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The Local – Germany

10 April 20 09

Steinmeier Demands Removal of US Nukes from Germany

US President Barack Obama's recent push for nuclear disarmament, and his joint declaration with Russian President Dmitri Medvedev to reduce their nuclear arsenals, prompted Steinmeier, who is the Social Democratic (SPD) chancellor candidate in this autumn's general election, to embrace the anti-nuclear bomb cause.

He told this weekend's *Der Spiegel* magazine, "These weapons are militarily obsolete today. He said he would push for the remaining US warheads "to be removed from Germany".

Der Spiegel says this puts him in clear opposition to Chancellor Angela Merkel who, although she knew what Obama was planning to say at the NATO meeting, told parliament at the end of March, that the government was sticking to its participation in the nuclear arms situation.

She said this guaranteed Germany had a voice and some influence over decisions made in NATO circles. The Defence Ministry, run by the Christian Democratic Union's Franz Josef Jung, is said to support the idea that only countries which host US bombs can expect to be taken seriously on the subject within NATO.

During the Cold War, the West German government secured a certain degree of influence in return for allowing thousands of American nuclear warheads to be stationed in its territory.

After reunification and the collapse of the Soviet Union, nearly all US warheads were removed from Europe, but some remain in Büchel in the Rhineland, the magazine reported, as well as some in Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy and Turkey.

Steinmeier spoke in Berlin on Friday as traditional Easter peace marches began across the country. He said, "For the first time for many years, we have the chance to create a new start for global disarmament and make peace safer."

He said the vision of a nuclear weapon free world was one his party shared, and had now entered realpolitik. "Now the work begins with which we can make concrete progress," he said.

He said the fact that 95 percent of nuclear warheads were in the possession of the US and Russia gave those countries the greatest responsibility for disarming. And he said conventional disarmament measures should be undertaken too, adding, "We have started on bans of malicious weapons such as cluster bombs but this must now be enforced, as according to UN estimates, half a million people are killed each year with such weapons."

<http://www.thelocal.de/national/20090410-18569.html>

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Washington Post

April 14, 2009

[Fine Print](#)

Report Urges Updating Of Nuclear Weapons Policy

By Walter Pincus

Talk of efforts to control nuclear arms typically focuses on sheer numbers of warheads and their explosive power.

But with President Obama and his Russian counterpart, Dmitry Medvedev, putting nuclear arms control back on the Washington-Moscow agenda, a new study looks beyond simple comparison of numbers and types of weapons to the more harrowing question of just what those weapons are targeted to strike.

During the Cold War, they were aimed at Russia's hardened silos, bomber bases and military installations. Later, similar sites in China were added. Now, potential nuclear facilities of other regional countries are on the list, as well as chemical and biological weapons facilities.

"From Counterforce to Minimal Deterrence," a 57-page report released last week by two arms-control advocacy groups, takes a close look at "strike options," giving their view of the role nuclear intercontinental ballistic missiles and strategic bombs play in today's post-Cold War world.

Instead of just comparing numbers among the nuclear powers, the authors representing the Federation of American Scientists and Natural Resources Defense Council focus on what the United States is targeting and whether this approach should change.

The study points out the obvious -- that "nuclear weapons are horrific things and nuclear war would be an unimaginable disaster." But it says current Pentagon plans for using strategic nuclear weapons include "individual strike options that probably range from using just a few weapons to using more than 1,000."

The authors also note that political and military leaders argue "that nuclear weapons are not really intended to be used, but are meant only to deter, and therefore detailed war plans and alert forces increase the credibility of the deterrent and make an attack less likely."

The starting point for such discussions must be the current U.S. strategic nuclear stockpile, which stands at about 5,200 warheads. About 2,200 of those are deployed on 450 Minuteman III land-based ICBMs, on ICBMs carried by 14 Trident submarines and on the hundreds of strategic bombs allocated to B-52 bombers. The remaining 3,000 are in storage or are awaiting dismantling.

The main purpose of maintaining our thousands of nuclear weapons during the Cold War was deterrence. According to the study, that meant two things: The first was preventing a Soviet conventional strike on Western Europe, Japan or South Korea. The second was making it clear to Moscow that if it launched a first strike against the United States, enough U.S. weapons would survive to deliver a devastating nuclear counterstrike on the Russian homeland.

Because both sides thought they could be subject to a first strike, they placed their nuclear forces on hair-trigger alert. The study points out, however, that 18 years after the Soviet Union dissolved, "the practice of keeping U.S. and Russian nuclear forces on alert continues today, albeit at lower numbers than during the Cold War."

The lack of a Cold War-level threat made no difference, the authors wrote, because under the guidance of Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, the United States insisted that nuclear weapons could legitimately be used against chemical or biological weapons "anywhere in the world, even against non-nuclear nations." This approach "significantly broadened the geographical reach and number of potential scenarios for U.S. nuclear strike options," they add.

It was in March 2003 that Adm. James O. Ellis Jr., chief of U.S. Strategic Command, told Congress that the nation's nuclear war plan was changing "to a family of plans applicable in a wider range of scenarios." The result in February 2008 was Operations Plan 8010, which the authors said included strike options against the combat and support equipment of six potential adversaries. The listed targets were in Russia, China, North Korea, Iran, Iraq and Syria.

As the authors note, although these appear to be military targets rather than population centers, many are within or near major cities. "When the weapon is a nuclear bomb [or warhead] with a force of several hundred thousand tons of TNT . . . the surrounding population is killed just as certainly as if it were the primary target," they say.

The study's main purpose is to propose a new nuclear doctrine for the United States, one it defines as "minimal deterrence." Under that doctrine, the nation would retain enough nuclear weaponry "to deter nuclear use in the first place." The study creates a new category called "infrastructure targeting," under which attacks would focus on "electrical, oil and energy nodes" that support war industries. "A minimal nuclear deterrence policy with infrastructure targeting does not require nuclear forces to be on alert or even to react quickly," according to the study.

The authors propose keeping weapons in the current stockpile but lowering their yields -- to a degree. The weapons, the report said, should remain devastating enough to deter any nation from striking the United States or any of its allies.

"Huge fatalities will occur in any nuclear attack," the authors say, but they add that their approach would result in fewer deaths "than would occur with today's targeting choices."

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn?node=admin/registration/register&destination=login&nextstep=gather&application=reg30-politics&applicationURL=http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/04/13/AR2009041302566.html>

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China View
14 April 2009

Bumpy Road Ahead of Russia-U.S. Arms Reduction

by Xinhua writer Hai Yang

MOSCOW, April 13 (Xinhua) -- With bilateral relations apparently on a positive track under U.S. President Barack Obama's administration, Russia and the United States are expected to begin the first round of consultations on a new strategic arms reduction treaty by the end of April.

Though the Obama administration regards the arms reduction talks as its first practical step toward a nuclear-free world, Russia remains cautious on the actual outcome of the talks.

A NUCLEAR-FREE WORLD

While addressing nearly 30,000 people at Hradcany Square in downtown Prague on April 5, Obama called for reducing the world's nuclear arsenal and finally eliminating all nuclear threat in the world.

He said that "to put an end to Cold War thinking, we will reduce the role of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy and urge others to do the same."

Earlier this month in London, Obama and his Russian counterpart Dmitry Medvedev issued a joint statement, saying the two countries will work out a "new, comprehensive, legally binding" agreement on reducing and limiting strategic offensive arms. Later Russian officials confirmed that the first round of consultations will begin by the end of April.

The joint statement said the new treaty would set lower limits for strategic weapons than the 2002 treaty, which called for reducing nuclear warheads to between 1,700 and 2,200 by the end of 2012.

U.S. SHIFT OF NUCLEAR STRATEGY

Obama's speech in Prague marks a complete transformation in U.S. thinking about nuclear weapons, some analysts said.

Daryl Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association in Washington, said that Obama has decided to make the elimination of all the world's nuclear weapons a central goal of U.S. nuclear policy.

"Obama may decide that the only purpose of nuclear weapons is to deter their use and that they should never be used or threatened to counter conventional attacks," Kimball said in his article published on Monday by the Moscow Times.

To start the new U.S. nuclear policy, Obama has chosen to negotiate with Russia on the new nuclear arms reduction treaty, said Kimball.

