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Washington Post
May 2, 2009

Expert Groups Largely Back Obama's Nuclear Stance

By Walter Pincus
Washington Post Staff Writer

Two bipartisan panels of nuclear weapons experts are endorsing much of President Obama's ambitious arms-control effort in advance of next week's nonproliferation talks here between Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

A congressionally mandated commission will recommend next week that the United States resume the lead in international efforts to prevent further proliferation of nuclear weapons. The U.S. government should declare that it will rely less on such weapons and seek to reduce U.S. and Russian nuclear stockpiles through extension of the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (START), according to the Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States. But, the commission said, it also should maintain "an appropriately effective nuclear deterrent force."

The commission split over Senate ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, a move Obama has said he will seek. The group, chaired by William J. Perry, who was President Bill Clinton's defense secretary, and vice-chaired by James R. Schlesinger, who held that post in the Nixon and Ford administrations, agreed that the Senate should take a close look at the "benefits, costs and risks" of the test ban treaty, which was defeated in 1999 when Republicans controlled Congress.

Yesterday, a Council on Foreign Relations task force co-chaired by Perry and Brent Scowcroft, who was national security adviser to Presidents Gerald R. Ford and George H.W. Bush, released a report calling for reductions in U.S. and Russian stockpiles as part of the START extension.

The report also recommended ratification of the test ban treaty to "lessen nuclear threats and promote cooperation on disarmament." Scowcroft told reporters yesterday in a conference call that he thought it would be "a tough struggle" to get the 67 Senate votes necessary for ratification but that he was "cautiously optimistic."

Both the congressional panel and the Council on Foreign Relations task force agreed with Obama's view that prevailing conditions do not allow the elimination of nuclear weapons. They agreed that a safe and secure U.S. nuclear force is needed to reassure America's allies, which without that protection would seek to develop their own weapons.

The congressional panel is calling for deployment of missile defenses against regional and limited long-range threats such as those posed by North Korea and Iran. But Scowcroft yesterday said he thinks U.S. missile defense is one of the issues leading China to modernize and increase its strategic nuclear force. He suggested that the Obama administration seek discussions with Beijing on the nuclear strategies of both countries, adding that it is too early to enter treaty agreements because the Chinese long-range force is so much smaller than that of the United States.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/05/01/AR2009050103404.html>

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Global Security Newswire
May 4, 2009

Nuclear Disarmament a "Long Road," Gates Says

U.S. President Barack Obama's dream of a world without nuclear weapons is a worthy goal but not one likely to be reached in the near term, Defense Secretary Robert Gates said yesterday (see *GSN*, May 1).

"I think this is an important goal for everyone to have in the world, but I think that it's a long road to get there," he told CNN. "President Obama is the fourth president that I have worked for who has said publicly he would like to see an end to nuclear weapons and (have) a nuclear weapons-free world. I think that's a laudable objective," Gates said.

However, Gates added that "it's a goal that you have to move toward step by step," Agence France-Presse reported.

He noted that a number of nations, including Libya and South Africa, have voluntarily given up nuclear-weapon pursuits. "So total pessimism with respect to nonproliferation, I think is unwarranted."

The global proliferation of nuclear expertise, though, means the threat is not likely to be permanently eliminated, Gates said.

"How do you deal with the reality of that technology being available to almost any country that seeks to pursue it?" he said. "And what conditions do you put in place, what U.N. verification measures or IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) verification measures do you put in place, to prevent others from getting that?"

Nonetheless, it is appropriate for Washington to look toward ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (see *GSN*, April 22) and to further drawdowns of the U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals, Gates said (see *GSN*, April 28).

"These are all important steps in that direction. But my guess is, it's a long march," he said (Agence France-Presse/Spacewar.com, May 3).

A U.S. panel of experts has backed further reductions of the nuclear stockpiles held by the former Cold War rivals, the *Washington Post* reported Saturday. In a report to be issued this week, the Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States is expected to urge Washington to publicly state that it would reduce its reliance on nuclear weapons, but also keep "an appropriately effective nuclear deterrent force."

The commission, much like a Council on Foreign Relations panel that considered the nuclear issue, argued that the United States must maintain some weapons in order to provide a "nuclear umbrella" for allied nations and prevent them from seeking their own deterrent.

Commission members were divided on CTBT ratification by the U.S. Senate, saying that lawmakers should consider the "benefits, costs and risks" of such a move.

