position is very clear. We are totally in agreement that those who are signatories to the NPT, they must fulfil their treaty obligations. Because of this discriminatory nature, we are not signatories, but with the objectives of non-proliferation, we are with the rest of the world," he told journalists here on Sunday.

"We are second to none in propagating non-proliferation but we did not sign the NPT and we do not have any intention of signing the NPT because we disagree with the objective. We disagree with the gross discrimination which these treaties make between nuclear weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states," he added.

He said nobody else other than the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) could judge whether the NPT signatories were fulfilling their treaty obligations. "IAEA is the appropriate watchdog body in this area," he said.

Admitting that there have been cases of harassment of Indian fishermen by the Sri Lankan Navy, Mr. Mukherjee said New Delhi was constantly in touch with the Sri Lankan authorities and had told them that killing fishermen who strayed into their waters accidentally was totally unacceptable. "We are also making efforts to warn the fishermen about the danger zones," he added.

India, he said, had been persistently demanding that Pakistan fulfil its regional, bilateral and international obligations especially the bilateral obligation made by then Pakistan President General Pervez Musharraf to the then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in January 2004 and reiterated recently by Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at Colombo last year.

Both leaders had promised that Pakistani territory would not be used by terrorists for activities against India. Mr. Mukherjee also mentioned the SAARC Anti-Terror Convention and anti-terror international obligations to which Pakistan is a signatory.

Pakistan situation

On Sunday's terror attack in Pakistan, he said: "We want development and peace in the neighbourhood. It is in the interest of Pakistan and the international community that the terrorist infrastructure in Pakistan is dismantled and the perpetrators of such acts of terror are brought to book."

<http://www.hindu.com/2009/04/06/stories/2009040659821000.htm>

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Washington Post
Sunday, April 5, 2009

Czechs Could Shoot Down Hope for Missile Defense

By Craig Whitlock
Washington Post Foreign Service

PRAGUE, April 4 -- As elsewhere in Europe, President Obama received the red-carpet treatment when he arrived in the Czech Republic on Saturday. But he was also greeted by crowds of demonstrators who have nearly succeeded in defeating a key component of the Pentagon's missile-defense shield and who want Obama to bury the project for good.

Polls show that about 70 percent of Czechs oppose the shield, a futuristic project designed to intercept long-range missiles fired by Iran at Europe or the United States. Despite popular opinion, the Czech government signed a treaty with the Bush administration in July to host a radar tracking system, one of two legs of the shield that would be based in Eastern Europe.

In recent weeks, however, foes have nearly derailed the project here, a turn of events that has surprised even some activists.

Last month, the government was forced to postpone a legislative vote to ratify the treaty after opponents mustered enough support to block it. A few days later, lawmakers voted to dissolve the government of Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek, a leading champion of the shield.

Topolaneck remains in power for the moment but is a lame duck until elections can be held, probably in October. Analysts said a new government, mindful of public skepticism of the missile shield, will probably let the unratified treaty lay dormant, if not kill it outright.

"As far as the Czechs are concerned right now, it's on the shelf," said Oldrich Cerny, a former Czech national security adviser and foreign intelligence chief. "It didn't stand a chance of being ratified by the Parliament in its current shape."

Obama has said he has doubts about whether the interceptors will work and has questioned whether the project is affordable, but he has not pulled the plug on it. That has prompted opponents to plan large-scale demonstrations Sunday -- when Obama is scheduled to make an open-to-the-public speech at Prague Castle.

"The truth is, the treaties are not dead. They can be brought back to life," said Jan Tamas, a leader of the Nonviolent Movement, a coalition that has lobbied against the shield. "That's the strange thing about it. We have our own politicians who have already gone completely against the will of the people, so who knows what they'll try to do."

Jana Glivicka, a spokeswoman for a group called the No Bases Initiative, said many Czechs think highly of Obama and have been encouraged that he has expressed doubts about the missile shield. But she said she doubts Obama will go so far as to bury it.

The only way to do that -- or at least to ensure that the Czechs play no role in the project -- is to pressure Czech lawmakers to kill the treaty, she said.

"We really want to win this battle at home in the Czech Republic," Glivicka said. "It's not just a question of foreign policy. It's a battle for democracy. We can vote down this relic of the Bush administration on our own."

The Pentagon has said it is crucial to base the shield in Eastern Europe so it can intercept Iranian missiles aimed at Europe or the United States.

In August, after lengthy negotiations, Poland agreed to host 10 interceptor missiles in exchange for U.S. pledges to help upgrade the Polish military. The Czech leg of the system would be a tracking radar planted on top of a rocky hill in the Brdy military district, about 56 miles southwest of Prague.

After decades of occupation by Soviet forces, however, many Czechs are hostile to the idea of a foreign military presence on their territory. Others doubt whether the shield would work and wonder why they should insert themselves into a conflict between the United States and Iran.

"It's a scheme that doesn't work, against a threat that doesn't exist, in a country that doesn't want it," Glivicka said.

Many Czechs are also worried about alienating Russia, which has complained that the shield is a Pentagon stalking horse aimed at Moscow. U.S. military officials say the antimissile system is purely defensive and is too small to withstand the Russian nuclear arsenal. But they have failed to persuade the Russians to drop their objections.

In November, on the day after Obama won the U.S. presidential election, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev threatened to retaliate against the shield by moving short-range missiles into Kaliningrad, a sliver of Russian territory on the Baltic Coast adjoining Poland. Russian generals have also talked tough about taking aim at Poland and the Czech Republic if they continued to cooperate with Washington.