"The two sides will likely set lower limits on deployed strategic warheads -- to 1,500 or below on each side -- and the missiles and bombers used to deliver them," he said in the article.

"Given that no other state possesses more than 300 nuclear bombs, that simple shift in U.S. nuclear strategy would facilitate far deeper reductions in U.S. and Russian arsenals -- to 1,000 total nuclear warheads each in the next five years -- and open a path for multilateral disarmament talks involving other nuclear-armed states," said the article.

However, to put the nuclear-free world into reality requires more efforts from other countries, according to Kimball.

"NATO countries and Russia should agree to put tactical nuclear weapons on the negotiating table and begin a process of accounting for and eventually dismantling these obsolete systems," said the article.

OBSTACLES LYING AHEAD

Although the U.S. expert is quite optimistic in Obama's nuclear policy, Russian analysts noted that a number of stumbling blocks remain on concluding the new treaty.

"Among them, the major one is the coordination of principles on the accounting of warheads, because there has been a lot of disputes on this issue over the years," the Interfax news agency quoted Maj. Gen. Vladimir Dvorkin, a senior fellow with the International Security Center at the Institute of World Economy and International Relations, as saying.

Indeed, earlier media reports estimated that the United States currently has at least 2,200 strategic nuclear warheads deployed and Russia between 2,000 and 3,000. But figures given out by Kimball citing independent experts showed that Russian arsenal of tactical nuclear warheads could be as high as 8,000.

Meanwhile, experts from Poland, the key location of U.S. missile defense system, believed that the United States and Russia together hold nearly 25,000 nuclear warheads, or 96 percent of the global nuclear arsenal, according to the Moscow Times.

Another obstacle lies right in the U.S. stance on its missile defense system.

While calling for a nuclear-free world, Obama also said in Prague that he would continue to pursue a missile defense system in Europe "that is cost-effective and proven" as long as the Iranian nuclear threat existed, Russian analysts pointed out.

"Obama's proposal of a nuclear-free world is not a propaganda move. The Americans have outlined a long-term policy that will benefit them. However, one cannot liquidate nuclear weapons without changing one's policy from positions of strength while at the same time developing an ABM system," the Vremya Novostei quoted Gen. Pavel Zolotarev, deputy director of the Moscow-based Institute of U.S. and Canadian Studies, as saying.

"The Americans will not stop the deployment of a missile defense system in Europe," the daily Russian paper reported citing another expert Viktor Yesin, former chief of staff of Russia's Strategic Missile Force.

The only question is "whether Obama will limit it to 10 anti-missiles in Poland and one missile tracking radar in the Czech Republic or not," said Yesin.

Lastly but most importantly, some Russian analysts also noted that the Kremlin relies heavily on its nuclear arms for national security due to its "weak" conventional forces.

Russia's nuclear arsenal is the only military component that gives it hedge in dealing with the United States and other major powers, said Alexander Golts, deputy editor of the on-line newspaper Yezhednevny Zhurnal.

"This is precisely why Russia's military strategists see Obama's call for a decrease in nuclear weapons as another attempt to decrease Moscow's influence," he said in an article published on the Moscow Times.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-04/14/content_11182434.htm

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Los Angeles Times

April 10, 2009

Iran Touts Nuclear Technology Gains

By Borzou Daragahi and Ramin Mostaghim

Reporting from Beirut and Esfahan, Iran -- Iran announced fresh advances Thursday in its steady drive to master nuclear technology, trumpeting two new devices to enrich uranium and inaugurating a plant to produce fuel pellets for a heavy-water reactor.

State television broadcast a patriotic three-minute music video called "Fruits of Science" heralding technological achievements during the annual National Day of Nuclear Technology celebrations marking the date in 2006 when Iran produced its first batch of enriched uranium.

"We are witness to very important nuclear achievements," President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad told Iranian officials and foreign guests in Esfahan for the launch of the nuclear fuel production plant, which was broadcast on state television.

Iran's nuclear authorities "have announced that the various cycles of nuclear fuel management are in our grasp in a comprehensive and domestically produced way," Ahmadinejad said.

Also at the event, the head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization said the country now has "around 7,000" centrifuges installed at its Natanz facility, a significant jump from the 5,600 the International Atomic Energy Agency cited in a February report. Iranian officials also announced the introduction of two new types of centrifuges that enrich uranium faster than the current models.

"This shows Iran's unique progress in line with the most up-to-date technology in the world," Gholamreza Aghazadeh said.

The West suspects that Iran's program is meant to eventually produce weapons, but Tehran insists that it is meant to expand the country's energy supply. The United Nations Security Council has called on Iran to stop producing nuclear material with the potential for use in weapons.

Iran's buildup of nuclear technology infrastructure, without explicitly pursuing weapons, keeps its unnerved regional rivals and the West guessing about its capabilities and intentions, a strategy that some analysts say could serve as a deterrent to foreign military action.

But experts say Iran's plan could backfire if international inspectors accuse it of violating the Nonproliferation Treaty, to which it is a signatory.

"If they're trying to do everything they're doing entirely legally, when they take steps that cross the boundary they're going to really undermine their own argument," said Peter Crail, an analyst at the Washington-based Arms Control Assn.

The Obama administration reacted coolly to the latest news.

"Iran is entitled to have a civilian nuclear program, but with that program come responsibilities," State Department spokesman Robert Wood told reporters in Washington. "If Iran means very seriously that its program is for civilian purposes only, then why doesn't it comply with the basic things that the international community has asked Iran to do?"

Western scientists described the announcements as incremental and long-anticipated. The new high-speed centrifuges could hasten Iran's expansion of its low-enriched uranium supply, which could be used for a bomb only if Iran were to take the extreme step of kicking out inspectors, withdrawing from treaty obligations and beginning further enrichment. Theoretically Iran already has enough low-enriched uranium to produce the weapons-grade uranium necessary for a single nuclear bomb, arms control experts say.

The uranium fuel pellet factory is meant to eventually produce 10 tons of fuel rods a year for the research reactor in Arak and others, including the Russian-built reactor at Bushehr, nuclear scientist Vajihollah Asadi said at the Esfahan event.

Turning its low-enriched uranium into reactor fuel could reassure the West that Iran has no intention of further refining its stockpile. But plutonium extracted from the spent fuel from Arak could be used for a bomb. That's only if Iran were to build a reprocessing facility, which it says it won't do.

"They don't have one and say they're not interested in one," said Paul Kerr, an arms control expert at the Congressional Research Service. "The reactor is under safeguard. They can't [create weapons-grade plutonium] without getting caught."

Building a plutonium nuclear warhead is also more technically challenging than a uranium bomb.

The Obama administration this week announced that it would begin regularly joining the table at nuclear talks involving Iran and European nations, Russia and China. The Bush administration had avoided the negotiations until sending an observer to a session last year.

Iran's nuclear achievements have increasingly become wedded to its national identity and official ideology, making it harder for the leadership to back down. The music video clip broadcast Thursday spliced scenes of nuclear installations and scientists in laboratories and demonstrations of Iranians holding up portraits of the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who led the Islamic Revolution that put the clergy in power.

"The name of Iran and Iranian nation is shining like the sun, in the world of wisdom and knowledge," vocalist Nima Masiha sang. "If science and wisdom go together, they can elevate the status of mankind.

Mostaghim is a special correspondent.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-iran-nuclear10-2009apr10.1.3632203.story>

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Washington Times

April 12, 2009

Iran Claims Control of Full Nuclear Fuel Cycle

By Ali Akbar Dareini, Associated Press

TEHRAN--Iran now controls the entire cycle for producing nuclear fuel, the Iranian president said Saturday, highlighting his country's growing capabilities at a time when the U.S. wants to negotiate with Iran over its nuclear program.

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's comments came two days after the inauguration of a facility that produces uranium oxide fuel pellets for a planned heavy-water reactor - the final step in the long, sophisticated nuclear fuel cycle.

"Today, with the grace of God, Iran is a country controlling the entire nuclear fuel cycle," Mr. Ahmadinejad said on state television.

The step is significant toward furthering Iran's nuclear energy capabilities and, an analyst said, could be designed to strengthen Iran's position at a time when the Obama administration says it would negotiate with Iran over its nuclear program.

However, it is less worrying for the West in terms of its potential to be used in nuclear weapons, rather than Iran's advanced enriched uranium program.