Missile defenses are needed to counter regional threats and longer-range systems that might be developed by nations such as Iran and North Korea, according to the congressional group (Walter Pincus, *Washington Post*, May 2).

http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20090504_9514.php

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London Guardian
1 May 2009

Tories Cast Doubt on £21bn Trident Nuclear Missile Upgrade

By Patrick Wintour and Nicholas Watt

David Cameron is considering abandoning the British Trident nuclear missile deterrent or going for a less expensive upgrade by converting to air-launched cruise missiles, rather than the government's planned four expensive submarines.

An intense debate is under way inside the shadow cabinet, with the shadow chancellor George Osborne and some senior party strategists arguing against the full £21bn Trident modernisation proposed by Labour.

The money saved would help stem massive government borrowing, but there is resistance from William Hague, the shadow foreign secretary, and Liam Fox, the shadow defence secretary, who say the Tories should honour the government's commitment to the project and not risk a backlash from middle England.

Cameron is seeking to shield himself from specific commitments by saying he will hold a major strategic defence review once in office, similar to the review undertaken by Lord Robertson as Labour defence secretary in 1998.

However, at a press conference yesterday the Tory leader refused to wholeheartedly support the Trident upgrade when he indicated its future should be considered as part of a wider defence review.

He said: "We are in a very similar position to the government. We support things that are in the forward defence programme because we think there is good justification for all of them. But that doesn't mean in these difficult circumstances that you don't have to look - just as you're looking across government - look at all these things. But when you are reviewing spending you have to review all spending."

The Tory review will look at the modern threats faced by Britain, including the need for two new aircraft carriers and whether Britain should spend more on equipping mobile armed forces.

The shadow defence minister Gerald Howarth said the state of the defence budget was "absolutely desperate", though the Tories may find they have little room for manoeuvre due to contractual commitments made by this government on major defence contracts.

However, Cameron is being urged to look at Trident by senior backbench figures led by James Arbuthnot, Tory chairman of the all-party defence select committee and by Nicholas Soames, the former armed forces minister. David Davis, the former shadow home secretary is also a convert to cancelling Trident.

Trident is due to cost £21bn over the next 20 years at a time when the defence spending programme is already under intense pressure. Arbuthnot told the Guardian that the world financial crisis meant it was time to reopen the debate on whether Britain should retain an independent nuclear deterrent. "It remains my thinking," he said of his speech two years ago in which described Trident as of "doubtful usefulness" but came down against unilateral disarmament.

"Since then the financial situation has got significantly worse," he said. "So the conclusions that need to be drawn from that are going to be more stark. We need to have a debate about the means of deterrent and what is the most effective deterrent. I think there is more of an appetite for such a debate in the country now."

Arbuthnot indicated he is changing his position on one of the central elements of the debate within Tory thinking: whether Trident should be abandoned unilaterally or as part of multilateral negotiations on disarmament. In his speech two years ago Arbuthnot rejected unilateral disarmament.

Soames is another who has recently warned against such a massive spending commitment. "The arguments have not yet been had in public in nearly an adequate enough way to warrant the spending of this nation's treasure on the scale that will be required," he told MPs.

Howarth has made clear that if the defence review shows the country cannot afford to pay for commitments that it has made, then government will have to act.

He said: "If we find in the then prevailing economic climate that it is unaffordable, we must then be prepared to change the mission, not squeeze the equipment and manpower to deliver a 'mission impossible'."

Howarth also warned room for manoeuvre on spending will be limited by long-term MoD contractual commitments.

He told MPs: "Not content with screwing up their own budget, this government want to saddle the next Conservative government with Labour's debts".

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/may/01/conservatives-trident-nuclear-missile-upgrade>

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London Daily Telegraph
01 May 2009

General David Petraeus: We have Two Weeks to Save Pakistan from Taliban

By Isambard Wilkinson in Islamabad

Gen Petraeus reportedly said that "we've heard it all before" from the Pakistanis and he is looking to see concrete action by the government to destroy the Taliban in the next two weeks before determining the next course of action for the US.

"The Pakistanis have run out of excuses" and are "finally getting serious" about combating the threat from Taliban and al-Qaeda extremists operating out of north-west Pakistan, the general added.

He made these assessments in talks with US congressmen and members of the Senate, according to the Fox News channel.