Since then, the Russians have toned down their threats, partly in response to the Obama administration's professed lack of enthusiasm for the shield. But Russia also seems to be betting that the Czechs will pull out of the project.

Dmitry Rogozin, Russia's ambassador to NATO, said the collapse of the pro-shield Czech government and the decision to hold fresh elections later this year represent "a practically insurmountable problem" for the project. "Without the radar, the U.S. missiles in Poland would be blind," he added.

Tomas Weiss, a security analyst at the Europeum Institute for European Policy in Prague, said many Czechs worry that the shield could make them a potential target. But he said public perceptions could shift if Iran becomes a nuclear power or tests long-range missiles that could reach Europe. If that happens, he said, the Czech government could quickly dust off the treaty and win legislative approval.

"All of it can be sold to the public if the situation changes," Weiss said. "I don't really think it's dead completely. I just think it's on hold."

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/04/04/AR2009040400171.html?hpid=artslot>

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Los Angeles Times
April 6, 2009

North Korea's Rocket Didn't Reach Orbit, but Kim's In Another World

By John M. Glionna

Reporting from Seoul — Never mind that much of the world is calling North Korea's weekend space launch a dud -- that the regime's vaunted communications satellite probably now sits somewhere on the Pacific Ocean floor.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Il still insists that his rocket scientists boldly launched a craft into orbit Sunday. And he likely is not inclined to be told otherwise.

A release from North Korea's state-run press today said Kim watched the launch at the nation's Satellite Control and Command Center and has deemed the effort "successful."

"It is a striking demonstration of the might of our *juche*-oriented science and technology that our scientists and technicians developed both the multistage carrier rocket and the satellite with their own wisdom and technology . . . 100% and accurately put the satellite into orbit at one go," the Korea Central News Agency quoted Kim as saying.

Such proclamations have analysts scratching their heads, asking the perhaps impolite question: What planet is he living on?

"Kim Jong Il doesn't care about what the rest of the world thinks -- all he cares about is what he says himself," said Brian Myers, assistant professor at Dongseo University and an expert on North Korean propaganda.

"This is an extreme ethno-nationalist government that in its own eyes is unequivocally virtuous and unequivocally moral. All other races are not to be trusted. But the real story is that, if you are a military dictator, you need constant victories."

As the United Nation's Security Council debates sanctions over the launch, which crossed Japanese air space before the rocket's three stages and satellite payload plunged into the Pacific, Pyongyang did not mention assertions that it had perpetrated yet another world crisis.

There was no response to reports that Japan today said it plans to extend sanctions against North Korea in light of its reckless launch.

For North Korea, this was a day of celebration. Forget past long-range missile test failures or a bungled 1998 attempt to put a satellite into space that would have beamed patriotic songs back to the homeland.

Instead, Kim said his Kwangmyongsong No. 2 satellite brought North Korea closer to conquering outer space.

He praised "the patriotic devotion of the scientists and technicians who are playing a vanguard role in the drive to open the gate to a great, prosperous and powerful nation," according to North Korea's state-run media.

But a photo the agency released of Kim reportedly meeting and posing with his "scientists and technicians" shows a breakdown in the story line. Instead of celebratory, the mood of Kim and his underlings looks downright somber, mannequin-stiff.

Judging by photos, this was no party. It was a funeral.

South Korean analysts say that when it comes to Kim and his isolated state, nothing shocks anymore.

Yang Moo-jin, a professor at University of North Korean Studies, says Kim's stubborn insistence of a successful launch is his way of playing to his audience.

"[North Korea] is a propaganda nation," he said, adding that by stressing that Kim observed the launch, the government is telling its citizens "that their Dear Leader did this."

As far as the message to the rest of the world, Yang said, North Korea "has nothing left but brinkmanship. It is just throwing a temper tantrum."

Myers says it is only so long that Kim can keep up the charade.

"In the short run, he can tell his people the launch was a success, but there are enough people with access to South Korean television that the lie will be short-lived," he said.

"He'll eventually have to come up with something else."

Ju-min Park of the Seoul bureau contributed to this story.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-north-korea-kim7-2009apr07.0.6130679.story>

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Yonhap News
April 6, 2009

N. Korea Hopes to Launch More Rockets: Report

By Kim Hyun

SEOUL (Yonhap) -- North Korea hopes to launch more satellites to boost its economy, a pro-Pyongyang newspaper in Japan said Monday, a day after the communist nation fired a rocket that experts say could also carry a missile.

Sunday's launch of what Pyongyang calls an experimental communications satellite, Kwangmyongsong-2, was the opening stage of a larger plan to send various practical satellites into orbit in the future, said Choson Sinbo, which typically conveys North Korea's official position.

The report, published by ethnic Koreans in Japan, described the launch as "productive" and "historic," but did not say if it was successful as North Korea claims.

The North's state media said the satellite launched from the country's east coast and is now in orbit, while outside monitors concluded the rocket's final stages fell into the Pacific Ocean and never entered space.

South Korea, Japan and the United States had warned the North not to go ahead with the launch, suspecting it would be a test of Pyongyang's ballistic missile capability.

"North Korea is preparing to launch practical satellites for the purpose of communications, exploration of natural resources and weather forecasting, which are essential for the country's economic development," the Choson Sinbo said.