Spent fuel from heavy-water reactors can eventually be reprocessed to produce plutonium for a warhead, but that would still take many years. Iran is already believed to have enough enriched uranium that could be used to build a nuclear weapon, should Tehran decide to do so.

The United States and its allies have expressed concern over Iran's developing nuclear program for fear it is masking a weapons program. Tehran says its nuclear program is only designed to create peaceful energy.

Mr. Ahmadinejad has announced several times in the past that Iran has the knowledge necessary to produce its own fuel, but with the opening of the new facility near the central city of Isfahan, the Islamic republic says it now has the capability on a large scale.

Mr. Ahmadinejad's comments come after U.S. administration officials said early last week that U.S. diplomats would attend group talks with Iran over its suspect nuclear program. That would be a major departure from President George W. Bush's policy of isolation from a nation he once deemed evil.

Mr. Ahmadinejad said Thursday during the inauguration ceremony that his country is open to talks with the U.S. and other countries over its nuclear program. But he insisted the talks must be based on respect for Iran's rights, suggesting the West should not try to force Tehran to stop uranium enrichment.

Mr. Ahmadinejad said Iran would present a new proposal for negotiations, saying "conditions have changed" - an apparent reference to President Obama's election and Iran's progress in its nuclear program.

Iran also has been making strides in its efforts to enrich uranium. Officials said Thursday that Iran had increased the number of centrifuges - machines used to enrich uranium - at its enrichment facility in Natanz, and that a new, more advanced type of centrifuge had been tested.

Mr. Ahmadinejad said the next step is to build nuclear power plants without help from foreign countries.

Iran is putting the finishing touches on a nuclear power plant with Russian help in Bushehr, in southern Iran, but the uranium fuel to power the plant is imported. Tehran also plans to build a 360-megawatt light-water nuclear power plant in Darkhovin, in southwestern Khuzestan province, which it will power with its own fuel.

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/apr/12/iran-claims-control-of-full-nuclear-fuel-cycle/>

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Tehran Times
13 April 2009

Nuclear Talks must be Approved by the Majlis: Larijani

Tehran Times Political Desk

TEHRAN – The Iranian government will only conduct international negotiations on the nuclear issue that are approved by the parliament and the legislature will closely monitor all such talks, Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani said here on Sunday.

Larijani told MPs during a Majlis session that Iran's mastery of the complete nuclear fuel cycle has stopped the enemies' propaganda.

He added that the proposal by some members of the 5+1 group calling for more intrusive inspections of Iran's nuclear activities is not legal

http://www.tehrantimes.com/Index_view.asp?code=192112

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RIA Novosti
10 April 2009

Russia to Test Launch 14 ICBMs in 2009 - Missile Forces Chief

MOSCOW (RIA Novosti) - Russia plans 14 test launches of ballistic missiles this year, the commander of the Strategic Missile Forces (SMF) said on Friday.

"Fourteen launches of intercontinental ballistic missiles of various types are planned for 2009," Col. Gen. Nikolai Solovtsov said.

He also said the SMF would have two mobile Topol-M missile regiments.

Russia's first such regiment was deployed near the town of Teikovo near Moscow in December 2006.

"By late 2009, we plan to complete the provision of the second missile regiment with Topol-M missile systems," Solovtsov said.

He also said the SMF would adopt six new missile systems in 2009, including Topol-M.

"Six missile systems will enter service with the SMF in 2009," the commander said.

He also noted that the RS-20 Voyevoda-M (SS-18 Satan) intercontinental ballistic missile, introduced almost 21 years ago, would remain in service until 2019.

"The extension of the service life of the [Voyevoda-M] missile will allow us to keep these missiles, the most powerful in the world, in the SMF for another eight to 10 years," the general said.

Russia reportedly has 88 SS-18 systems, most of them deployed at the Dombrovsky missile base in the Orenburg Region, in the southern Urals.

Russia successfully test launched earlier on Friday a Topol intercontinental ballistic missile to assess the possibility of extending its service life up to 22 years, an SMF spokesman said.

The missile was in active service from 1987 until 2007, and deployed with the 54th Strategic Missile Division near Teikovo.

The RS-12M Topol (SS-25 Sickle) is a single-warhead intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) approximately the same size and shape as the U.S. Minuteman ICBM. The first Topol missiles were put into service in 1985. The missile has a maximum range of 10,000 km (6,125 miles) and can carry a 550-kiloton nuclear warhead.

Although the service life of the SS-25 has already been extended to 21 years after a series of successful test launches last year, the missile will be phased out in the next decade and replaced by mobile Topol-M (SS-27 Stalin) missile systems.

The SMF reportedly have a total of 541 ICBMs, including 306 Topol and 59 Topol-M missiles.

<http://en.rian.ru/russia/20090410/121052406.html>

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RIA Novosti
10 April 2009 13:09

Russia Test Launches Topol Missile to Extend Service Life

MOSCOW (RIA Novosti) - Russia successfully test launched on Friday a Topol intercontinental ballistic missile to assess the possibility of extending its service life up to 22 years, a spokesman for the Strategic Missile Forces (SMF) said.

"The dummy warhead has hit a designated target at the Kura testing grounds on the Kamchatka peninsula with the required precision," Col. Alexander Vovk said.

The missile was in active service from 1987 until 2007, and deployed with the 54th Strategic Missile Division near the town of Teikovo, about 150 miles (240 km) northeast of Moscow.

The successful test launch of the missile, from the Plesetsk space center in northern Russia, will allow the Topol's service life to be extended to 22 years, the spokesman said.

The RS-12M Topol (SS-25 Sickle) is a single-warhead intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) approximately the same size and shape as the U.S. Minuteman ICBM. The first Topol missiles were put into service in 1985.

The missile has a maximum range of 10,000 km (6,125 miles) and can carry a 550-kiloton nuclear warhead.

Although the service life of the SS-25 was already extended to 21 years after a series of successful test launches last year, the missile will be progressively retired over the next decade and replaced by mobile Topol-M (SS-27 Stalin) missile systems.

According to available data, Russia's SMF has a total of 541 ICBMs, including 306 Topol missiles and 59 Topol-M missiles.

<http://en.rian.ru/russia/20090410/121047976.html>

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RIA Novosti
10 April 2009

Russia Delivers First Batch of Nuclear Fuel to India

MOSCOW (RIA Novosti) - Russia's TVEL, a subsidiary of state-controlled nuclear power company Atomenergoprom, has delivered its first shipment of nuclear fuel for Indian heavy-water reactors, Atomenergoprom said Friday.

"Thirty metric tons of pellets were delivered to the nuclear fuel complex in Hyderabad for further conversion into fuel for the Rajasthan nuclear power plant," the company said.

In line with a \$700 million contract signed February 11 with New Delhi on fuel supplies to Indian nuclear power plants, Russia is to supply India with 2,000 metric tons of uranium pellets.

The fuel contract is another step in burgeoning nuclear cooperation between Russia and India. On December 5, Moscow signed an agreement with Delhi to build an additional four reactors for the Kudankulam nuclear power plant, where it is finishing two reactors under an earlier contract, and construct new nuclear plants in India.

TVEL is one of the world's leading manufacturers of nuclear fuel, which it supplies to 73 commercial (17% of the global market) and 30 research reactors in 13 countries.

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20090410/121046504.html>

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RIA Novosti
10 April 2009

Russia to Keep SS-18 Ballistic Missiles in Service Until 2019

MOSCOW (RIA Novosti) - The RS-20V Voevoda-M (SS-18 Satan) intercontinental ballistic missile, introduced almost 21 years ago, will remain in service until 2019, the commander of Russia's Strategic Missile Forces (SMF) said on Friday.

"The extension in the service life of the [Voevoda-M] missile will allow us to keep these missiles, the most powerful in the world, in the SMF for another eight-10 years," Col. Gen. Nikolai Solovtsov said.

"We have no technical difficulties in accomplishing this task," he added.

The general also said Russia was developing a new ICBM comparable to the SS-18, and would gradually decommission older versions of the missile "in order to ensure nuclear safety."

According to publicly available sources, Russia currently has 88 SS-18 missile silo launchers, most of them deployed at the Dombrovsky missile base in the Orenburg Region, southern Urals.

The missile is armed with a warhead fitting 10 multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles (MIRVs) with a yield of 550 to 750 kilotons each.