Officials said that Gen Petraeus and senior officials in the Obama administration believe that the Pakistani army, led by Gen Ashfaq Kayani, is "superior" to the civilian government.

American officials have watched with anxiety as Taliban fighters advanced earlier this month to within 60 miles of the capital city, Islamabad. In recent days, the Pakistani army has sought to reverse that tide, retaking control of strategic points in the district of Buner even as the Taliban struck back by kidnapping scores of police and paramilitary troops.

However, the US secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, said last Saturday that It would be "unthinkable" that the Pakistani government of President Asif Ali Zardari would be toppled by the Taliban, adding: "Then they would have the keys to the nuclear arsenal of Pakistan, and we can't even contemplate that. We cannot let this go on any further."

The anxiety with which US officials are monitoring events in Pakistan is compounded by a battle in Washington over how best to help the Pakistanis. Some members of Congress want to attach strict conditions to any aid provided to Islamabad - a move opposed by the Obama administration - while still others wish to transfer authority over key funding streams from the defence department to the state department, which is also opposed by the administration.

Officials told Fox News that no one in the US possesses "an understanding of the Taliban's true objective".

It remains unclear to policymakers whether the group truly seeks to overthrow Mr Zardari's government or merely to carve out a territory within Pakistan in which it can establish safe haven, impose Islamic law and plot attacks on external targets.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/pakistan/5256489/General-David-Petraeus-we-have-two-weeks-to-save-Pakistan-from-Taliban.html>

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U.S. News & World Report

May 1, 2009

How Safe Is Pakistan's Nuclear Arsenal?

By Thomas Omestad

Pakistan has been active in improving the safety and security of its nuclear weapons in recent years, despite recent expressions of concern on the topic by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and others, says a knowledgeable U.S. official.

"It's clear the Pakistani authorities have taken significant steps to enhance the security of their nuclear arsenal...a variety of steps," said the official. "They take the issue of not ever again being a source of nuclear proliferation very seriously."

That was in part a reference to the nuclear black market of ousted Pakistani scientist A. Q. Khan, who sold nuclear technology to Libya, Iran, and North Korea.

The current worry about Pakistan's nuclear force stems from the aggressive advances of armed Taliban units, including some about 60 miles of the capital, Islamabad. The official said, "Obviously, what's going on enters into our thinking.... We are watchful."

The Bush administration started a program to assist Pakistan's military with equipment and training on nuclear security. The official noted, "We have provided some assistance over several years," and that assistance continues. "This is mutually agreed-upon stuff," the official said.

The official also credited Pakistan with improving export controls and participating in a program of pre-screening United States-bound cargo from the port of Qasim, Pakistan, with radiation scanning.

In light of advances by the Taliban in Pakistan, the United States and other Western nations have expressed public questions about the security of Pakistan's nuclear weapons.

Earlier this week, Pakistan's president felt compelled to respond publicly to those concerns by stating that the country's atomic arsenal is beyond the grasp of Islamist militants. "I want to assure the world that the nuclear capability of Pakistan is under safe hands," President Asif Ali Zardari insisted.

His comments followed a chilling warning from Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. "If the worst, the unthinkable, were to happen and this advancing Taliban—encouraged and supported by al Qaeda and other extremists—were to essentially topple the government for failure to beat them back, then they would have the keys to the nuclear arsenal of Pakistan," she said. "We can't even contemplate that."

At his press conference on Wednesday, Obama addressed the issue: "We have huge strategic interests, huge national security interests in making sure that Pakistan is stable and that you don't end up having a nuclear-armed militant state."

<http://www.usnews.com/articles/news/world/2009/05/01/how-safe-is-pakistans-nuclear-arsenal.html>

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China View
2 May 2009

PM: Pakistan's Nuclear Assets Safe

ISLAMABAD, May 2 (Xinhua) -- Pakistani Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani said that Pakistan's nuclear assets are in safe hands and will not allow any body to cast evil eyes on it.

Talking to reporters Saturday in the eastern Pakistani city of Lahore, Gilani rejected rumors about the nuclear program, saying that Pakistan is a responsible nuclear state with a strong command and control system in place.

Meanwhile, the Pakistani foreign ministry Saturday rejected as totally baseless a British daily report that Pakistan had shared nuclear secrets with Western allies.

