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April 21, 2009
Global security Newswire

Russia Would Accept Obama's Nuclear Plan with Conditions, Medvedev says

Russia would support a nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament agenda laid out by U.S. President Barack Obama if Washington adhered to terms including a prohibition against space-based nuclear weapons, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said yesterday (see *GSN*, April 6).

Speaking in Prague on April 5, Obama vowed to push for Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty ratification, roll back the U.S. nuclear arsenal and take new steps to curb nuclear proliferation (see *GSN*, April 20).

Moscow and Washington this month are set to begin talks on reducing their nuclear stockpiles under a follow-up pact to the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (see *GSN*, April 17).

"We noted what was said by the U.S. president in Prague that (disarmament) can be reached under a number of conditions," Medvedev said in a speech in Helsinki, according to Reuters. "These conditions are fair, but I would want to cite more conditions needed to achieve such a treaty."

Along with the space weapons bans, Moscow's demands include requiring nuclear weapons to be eliminated rather than merely removed from their delivery vehicles and banning conventional force buildups aimed at offsetting nuclear-weapon reductions (see *GSN*, June 18, 2008).

Medvedev also reaffirmed Russian opposition to a European missile shield planned under the Bush administration (see *GSN*, April 17). Obama has not formally said whether he plans to deploy the defenses, which would include 10 missile interceptors in Poland and a radar station in the Czech Republic.

"We are very concerned about the prospects of a unilateral deployment of antimissile systems ... which complicates nuclear disarmament," Medvedev said. "Truly global antimissile defense cannot match the interests of only one or several states. Its parameters cannot be set unilaterally" (Young/Dyomkin, [Reuters](#), April 20).

http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20090421_3971.php

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RIA Novosti
24 April 2009

Russian, U.S. Officials Discuss Strategic Arms Reduction in Rome

ROME, April 24 (RIA Novosti) -- The first round of Russian-U.S. consultations on a new strategic arms reductions treaty began in Rome on Friday.

The Strategic Arms Reductions Treaty (START 1), signed in 1991, obliges Russia and the U.S. to reduce nuclear warheads to 6,000 and their delivery vehicles to 1,600 each. The treaty expires on December 5 this year.

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Rose Gottemoeller and Russia's Anatoly Antonov, the director of the Foreign Ministry's department for security and disarmament, are leading the negotiations.

The director of the North American Department at the Foreign Ministry, Igor Neverov, told RIA Novosti on Thursday that the discussions would continue on May 7 in Washington at a meeting between Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

Earlier in the week during an official visit to Helsinki, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said the new deal to replace START-1 must also cover delivery systems.

In 2002, a follow-up agreement on strategic offensive arms reduction was concluded in Moscow. The agreement, known as the Moscow Treaty, envisioned cuts to 1,700-2,200 warheads by December 2012.

Medvedev and U.S. President Barack Obama agreed during their London meeting earlier this month on an immediate start to talks on a new strategic arms reduction treaty.

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20090424/121289930.html>

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Deutsche Welle
24 April 2009

Bundestag Debates Disarmament, Opposition Demands Nuclear-Free Germany

Germany's opposition parties have urged the government to press for a nuclear-free Germany, saying the withdrawal of US nuclear weapons based in Germany would be signal that NATO is serious about disarmament.

German parliamentarians have come out in support of US president Barack Obama's vision of a nuclear-free world during a one-hour debate in Germany's Bundestag, or lower house of parliament, on Friday.

"The time is right for a new beginning on nuclear disarmament," Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said, referring to an agreement earlier this month between US President Barack Obama and his Russian counterpart, Dimitry Medvedev, aimed at negotiating a new deal on strategic nuclear arms reduction.

In the debate, the German foreign minister outlined steps which he said were crucial for reaching the goal of a nuclear-free world.

He said US-Russian talks on a follow-up to the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START 1), due to expire in December, must be successfully completed. In addition, Iran and North Korea - two countries thought to be on the threshold of becoming nuclear powers - must be convinced to enter talks on their nuclear programs as proposed by the US president. Other efforts must be made on reducing the number of short- and medium-range nuclear weapons and to unfreeze negotiations on conventional arms reduction.

Scrap Nukes in Germany

In separate motions, Germany's opposition parties - the environmentalist Greens, the liberal Free Democrats (FDP) and the Left party - called on the government to press for the removal of American tactical nuclear weapons based on German soil.

The weapons are a remnant of the Cold War, although details about their number and location are not known.

"It's a myth that the scrapping of these weapons would go along with a loss of security for Germany and reduced influence in decision-making at NATO," the FDP's foreign policy expert Werner Hoyer said in reference to the government's stance that the weapons are important.

Gregor Gysi, the parliamentary leader of the Left party, also urged Chancellor Angela Merkel to abandon her policy of participation in NATO's nuclear strategy.

Under NATO policy, non-nuclear alliance members must provide troops and technical assistance in the event of a nuclear strike. Greece and Canada have already opted out of this strategy.

Gysi said Germany should become the third NATO country to do so.

"The idea that a departure from this policy would diminish German influence in NATO is Cold War thinking," he added.

Cool Response by the Government

Eckart von Klaeden, foreign policy expert of Chancellor Merkel's conservative CDU, expressed skepticism about the demands.

"Unfortunately we've seen a rapid increase in the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the world," he said.

Stressing that Iran was on the verge of becoming a nuclear power, and that India and Pakistan are eager to upgrade their nuclear weapons technology, he said that the tactical nuclear arms based in Germany were an important part of NATO's policy of nuclear deterrence.

"President Obama himself has stressed," he concluded, "that his drive towards disarmament must go hand in hand with maintaining security for his country and that of its NATO partners."

The Social Democratic-conservative coalition government used its large majority to turn down the motions put forward by the opposition.

A nuclear-free Germany can only be part of NATO's disarmament initiative, they said, and not the start of it.

<http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,4202694,00.html>

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RIA Novosti
24 April 2009

Russia, U.S. to Hold Full-Scale Arms Reduction Talks in Mid-May

ROME, April 24 (RIA Novosti) - Russian-U.S. negotiations on a new strategic arms reduction treaty will take place in May in Washington, a Russian Foreign Ministry official said on Friday.

The Strategic Arms Reductions Treaty (START 1), signed in 1991, obliges Russia and the United States to reduce nuclear warheads to 6,000 and their delivery vehicles to 1,600 each. The treaty expires on December 5 this year.

"The first round of full-scale negotiations between Russia and the United States on a [new] strategic arms reduction treaty will be held in mid-May in Washington," said Anatoly Antonov, director of the Foreign Ministry's department for security and disarmament, who led the Russian delegation at the U.S. Embassy in Rome earlier on Friday.

He said the Rome meeting had a limited format and was of a preliminary nature.

In an interview with RIA Novosti, Assistant Secretary of State Rose Gottemoeller, head of the U.S. delegation, said in Russian: "Yes, it was a quick start."

She stressed that discussion of a new treaty would continue in the course of Lavrov's visit to Washington on May 7.

Earlier in the week, during an official visit to Helsinki, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said the new deal to replace START 1 must also cover delivery systems.

In 2002, a follow-up agreement on strategic offensive arms reduction was concluded in Moscow. The agreement, known as the Moscow Treaty, envisioned cuts to 1,700-2,200 warheads by December 2012.

Medvedev and U.S. President Barack Obama agreed at their first meeting in London earlier this month on an immediate start to talks on a new strategic arms reduction treaty.

<http://en.rian.ru/russia/20090424/121294470.html>

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China View
22 April 2009

Chinese Navy Sees Role Further Afield

By Xinhua Writers Li Zihui, Quan Xiaoshu, Zhu Xudong

BEIJING, April 22 (Xinhua) -- The Chinese navy is undergoing a transformation to protect the country and its maritime rights, experts said ahead of the 60th founding anniversary of the navy on Thursday.

The navy has been following the offshore defense strategy in the 1980s. A long coastline and developing sea-borne trade mean China needs to have a strong blue-water presence, said Zhuang Congyong, a researcher with the Naval Command Academy (NCA) of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA).

"Nowadays, threats to China's maritime safety and development include maritime terrorism, pirates, international crime and other unconventional challenges. It is the sacred responsibility of our armed forces to protect our sea territory and to maintain our maritime rights and interests."