It has a maximum range of 11,000 km (6,800 miles) with a launch mass of over 210 tons and a payload of 8.8 tons.

<http://en.rian.ru/russia/20090410/121049655.html>

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The Hindu
11 April 2009

Russia Considers Pakistan a Principal Nuclear Threat: Expert

Washington (PTI): Describing Pakistan as the "principal" nuclear threat to Russia, an eminent foreign policy and security expert has claimed that Moscow would support any US endeavour to take away Islamabad's atomic weapons in case of any destabilisation in the Islamic nation.

"Russian authorities for many years have been indicating that Pakistan was a much more serious problem, both for nuclear proliferation and for nuclear terrorism, than Iran," Alexei Arbatov, Chairman of the Non-Proliferation Programme of Carnegie Moscow Centre, said at a recent seminar here.

"Russia has been living already for more than a decade within reach of Pakistani nuclear missiles and without any means to defend against them. So Russia considered and considers Pakistan to be the principal threat from the point of view of nuclear proliferation," he said.

Mr. Arbatov was a member of the Russian Parliament from 1994 to 2003 and Deputy Chairman of the Defence Committee. Author of several books, he is also a member of the Advisory Council to the Foreign Minister and heads a panel on strategic planning for the Scientific Board of the Security Council of Russian Federation.

<http://www.thehindu.com/holnus/001200904111503.htm>

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Global Security Newswire
Monday, April 13, 2009

Russia Faces Chemical Weapons Disposal Funding Challenges

A Russian official reaffirmed last week that the nation has not yet received the full amount of anticipated funding for its chemical weapons disposal work from other countries, a problem that is likely to be exacerbated by the global economic downturn, Interfax reported (see *GSN*, Feb. 27).

"Due to the financial crisis the amount of international help will reduce, and Russia will have to rely on itself," Grigory Rapota, head of the state commission on chemical disarmament, said during an event Thursday near the disposal plant at Leonidovka.

Russia at the beginning of this year had received nearly \$584 million in outside support for chemical disarmament, 46 percent of the amount expected from nations participating in the Group of Eight Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction, Interfax reported. Some support comes in the form of technical assistance, Rapota said.

"There are certain obligations, which were assumed by the Chemical Weapons Convention states parties voluntarily and are reflected in chemical disarmament plans. And if these obligations are not being met, this puts us in a difficult situation," he said.

The international convention requires Russia to eliminate its chemical arsenal, which originally stood at 40,000 metric tons of warfare agents, by April 2012. The disposal program as of March 20 had destroyed 12,000 metric tons, 30.1 percent of the entire stockpile, Interfax reported (Interfax I, April 10).

Research and development work for Russia's chemical disarmament program could be one of the victims this year of a \$4.1 billion reduction in defense funding, Interfax reported.

"The budget funding of the scientific research for national defense purposes was decreased by [\$338 million], which resulted in the recall of 363 research and development projects in the field of national defense," a Russian Defense Ministry source said (Interfax II, April 10).

http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20090413_2704.php

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Yonhap News
April 13, 2009

S. Korea Consults with U.S. on Its PSI Role: Ministry

By Lee Chi-dong

SEOUL, (Yonhap) -- South Korea has informed the United States and some other allies of its plan to join the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), officials here said Monday.

"We consulted with allied countries including the U.S. on the issue," foreign ministry spokesman Moon Taeyoung said in his regular press briefing. "We notified them of our plan."

Moon did not provide details including when and how the notification was made, as well as the countries' responses.

"I don't want to go into details as I think you can guess (their responses)," he added.

He reaffirmed that the government will soon decide when to announce its participation in the PSI, taking into account the U.N. measure against North Korea's April 5 rocket launch. The PSI, launched in 2003 by the U.S., is a global effort to stop the trafficking of weapons of mass destruction and related materials. North Korea is apparently a main target.

The 15-member U.N. Security Council is about to issue a presidential statement condemning the launch which Pyongyang claims was aimed at sending a satellite into orbit but is suspected to be cover for a long-range missile test.

According to an agreed-upon draft, expected to be endorsed formally on Tuesday (Seoul time), the Security Council concludes the North's launch contravenes Resolution 1718, which prohibits the communist nation from conducting a ballistic missile test.

"If the presidential statement is adopted, the U.N. Security Council would be able to send a clear message to the international community on North Korea by issuing a swift and unified response," Moon said.

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WAtoday.com.au – Australia
April 11, 2009

West Warned on Nuclear Terrorist Threat from Pakistan

The next few months will be crucial in defusing a global terrorist threat that would be even deadlier than the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, a leading Washington counter-terrorism expert warns.

David Kilcullen — a former Australian army lieutenant colonel who helped devise the US troop surge that revitalised the American campaign in Iraq — fears Pakistan is at risk of falling under al-Qaeda control.

If that were to happen, the terrorist group could end up controlling what Dr Kilcullen calls "Talibanistan". "Pakistan is what keeps me awake at night," said Dr Kilcullen, who was a specialist adviser for the Bush administration and is now a consultant to the Obama White House.

"Pakistan has 173 million people and 100 nuclear weapons, an army which is bigger than the American army, and the headquarters of al-Qaeda sitting in two-thirds of the country which the Government does not control."

Compounding that threat, the Pakistani security establishment ignored direction from the elected Government in Islamabad as waves of extremist violence spread across the whole country — not just in the tribal wilds of the Afghan border region.

"We have to face the fact that if Pakistan collapses it will dwarf anything we have seen so far in whatever we're calling the war on terror now," Dr Kilcullen told *The Age* during an interview at his Washington office. Late last month, when US President Barack Obama unveiled his new policy on Afghanistan and Pakistan, he warned that al-Qaeda would fill the vacuum if Afghanistan collapsed, and that the terror group was already rooted in Pakistan, plotting more attacks on the US.

As the US implements its new strategy in Central Asia, Dr Kilcullen warned that time was running out for international efforts to pull both countries back from the brink.

Special US Envoy Richard Holbrooke has been charged with trying to broker a regional agreement by reaching out to Iran, Russia and China. Dr Kilcullen spoke highly of Mr Holbrooke's talent as a diplomat: "This is exactly what he's good at and it could work.

"But will it? It requires regional architecture to give the Pakistani security establishment a sense of security, which might make them stop supporting the Taliban," he said.

"The best-case scenario is that the US can deal with Afghanistan, with President Obama giving leadership while the extra American troops succeed on the ground, at the same time as Mr Holbrooke seeks a regional security deal."

The worst case was that Washington would fail to stabilise Afghanistan, Pakistan would collapse and al-Qaeda would end up running what he called "Talibanistan".

"This is not acceptable; you can't have al-Qaeda in control of Pakistan's missiles," he said.

"It's too early to tell which way it will go. We'll start to know about July. That's the peak fighting season and the extra troops will have hit the ground, and it will be a month out from the Afghan presidential election."

Dr Kilcullen also cautioned Western governments against focusing too heavily on Afghanistan at the expense of the intensifying crisis in Pakistan, because "the Kabul tail was wagging the dog". Contrasting the challenges in the two countries, Dr Kilcullen described Afghanistan as a campaign to defend a reconstruction program.

"It's not really about al-Qaeda," he argued. "Afghanistan doesn't worry me. Pakistan does."

However, he was hesitant about the level of resources and likely impact of Washington's new drive to emulate the effectiveness of an Iraq-style "surge" by sending an additional 21,000 troops to Afghanistan.

"In Iraq, five brigades went into the centre of Baghdad in five months," he said.

"In Afghanistan, it will be two combat brigades (across the country) in 12 months. That will have much less of a punch effect than we had in Iraq.

"We can muddle through in Afghanistan. It is problematic and difficult, but we know what to do. What we don't know is if we have the time or if we can afford the cost of what needs to be done."

Dr Kilcullen said that a fault line had developed in the West's grasp of the situation on either side of the Durand Line, the long-disputed border between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

"In Afghanistan, it's easy to understand, difficult to execute. But in Pakistan, it is very difficult to understand and it's extremely difficult for us to generate any leverage, because Pakistan does not want our help.

"In a sense there is no Pakistan; no single set of opinion. Pakistan has a military and intelligence establishment that refuses to follow the directions of its civilian leadership.