The paper featured an interview with the head of a North Korean national weather agency, Ko Sang-bok, who called the launch a "historic feat" that raised national morale and took the country closer to its foremost goal of becoming a powerful nation by 2012. The year is important for North Korea as the centennial of the birth of late President Kim Il-sung, father of current leader Kim Jong-il.

"Within the next few years, during which our country plans to launch a polar-orbiting meteorological satellite or a geostationary meteorological satellite, great progress will be achieved in the field of weather forecasting," Ko said, adding his country currently receives data from China and Russia.

"This experimental communications satellite launch is a front stage procedure toward launching a meteorological satellite and other practical satellites," he said.

The Choson Sinbo said on Sunday that the launch will be a major boost for North Korea's 2012 economic campaign, paving the ground for rocket technology exports.

"North Korea's biggest agenda at this time is economic reconstruction. Large-scale rocket development is related to its citizens' livelihoods," the paper said, citing "a series of economic benefits" through civilian technology transfer and rocket sales.

South Korea and the U.S. said the first booster of the three-stage carrier rocket fell into the East Sea lying between Korea and Japan, while the second and third stages fell into the Pacific Ocean.

After launching its first satellite, Kwangmyongsong-1, in 1998, North Korea also claimed it was operating in orbit, while international monitors said it was a failed launch.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2009/04/06/45/0401000000AEN20090406006500315F.HTML>

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The Australian

April 07, 2009

Defiant Kim Jong-il's Missile Test Fails

Peter Alford, Tokyo correspondent

NORTH Korea's failure to launch a satellite into orbit at the weekend is a setback for the Pyongyang regime, outside experts believe, but opinion was sharply divided on whether the test represents a heightened security threat.

Joseph Bermudez, a leading authority on North Korea's missile program, said Pyongyang had again been unable to demonstrate a capability to threaten US territories with an intercontinental ballistic missile.

The failure would provoke the North Korean leadership into a "bottom-up review" of the ICBM project "that puts a lot of people under pressure", said Mr Bermudez, a senior analyst for Jane's Defence Weekly.

The second and third, satellite-carrying stages of the rocket - believed to be an upgraded version of the Taepodong-2 military missile - reportedly failed to separate, and they fell together into the Pacific, about 3000km east-southeast of the Musudan-ri launch site.

But advocates of strengthening the US ballistic missile defence shield, which has already cost more than \$US1trillion, say the launch shows an increasing North Korean threat.

"The fact they did not get apparent separation of the payload from the second or third stages means they have more work to do there in terms of being able to achieve that," retired general Henry Obering, formerly director of the US Missile Defence Agency, told CNN. "The bottom line is they are continuing to advance in their ranges, and I think it's why it's important we have the ability to defend against these types of threats."

Kim Tae-woo, of the government-linked Korea Institute for Defence Analysis in Seoul went further, telling Reuters: "With this capability, North Korea is equipped with the infrastructure to play the nuclear game and raise the stakes in six-party (nuclear disarmament) talks."

But Mr Bermudez told The Australian that although North Korean missiles already posed a serious risk to South Korea, Japan and the US military forces in those countries, he did not believe Sunday's launch had heightened the threat.

The regime has about 600 ballistic missiles, mostly short and medium-range, the largest such arsenal in the developing world.

"However, the North Koreans haven't developed a consistent, reliable long-range missile capability," he said.

"They have tried three times and they've failed three times."

In August 1998, the North attempted what it called a satellite launch but the US and its allies regarded as Pyongyang's initial long-range ballistic missile test. It also reportedly failed around the second-stage separation point.

A Taepodong-2 launched over the Sea of Japan in July 2006 failed during the initial boost phase after 42 seconds in the air.

Although by late Sunday, US and other space monitoring agencies were confidently saying nothing had been put in orbit, the North Koreans continued to insist yesterday the Kwangmyongsong-2 communications satellite was aloft and functioning properly.

The Korean Central News Agency yesterday released photographs of regime leader Kim Jong-il with officials and younger scientists and technicians, which the agency said were taken at the launch site on Sunday morning.

Although the tone of the accompanying KCNA article was celebratory, the 68-year-old Kim, who is said to have only partly recovered from a stroke last year, and his companions remained poker-faced in the pictures.

Mr Bermudez said he now expected the North's National Defence Commission, the totalitarian state's most powerful grouping chaired by Mr Kim, would undertake a harsh review of the long-range missile program.

But he expected the NDC to remain committed to the project, with the objective of developing a functional ICBM.

<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,25299736-2703,00.html>

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RIA Novosti

07 April 2009

Russia Concerned by N.Korea's Rocket Launch, but Urges Caution

MOSCOW, April 7 (RIA Novosti) - Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov expressed concern on Tuesday over North Korea's recent rocket launch, but cautioned against taking action until all the facts are established.

North Korea launched a multistage rocket that it said was carrying a communications satellite at 11:30 a.m. (02:30 a.m. GMT) on Sunday, defying pressure from the United States, Japan, South Korea and other countries, which suspect the launch was a cover for the test of a Taepodong-2 long-range missile.

"We would like to get to the bottom of the problem and use the existing mechanisms, such as the UN Security Council, to send a signal about our concern, but at the same time urge the parties involved to honor the existing agreements," he said.

He added that Russia was also calling for the earliest possible resumption of six-nation negotiations on North Korea's nuclear program.