The White Paper on China's National Defense in 2008 issued early this year said the navy is "developing capabilities of conducting cooperation in distant waters and countering non-traditional security threats, so as to push forward the overall transformation of the service."

To Liu Song, former commissar on the Yangtze frigate, one of the first warships of the Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN), the escort mission of the Chinese navy across the Indian Ocean was beyond his imagination half a century ago as the navy was weak when it was founded 60 years ago.

Chinese leader Mao Zedong spent four days on the Yangtze frigate and Luoyang frigate in 1953 on his first tour of the navy." Chairman Mao reminded us that aggression came from the sea during the Opium War (1840-1842). He called for the building of a strong navy to combat the imperialism aggression," Liu said.

Due to the U.S. blockade, the Korean War and conflicts with the Soviet Union, the Chinese navy kept troops close to land from the 1950s to the end of the 1970s under the strategy of inshore defense. Since the 1980s, the Navy has realized a strategic transformation to offshore defensive operations.

The White Paper says the navy comprises the submarine, surface vessel, aviation, marine corps and coastal defense wings.

Wu Shengli, commander of the Navy, said it will accelerate researching and building new-generation weapons to boost the ability to fight in regional sea wars. Aircraft and torpedoes, long-range missiles with high accuracy, submarines with superb invisibility and endurance and electronic weapons and facilities are also on the Navy's agenda.

"The ability to go deep into the ocean to conduct integrated operations is a key criterion for a strong navy. The escort operation to the Gulf of Aden and Somali waters reflects and starts the transformation of our military strategy," Zhuang said. "The Chinese navy will conduct more long-distance escort missions in the future."

While stressing the navy would always be a peaceful force committed to China's security, experts said China should pay more attention to protecting its maritime security in the Strait of Malacca.

About 85 percent of China's imported crude oil and half of China's commercial fleet passed through the strait, said Professor Zhang Xiaolin with NCA.

"The Chinese navy should also protect increasing shipping in the strait as piracy threats in Malacca are more serious than those in Somali waters," he said.

But experts said the Somalia operation showed the Chinese navy was still a long way from being strong enough to protect China's expanding maritime rights and interests.

"We have problems in helicopter maintenance, logistic supplies and telecommunications on the open sea," said Zhang Shiping, a researcher with the PLA's Academy of Military Sciences.

He suggested more young officers and naval students be trained through long-distance missions and exchanges with foreign counterparts.

"We should be far-sighted in our naval development," he said.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-04/22/content_11233491.htm

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23 April 2009

‘Secret’ Submarines Lead Show of China’s Naval Might

JANE MACARTNEY, BEIJING

China showed off its nuclear submarines to the world for the first time today with two previously top-secret vessels leading a naval parade in the East China Sea.

Thousands of white-uniformed soldiers stood to attention on the decks of warships, naval jets screamed overhead and helicopters rattled above streaming red, yellow and blue smoke trails as the People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) celebrated the 60th anniversary of its founding.

President Hu was on board the destroyer *Shijiazhuang* to witness the display of maritime might — perhaps hoping that this fleet will fare better than the country’s first modern navy, established in 1888 and destroyed a year later by the Japanese.

State media said that 25 submarines, destroyers, frigates and missile boats and 31 aircraft were on show off the eastern port city of Qingdao. It was only the fourth such review since 1949 and the first to include international ships, including a US destroyer.

Addressing the sailors in his capacity as chairman of the Central Military Commission, Mr Hu reiterated what he called China’s commitment to peace and restraint. “China will stick unswervingly to the path of peaceful development, and will never seek hegemony now or in the future, no matter how much the country develops,” he said.

“China will not engage in military expansionism nor an arms race, and will never constitute a military threat to any other nation.”

Military analysts said that the unusual display of openness reflected China’s growing sense of its importance on the international stage. Li Daguang, a weapons expert at the National Defence University in Beijing, said that invitations to foreign naval officers to tour its warships were rare. “The openness comes from the confidence in itself,” he said.

The decision, announced only this week, to place two of its estimated ten nuclear submarines in the public eye for the first time drew widespread attention. China displayed two of its 20-year-old 092-type submarines — the *Long March 6* and *Long March 3* — to lead the parade, with flags fluttering from their turrets. It kept its more modern 094 submarines out of sight, a move one disappointed analyst described as showing that China’s strategy would remain defensive.

Beijing has always emphasised that its military build-up, watched with a wary eye by the United States, poses no threat to other countries. It sent two ships to the Gulf of Aden this year on an anti-piracy assignment in the navy’s first potential combat mission beyond territorial waters, sending a message that it was ready to play a responsible role on international seas.

Jean-Pierre Cabestan, Professor of Political Science at Hong Kong Baptist University, described the parade as a show of power. “It’s a public relations display with a double message — China as an integrator, showing it is keeping with the rules of the international game, but also showing it is now in the big power arena.”

The Chinese Navy still lags far behind that of the United States, which has 75 nuclear submarines. An editorial in the *China Daily* noted: “Let us be sensible — the PLAN does not have much muscle to show off.”

It needs a stronger force to protect sea routes along which it imports about 70 per cent of its energy needs, and to ensure its capability in territorial disputes.

Admiral Wu Shengli, the Navy’s commander-in-chief, said this month that China would develop a new generation of warships and aircraft to give it longer-range capabilities. Beijing has also said that it is ready to build an aircraft carrier.

“Now we are a commercial and maritime nation and our ways to survive have changed,” the defence analyst Ni Lexiong told *The Times*.

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article6155530.ece>

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China View
23 April 2009

Chinese Navy to Stick to Defensive Strategy

BEIJING, April 23 -- The 60 years' history of the navy of the People's Republic of China (PRC) has witnessed both great triumph in battlefields and substantial progress in its weaponry and equipments.

Right from purchasing, repairing and imitating, the navy has now noticeably improved its capability of independently designing and manufacturing combat platforms, weaponry and equipment. As a result, the operational capability of the navy has seen a rapid rise.

In the early 1980s, the navy had considerably upgraded its weaponry and equipments, and acquired offshore operational capability. It was mature to adopt an offshore defense strategy, due to the rising strategic status of the offshore battlefields.

In such a background, based on Deng Xiaoping's thought on the offshore defense strategy, the navy formulated and established its plan focusing on offshore defense. This strategy endowed the navy new missions. Its duty to cooperate with the army to defend the landmass was curtailed, while undertaking the tasks of ensuring the unification of the nation, defending the integrity of the territory, as well as safeguarding the maritime rights and interests of China.

The offshore defense strategy makes clear to the international community that the missions of the Chinese navy are to defend the country's maritime rights, interests and security, safeguard its economic development, and serve its peaceful diplomacy.

China will not build an offensive navy cruising the globe, but concentrate on its offshore area. Even if in future the navy is modernized, the defensive nature of the naval strategy will not change.

In order to defend China's territory and sovereignty, and secure its maritime rights and interests, the navy decided to set its defense range as the Yellow Sea, the East China Sea, and the South China Sea. This range covered the maritime territory that should be governed by China, according to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, as well as the islands in the South China Sea, which have been its territory since ancient times.

As part of the offshore defense strategy, the navy carried out defensive counterattack operations in Nansha Islands, and resumed and garrisoned seven islands and reefs. In the same period, the navy perfectly accomplished the missions of maritime scientific expeditions, naval military exercises, naval weaponry experiments, and assistance to the nation's economic development.

Along with upgraded naval equipments and strengthened operational capability, as well as the extension of China's maritime interests, the navy has accelerated its pace of modernization in a bid to more effectively fulfill its missions.

It seeks to promote the capability of capturing and maintaining the command of the sea and air in the main directions of operation in the offshore area. The capability to effectively control, when necessary, the major sea routes linking China's waters, and to operate in the seas adjacent to China's maritime territory, should also be strengthened.

In the 21st century, the modernization process of China has entered into a new phase. China's maritime security has also seen new circumstances and uncertain disputes, and faced multifaceted threats and challenges.

Furthermore, the arms development in the world is dashing at a revolutionary pace, shaping the future's information-oriented wars, which will greatly affect navies around the globe.

In the future, the struggle for the command of the sea will emerge in multi-dimensional battlefields, including the land, the sea, the air, the outer space, the cyber space, and so forth.

Based on the current force of the navy, China should maintain its offshore defense naval strategy, and guarantee the command of its seas.