"They have a tradition of using regional extremist groups as unconventional counterweights against India's regional influence.

"The (Pakistani) military also has an almost pathological phobia by which it sees al-Qaeda as 'this little problem', as distinct from what they see as the main game opposing India.

"In terms of a substantial threat, Pakistan is the main problem we face today.

"We don't have a responsible actor to work through in Islamabad. My judgement, to use diplomatic speak, is that Pakistan has yet to demonstrate genuine commitment."

<http://www.watoday.com.au/world/west-warned-on-nuclear-terrorist-threat-from-pakistan-20090413-a4ac.html?page=-1>

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Deccan Herald - India

13 April 2009

Pak to Construct Two Nuclear Power Plants with Chinese Help

Islamabad, PTI:

Pakistan has given a go ahead for construction of two more nuclear power plants of 340 MW each with the Chinese help at the Chashma complex at a cost of USD 2.37 billion, a media report said today.

The two plants, to be supplied by China, will involve a foreign exchange component of USD 1.75 billion, the Business Recorder newspaper quoted its sources as saying.

The government has approved the proposal, but it was not made part of the formal agenda of a recent meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council and was distributed among members of the panel and provincial officials at the end of the meeting without necessary details, the sources were quoted as saying.

"Please do not seek any details and clarification about the project. Approve it in the national interest," one official reportedly told the committee's meeting.

China had agreed in principle to provide two nuclear power plants to help meet Pakistan's growing electricity needs and was about to sign an agreement during a visit by the Chinese President to Islamabad.

However, China shelved the project after the issue was reported in the media, arguing that it would not indulge in any controversy, sources said.

A fresh endeavour was made to streamline negotiations to acquire the nuclear plants when Pakistan's Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee chairman visited Beijing some years ago.

Earlier, Pakistan was expecting nuclear power plants with a total generating capacity of 1,000 MW and indigenous fabrication of nuclear plants with a capacity of 300 MW with Chinese assistance.

However, the capacity has now been reduced. The Central Development Working Party headed by former Planning Commission Deputy Chairman Akram Sheikh has approved the setting up of Nuclear Fuel Enrichment Plant at a cost of Rs 13.7 billion, including a foreign exchange component of Rs 8.13 billion.

However, it remains unclear how Pakistan and China will get approval for the move from the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

Islamabad has been pressing the world community to forge a civil nuclear cooperation regime similar to the one extended to India so that it can gain access to nuclear technology and materials.

The Chashma site already has two power plants built with Chinese help. The first nuclear reactor now generates 300 MW and the second one is currently being completed.

Pakistan plans to increase the share of nuclear power from one per cent to 5.4 per cent by establishing atomic plants capable of generating 8,800 MW by 2030.

<http://www.deccanherald.com/Content/Apr132009/foreign20090413129951.asp?section=updatenews>

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Global Security Newswire
April 13, 2009

Obama not Expected to Soon Acknowledge Pakistani Nuclear Status, Expert Says

U.S. President Barack Obama is unlikely to quickly pursue negotiations aimed at officially acknowledging Pakistan's status as a nuclear-armed state, one analyst told the Indo-Asian News Service (see *GSN*, June 16, 2008).

"To acknowledge Pakistan's nuclear weapon status, I don't know if that's something on which [the] Obama administration would be moving on fairly quickly," said Reva Bhalla, head of analysis for the independent analysis group STRATFOR.

The United States completed a civilian nuclear cooperation agreement with India last year, prompting Islamabad to complain that it has not received equal treatment. India and Pakistan both possess nuclear weapons, but neither is acknowledged as a nuclear-weapon state in the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

"The whole point is how to integrate Pakistan under a better international regime and how to make Pakistan's nuclear program more transparent," Bhalla said. "Pakistan of course would ... seek access to nuclear technology and nuclear fuel but that's not going to pass Congress easily."

"U.S. congressional officials have been dissatisfied with the handling of the A.Q. Khan nuclear proliferation debacle and, at a bare minimum, would require clarification on his status within Pakistan and a fuller accounting of his proliferation activities before they would give any consideration to officially recognizing Pakistan's nuclear weapons status," said Lisa Curtis, a senior research fellow at the Heritage Foundation (see *GSN*, Feb. 12).

However, "there are good reasons for having a discreet U.S.-Pakistan dialogue about the safety and security of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal," she said (Arun Kumar, Indo-Asian News Service/*New Kerala*, April 10).

Meanwhile, a Russian analyst called Pakistan the "principal" nuclear danger faced by Russia, the Press Trust of India reported.

"Russian authorities for many years have been indicating that Pakistan was a much more serious problem, both for nuclear proliferation and for nuclear terrorism, than Iran," said Alexei Arbatov, head of the Nonproliferation Program at the Carnegie Moscow Center.

"Russia has been living already for more than a decade within reach of Pakistani nuclear missiles and without any means to defend against them. So Russia considered and considers Pakistan to be the principal threat from the point of view of nuclear proliferation," Arbatov said.

"I think that Russia would support whatever may be done to stabilize Pakistan, to have some precautions and some tentative planning to take away Pakistani nuclear weapons, one way or the other, if the country becomes totally destabilized," he said (Lalit Jha, Press Trust of India/*Zee News*, April 11).

http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20090413_4899.php

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Daily Telegraph
13 April 2009

Pakistani Police Told to Give Taliban a Free Hand

By Ashfaq Yusufzai in Buner and Isambard Wilkinson in Islamabad

The presence of the militants has spread fear in the area only 60 miles from the capital, Islamabad.

Clashes erupted in Buner district last week after scores of Taliban moved in unopposed from the neighbouring Swat valley, where authorities struck a deal with Islamists in February to enforce Islamic law in a bid to end violence.

"We have been instructed by the government to stay away from Taliban as they are our guests and should be allowed to walk around the marketplace", said, a police officer in Pir Baba police station in Buner district. He said he had been told that any action against the Taliban could derail peace process.

Buner residents formed a militia, or "lashkar", to resist the militants and 13 people, including eight Taliban, three policemen and two villagers, were killed in clashes.

Authorities say they are negotiating with the militants to persuade them to withdraw but the Taliban have stayed put and appeared determined to take over the valley, police said.

"They are everywhere," said Arsala Khan, a deputy superintendent of police.

"They are visiting mosques, they are visiting bazaars asking people to help them in enforcing sharia," he said.

"Buner is fast turning into Swat," he added.

Authorities agreed to an Islamist demand for Islamic sharia law in Swat in February to end the fighting but critics said appeasement would only embolden the militants to take over other areas.

President Asif Ali Zardari has yet to sign into law a bill imposing sharia law in Swat valley and the president's aides have said he would only sign when peace returned to the valley.

But conservatives and the main political party in the northwest, who support the law as the only way to bring peace, say he is delaying because of liberal and American opposition.

Acting on Mr Zardari's advice, the government has referred the bill to parliament that was due to debate it later on Monday.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/pakistan/5149310/Pakistani-police-told-to-give-Taliban-a-free-hand.html>

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Miami Herald

13 April 2009

Pakistan's Move on Islamic Law seen Widening Influence of Extremists

By SAEED SHAH

ISLAMABAD -- Pakistan's president bowed to Islamists' demands Monday and agreed to impose Islamic law in part of the country's North West Frontier province, and al-Qaida-allied militants overran a neighboring district just 60 miles from the capital of Islamabad.

The takeover in Buner in the past several days, with almost no resistance from Pakistani security forces, marked a major advance for the militants, and the government's endorsement of Islamic law in Swat further increased their political clout.

In Washington, the Obama administration had no immediate comment. However, with the Taliban's advances, the military's instability or unwillingness to combat them, the government's weakness and the country's economic crisis, Pakistan constitutes the most serious security threat the administration faces.

President Asif Ali Zardari signed the agreement to introduce Sharia Islamic law in Swat, a huge valley in the North West Frontier province, a few hours after parliament, under what amounted to a death threat from the Pakistani Taliban, unanimously approved a resolution backing the move.

The Pakistani capital itself was on high alert and all but sealed off following threats of a terrorist attack,

A U.S. defense official, however, said the loss of Buner "should be a wake-up call, that (the militants) are just not going to settle for Swat. They're going to continue to consolidate power."