Earlier on Tuesday, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said North Korea has the right to pursue peaceful space-related activities. The ministry urged the international community to exercise restraint on the issue, to maintain stability in the region.

The 15-member Security Council convened for an emergency meeting late on Sunday at Japan's request, to discuss sanctions against Pyongyang over the rocket launch, but strong opposition from Russia and China prevented the adoption of even a preliminary statement of condemnation.

North Korea claimed the rocket, which was launched over Japan, successfully delivered a communications satellite into orbit, but the U.S. and South Korean militaries said all three stages fell into the ocean and that "no object entered orbit."

The U.S. and other countries argued for sanctions against Pyongyang, saying that the launch violated Security Council Resolution 1718, which was passed after North Korea's 2006 nuclear test, but Russia and China called for restraint on the grounds that the resolution does not prohibit the launch of satellites.

<http://en.rian.ru/russia/20090407/120958671.html>

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Time

April 03, 2009

Taliban Commander Baitullah Mehsud

By Alex Altman

Baitullah Mehsud is a natural leader: cagey, dogged and charismatic, with an apparent knack for uniting disparate factions around a common cause. But instead of channeling those talents toward building an empire, Mehsud is trying to bring one to its knees. The shadowy Pakistani Taliban commander, whose vertiginous rise to infamy landed him on 2008's TIME 100 List, has transformed the badlands of South Waziristan into al-Qaeda's most important redoubt. Among the atrocities attributed to Mehsud is the brazen assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in Dec. 2007. Mehsud has denied involvement, but even if he's innocent of that crime there's no shortage of reasons TIME dubbed him "an icon of global jihad." On March 31, Mehsud claimed responsibility for an assault the previous day on a police academy in Lahore, Pakistan that left 12 dead. He also threatened a massive terrorist attack on Washington that would "amaze everyone in the world."

Fast Facts:

- Mehsud, thought to be about 35, is an uneducated Pashtun tribesman from a modest clan; his family reportedly made their living driving trucks. He suffers from diabetes.
- Though given to boasting about his grand plans for inflicting mass-murder, Mehsud is also cautious. He shuns photographers — there is no definitive snapshot of his face — travels in convoys protected by armed guards and hops between safe houses. Despite his bellicose rhetoric, Mehsud has been described as baby-faced and jocular in person.
- Mehsud served as a Taliban fighter against the Soviets in the battle for Afghanistan, but first rose to prominence as a supporter of Abdullah Mehsud, a one-legged militant imprisoned soon after the 9/11 terror attacks at the U.S. prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Baitullah Mehsud quickly leapfrogged his boss, and his ascension up the jihadi ladder was made apparent in 2005, when — swathed in a black cloth to shield his face — he negotiated the public signing of a cease-fire agreement with the Pakistani government. He has also served as the protege of Afghan Taliban leader Mullah Omar.
- Under the cover afforded by the agreement — he was once touted by a Pakistani Army official as a "good Taliban" — Mehsud quickly tightened his grip on Waziristan, converting the rugged region into a haven where militant groups could freely operate camps and training facilities. In 2007, he signaled the depth of his influence in the region when he took hostage more than 200 soldiers who had been on patrol.
- The 2007 assault on a group of radical students at Islamabad's Red Mosque by the Pakistani army shattered any pretenses of a peace agreement, and Mehsud's vows of revenge for the incident only brought him greater fame. In December of that year, he was tapped by a Taliban council to consolidate the group's loosely affiliated factions in Pakistan. The same month, on Dec. 27, former Prime Minister Benazir was assassinated.
- With a reported 20,000 militants at his command, Mehsud is believed to have been the architect of the 2008 bombing of Islamabad's Marriott Hotel, the mastermind behind a terrorist cell uncovered in Barcelona that same year and the dispatcher of numerous suicide bombers in the region. Mehsud has reportedly executed more than 100 rival tribal leaders to consolidate power.
- Has a \$5 million bounty on his head, courtesy of the U.S. government.

Quotes from:

"Soon we will launch an attack in Washington that will amaze everyone in the world."

—Explaining that recent attacks were intended to avenge American missile strikes on Pakistani border areas. (*Associated Press*, March 31, 2009)

"Only jihad can bring peace to the world."

—Espousing his philosophy during an interview with the BBC. (*BBC*, October 2007)

"Fantastic job. Very brave boys, the ones who killed her."

—Communication intercepted and produced by the Pakistani government that allegedly fingered Mehsud as being behind Bhutto's assassination. (*Newsweek*, Jan. 14, 2008)

Quotes about:

"He is the law here."

—Naseem Khan, a business owner in Wana, the capital of South Waziristan. (*U.S. News and World Report*, Feb. 11, 2008)

"South Waziristan now seems like a state within the state, and Baitullah Mehsud is running this like a head of government. Now he's an all-powerful man whose writ and command is visible across the tribal belt."
—On Mehsud's burgeoning influence. (Washington *Post*, Jan. 10, 2008)

"Baitullah is much stronger, much better. His way of talking, how he acts — he is a much more powerful leader."
—Ahmad Muaffaq Zaidan, Pakistan bureau chief for *al-Jazeera*, weighing in on comparisons between Mehsud and Mullah Omar, the famously reclusive leader of the Afghan Taliban. (TIME, Jan. 24, 2008)

<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1889286,00.html>

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London Sunday Telegraph
April 5, 2009

Taliban Jihad Against West Funded By Emeralds From Pakistan

By Ashfaq Yusufzai and Isambard Wilkinson

Thousands of emeralds are pouring onto world gem markets from the Swat valley in Pakistan, sold to fund the Taliban's jihad against the West.