With better naval weaponry and stronger operational capability, the navy could gradually extend its operational range beyond the offshore area. The offshore area, however, will still be its focus.

The navy has encouraged creative reforms in the contents and methods of military exercises, highlighted joint operation exercises, and strengthened its comprehensive operational capability of fighting battles in the offshore area, as well as its nuclear counter-attack capability.

The navy scientifically organizes its battle, tactic, specialized technical, and general exercises. The integrated exercises joining all war-fighting elements in the information age are emphasized, while exploring the training methods in complex electromagnetic environment.

The navy stresses on exercises for peaceful military operations, and has proactively joined bilateral and multilateral joint exercises.

New types of submarines, destroyers, corvettes, and airplanes are now produced. The navy has formed a weaponry system with second-generation equipments as the main body and third-generation equipments as the core.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-04/23/content_11239423.htm

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Daily Telegraph
21 April 2009

China Denies Claims it Hacked into Pentagon Computers

By Malcolm Moore in Shanghai

The \$300 billion (£206bn) jet is being developed by Lockheed Martin and will be bought by eight other countries, including the UK.

However, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that hackers had broken into the project and siphoned off "several terabytes of data related to design and electronics systems".

The leak could make it easier to defend against the plane, also known as the F35 Lightning II. However, the spies could not access the most sensitive material, which is kept on computers that are not connected to the internet.

Former US officials said the attacks appear to have originated in China, but there is scant concrete evidence because it is easy to mask identities online.

Chinese officials reacted angrily to the accusation, and a spokesman for the foreign ministry said: "China has not changed its stance on hacking. China has always been against hacking and we have cracked down very hard on hacking. This is not a Chinese phenomenon. It happens everywhere in the world."

Attacks on the Pentagon are common, but are said to have escalated dramatically in the past six months, and coincide with growing speculation about China's role in cyber espionage.

A report issued by the Pentagon last month said the Chinese military has made "steady progress" in its online warfare capabilities, a key field in which China can compete with the US.

The Chinese Embassy in Washington called the report "a product of the Cold War mentality" and said accusations of cyber crime were being spread to inflame opinion against China.

At the end of last month, researchers at several universities discovered the existence of GhostNet, a vast internet espionage network that was siphoning information from sensitive computers in 103 countries. One third of its targets were based in embassies, news media and NGOs. The researchers said the majority of GhostNet's attacks originated from within China but stopped short of accusing Beijing of responsibility.

The security of the Joint Strike Fighter may have been breached before, according to a Pentagon report in 2008. The report said that "the advanced aviation and weapons technology for the JSF programme may have been compromised" because the Defence Department had not kept a close enough eye on the 1,200 contractors involved in the mammoth process. At the time, BAE Systems, the UK arms company, was named as one contractor that might have allowed details to leak. BAE denied that any information on the jet had been compromised.

The UK intends to use the Joint Strike Fighter as a replacement for the Harrier jump jet. More than 2,400 jets will be built in total.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/china/5193207/China-denies-claims-it-hacked-into-Pentagon-computers.html>

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MSNBC.com

April 21, 2009

Gates May Recommend New 'Cyber Command'

NBC News and news services

The Pentagon is planning to create a new military command to focus on cyberspace and protect its computer networks from cyber attacks, U.S. officials said Wednesday.

The move comes as the White House is poised to release a broader study on the nation's cyber security. Officials in recent months have increasingly warned that the nation's networks are at risk and repeatedly are being probed by foreign governments, criminals or other groups.

The Pentagon has been reviewing for at least a year just how it needs to reorganize military efforts on cyber issues, one official said on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak on the record. Another official said that under the new plan, being finalized now, a sub-command could be set up under the U.S. Strategic Command.

Located at Offutt Air Force Base just south of Omaha, Neb., the command oversees space issues and is responsible for protecting and monitoring the military's information grid, as well as coordinating any offensive cyber warfare on behalf of the country.

Defense Department networks are probed repeatedly every day and the number of intrusion attempts have more than doubled recently, officials have said. Military leaders said earlier this month that the Pentagon spent more than \$100 million in the last six months responding to and repairing damage from cyber attacks and other computer network problems.

In the Pentagon's budget request submitted last week, Defense Secretary Robert Gates said the Pentagon will increase the number of cyberexperts it can train each year from 80 to 250 by 2011.

The broader Obama administration study also about to be released looked at how the government can better manage and use technology to protect everything from the nation's electrical grid and stock markets to tax data, airline flight systems and nuclear launch codes.

According to the official, the program would not be on the level of a separate combatant command. Instead, the likely recommendation would be to create a "sub-unified command" that would focus entirely on combating cyber warfare but exist under the current Strategic Command.

A senior Pentagon official revealed that cyber attacks against military computer networks have "increased significantly ... more than doubled" in the past six months. The attacks were said to include "thousands of probes a day" against Web sites associated with the Defense Department.

One such cyber attack occurred two years ago against the military's most expensive weapons system, Lockheed Martin Corp.'s F-35 Lightning II program — also known as the Joint Strike Fighter. Pentagon officials told The Associated Press that the hackers were able to steal data about some of the plane's systems through computer networks, although they insisted that the information was not classified and that the loss of the information did not present any potential threat to the aircraft.

One defense official said it is not clear who did it, or whether it was an attempt at corporate thievery or a hacker trying to harm the program. The Pentagon is expected to pay about \$300 billion to buy nearly 2,500 of the F-35 jets for the Air Force, Navy and Marines.

Although the number of cyber attacks and simple "probes" has increased, none of the attacks has resulted in the loss of highly classified information, the officials said. The information is contained only in the U.S. military's internal computer networks, which are not accessible over the Internet and considered largely impenetrable by outside hackers.

In the wake of disclosures about the cyber attack, Lockheed Martin issued a carefully worded statement saying that "to our knowledge there has never been any classified information breach." The company added that its systems are continually attacked, and that measures have been put in place to detect and stop the hacking.

The statement did not specifically deny a breach into unclassified information or less sensitive areas of the F-35 program.

One official said that outside cyber scans of the fighter program are not new, and that they could well involve subcontractors and suppliers around the world. Those scans may not involve critical, classified systems, the officials said.

Lockheed is the lead contractor for the F-35. A number of other companies, including Northrop Grumman Corp. and BAE Systems, make parts and systems for the plane.

According to U.S. counterintelligence officials, this is not the first military jet program that has suffered cyber attacks.

During a speech in Texas earlier this month, Joel Brenner, head of the U.S. Office of the National Counterintelligence Executive, said officials have seen counterfeit computer chips "make their way into U.S. military fighter aircraft."

Brenner added: "You don't sneak counterfeit chips into another nation's aircraft to steal data. When it's done intentionally, it's done to degrade systems, or to have the ability to do so at a time of one's choosing."

His comments were not related to the F-35, according to administration officials. But Brenner has also warned that careless, laid-off or disaffected employees can often be the root of corporate cyber leaks. Foreign governments or groups, he said, plan computer attacks that take advantage of sloppy workers or bad network management practices.

In a series of recent speeches, Brenner has repeatedly raised the alarm that foreign governments and other groups are accessing government systems and installing malicious software.

"The Chinese are relentless and don't seem to care about getting caught. And we have seen Chinese network operations inside certain of our electricity grids. Do I worry about those grids, and about air traffic control systems, water supply systems, and so on? You bet I do," Brenner told an audience at the University of Texas at Austin.

While some reports indicated the source of the F-35 hack was traced back to China, Pentagon officials told NBC News that there was no proof of that, and that the U.S. may not be able to prove the Chinese government was behind the cyber attack.

This report includes information from NBC News' Jim Miklaszewski and The Associated Press.

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/30319722/>

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Washington Post
April 22, 2009

Officials Say Hackers Didn't Steal Critical Data about New Fighter Jet

By Ann Scott Tyson and Dana Hedgpeth
Washington Post Staff Writers

The Pentagon and Lockheed Martin, the lead defense contractor for the new F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, suggested yesterday that cyber-attacks had not caused any serious security breaches in the Pentagon's most expensive weapons program.

Still, defense and corporate officials said attacks on the Pentagon as well as the F-35 program are constant, and former defense officials familiar with the program said some of the F-35's less sensitive systems have been infiltrated by cyber-intruders.