The takeover of Buner and the imposition of Sharia in Swat are an outgrowth of the Taliban's violent conquest of Swat, completed in February. The provincial government in the Frontier province had forged a deal with Taliban extremists, agreeing to the imposition of Islamic law in return for an end to the fighting, but the accord didn't enter into force because Zardari had hesitated to give the necessary assent.

The U.S. has voiced concerns over the deal in Swat as have members of Pakistan's small liberal elite. But politicians said they were left with few options after a band of marauding Taliban defeated the Pakistani army in Swat.

"This (Sharia) has been imposed from a position of defeat," said Iqbal Haider, a co-chairman of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, an independent group. "This is a formula for the Talibanization of Pakistan."

It appears that Western-style schools, where English is the language of instruction, could be the extremists' next target. Several schools in Islamabad closed Monday, and others in Punjab province, the country's most populous region, hurriedly beefed up their security.

In the parliamentary debate, the ruling Pakistan Peoples Party led the argument in favor of introducing Sharia law. Only one political party, the Karachi-based MQM, was critical of the deal, but it abstained rather than vote no. Farooq Sattar, a leader of the MQM, said that his party doesn't believe in "agreements made at gunpoint." Earlier Monday, Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., visiting Pakistan, had praised the country's democracy.

Zardari's spokesperson, Farahnaz Ispahani, said the president signed the Sharia agreement "after passing of unanimous resolution by parliament which reflects the wishes of the people of Pakistan."

In Swat, which has suffered a two-year campaign of terror at the hands of the Taliban, there was widespread relief over Zardari's assent. Since the deal was reached with the provincial authorities in February, Taliban forces have taken a much lower profile, but the delay in getting Islamabad's approval raised fears that the gunmen would be back on the streets.

According to reports from Swat late Monday, residents were celebrating by firing guns in the air and handing out candy. The Swat Taliban fighters said they "appreciated" the parliament's endorsement of the deal.

Mehmood Shah, an analyst who formerly was a senior official in the Frontier province, said the Pakistan government "doesn't have a plan" for dealing with the extremists. He said its lack of a strategy is contributing to the militancy's spread.

Swat, a mountainous region, was Pakistan's top tourist destination before Pakistani Taliban militants became entrenched there in 2007. The militants, who are based in the semi-autonomous tribal area west of Swat, are allied with al-Qaida. Until this week, Swat was the only "settled" area in Pakistan - a regular part of the country - that militants have annexed.

The Sharia agreement applies not only in Swat but also in surrounding districts, including Buner to its southeast and Dir to its west. Dir, which borders Afghanistan, appears to be the next Taliban target.

About a week ago, hundreds of armed militants moved into Buner district, which has a population of around 500,000, and killed three policemen and two residents. Now, without resistance by the armed forces, they have taken over a shrine, the homes of tribal leaders, and they now patrol the area, imploring the youth there to join them, according to local media reports. From Buner, the Taliban could go east or west to strategically important positions.

Pakistan's English-language press has been scathing about the Buner debacle. The News, a daily newspaper, said residents "had no support from the federal or provincial government and it was, in military terms, a walk-over for the Taliban."

The Daily Times, in an editorial published Sunday, said: "Pakistan needs help because it can't fight the Taliban. What should the world community do when it sees a state being usurped by terrorists who clearly intend to spread their terrorism around the world?"

(Staff writer Jonathan S. Landay contributed to this report from Washington.)

<http://www.miamiherald.com/news/world/AP/v-fullstory/story/998310.html>

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Wall Street Journal
April 14, 2009

Pakistani Peace Deal Gives New Clout to Taliban Rebels

By Zahid Hussain and Matthew Rosenberg

MINGORA, Pakistan -- Thousands of Islamist militants are pouring into Pakistan's Swat Valley and setting up training camps here, quickly making it one of the main bases for Taliban fighters and raising their threat to the government in the wake of a controversial peace deal.

President Asif Ali Zardari effectively ratified the government's deal with the Taliban Monday by signing a bill that imposes Islamic law in Swat, a key plank of the accord, hours after legislators overwhelmingly approved a resolution urging it. Pakistani officials have touted the deal, reached in February, as a way to restore peaceful order in the bloodied region -- which lies just a few hours' drive from the capital -- and halt the Taliban's advance.

Yet a visit to the Taliban-controlled valley here found mounting evidence that the deal already is strengthening the militants as a base for war. U.S. officials contend the pact has given the Taliban and its allies in al Qaeda and other Islamist groups an advantage in their long-running battle against Pakistan's military.

The number of militants in the valley swelled in the months before the deal with the Taliban was struck, and they continue to move in, say Pakistani and U.S. officials. They now estimate there are between 6,000 and 8,000 fighters in Swat, nearly double the number at the end of last year.

Taliban leaders here make no secret of their ultimate aim. "Our objective is to drive out Americans and their lackeys" from Pakistan and Afghanistan, said Muslim Khan, a spokesman for the group, in an interview here. "They are not Muslims and we have to throw them out."

Militant training camps are springing up across the valley's thickly forested mountainsides. "Young men with no prospect of employment and lack of education facilities are joining the militants," said Abdur Rehman, a schoolteacher in Swat.

Until the fighting began nearly two years ago in the valley, it was a popular weekend getaway for well-heeled Pakistanis, known for its alpine ridges, fruit orchards and trout-filled streams. With the Taliban now imposing its harsh version of Islamic law, floggings and even executions are fast becoming commonplace. Residents said many young men are joining the militants to ensure the safety of their families, who they hope will be left in peace if one of their own is fighting the government.

"We are all frightened by this brutality. No one can dare to challenge them," said Fazle Rabbi, who owns a cloth shop in Mingora, Swat's main town. The shop sits on a square that has become known among residents as "Slaughter Square" because the Taliban have begun using it to dump bodies after executions.

Since the new peace deal was made, the militants are beginning to push into neighboring areas. Last week they overpowered a village militia in the adjacent Buner district. The attack was a violation of the peace accord. But the Taliban faction that controls Swat says it has no intention of withdrawing. "We want Islamic *sharia* [law] also to be enforced in Buner," said Mr. Khan. "No one can force us out from any part of the province."

Many of the longer-term jihadist fighters are loyal to groups with ties to al Qaeda, such as Jaish-e-Mohammed. They have been hardened on battlefields in neighboring Afghanistan and the Kashmir region claimed by India and Pakistan -- underlining the growing confluence between the various Islamist groups fighting on either side of the Afghan-Pakistani border, the officials say.

The Taliban and al Qaeda were once largely confined to a mountainous ribbon that runs along the Afghan border and has long existed in a semiautonomous limbo, technically part of Pakistan but never fully under the control of its government.

In the past two years, however, the Taliban and its allies have pushed into areas where Pakistan's state had held sway, such as Swat, about 100 miles from Islamabad.

Striking peace deals with some Taliban factions is part of Pakistan's broader strategy to counter the militants. The government's logic is that such accords can exploit the groups' fractious nature; one enemy can be neutralized with a peace deal while another is defeated on the battlefield. The deals also have been struck when the army has struggled to overcome militants. In Swat, about 3,000 militants pushed four times as many soldiers out of the valley in 18 months of fighting, leaving some 1,500 people dead.

Nearly all the peace accords reached in the past few years in areas near the Afghan border, where the Taliban are strongest, have collapsed. Often they have left the militants more powerful. A similar deal in Swat fell apart last year after the Taliban renewed attacks on Pakistani forces.

The Taliban's actions since the new peace deal was unveiled have alarmed Washington, where officials fear that Swat will become an effective launching pad for expansion into Pakistan's more densely populated plains. "This is a rest stop for the Taliban, it's nothing more," said a U.S. official in Washington.

Swat now offers a glimpse of the Taliban's vision for Pakistan. They have taken control of the local government and the police, who have been ordered to shed their uniforms in favor of the traditional Shalwar Kameez, an outfit comprising a long shirt and loose trousers. They also have seized Swat's emerald mines, which extract millions of dollars a year in gemstones.

At barbershops, notices warn men not to shave their beards. Women are no longer allowed to leave their homes without their husbands or male blood relatives. Girls' schools have been reopened after initially being closed but the students must be covered from head to toe, and Taliban officials routinely inspect classrooms for violators.