Militants have begun reopening lucrative emerald mines which had been closed by the government, since they took full control of the poor but picturesque region in the north of the country under a controversial peace deal last month.

They are using revenue from the sale of the emeralds to help finance attacks on Nato forces in neighbouring Afghanistan, and to support their drive to extend harsh sharia, including public whippings and summary executions, into more regions of Pakistan.

Swat holds one of Asia's two largest-known deposits of high quality emeralds, from where the precious stones are smuggled to Jaipur, India, and transported to Bangkok, Switzerland and Israel. Here they are cut and polished into the lustrous gems that adorn the world's finest jewellery, sold to unsuspecting customers who have no idea that the money they are spending may end up financing the Taliban.

"We receive one third of the profit, the rest goes to the workers," Muslim Khan, the Taliban spokesman in Swat, told *The Sunday Telegraph*.

"We know that all the minerals have been created by Allah, the mighty and the merciful, for the benefit of his creatures. We should avail the opportunity."

The revelation that the Taliban are making huge profits from the emeralds will heighten fears among Pakistan's middle class that their country is on a slippery slope to religious zealotry and Islamic rule. Millions of ordinary Pakistanis are afraid of the slide towards anarchy that appears to have begun. Evidence of the militants' growing stranglehold emerged last week in a gruesome video showing a 17-year-old girl screaming as she is beaten by Islamic radicals in Swat.

The unlicensed trade in the region's emeralds provides the Taliban with cash to buy weapons for their struggle against Pakistan's secular government, just as the Taliban in Afghanistan has thrived on the proceeds of the opium trade.

Brig Mahmood Shah, the former chief of security for Pakistan's tribal areas, said: "The Taliban use drug money for jihad in Afghanistan. The same thing is now happening in Swat. Money from emeralds is sponsoring their so-called jihad."

The flow of emeralds promise to provide a rising stream of cash as the Taliban open more mines. Abdul Karim Shah, director of the Gems and Gemological Institute in Peshawar, estimated that the Taliban could already earn up to £2 million a year from the mines now operating, with more to come as emerald deposits potentially worth millions are tapped into.

One newly reopened mine, near the Swat capital, Mingora, had been sealed since 1998 because of a legal dispute between the government and a contractor. Now workers use picks and shovels to dig for emeralds, excavating dozens of new pits and creating a cratered landscape. "We have given instructions to workers to lessen the amount of destruction," said Wahidullah Khan, a Taliban soldier at the mine.

About 70 Taliban recently occupied another emerald mine in the Shangla district near Swat, a government mining official said. Taliban gunmen forced out local officials and hired their own workers, who were promised a 50 per cent share of the profits.

"They have engaged 1,000 people and the number is increasing," a Taliban commander said. "It is a great opportunity for the people, as there is so much poverty and unemployment here."

One of the workers who is benefiting, Shad Ali, 24, said: "I earn at least Rs1000 (£8) per day. When I find a stone during digging, I take it to the Taliban's office here. It's weighed there and my share of the price is given to me." He said the mine had proved a "blessing" to poor people in the area.

Emerald mines in Pakistan and Afghanistan are thought to contain nearly 10 per cent of the world total, and during the 1980s the mines of Swat yielded a quarter of a million carats of emeralds - worth £15 million in rough, uncut form.

A government mining official in the area, who is powerless to enforce the government's writ, said: "If the Taliban continue selling the emeralds they will become very strong and it will be impossible for the government to dislodge them."

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/pakistan/5106526/Taliban-jihad-against-West-funded-by-emeralds-from-Pakistan.html>

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UPI Asia.com

OPINION

3 April 2009

Security of Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons

By Hari Sud

Toronto, ON, Canada, — In the midst of all the turmoil in Pakistan, who is watching the country's nuclear weapons? It is a declared intention of Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida terrorist group to acquire nuclear weapons. Are Pakistan's nuclear weapons within their reach?

All the terrorists would have to do is bribe a few guards, kill any who could not be bribed, and get away – if not with a full-blown nuclear weapon, then at least with enough nuclear material to set off a dirty bomb.

Thanks to the links between Pakistan's intelligence service and terrorist elements, it is no longer possible to distinguish friend from foe. The Taliban have been reorganized, trained and sheltered by Pakistan's intelligence agency. They have been bold enough to mount terror operations in Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi and other big cities.

Over the past eight years, new recruits and new Taliban leaders in association with al-Qaida have started waging war with Pakistani forces. Their grievances include Pakistan's cooperation with NATO and the United States. After killing a large number of Pakistani troops in frontier provinces, the Pakistani Taliban has forced the civilian government to permit the practice of ancient Islamic Sharia law there.

The Taliban's objective is to split the Pashto-speaking frontier provinces from Pakistan and join them with Pashto-speaking areas in Afghanistan to create a nation called Pashtunistan. The bombings in recent months and the daring attack on a police academy near Lahore were designed to avenge the excesses of Pakistani forces in the frontier area. Slowly the Taliban are moving to achieve their objective. Today Sharia law, tomorrow a separate homeland and later full nationhood.