"We know we are probed on this every day. We have very aggressive defensive systems. The more sensitive the information, the greater the safeguards are," said Pentagon spokesman Bryan Whitman. He said he was not aware of any sensitive F-35 technology having been compromised by a cyber-attack.

The comments came in response to a Wall Street Journal story Monday reporting that cyber-attackers copied and siphoned off data related to design and electronics systems, "potentially making it easier to defend against the craft."

The F-35 is the Pentagon's most expensive, complex and ambitious aircraft program. According to program estimates, the total investment required in the F-35 exceeds \$1 trillion -- more than \$300 billion to buy 2,456 aircraft and \$760 billion to keep them flying beyond their expected life cycle.

The program has been troubled by cost overruns and delays. Some analysts said cyber-attacks could further delay delivery of the first aircraft.

In a conference call with Wall Street analysts to discuss the company's first-quarter earnings, Lockheed Martin Chief Financial Officer Bruce L. Tanner said, "To our knowledge there's never been any classified information breach." He went on to say, "Like the government, these attacks on our systems are continuous, and we do have stringent measures in place to both detect and stop these attacks."

Troy J. Lahr, a defense industry analyst at Stifel Nicolaus, said the news of any security breach would probably "shake up people in Congress" and lead to a push for more money to fund cybersecurity.

Jim McAleese, who has worked as a consultant to Lockheed and other major defense companies, said it appears that the information the attackers got would not allow crucial insights into the aircraft's software codes, radar or electronic warfare systems.

He said it appears that the spies got information on operations and maintenance of the aircraft, which he described as "materials that have very few details to make the aircraft vulnerable."

"They'll have very little information other than how you maintain the aircraft," he said. "They'd know, for example, at what number of hours do the engines get checked, or the procedures for maintaining the stealth coding," but "they wouldn't have information about key parts," he said.

Former defense officials confirmed that more than a year ago cyber-attackers had penetrated the F-35's logistics system.

"It was not sensitive -- not an area that was very critical," one official said. "Everyone went on an alert status, and most of the programs left vulnerable were fairly minor," he said, adding that the critical areas of the program are kept on an off-line computer system. President Obama is reviewing recommendations from a comprehensive interagency assessment of the government's cybersecurity efforts, seeking to ensure that public- and private-sector efforts are properly funded and coordinated and that the White House is organized to attack the problem.

A recent Pentagon report on China's military power noted that cyber-attacks on the United States had been traced back to the communist nation.

Staff writer Spencer S. Hsu contributed to this report.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/04/21/AR2009042103938.html>

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The Australian
April 23, 2009

Lockheed Fends off Chinese Hack Attack

By Mark Dodd

US aerospace giant Lockheed Martin has dismissed claims that Chinese computer spies hacked into top-secret files containing information on the \$500 billion Joint Strike Fighter program.

Lockheed Martin yesterday admitted its computer systems were being continually attacked but denied there had been any breach.

The Royal Australian Air Force has placed a tentative order for 100 of the F-35 JSFs for about \$16 billion - making

it easily Australia's biggest military purchase - to replace its ageing fleet of F-111 strike aircraft and F/A-18 fighters.

Citing current and former US government officials, *The Wall Street Journal* claimed classified information about the stealth fighter's design and electronics had been accessed by suspected Chinese hackers.

According to the newspaper, the spies hacked into the company's computer system removing "terabytes of data related to design and electronics systems".

A spokesman for Lockheed Martin's head office in Fort Worth, said: "The article in The Wall Street Journal was incorrect in its representation of successful cyber attacks on the F-35 program. To our knowledge, there has never been any classified information breach.

"Like the US Government, we have attacks on our systems continually and have stringent measures in place to detect and stop attacks."

Regarded as the world's most advanced warplane, the F-35 is equipped to carry out simultaneous air-to-air and air-to-ground missions and is expected to be the lead combat aircraft for the US Air Force, Marines and Navy.

It is the US Defence Department's most costly program.

Designed as a low-observable stealth aircraft, the F-35 is equipped with fifth-generation capability, which its makers say will ensure the RAAF maintains regional dominance in the air.

Asked to respond to the reported hacking, the Defence Department said yesterday it had sought more details about the cyber attacks.

In Canberra yesterday, at the end of a two-day official visit, US Under-Secretary of State William Burns said cyber security was raised in talks at the highest level between US and Australian officials.

"Cyber security is high priority, I think, for both our governments - the United States and Australia," Mr Burns said.

"It was the subject of conversation when our foreign and defence ministers met, cyber security in general.

"It's an area I think we both benefit by continued and strengthened co-operation."

A long-awaited white paper outlining Australia's future defence priorities is expected to be released next week. It is understood it will contain a recommendation for the Government to proceed with the JSF purchase despite the uncertainties about the final cost.

<http://www.australianit.news.com.au/story/0,24897,25373608-15306,00.html>

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RIA Novosti
23 April 2009

Russian Foreign Minister Arrives in Pyongyang

PYONGYANG, April 23 (RIA Novosti) - Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov arrived in North Korea on a working visit on Thursday amid spiraling tensions over Pyongyang's recent rocket launch and its withdrawal from nuclear negotiations.

North Korea withdrew from the six-nation talks on its nuclear program in protest against criticism from the UN Security Council over its rocket launch earlier this month. Pyongyang also expelled IAEA nuclear inspectors and pledged to resume its work at the Yongbyon reactor.

Following his trip to the reclusive communist state Lavrov will travel to South Korea on Friday for a two-day visit.

Russia's top diplomat is expected to discuss bilateral relations between the two Koreas, the situation in Northeast Asia and pressing international issues.

North Korea has reacted furiously to suggestions that Seoul could join the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), a U.S.-led pact to prevent supplies of weapons of mass destruction, and has warned that it would consider such a move a declaration of war.

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton signaled on Wednesday that Washington was ready to resume nuclear talks with North Korea but urged countries "not to give in" to Pyongyang's "unpredictable behavior."

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

Under deals reached in 2007, the North began disabling a nuclear reactor and other facilities at Yongbyon supervised by U.S. experts in exchange for economic aid and political incentives.

However, in December, the latest round of six-party talks resulted in deadlock over a U.S. demand that nuclear inspectors be allowed to take samples out of the country from North Korean facilities for further analysis.

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20090423/121260219.html>

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Times of London

April 24, 2009

North Korea is Fully Fledged Nuclear Power, Experts Agree

Richard Lloyd Parry in Tokyo

The world's intelligence agencies and defence experts are quietly acknowledging that North Korea has become a fully fledged nuclear power with the capacity to wipe out entire cities in Japan and South Korea.

The new reality has emerged in off-hand remarks and in single sentences buried in lengthy reports. Increasing numbers of authoritative experts — from the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to the US Defence Secretary — are admitting that North Korea has miniaturised nuclear warheads to the extent that they can be launched on medium-range missiles, according to intelligence briefings.

This puts it ahead of Iran in the race for nuclear attack capability and seriously alters the balance of power between North Korea's large but poorly equipped military and the South Korean and US forces ranged against it. "North Korea has nuclear weapons, which is a matter of fact," the head of the IAEA, Mohamed ElBaradei, said this week. "I don't like to accept any country as a nuclear weapon state \ we have to face reality."

North Korea carried out an underground nuclear test in 2006 but until recently foreign governments believed that such nuclear devices were useless as weapons because they were too unwieldy to be mounted on a missile.

With 13,000 artillery pieces buried close to the border between the two Koreas, and chemical and biological warheads, it was always understood that the North could inflict significant conventional damage on Seoul, the South Korean capital. Military planners had calculated, however, that it could not strike outside the peninsula.

Now North Korea's supreme leader, Kim Jong Il, has the potential to kill millions in Japan as well as the South, and to lay waste US bases and airfields in both countries. It will force military strategists to rethink plans for war in Korea and significantly increase the potential costs of any intervention in a future Korean war. The shift from acknowledging North Korea's nuclear weapons development programme to recognising it as a fully fledged nuclear power is highly controversial. South Korea, in particular, resists the reclassification because it could give the North greater leverage in negotiations.

The successful work enabling the nuclear devices to be mounted on weapons happened towards the end of last year, according to Daniel Pinkston, of the International Crisis Group think-tank. He says that he has been shown detailed intelligence assessments of the new nuclear capability by a foreign government. Last December, the US Forces Joint Command published an annual report which, for the first time, listed North Korea, alongside China, India, Pakistan and Russia, as one of Asia's nuclear powers.