"We used to have lots of cultural and extracurricular activities in the school, but all that has been stopped," said Ziaullah Yousaf Zai, a principal of a private girls' school in Mingora. "We do not want to give any pretext to the Taliban to shut the school again."

Mr. Khan, the Taliban spokesman, predicted there would soon be more executions, showing off a list of people whom the Taliban want to try in Islamic courts for what he called their "anti-Islamic" ways. The list includes senior government officials, a woman whose husband is in the U.S. military, and others. Many of them have fled or are in areas outside Taliban control

"These kinds of people should not live," said Mr. Khan, who also is a commander in the Tehrik-e-Taliban, a broader Taliban alliance focused on battling the Pakistani government.

Islamic courts haven't yet been set up in Swat because Pakistani President Zardari had delayed signing the bill to impose *sharia*, as the peace deal stipulates. Until Monday, he had maintained there first must be complete peace in the valley, though he didn't explain how he would determine that, nor did he address it Monday.

Mr. Zardari's delay was widely viewed as an attempt to save face with opponents of the deal in his own government and Washington. He relented after the Parliament vote established support from almost every national political party, said a senior official close to the president. One party walked out in opposition.

Mr. Khan had warned of more bloodshed if Islamic law was not formally imposed. "It does not matter to us whether the peace deal stays or not. No one can stop us from setting up our own courts," he said.

The Taliban were already imposing their own version of *sharia*, which has been interpreted with wide variations by Islamic scholars for centuries. Pakistani television stations recently broadcast a video of a woman being flogged by black-turbaned Taliban in Swat. Most official accounts say she was alleged to have left her house without a male blood relative.

While Mr. Khan insisted the video was a fake, he acknowledged that such an incident did happen. "As a Muslim, we cannot allow a woman to violate Islamic values," he said.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123963706622913745.html>

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China View
14 April 2009

Pakistan Parliament Approves Islamic Law in Swat Valley

ISLAMABAD, April 13 (Xinhua) -- Pakistan's parliament on Monday passed a resolution on enforcing Shariah, or Islamic law, in the restive northwestern Swat valley.

The resolution will be followed by the signing of Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari.

The Taliban militants have been fighting for the enforcement of Shariah law in Swat since 2007 by burning down girls' school, outlawing entertainment and clashing with security forces.

The Pakistani government and a Muslim cleric, a mediator for peace talks between the government and local Taliban, signed a peace deal in March in the Swat valley.

The accord was signed by the security forces and Sufi Muhammad, founding chief of a religious group Tehrik Nifaz Shariat-i-Muhammadi(TNSM).

Sufi Muhammad has been mediating peace talks in a bid to persuade the Taliban to lay down arms on the condition of the implementation of Shariah, or Islamic laws, in the region.

But the peace deal in the region has also sparked concerns around the world for fear of emboldening Taliban and al-Qaeda militants in Pakistan.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-04/14/content_11180964.htm

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Times of India

14 April 2009

Zardari Approves Sharia Law for Swat

ISLAMABAD: On a day of fast moving developments, Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari late on Monday approved the imposition of Sharia law in parts of the country's restive northwest, including Swat, in return for a controversial deal with the Taliban for laying down their arms.

Zardari signed the Nizam-e-Adl Regulation after parliament approved the measure earlier on Monday, Geo TV quoted senior North West Frontier Province (NWFP) Minister Bashir Ahmed Bilour as saying.

The regulation will see the imposition of Sharia laws in the Malkhand division of NWFP that comprises seven districts, including Swat, where the writ of the Taliban largely runs.

Zardari had given his nod for the Feb 16 deal between the NWFP government and Taliban-linked radical cleric Sufi Mohammad but balked at acceding to it in face of growing international pressure.

"We respect the mandate of the provincial government and congratulate the people," Geo TV quoted Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani as saying after the house cleared the measure, following a walkout by Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) members.

Speaking earlier on Monday after the pact was tabled in the National Assembly, Gilani said this had been done as the government wanted to build national consensus on the measure.

"We did not want to by-pass the house as the parliament is sovereign," APP news agency quoted Gilani as saying.

"We want that our hands should be strengthened and that the whole nation is behind us," he added.

"The president gave his consent (to signing the accord). He gave a go ahead to have an agreement with the local authorities. The agreement was done with our consent," Gilani maintained.

Observers here saw the statement as Gilani's bid to downplay reports that the Swat accord had become a hot potato for Zardari, who had tossed this into parliament's court, instead of ratifying it.

At the same time, it is a fact that parliament was not consulted when Zardari gave his nod for the accord.

According to The News, "Zardari does not want to be held responsible for any negative fallout if this deal backfires in future, as then parliament will be responsible".

Many Western nations, including the US termed the deal a "retrograde" step as it was seen as bowing before the Taliban and getting in return too little for giving up too much.

The deal appeared to have come unstuck last week with Sufi Muhammad winding up his peace camp and leaving Swat to protest Zardari's delay in acceding to the accord. He then clarified the pact was intact but was dependent on Zardari signing it.

Gilani, The News noted, "was also said to have been caught off guard when he received the copy of Nizam-e-Adl from the presidency to table it before parliament as he, too, like rest of the politicians was expecting the president to sign the agreement".

What apparently tipped the balance was parliamentary affairs minister Babar Awan, who advised the president against taking responsibility for the deal.

"Awan was of the view this deal should be sent to parliament for discussion, debate and subsequent approval or rejection," The News said, adding the minister said that if parliament, representing the people of Pakistan, was ready to ink the deal with Taliban, the ruling Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) government "would not be singled out in case the deal went wrong at any stage".

Protracted fighting between the Pakistani security forces and the Taliban has forced tens of thousands of civilians to flee Swat. Estimates vary, but human rights monitors believe that up to 800,000 of the valley's 1.8 million people may have left.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/Zardari-OKs-Sharia-law-in-Paks-Swat-valley/articleshow/4397501.cms>

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Center for Infectious Disease Research & Policy

Press Release

April 7, 2009

NIOSH Revises Advice to Protect Responders from Airborne Pathogens

Robert Roos

(CIDRAP News) – The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) recently revised its recommendations about personal equipment for protecting first responders from airborne pathogens in potential bioterrorism situations.

The "Recommendations for the Selection and Use of Respirators and Protective Clothing for Protection Against Biological Agents" were updated to reflect changes in equipment ratings and standards since the previous version was issued in 2001, said John Decker, associate director for emergency preparedness at NIOSH. The document was published online last week.

The revised version includes respirators rated for chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) hazards as well as updated National Fire Protection Association standards (NFPA) for protective clothing, Decker told CIDRAP News.

"A lot of this has changed over the last several years," Decker said. "In 2001 we didn't have CBRN respirators. This was part of a general review of our site and which documents needed to be updated as part of a routine process."

The recommendations call for using CBRN respirators and the highest level of protective clothing for suspected biological incidents when the type of airborne agent or the dissemination method is unknown. The guidance describes circumstances that allow for lower levels of protection, such as when the agent is known and it was disseminated in "a letter or package that can be easily bagged."

The document also discusses circumstances in which non-CBRN respirators can be used, and it addresses decontamination of protective equipment after use. It says the use of personal protective equipment should be part of a worker health and safety program that also includes preexposure immunizations and postexposure preventive treatment and medical monitoring.

NIOSH says the guidelines are "oriented toward acts of terrorism" and do not apply to controlled use of biological agents in laboratories.

<http://www.cidrap.umn.edu/cidrap/content/bt/bioprep/news/apr0709niosh.html>

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Los Angeles Times

OPINION

April 12, 2009

Help Iran Go Nuclear

By Sonni Efron

Should the United States sell advanced civilian nuclear reactors to a Middle East country that doesn't seem to need them? A country that can keep pumping oil for the next 100 years, that has a pipeline to a vast natural gas field next door and enough desert for a solar panel array of biblical proportions?

No, it's not Iran. It's the United Arab Emirates, that federation of seven states, proposing the efficient and safest nuclear-generating program money can buy. It intends to purchase third-generation nuclear reactors from France, the United States, South Korea or Japan to power and air-condition its glittering desert cities and use the surplus heat to desalinate its drinking water at the same time. And it's in the U.S. national interest to help the UAE do it, as counterintuitive as that may seem to the American right wing, the green wing or nonproliferation hawks.