Al-Qaida has its own objective amidst the turmoil – to grab a nuclear bomb or nuclear material and threaten the world. The Pakistani military is much more Islamic today than it has been in the past. It is possible that when pressured with religious zeal soldiers may put faith ahead of their duty. That could be the beginning of the end of U.S. and British-supplied security of Pakistan's nuclear weapons. Individual soldiers are more prone to religious propaganda than their command structures; therefore they need to be watched.

Pakistan stores its nuclear materials at different locations, following British and U.S. advice to keep the warheads separate from the triggering devices. Also, the missiles or planes that could carry a bomb to its ultimate destination are far removed from the nuclear devices. Chaklala, Sargodha, Quetta and Karachi are high-security primary strategic materials storage depots.

The main research and centrifuge centers are still Kahuta and Khushab. The forward staging areas where the bombs are mated and loaded for action are much closer to the Indian border than previously known, to give India less time to react to a nuclear threat.

While in storage these materials are harder to compromise. The United States supplied permissive action links, or PAL locks, in 2002, which detect and alert authorities to any attempted tampering. Hence any theft would take place during nuclear transport or by sleeper cells working in nuclear facilities.

The nuclear facilities are under the command of a single three-star general and a command structure known as Strategic Plans Division. Still, a commando-style operation like the one carried out in Lahore could net al-Qaida the materials it needs.

For many years, the head of this command structure has been former General Khalid Kidwai. He is the human face of Pakistan's nuclear weapons. The British approached him in 2000 to set up the SPD; they and the Americans have feted him over the years as a very capable pro-Western establishment man. The media have heaped high praise on him and on Pakistan's nuclear command and control; this was intended in part to chide India for not having such a system until recently.

Of course, in the event of a theft of nuclear materials, the chief suspects would be the people who guard them. They could be overcome by jihadi propaganda and feel morally obliged to act on behalf of the terrorists. Today their enemies are NATO, the United States, Israel and India; tomorrow they could be the rest of the world.

What must be done to pre-empt the worst-case scenario? Until jihadism and the Inter Services Intelligence are reined in, the United States should ask for temporary custody of all nuclear materials in Pakistan. U.S. President Barack Obama should make financial and military aid conditional upon this action.

Failing that, India, Israel, the United States, NATO and Russia should act jointly to take away these materials from Pakistan. If Pakistan does not agree, these nations should end all military deliveries, financial aid and trade relations with Pakistan. This may appear farfetched, but dying in a nuclear holocaust is more farfetched. This tragedy could be prevented with suitable action today.

The day a nuclear device ends up in al-Qaida's hands will be a catastrophic day for the world. A dirty bomb may not appear in a city overnight, but it could be used to blackmail the United States, for example, forcing it out of the Middle East, Afghanistan, Pakistan and the entire Muslim world. India could have a nuclear war at hand.

Pakistan's argument has been that its nuclear security system is foolproof. General Kidwai has been harping on this for about 10 years. But he did not take into account the fall of the Taliban in Kabul and the rise of jihadi culture all around him. He may be a secular man, but he cannot be sure about the rest of his command.

The Pashtun tribesmen are now restive. They do not like the Pakistan army, which they believe is in the pay of the Americans. If they were to force the truncation of Pakistan and take away the Pashtun areas, there is not much Pakistan could do. If the Punjabi-dominated Pakistan army were to take harsher action in the region, it could cause unhappy Pashtun men in the army to revolt. This could pose a danger to the nuclear weapons depots, which are mostly in Punjab.

An alternative to this worst-case scenario is for Pakistan to seek accommodation with India. That would allow it to withdraw its forces from the border and redeploy them in the restive west. Their permanent presence may help to simmer down the tribesmen.

Another alternative, which would be hard for the Pakistanis to digest, is to allow the Pashtun-speaking areas to set up a new federation, loosely connected to Afghanistan and Pakistan. That would pacify the tribesmen for some time. A permanent solution would be to urbanize the dirt-poor frontier areas and provide people with employment other than smuggling drugs and guns.

Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence, which has been stirring up these tribesmen, would have to stay out of any of these solutions. The ISI has been short on civilian supervision; that authority needs to be reestablished within its ranks. The tribesmen know that they have picked a fight with their benefactors in Pakistan; they cannot hope it will last long. With no supplies or support their movement will die away, but it will take time.

In any case, it is no longer safe to trust terror-ridden Pakistan with nuclear materials. No amount of security can prevent their disappearance if the people guarding them are compromised. Al-Qaida, bent on acquiring nuclear materials, is a serious threat to Pakistan. It can no longer be taken lightly.

(Hari Sud is a retired vice president of C-I-L Inc., a former investment strategies analyst and international relations manager. A graduate of Punjab University and the University of Missouri, he has lived in Canada for the past 34 years. ©Copyright Hari Sud.)

http://www.upiasia.com/Security/2009/04/03/security_of_pakistans_nuclear_weapons/9705/

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RIA Novosti

OPINION

03 April 2009

Tehran Working to Advance Its Space Program

Andrei Kislyakov, for RIA Novosti

MOSCOW. (Andrei Kislyakov, for RIA Novosti) - The international community, busy discussing the upcoming launch of a North Korean booster with a satellite, or possibly a warhead, did not notice Iran's announcement that its satellite had successfully completed its scientific mission after more than a month in orbit.

Iran put its first communications satellite, Omid (Hope), into a near-Earth orbit on February 2. The satellite was carried into orbit by an Iranian launch vehicle, Safir (Messenger).