The US Government insisted that this did not reflect its official policy — but then James Schlesinger, a former US Defence Secretary, delivered a report by a Pentagon task force saying the same thing. “North Korea, India and Pakistan have acquired both nuclear weapons and missile delivery systems,” he said. In January Robert Gates, the US Defence Secretary, published an article in Foreign Affairs in which he referred to the “arc of nuclear powers running from Israel in the west through an emerging Iran to Pakistan, India, and on to China, North Korea, and Russia in the east”.

According to Dr Pinkston, the long-range Taepodong-2 rocket that North Korea fired this month is an unsuitable vehicle for a nuclear bomb because it takes weeks to assemble, fuel and arm, giving ample time for it to be destroyed on the launch pad.

The danger lies with shorter-range weapons, some of which are difficult to detect. They include variants of the Scud, which could strike South Korea, and the Nodong, which could reach much of Japan. Pyongyang also has a short range weapon called the Toksa, which is highly accurate up to 75 miles. The Musudan, which can be transported by road, could reach US bases on the Pacific island of Guam.

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article6155956.ece?print=yes&randnum=1240582332362>

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RIA Novosti
24 April 2009

N.Korea does not Plan yet to return to Nuclear Talks - Russian FM

SEOUL, April 24 (RIA Novosti) - North Korea does not as yet intend to return to six-party talks on the Korean Peninsula's nuclear problem, but Russia hopes Pyongyang heeds its call to do so, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Friday.

Prior to the Seoul visit, Lavrov visited North Korea, where officials reaffirmed their decision to abandon the six-party talks on nuclear disarmament.

"The DPRK [North Korea] is not ready to resume six-party talks, but Russia hopes Pyongyang has heard its call to do so," Lavrov said. "Our common task is to create such conditions that the resumption of talks becomes possible."

During his visit to Pyongyang, Lavrov met with the number two in the reclusive communist state's regime, Kim Yong-nam, and Foreign Minister Pak Ui-chun.

North Korea withdrew from the six-nation talks on scrapping its nuclear program after the UN Security Council condemned the launch of a rocket on April 5, which Pyongyang said was carrying a communications satellite.

The North also expelled IAEA and U.S. nuclear inspectors and pledged to resume its work at the Yongbyon nuclear facility.

After his meeting with North Korean officials on Thursday, Lavrov said: "We are not expecting a breakthrough yet. This is a complicated issue, and we should not give way to emotion, rather we should concentrate on what we have already achieved."

The foreign minister also said Friday that Russia hopes the situation around North Korea's nuclear and missile programs would not be used as a pretext for the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the region.

"I hope that no one would ... use the situation around North Korea to set up alliances, build missile defense networks or announce an intention to possess nuclear weapons," Lavrov said.

"Unfortunately, we hear these announcements from a neighboring country. We think that it is unacceptable," he added, without specifying the country, although media have reported such statements coming from Japan.

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20090424/121300603.html>

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Boston Globe

April 24, 2009

North Korea to Boycott Nuclear Talks: Russia

By Jack Kim

SEOUL (Reuters) - North Korea will stay away from international nuclear disarmament talks, Russia's foreign minister said on Friday after visiting the secretive state and pressing Pyongyang to return to the sputtering discussions.

North Korea, which raised regional tensions with a defiant rocket launch earlier this month widely seen as a disguised test of a long-range missile, can send satellites into orbit on Russian rockets, Sergei Lavrov said after leaving North Korea.

North Korea responded to U.N. punishment for the launch by saying it would boycott the nuclear talks with China, Japan, Russia, South Korea and the United States as well as restart its plant that makes arms-grade plutonium that was being taken apart under the deal.

"North Korea at this point does not intend to return to the six-party talks," Lavrov told reporters in Seoul through a translator.

Lavrov, the first high-level envoy from a global power to visit the reclusive North since after the launch, and South Korean Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan agreed to work together to have North Korea return to the nuclear talks, Yu said at the joint news conference.

Prickly North Korea, arguing it has the right to have a peaceful space program, said it sent a satellite into orbit in the April 5 launch that is now playing revolutionary songs as it circles the earth.

U.S. and South Korean officials said nothing was sent into space during the test-flight of the North's Taepodong-2 missile, with all parts of the rocket splashing down in the sea.

Russia is willing to send the North's satellites into space in line with a similar cooperation deal it has with the South, Lavrov was quoted as saying by Russia's Interfax news agency.

Experts are uncertain if the impoverished North can actually produce a working satellite, let alone place it into orbit.

Lavrov, who delivered a message from the Russian President Dmitry Medvedev to the North's leader Kim Jong-il, told reporters his country stood by the U.N. move to chastise Pyongyang and tighten existing sanctions that limit the North's arms trade and imports.

Lavrov did not meet Kim, 67, who was suspected of having a stroke in August and did not make an appearance at major public events for months after that until he appeared at the annual meeting of parliament about two weeks ago walking with a limp.

Kim, however, was able to pose for pictures with scientists responsible for the rocket launch who warmly cheered the man known in the North as the "Dear Leader," North Korea's KCNA news agency said.

U.S. JOURNALIST TO GO ON TRIAL

While Lavrov was in Pyongyang, North Korea raised tension in a simmering dispute with the United States by saying it will put two U.S. journalists arrested last month on its border with China on trial to face criminal charges.

"A competent organ of the DPRK (North Korea) concluded the investigation into the journalists of the United States. The organ formally decided to refer them to a trial on the basis of the confirmed crimes committed by them," KCNA said in a separate dispatch.

The pair, Euna Lee and Laura Ling of U.S. media outlet Current TV, were arrested in March along the border between North Korea and China. North Korea has accused them of illegally entering its territory with "hostile" intent.

The U.S. State Department had no immediate comment.

Washington has said it was in touch with the North through various channels to secure the release of the two journalists, with details of their pre-dawn arrest still murky several weeks

Financial market players in Seoul, used to North Korea's saber rattling, have mostly shrugged off Pyongyang's threat to bolster its nuclear deterrent.

But analysts say markets may take notice of heightened political risk if the North restarts a lab at its nuclear complex to separate more plutonium for weapons, which could increase the likelihood of a new nuclear test.

http://www.boston.com/news/world/asia/articles/2009/04/24/us_journalists_face_criminal_trial_in_north_korea_1240551639/

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The Australian
April 25, 2009

N Korea is Armed for Nuclear War

Richard Lloyd Parry, Tokyo

THE world's intelligence agencies and defence experts are quietly acknowledging that North Korea has become a full nuclear power, with the capacity to wipe out entire cities in Japan and South Korea.

The new reality has emerged in off-hand remarks and single sentences buried in lengthy reports.

Increasing numbers of authoritative experts -- from the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency to the US Defence Secretary -- admit North Korea has miniaturised nuclear warheads to the extent they can be launched on medium-range missiles, according to intelligence briefings.

This puts the country ahead of Iran in the race for nuclear attack capability and alters the balance of power between North Korea's large but poorly equipped military and the South Korean and US forces ranged against it.

"North Korea has nuclear weapons, which is a matter of fact," IAEA head Mohamed ElBaradei said. "I don't like to accept any country as a nuclear-weapon state, but we have to face reality."

North Korea carried out an underground nuclear test in 2006 but until recently foreign governments believed such nuclear devices were too unwieldy to be mounted on a missile.

With 13,000 artillery pieces buried close to the border between the two Koreas, and chemical and biological warheads, it was always understood the North could inflict significant conventional damage on Seoul, the South Korean capital. But Western military planners had calculated it could not strike outside the peninsula.

Now North Korea's supreme leader, Kim Jong-il, has the potential to order the killing of millions in Japan as well as the South, and to lay waste to US bases and airfields in both countries. This will force Western military strategists to rethink plans for war in Korea and increase the potential costs of any future Korean war.

The shift from acknowledging North Korea's nuclear weapons development program to recognising it as a nuclear power is controversial. South Korea resists the reclassification because it could give the North more negotiating leverage.

The successful work of enabling the nuclear devices to be mounted on weapons happened towards the end of last year, according to Daniel Pinkston, of the International Crisis Group think tank.