Why? First, because the U.S. cannot stop the emirates from proceeding, even if we wanted to. The UAE has joined the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and an alphabet soup of other international covenants aimed at stopping proliferation and trafficking. All Congress could stop is U.S. companies from competing for the lucrative contracts.

Second, the UAE is a friendly Arab nation fighting alongside NATO in Afghanistan. It soaked up \$11.6 billion worth of U.S. exports in 2007 and has been investing in marquee American companies, including a \$7.5-billion stake in Citigroup. It hosts a U.S. Air Force base. And its Sunni rulers are, if anything, even more spooked than we are by the prospect of a hegemonic, nuclear-armed Iran.

But most important, the U.S. should endorse and assist the UAE because its proposal could serve as a model to Iran and other countries for how to build an environmentally friendly civilian nuclear plant that doesn't make the world conclude that your real goal is a nuclear bomb.

There is, of course, ample cause for concern. North Korea used spent fuel from its Yongbyon nuclear generator to extract enough plutonium for perhaps six nuclear bombs. It tested one in 2006 and gave the West another anxiety attack last weekend by firing a rocket that -- if it ever works -- could carry a plutonium warhead. Iran has opened its fuel enrichment plant in Natanz, allegedly to fuel a civilian reactor in Bushehr, which is scheduled to begin operation this year. The Iranians could end up with enough uranium for a bomb in less than 10 years.

Iran's neighbors fear not only nuclear weapons but the potential fallout from an accident. Kuwaiti officials point out that Bushehr is in earthquake territory, less than 200 miles from Kuwait City. They have reminded the Iranians of Chernobyl and noted that the winds tend to blow counterclockwise across the Persian Gulf -- toward them.

The UAE model isn't foolproof; cheating and accidents are always possible. But it's as safe as a nuclear program can be. Abu Dhabi has rejected Canadian nuclear technology because the heavy-water reactors generate plutonium-laden waste. It nixed Russian stuff as too old and risky. That leaves the U.S., Japan, South Korea and France as possible suppliers of advanced light-water reactors.

In its waning days, the Bush administration signed a civilian nuclear cooperation deal with the UAE. The deal requires approval from Congress, and the UAE is lobbying to have it taken up in May. The Obama administration should push for quick approval.

The most interesting aspect of the UAE plan is what it doesn't do. To eliminate the risk of nuclear diversion, Abu Dhabi has decided to "forgo the fuel cycle" -- it will buy its reactor fuel from abroad and return the spent fuel for reprocessing, instead of enriching its own. During European-led negotiations with Iran, Russia offered Iran a similar deal. Tehran refused, insisting on its own enrichment technology. That has only reinforced suspicions of its motives.

President Obama has vowed to try again to strike a peaceful deal with Iran. But his overture last month was promptly scorned by Tehran, including in an article on this page, as lacking in seriousness, substance and spirit of atonement for the Great Satan's longtime sins.

The White House is reportedly working on a detailed proposal. It might consider offering Iran what it says it wants: an advanced civilian nuclear program that would put Tehran in the technological vanguard. Iran could be allowed to purchase the same reactor technology that the UAE will be permitted to buy, in exchange for abandoning enrichment and allowing inspections.

Broke and busy in Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. lacks the will and wherewithal to force Iran to forswear the bomb, and sanctions haven't cowed Tehran. The only realistic way to deter Iran today is to offer it something it might genuinely want. Would advanced nuclear energy, normal relations with the U.S., an end to sanctions and less tension with its neighbors be enough to interest Tehran? Would the Iranians accept a deal from Obama that they already rejected from Moscow? Is there anything they want more than to build a bomb?

Perhaps not. But if Tehran refused, it would lose whatever credibility remains to its claim that its nuclear ambitions are purely peaceful. It would also have to stop railing that the U.S. seeks to keep it technologically backward and excluded from the elite nuclear club.

And if it said yes, then next year when Iran again observes its annual "National Nuclear Technology Day," it would actually have something to celebrate.

Sonni Efron, a Washington-based writer, is a contributing editor to Opinion.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/commentary/la-oe-efron12-2009apr12,0,420945.story>

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Wall Street Journal

OPINION

APRIL 12, 2009

What Iran Really Thinks About Talks

By MICHAEL RUBIN

On Apr. 9, Gholam Reza Aghazadeh, the head of Iran's atomic energy agency, announced that the Islamic Republic had installed 7,000 centrifuges in its Natanz uranium enrichment facility. The announcement came one day after the U.S. State Department announced it would engage Iran directly in multilateral nuclear talks.

Proponents of engagement with Tehran say dialogue provides the only way forward. Iran's progress over the past eight years, they say, is a testament to the failure of Bush administration strategy. President Barack Obama, for example, in his Mar. 21 address to the Iranian government and people, declared that diplomacy "will not be advanced by threats. We seek engagement that is honest and grounded in mutual respect."

Thus our president fulfills a pattern in which new administrations place blame for the failure of diplomacy on predecessors rather than on adversaries. The Islamic Republic is not a passive actor, however. Quite the opposite: While President Obama plays checkers, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei plays chess. The enrichment milestone is a testament both to Tehran's pro-active strategy and to Washington's refusal to recognize it.

Iran's nuclear program dates back to 1989, when the Russian government agreed to complete the reactor at Bushehr. It was a year of optimism in the West: The Iran-Iraq War ended the summer before and, with the death of revolutionary leader Ayatollah Khomeini, leadership passed to Ayatollah Khamenei and President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, both considered moderates.

At the beginning of the year, George H.W. Bush offered an olive branch to Tehran, declaring in his inaugural address, "Good will begets good will. Good faith can be a spiral that endlessly moves on." The mood grew more euphoric in Europe. In 1992, the German government, ever eager for new business opportunities and arguing that trade could moderate the Islamic Republic, launched its own engagement initiative.

It didn't work. While U.S. and European policy makers draw distinctions between reformers and hard-liners in the Islamic Republic, the difference between the two is style, not substance. Both remain committed to Iran's nuclear program. Former Iranian President Mohammad Khatami, for example, called for a Dialogue of Civilizations. The European Union (EU) took the bait and, between 2000 and 2005, nearly tripled trade with Iran.

It was a ruse. Iranian officials were as insincere as European diplomats were greedy, gullible or both. Iranian officials now acknowledge that Tehran invested the benefits reaped into its nuclear program.

On June 14, 2008, for example, Abdollah Ramezanzadeh, Mr. Khatami's spokesman, debated advisers to current Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad at the University of Gila in northern Iran. Mr. Ramezanzadeh criticized Mr. Ahmadinejad for his defiant rhetoric, and counseled him to accept the Khatami approach: "We should prove to the entire world that we want power plants for electricity. Afterwards, we can proceed with other activities," Mr. Ramezanzadeh said. The purpose of dialogue, he argued further, was not to compromise, but to build confidence and

avoid sanctions. "We had an overt policy, which was one of negotiation and confidence building, and a covert policy, which was continuation of the activities," he said.

The strategy was successful. While today U.S. and European officials laud Mr. Khatami as a peacemaker, it was on his watch that Iran built and operated covertly its Natanz nuclear enrichment plant and, at least until 2003, a nuclear weapons program as well.

Iran's responsiveness to diplomacy is a mirage. After two years of talks following exposure of its Natanz facility, Tehran finally acquiesced to a temporary enrichment suspension, a move which Secretary of State Colin Powell called "a little bit of progress," and the EU hailed.

But, just last Sunday, Hassan Rowhani, Iran's chief nuclear negotiator at the time, acknowledged his government's insincerity. The Iranian leadership agreed to suspension, he explained in an interview with the government-run news Web site, Aftab News, "to counter global consensus against Iran," adding, "We did not accept suspension in construction of centrifuges and continued the effort. . . . We needed a greater number." What diplomats considered progress, Iranian engineers understood to be an opportunity to expand their program.

In his March 24 press conference, Mr. Obama said, "I'm a big believer in persistence." Making the same mistake repeatedly, however, is neither wise nor realism; it is arrogant, naïve and dangerous.

When Mr. Obama declared on April 5 that "All countries can access peaceful nuclear energy," the state-run daily newspaper Resalat responded with a front page headline, "The United States capitulates to the nuclear goals of Iran." With Washington embracing dialogue without accountability and Tehran embracing diplomacy without sincerity, it appears the Iranian government is right.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123958201328712205.html>

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