Iran has the missile potential, based on the best achievements of the Soviet Union, China and North Korea, for becoming a fully-fledged space power soon, and also for manufacturing strategic missiles.

After the successful launch on February 2, Reza Taghipour, head of Iran's Aerospace Industries Organization, mentioned their ambition to launch an astronaut into space before 2021. Iran's minister of communications said Tehran was working on seven types of satellites, including three high-orbit ones. It plans to orbit five satellites by 2010.

Iran has advanced a great deal in the field of missile and rocket technology. The Omid satellite orbited by the Safir booster will soon be followed by the Kavehshgyar (Explorer) rockets. The Western intelligence community has warned that Iran's successes in peaceful space exploration point to its expanded possibilities in the field of ballistic missiles.

Iran's missile industry is based on the Soviet RS-14 Scud and its modernized North Korean and Chinese versions. Iran used more than 300 Scud missiles it had bought from North Korea to create the Shahab-1 and -2 missiles in the 1990s, and launched their production at home by 1997. It is rumored that Iran is also manufacturing its Shahab-2 missiles in Syria.

Next it produced the Shahab-3 missile on the basis of North Korea's No Dong-1/A and No Dong-1/B missiles, which had possibly been created and modernized with Iran's financial assistance. The first successful launch of the Shahab-3 missile with a North Korean engine was made in July 2000. On September 22, 2003, Shahab-3 missiles mounted on mobile launchers took part in a military parade in Tehran.

Western analysts assume that the missile has a range of some 2,000 km (1,243 miles) and a payload of 700 kilograms, which qualifies it as a medium-range missile. In other words, it is a strategic missile. By early 2008, Iran presumably increased its payload to 1.3 tons without affecting its range.

Iran is currently working on solid-fuel ballistic missiles, Shahab-5 and Shahab-6, with a range of 3,000 (1,865 miles) and 5,000 km (3,108 miles), respectively. This means that Tehran is on the verge of creating intercontinental strategic missiles.

It is also developing the ground infrastructure for its missiles. Iran already has seven missile centers at Isfahan, Semnan, Shiraz, Sultanabad, Lavizan, Kuh-e Barjamali and Shahrud, as well as a host of smaller enterprises.

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

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Wall Street Journal

OPINION

6 April 2009

A Missile Shot for Iran

By GORDON G. CHANG

Yesterday, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea either tested a Taepodong-2 long-range ballistic missile or attempted to put a satellite into orbit with a multistage rocket. "Whether it is a satellite launch or a missile launch, in our judgment makes no difference," said Stephen Bosworth, the Obama administration's special envoy for North Korea. "It is a provocative act."

"Provocative" is Washington's favorite word these days when it comes to the one-man state run by Kim Jong Il. Mr. Obama used the term in his statement issued immediately after the launch, and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton repeated it many times beforehand. The State Department used the word again yesterday, only a few hours after the launch. There's no question that "provocative" is particularly apt. So what is the administration going to do now that it has been provoked? The answer will affect not only North Korea, but the buyers for its weapons -- particularly, Iran.

Both before and after the launch, the United States stated it would seek United Nations sanctions against North Korea. Yet China has apparently not enforced Security Council Resolutions 1695 and 1718, adopted after the North's missile and nuclear tests in the second half of 2006. This time, veto-wielding Beijing and Moscow have signaled they will not support any American effort to impose further penalties on Chairman Kim's state. Yesterday, Japan called an emergency session of the U.N. Security Council. In all probability, the efforts of Tokyo and Washington will fail.

What next, then? Mrs. Clinton late last month hinted that Washington, in the event of a launch, might pull out of the six-party talks to disarm North Korea, but Mr. Bosworth on Friday said that America would continue to participate. Worse, the veteran diplomat even held out the possibility of conducting bilateral discussions with Pyongyang. One-on-one negotiations with the U.S. are something that North Korea has sought most of this decade.

So far, Obama Administration's policy has been all carrot and no stick, and, from all appearances, it will remain that way for some time. This approach obviously failed to prevent yesterday's launch and promises no breakthrough in the future. North Korea has been trying to build nuclear weapons and the means to deliver them since the early 1980s and maybe even as early as the mid-1960s. Ineffective American diplomacy has only given the world's most militarized state the one thing it needed most to develop the world's most destructive weapons -- time.

Unfortunately, the consequences of feckless American diplomacy will not be limited to North Asia. As a spokesman for South Korean President Lee Myung-bak said after the launch, North Korea's act constitutes a "serious threat" not just to the Korean peninsula but also the rest of the world. He's right because North Korea is not just about Korea. Yesterday's test also impacts Iran. The atomic ayatollahs of the Islamic Republic are surely interpreting ineffective American diplomacy in Korea as a big green light for their own weapons ambitions.

How are the two regimes connected? On March 29, Sankei Shimbun, the conservative-leaning Tokyo paper, reported that 15 Iranians were in North Korea to provide assistance for the then-impending launch. Ten Iranians were in North Korea for the Taepodong-2 test in July 2006 according to the Los Angeles Times, and the State Department's Christopher Hill, then Washington's point man on Korea, confirmed their presence (he later retracted his confirmation). There are also reports that Iranians witnessed North Korea's 1998 Taepodong test. In February, North Korean scientists were spotted in Iran for the launch of an Iranian missile.