The US Forces Joint Command published an annual report Last December that for the first time listed North Korea, alongside China, India, Pakistan and Russia, as one of Asia's nuclear powers. The US Government insisted this did not reflect its official policy -- but then former US defence secretary James Schlesinger delivered a report from a Pentagon task force saying the same thing.

"North Korea, India and Pakistan have acquired both nuclear weapons and missile delivery systems," he said.

US Defence Secretary Robert Gates published an article in Foreign Affairs in January in which he referred to the "arc of nuclear powers running from Israel in the west through an emerging Iran to Pakistan, India, and on to China, North Korea, and Russia in the east".

According to Dr Pinkston, the long-range Taepodong 2 rocket North Korea fired this month is unsuitable for a nuclear bomb because it takes weeks to assemble, fuel and arm, giving ample time for it to be destroyed on the launch pad.

The danger lies with shorter-range weapons, often difficult to detect. They include variants of the Scud, which could strike South Korea, and the Nodong, which could reach much of Japan.

Pyongyang also has a short-range weapon called the Toksa, accurate up to 120km. The Musudan, which can be transported by road, could hit US military bases on the Pacific island of Guam.

<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,25381354-2703,00.html>

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Middle East Times
April 21, 2009

Iran Boasts Military, Nuclear-Fuel Ability

TEHRAN, April 21 (UPI) -- Iranian atomic-energy officials said they had complete and autonomous knowledge of nuclear-fuel production amid claims of regional military capabilities.

Abdallah Solat-Sana, the deputy chief of the Iranian Atomic Energy Organization, told the official Islamic Republic News Agency his team of experts had developed the technology to produce nuclear fuel without outside assistance and despite mounting international pressure, according to Press TV.

The nuclear chief went on to say it was "natural" that foreign companies were reluctant to pursue nuclear fuel contracts with Iran amid international concerns but noted that fuel from nuclear facilities, notably Bushehr, was available.

"We do not wish to provide nuclear fuel for the Bushehr plant ourselves, as we believe in having international ties which will enable us to both purchase and sell nuclear fuel," he said.

Iran is under punitive economic sanctions for its nuclear program, which is considered ambiguous despite years of international monitoring efforts.

Meanwhile, IRNA reported that Maj. Gen. Hassan Firouzabadi, the chief of staff of the Iranian armed forces, said Iran has the military capability to defend the entire Gulf region.

"Iran is a powerful and influential country in the world," he said.

http://www.metimes.com/Security/2009/04/21/iran_boasts_military_nuclear-fuel_ability/e0eb/

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Washington Post
April 22, 2009

Clinton: Diplomacy on Iran Could Lead to Sanctions

By ROBERT BURNS
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON -- By trying to talk Iran out of its nuclear program, the U.S. is in a better position to win tougher international sanctions in the event that diplomacy fails, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said Wednesday.

"We actually believe that by following the diplomatic path we are on, we gain credibility and influence with a number of nations who would have to participate in order to make the sanctions regime as tight and as crippling as we would want it to be," Clinton told the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Iran denies that its nuclear program is intended to develop weapons.

The official Iranian news agency IRNA reported Wednesday that Iran welcomes a "constructive" dialogue with world powers over its nuclear program, but insisted that it won't halt its uranium enrichment activities.

The Iranian report was in response to an invitation from the United States, Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia for a new round of nuclear talks. No date has been set.

Clinton said the administration is confident that with the help of international partners, it can put together a comprehensive sanctions regime against Iran, "should we need it." She said it would be needed "in the event we are unsuccessful or stonewalled in our other approach."

The House hearing was Clinton's first congressional testimony since her confirmation hearing in January, and the questions were mostly friendly. Panel members initially focused mainly on Iran, the Islamic extremist threat in Pakistan and U.S. policy toward Cuba. Some Republicans pressed her on the administration's release of formerly classified documents on detainee interrogation methods used during the Bush administration, but she deflected those inquiries, saying it was not a matter for her to discuss publicly.

Asked about a peace deal reached last week that allows militants in Pakistan's northwest to impose Islamic law in exchange for a cease-fire with Taliban insurgents, Clinton strongly criticized Islamabad.

"I think the Pakistani government is basically abdicating to the Taliban and the extremists," she said. Later she said the administration believes the Pakistani government shares U.S. goals in defeating terrorism.

In a testy exchange, Rep. Dana Rohrabacher, R-Calif., asked Clinton whether she supports former Vice President Dick Cheney's stated request that the CIA declassify interrogation memos that he said cast a more positive light on the methods used with detainees during the early years of the Bush administration.

"Well, it won't surprise you that I don't consider him a particularly reliable source of information," Clinton responded.

Clinton was at her most emotional in batting down questions from Reps. Chris Smith, R-N.J., and Jeff Fortenberry, R-Neb., about the Obama administration's support for access to abortion through international organizations. Smith and Fortenberry are among Capitol Hill's staunchest abortion opponents.

Smith asked if the administration was seeking "in any way to weaken or overturn pro-life laws and policies in African and Latin American countries." Fortenberry asked: "Is forcing U.S. taxpayers to fund abortion in keeping with the highest values of the United States of America?"

"We have a very fundamental disagreement," Clinton told Smith, describing how she had seen women suffering in Africa, Latin America and Asia because of inadequate family planning and health care.

"It is my strongly held view that you are entitled to advocate, and everyone who agrees with you should be free to do so, anywhere in the world and so are we," Clinton said. "We happen to think that family planning is an important part of women's health and reproductive health includes access to abortion that I believe should be safe, legal and rare."

On Iran, Clinton said its nuclear program are one of the administration's highest foreign policy priorities.

"We are deploying new approaches to the threat posed by Iran and we're doing so with our eyes wide open and with no illusions," she said.

"We know the imperative of preventing Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons," she added. "After years during which the United States basically sat on the sidelines, we are now a full partner" in international talks on Iran.

Separately, David Kay, former head of a U.S. nuclear weapons-hunting team in Iraq, estimated Wednesday that Iran is two to four years away from having a nuclear device.

"It is a scary concern when you get that close," Kay said at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington think tank. "But it is going to take a lot of effort to deploy and get there."

Kay said the Iranians have not made a decision on who would take command of a nuclear weapons force. Kay said he did not think President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad "knows where he fits" in such a program.

Associated Press writers Matthew Lee and Barry Schweid contributed to this report.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/04/22/AR2009042201865.html>

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Iran Officially Welcomes Nuclear Talks

Tehran Times Political Desk

TEHRAN – In a statement released on Wednesday Iran officially announced it welcomes “constructive and fair” talks on its nuclear program with the 5+1 group.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran ... welcomes constructive and fair talks based on mutual respect and cooperation, and believes current problems could be resolved through dialogue,” the statement said.

It said Iran will continue its nuclear activities in “active collaboration” with the International Atomic Energy Agency “within the framework of the NPT like other members”.

The statement was Tehran’s response to the United States, Russia, China, France, Germany and Britain which on April 8 said they would ask European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana to invite Iran to a new round of talks over the country’s nuclear issue.

Iran criticized some points included in the six countries’ statement on April 8, saying some points mentioned in the statement are reminiscent of a dual approach of the previous carrot and stick policy which its inefficiency has been proven.

“Iranian people consider terms such as ‘two-track strategy’ in violation of mutual respect and dialogue in fair atmosphere,” it said.

Speaking in a gathering of people in Kerman last week, President Ahmadinejad announced that Iran is drawing up a new package of proposals based on the new conditions. He said the proposal will guarantee peace and justice in the entire world.

Last June Solana handed Iran a package in which it promised some incentives if Tehran ceases its nuclear enrichment program. However, Iran rejected the proposal and provided a counter-proposal which suggested the establishment of international consortiums to enrich uranium and manufacture nuclear fuel that would include Iran.

In its statement on Wednesday Iran said it had updated its package of proposals in order to “pave the way for dialogue and cooperation.”

In a telephone conversation with Iran’s Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Secretary Saeed Jalili on April 13, Solana elaborated on 5+1 group’s offer for resuming nuclear talks.

Jalili welcomed a new round of negotiations between Iran and the group for a constructive cooperation. He had said the Islamic Republic would issue a statement in response to the offer.

http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=192906

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Washington Post

April 24, 2009

Iran Cleric tells Washington to Stop the Language of Threats

Reuters

TEHRAN (Reuters) - An influential Iranian cleric urged the United States Friday to stop threatening Iran with more sanctions if it wanted to hold talks with the Islamic state over its disputed nuclear work.

"It is better if they do not repeat the threats so the atmosphere which is becoming ready in Iran more or less (for talks) is not destroyed," former president Ali Akbar Rafsanjani told worshippers at Friday prayers.

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton Wednesday threatened Iran with crippling sanctions if it did not suspend its disputed nuclear program.

Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad reiterated this week that Tehran had no intention to halt its nuclear work, which the West fears is a cover to build bombs.

Rafsanjani, also a top advisor to Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, said Tehran was ready to hold negotiations with Washington if the United States chose the "right path and proved its good will."

U.S. President Barack Obama has said he would break from his predecessor by pursuing direct talks with Tehran but has also warned Iran to expect more pressure if it did not meet the U.N. Security Council demand to halt nuclear uranium enrichment.

In a statement this week, Iran said it believed discussions could resolve a row between the Islamic state and the West but repeated Tehran would press ahead with its work to develop nuclear energy.

The statement was a response to an invitation this month by six world powers to discuss the country's nuclear issue.

Clinton has said engaging Iran over its nuclear work would increase U.S. leverage among other major powers to impose tougher sanctions if talks failed.

Engaging Iran has marked a major shift in Washington's policy toward Tehran under Obama, whose predecessor, George W. Bush, shunned direct talks as long as Iran continued with its uranium enrichment work.

"What is the difference between such talks (by Clinton) and what Mr. Bush used to say?," Rafsanjani said in the sermon at Tehran University broadcast live on state radio.

"This language is not proper for the face they want to show for change," he added.

(Writing by Zahra Hosseinian; editing by Samia Nakhoul)

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/04/24/AR2009042401250.html>

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Washington Post
April 23, 2009

Army Nearly Done With Probe of Fort Detrick Lab

By Nelson Hernandez and Ann Scott Tyson
Washington Post Staff Writers

Army investigators are close to closing a probe into the disappearance of deadly pathogens at Fort Detrick's infectious disease laboratory in Frederick and have found no evidence yet of criminal misconduct, the Army's Criminal Investigation Command said yesterday.

The investigation of the Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases is "in the final stages of its mandatory review process before being closed," said Christopher Grey, a spokesman for the criminal investigation division. The command "has found no evidence to date of any criminality related to the unaccounted-for items," he said.

Since last year, investigators have been trying to discover what happened to three small vials of Venezuelan equine encephalitis virus that were unaccounted for, according to Caree Vander Linden, the spokeswoman for the lab.

Although the quantity of the missing virus sample is small, the investigation shows how seriously military authorities take a possible security breach at the Army lab, which is responsible for developing countermeasures to such potential biological agents as anthrax and Ebola. The investigation was first reported yesterday in the Frederick News-Post.

The virus that causes Venezuelan equine encephalitis is mosquito borne and usually causes a mild flulike illness but can also cause brain inflammation and death. It has potential for use as a biological weapon but is far less lethal than some other agents the lab works with.

Vander Linden said that when one scientist left the institute several years ago, he handed down his materials to another scientist, who left three years later. Last year, a successor took an inventory of the samples and found three

vials missing, triggering an investigation, she said. The vials were probably missing because a freezer in which they were kept failed, destroying the batch, she said.

Vander Linden declined to name the scientists involved.

"We'll probably never know exactly what happened," an Army official said. "It could be the freezer malfunction. It could be they never existed." Although one lead scientist has responsibility for a stock of biological material, many lab workers on that scientist's staff might have access to it, so Army investigators have talked to "literally hundreds of people" but have apparently found no "criminality involved," said the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak on the record.

Alan Schmaljohn, a longtime scientist at the lab who is now a professor at the University of Maryland, said he had been questioned two or three months ago as someone who once had access to the virus.

"They caught me on my cellphone on the road, and I stopped and talked to them for quite a long time," Schmaljohn said in an interview. "She was just going down this whole list of questions, including, 'Did you take it?'"

Schmaljohn said he hadn't. He said the quantity of missing material was relatively small and easy to lose, especially if one of the freezers fails, requiring the vials to be rearranged.

"The number of vials is utterly meaningless," Schmaljohn said. "Three vials missing is no indication of any evil-doing. . . . It's almost equivalent to saying you're missing 3 cents out of the national budget. . . . From the scientist's point of view it is inconsequential, but from the regulator's point of view it is an indication of sloppiness, and they are finally going to take rugged action."

The Fort Detrick lab has been under heavy pressure to tighten security since the 2001 anthrax attacks, which killed five people and sickened 17 others. FBI investigators say they believe the anthrax strain used in the attacks originated at the Army lab, and its prime suspect in the investigation, Bruce E. Ivins, researched anthrax there. Ivins committed suicide last year amid an investigation into his activities.

The stricter security measures imposed since the anthrax attacks have been challenged by some scientists, who say they slow down research and are ineffective.

The new rules force scientists to keep closer tabs on the quantity of biological materials, but keeping an inventory is harder than keeping track of nuclear or chemical materials because viruses and bacteria are constantly replicating and dying.

In February, a separate problem accounting for Venezuelan equine encephalitis virus triggered the suspension of most research at the lab. A spot check in January found 20 samples of the virus in a box of vials instead of the 16 listed in the institute's database, Vander Linden said.

Most work was stopped until the institute could take an inventory of its entire stock of viruses and bacteria. She said that the inventory was almost complete and that some labs that finished their checks have resumed research. The official said the pathogens are used for medical research, not weapons research.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/04/22/AR2009042202005.html>

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RIA Novosti

OPINION

22 April 2009

Iran, Israel Ready to go to War

MOSCOW. (Pyotr Goncharov, for RIA Novosti) - On April 18, the London Times reported that "the Israeli military is preparing itself to launch a massive aerial assault on Iran's nuclear facilities within days of being given the go-ahead by its new government."

Several days later, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad accused Israel of being the "most cruel and racist regime," sparking a scandal at a UN racism conference in Geneva.

At the same time, Israeli websites reported that Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu had met with the Israeli Defense Minister, the Chief of the General Staff and other defense leaders three times during the past week. He was

reportedly informed about preparations for an assault at Iran's military facilities and was "pleasantly surprised" at how far these preparations had advanced.

How true can these reports be, and how high is the probability of Israel bombing out Iran's nuclear program?

Israel has always said that it would not allow Iran to advance to a technology level allowing it to create a nuclear bomb. One can understand its logic. While developing its nuclear technology, Iran keeps reminding Israel that it has no right to exist on the political map of the world.

Israel has always seen a "red line" in Iran's nuclear program beyond which Iran would become a direct threat to Israel. As defined by Israeli and European analysts, this "red line" comprises a certain development level of nuclear technology and a deadline, 2010. Therefore, it can be assumed that the media has reported a planned inspection by the new Israeli premier of the country's readiness to liquidate its biggest enemy.

There are several facts pointing in this direction.

Israel and the United States plan to hold a major ballistic missile defense exercise later this year, called Juniper Cobra. The maneuver will jointly test three different American and Israeli missile defense systems.

The Israel Air Force's Air Defense Division, the U.S. Missile Defense Agency and the U.S. European Command (EUCOM) have held the Juniper Cobra exercise for the past five years. The upcoming exercise is planned to be the most complex and extensive yet.

This may also mean that Israel and the U.S. are preparing for 2010, even if only in terms of defense.

Can a military scenario be avoided?

Israel has been living on the assumption that it must not be defeated. The smallest step backward is seen there as tantamount to the demise of the Israeli state.

Meanwhile, Iran has openly declared its ambition to become the regional power. It can attain its goal if it proves that Israel is ineffective as a state.

Why not try to push the enemy towards defeat, especially a military defeat, by forcing him to start a military operation with unpredictable consequences?

The current Tehran leaders have been saying and doing things that are actually forcing Israel to order its aircraft to bomb Iran's nuclear facilities. Tehran has announced several nuclear and missile achievements, thereby encouraging the international community to question the "peaceful nature" of its nuclear program.

As a result, the general concern is gradually giving way to the belief that Iran will eventually create a nuclear bomb, or that it is rapidly moving towards this goal. Ahmadinejad said in one of his recent speeches that Iran's nuclear ambition was fuelled by the immorality of the states that have the nuclear technology.