Moreover, American intelligence sources indicate Iran tested a North Korean missile for Pyongyang. The North Koreans possibly provided missile flight-test data to Iran. Iran has been financing the North Korean program either by purchasing the North's missiles or by sharing development costs and receiving missiles in return. Iranian support explains how a destitute North Korea has the funds to carry on a sophisticated weapons program.

In view of all these links, it is no surprise that Iran's Shahab-3 is essentially a North Korean Nodong missile and more advanced Iranian missiles, the Shahab-5 and Shahab-6, appear based on the long-range Taepodong models. Ominously, North Korea and Iran could be using Chinese technology as they develop the Taepodong-2.

It is no exaggeration to say the two regimes are conducting a joint missile program in two separate locations, one in North Asia and the other in the Middle East. That is one reason why North Korea should not be viewed in isolation. The North may be isolated, but the threat it poses is most certainly not.

Unfortunately, cooperation between Pyongyang and Tehran is not limited to missiles. Their nuclear weapons programs also seem to be linked. Iranians, for example, are said to have witnessed the North's detonation of an

atomic device in October 2006. And there are reports that Iranians traveled to North Korea three times in 2003 to learn how to deceive the weapons inspectors of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the U.N. nuclear watchdog. In any event, Henry Sokolski, the American proliferation expert, has written in these pages that Iranian officials ask him only one question: How will Washington handle North Korea?

Many analysts make the perfectly correct points that, in all probability, the North Koreans cannot now mate a nuclear weapon onto their longest-range missile and that it will be years before they can land a warhead on American soil. Therefore, some U.S. policy makers may believe that Washington can afford to adopt a carrots-only approach to coax the North into joining the international community.

Perhaps that is so, but failure to stop Kim Jong Il at this moment will inevitably embolden the Iranians to proceed with their missile and nuclear weapons programs. In that case, the U.S. and its allies will soon have to confront two hostile states armed with the most destructive weapon in history. So time is not on America's side.

An international system that cannot defend its most fundamental interest against one of its weakest members cannot last. Yesterday's launch is not just about Korea.

Mr. Chang is the author of "Nuclear Showdown: North Korea Takes On the World" (Random House, 2006).

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123896263698690485.html>

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China View
6 April 2009

Is Obama's Non-Nuclear Drive Realistic?

by Xinhua writers Wu Liming, Ban Wei

PRAGUE, April 5 (Xinhua) -- When U.S. President Barack Obama enthusiastically called on Sunday for "a world without nuclear weapons" in the picturesque Hradcany Square in central Prague, the 30,000 crowds cheered with thunderous applause.

But for politicians and analysts, questions may rise: Is it realistic? Does he mean business or just play lip service? Everybody, including Obama himself, knows the road to a non-nuclear world could be bumpy.

"I'm not naive, the goal can not be reached quickly, perhaps that's not in my lifetime," Obama told the crowds in Prague.

The United States boasts the biggest nuclear arsenal in the world. The country far outnumbers Russia and other major nuclear states, with some 4,000 atomic warheads in stock.

Washington has long put its nuclear advantage at a key point in its national security strategy, and Obama's predecessor, George W. Bush, had adopted a more aggressive policy in maintaining the country's advantage in this regard.

The Bush administration had striven to develop anti-missile defense program, and the former president declared unilateral withdrawal from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty in December 2001.

Observers believe that Obama's commitment for "a world without nuclear weapons" signals Washington's possible adjustment of nuclear strategy, or at least, a departure from the Bush administration.

In his speech in Prague, Obama not only stated "clearly and with conviction" his country's commitment and leadership in eliminating nuclear arms, but also tabled "concrete steps" in pushing his dream into reality, including hosting a world summit on nuclear security within next year.

The "concrete steps" included efforts to ease the role of nuclear arsenal in U.S. national security strategy, to conclude talks with Russia on a new "legally-binding" strategic arms reduction treaty and to pursue U.S. ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

Obama's initiative on building "a world without nuclear weapons" was, by no means, a flash of idea.

As early as on his campaign trail, Obama had said his arms-control efforts would follow the parameters laid out by the Nuclear Security Project, whose initiatives, including a plan for sharp reductions in U.S. nuclear stockpiles,

were crafted by centrists including former Democratic senator Sam Nunn and former Republican secretaries of state Henry Kissinger and George P. Shultz.

Shortly after his inauguration, the White House website posted Obama's agenda, including his pledges to "stop the development of new nuclear weapons" and work for a worldwide ban on the production of material for nuclear weapons.

However, such call will arouse opposition from home and abroad, Jan Techau, head of the European studies center of the German Council on Foreign Relations, told Xinhua. Obama is faced with potential opposition even within his own cabinet, Techau said.

U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates said last fall that developing new warheads was vital and building the so-called Reliable Replacement Warhead was essential to ensuring that the nation's nuclear defenses remain viable for years to come.

It will also be hard for Obama to persuade other nuclear countries to follow suit.

Nevertheless, Techau said it "is realistic" to expect a cut on nuclear arsenal. For one thing, maintaining an immense nuclear arsenal, capable of destroying the planet for several times, is costly.

A rational cut of nuclear ammunition will also benefit both the United States and Russia, the two biggest nuclear rivals.

Obama's enthusiasm for a non-nuclear world is also attributable to the U.S. strategic consideration concerning Iran and the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula.

"In so doing, President Obama intends to increase Washington's credibility in resolving the Iran issue," Techau said.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-04/06/content_11138057.htm

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