Indeed, this does not describe Iran's nuclear program as peaceful.

There is a definite loser in the Iranian-Israeli confrontation. It is Russia. If a war breaks out now, everyone will blame Russia.

The EU and the United States will blame Russia for failure to convince Tehran to stop its uranium enrichment program, Israel will blame Russia for selling weapons to Iran, and Iran will blame it for failure to deliver the S-300 defense systems.

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Moscow and Washington going to Rome to Count Warheads

MOSCOW. (RIA Novosti political commentator Andrei Fedyashin) - On April 24, Russian and American experts will start talks in Rome, which may lead to the first breakthrough in bilateral relations and new reductions in nuclear arms, notably, a new treaty to replace the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START-1).

It entered into force in 1994 and expires on December 5, 2009. In fact, it has already become obsolete.

Neither Moscow, nor Washington can afford to wait till December. They should draft a treaty or agreement by July, in time for President Barack Obama's planned visit to Moscow. He is expected to sign something important with President Dmitry Medvedev, but for the time being there is nothing else to sign except for the new treaty.

Both sides are in a hurry. Two months is too little time for the proposed treaty, but not unrealistic. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and his American counterpart Hillary Clinton are planning to meet in Washington on May 7 to check on the experts' progress. While addressing congressmen on April 22, Clinton said: "We have committed ourselves to working with Russia on finding a successor agreement to the START arms control agreement." The question is how to find it.

Everyone understands that we should move forward to tougher arms restrictions than those imposed by START-1. Why? First, both sides announced in December 2001 that the provisions of this treaty have been fulfilled. In a nutshell, the treaty commits each side to reduce the number of deployed carriers to 1,600, and the number of warheads to 6,000. In December 2001, Russia had 1,136 carriers and 5,518 warheads, while the United States had 1,237 carriers and 5,948 warheads.

In the recent estimate of the State Department, by January 1, 2009, Moscow had 814 carriers and 3,909 nuclear warheads, while the relevant numbers for the United States were 1,198 and 5,576, respectively. This gap is not alarming - in loaded weight we surpass the United States by almost 600 metric tons.

Second, it is hard for the United States to maintain such a nuclear arsenal during the economic crisis, and it is an even bigger burden for Russia.

However, figures are not the main point. If the treaty is not upgraded and improved properly, on which Russia insists, both sides could say "goodbye" to a later bilateral agreement on nuclear arms, which was signed by President George W. Bush and Russian President Vladimir Putin in 2002. This treaty provides for the reduction of strategic offensive armaments to 1,700-2,200 warheads by 2012. Its system of verification fully relies on that of START-1. By and large, the groundwork on both treaties will make it easy for the sides to agree to toughen START-1.

When it came to talks on nuclear arms cuts, the opinions of the Soviet Union and the United States always seriously diverged. For the time being, Obama's administration has not come up with anything new in this field. Perhaps it has a surprise in store for May?

Both Russia and the United States agree that they should reduce nuclear warheads and revise START-1. In this case, Obama's position is not very different from that of Bush in his later years. Eventually, Bush agreed that START-1 could be toughened. In effect, neither Washington, nor Moscow has ever opposed continued reductions in nuclear arsenals.

But the devil is in the details. The smaller the details, the bigger the devils, and the more enthusiastic the sides are in fighting for them. Well, this is only natural, if any nation, as Bernard Shaw once put it, has a tacit sympathy for its devils.

It will be hard to toughen the treaty because Washington has not yet completed the revision of its nuclear strategy. It should be finished by the fall. For the new treaty to be approved by Congress by December 5, the sides should have signed it by August.

American experts tend to believe that the work on the new treaty will have two stages. At the first stage, the sides will agree to conduct verifications and inspections, and reduce nuclear warheads to 1,500 each. This agreement could be signed by Obama and Medvedev in July. At the second stage, next year, the sides will decide to reduce warheads to 1,000 and to cut their carriers by half - to about 600-700 on each side. In this case, the United States will have to reduce more carriers than Russia.

In principle, both sides agree on the ceiling, but their opinions diverge on other issues.

As always, the United States is trying to leave part of its strategic missiles outside nuclear restrictions in accordance with Bush's new doctrine of a timely global strike. In line with this doctrine, a number of strategic nuclear missiles are equipped with conventional warheads for a crushing blow against terrorism. But it is quite easy to turn it into a

nuclear carrier again, and it is absolutely unclear how to register strategic missiles with conventional warheads in the new treaty.

Moreover, the tougher the strategic restrictions for the United States and Russia, the more attention should be paid to the nuclear forces of France, Britain, China, Pakistan, and India, to name but a few. The importance of their nuclear forces in the world's nuclear balance will increase considerably.

However, for all the problems, Russia will stand to gain much more from the new treaty. We have fallen so far behind the United States in upgrading our nuclear carriers (neither Topols, nor submarine-launched Bulavas can redress the situation) that any restrictions will only benefit Russia. So, it seems that Russia will have to accept a host of American proposals if it does not want to deepen the nuclear gap. It will be no disaster if the new treaty is not signed but the gap in missile quality will increase.

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Gorbachev: The Prospect of A New Arms Race Seems Realistic Now but Russia and U.S. Could Make Progress in Nuclear Disarmament

Former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev has said he hopes that contacts between Russia and the U.S. on nuclear disarmament would lead to positive changes.

"Unfortunately, no radical achievements have been made in the nuclear disarmament area over the past two decades, although there have recently been signs indicating that the leading nuclear powers understand that the current situation is intolerable," Gorbachev told Interfax on Thursday.

In particular, "the Russian and U.S. presidents reaffirmed their commitment to Article 6 of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and their joint statement envisions a number of steps to decrease the nuclear danger, including the U.S. ratification of the Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty. They have also agreed to conclude a treaty on the reduction of strategic offensive weapons envisioning verification measures by the end of the year," he said.

"The first Russian-American consultations on strategic offensive weapons will take place in Rome on April 24. Certainly, great hopes are pinned to a summit between the Russian and U.S. presidents to take place in Moscow in July. All these steps are positive and inspiring, but nevertheless it is necessary to admit openly: there are still more problems and dangers than achievements, and the path toward a nuclear-free world is hindered by numerous obstacles," Gorbachev said.

"The main reason for this is incorrect perception of the events following the end of the Cold War: the U.S. and some other countries interpreted them as the West's victory and as the green light for the policy of unilateral steps," Gorbachev said.

"The use of force or the threat of using it are again viewed as a normal way to resolve problems, and official documents rationalize the doctrines of preemptive strikes and the need for the U.S. to enjoy military supremacy," Gorbachev said.

"Therefore, the prospect of a new arms race seems realistic now," he said.

As regards the problem of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, Gorbachev said "its essence is above all in the nuclear club members' failure to comply with the commitment to move toward elimination of nuclear weapons, which they undertook in Article 6 of the non-proliferation treaty."

"As long as this situation remains in place, the danger of the emergence of new nuclear powers will also remain in place. Dozens of countries have such technical capabilities now. In the final analysis, the nuclear danger can be eliminated only through the elimination of nuclear weapons," he said.

Gorbachev speculated on "whether it could be considered realistic that ultimately one country might remain with an amount of conventional weapons nearly surpassing the arsenals of all other countries together, that is, that this country might have absolute military dominance in the world."

"I would like to be sincere: Such a situation would be an insurmountable obstacle to ridding the world of nuclear weapons. Therefore, if we do not bring up the issue of demilitarization of global politics, the reduction of nuclear budgets, the termination of the development of new types of weapons, and the prevention of the militarization of outer space, all the talk about a nuclear-free world will remain empty," he said.

Judging by U.S. President Barack Obama's recent statements, "the possibility that the U.S. could ratify the Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty looks realistic, and this would be an important step ahead, especially in combination with the new agreement on strategic weapons between the U.S. and Russia," he said.

"I believe the other nuclear powers, both the official members of the club and the others, will have at least to declare the freezing of their nuclear arsenals and the willingness to begin negotiations on their limitation and reduction. If the possessors of the largest stockpiles of nuclear weapons take the path of their real reduction, the others will find it impossible to stand aside and conceal their arsenals from international control. This issue needs to be brought up now, for otherwise there will be no trust, without which our common security is unthinkable," Gorbachev said.

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