The Financial Times reported on April 30 that Pakistan's senior civil and military officials were sharing tightly-held information about the country's nuclear weapons program with western countries to allay fears about the security of warheads in the face of a Taliban advance.

A foreign ministry spokesman of Pakistan termed the report as totally baseless, saying that no such briefing ever took place.

"Pakistan's strategic assets were absolutely safe, given our robust multi-layered Command and Control systems," he said.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-05/02/content_11300928.htm

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London Guardian
3 May 2009

Pakistan Nuclear Projects Raise US Fears

By Simon Tisdall

Pakistan is continuing to expand its nuclear bomb-making facilities despite growing international concern that advancing Islamist extremists could overrun one or more of its atomic weapons plants or seize sufficient radioactive material to make a dirty bomb, US nuclear experts and former officials say.

David Albright, previously a senior weapons inspector for the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency in Iraq, said commercial satellite photos showed two plutonium-producing reactors were nearing completion at Khushab, about 160 miles south-west of the capital, Islamabad.

"In the current climate, with Pakistan's leadership under duress from daily acts of violence by insurgent Taliban forces and organised political opposition, the security of any nuclear material produced in these reactors is in question," Albright said in a report (pdf) issued by the independent Institute for Science and International Security in Washington.

Albright warned that the continuing development of Pakistan's atomic weapons programme could trigger a renewed nuclear arms race with India. But he suggested a more immediate threat to nuclear security arose from recent territorial advances in north-west Pakistan by indigenous Taliban and foreign jihadi forces opposed to the Pakistani government and its American and British allies.

"Current US policy, focused primarily on shoring up Pakistan's resources for fighting the Taliban and al-Qaida, has had the unfortunate effect of turning the US into more of a concerned bystander of Pakistan's expansion of its ability to produce nuclear weapons," Albright said in the report, co-authored with Paul Brannan.

The Khushab reactors are situated on the border of Punjab and North-West Frontier province, the scene of heavy fighting between Taliban and government forces. Another allegedly vulnerable facility is the Gadwal uranium enrichment plant, less than 60 miles south of Buner district, where some of the fiercest clashes have taken place in recent days.

A suicide bomber blew himself up outside the Kamra air weapons complex near Gadwal in December 2007, injuring several people.

Uncertainty has long surrounded Pakistan's nuclear stockpile. The country is not a signatory to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty or the comprehensive test ban treaty. Nor has it submitted its nuclear facilities to international inspection since joining the nuclear club in 1998, when it detonated five nuclear devices. Pakistan is currently estimated to have about 200 atomic bombs.

Although Pakistan maintains a special 10,000-strong army force to guard its nuclear warheads and facilities, western officials are also said to be increasingly concerned that military insiders with Islamist sympathies may obtain radioactive material that could be used to make a so-called dirty bomb, for possible use in terrorist attacks on western cities.

Hillary Clinton, the US secretary of state, told Congress recently that Pakistan had dispersed its nuclear warheads to different locations across the country in order to improve their security. But John Bolton, a hawkish former senior official in the Bush administration, said this weekend that this move could have the opposite effect to that intended.

"There is a tangible risk that several weapons could slip out of military control. Such weapons could then find their way to al-Qaida or other terrorists, with obvious global implications," Bolton said.

Bolton threw doubt on President Barack Obama's assurance last week that while he was "gravely concerned" about the stability of Pakistan's government, he was "confident that the nuclear arsenal will remain out of militant hands". Since there was a real risk of governmental collapse, Bolton said the US must be prepared for direct military intervention inside Pakistan to seize control of its nuclear stockpile and safeguard western interests.

"To prevent catastrophe will require considerable American effort ... We must strengthen pro-American elements in Pakistan's military, roll back Taliban advances and, together with our increased efforts in Afghanistan, decisively defeat the militants on either side of the border," Bolton wrote in an article published in the Wall Street Journal.

"At the same time, we should contemplate whether and how to extract as many nuclear weapons as possible from Pakistan, thus somewhat mitigating the consequences of regime collapse."

Husain Haqqani, Pakistan's ambassador to Washington, has dismissed such warnings as hyperbolic and accused US officials and analysts of being guilty of a "panic reaction".

"The spectre of extremist Taliban taking over a nuclear-armed Pakistan is not only a gross exaggeration, it could also lead to misguided policy prescriptions from Pakistan's allies, including our friends in Washington," Haqqani said last week.

Senior British officials have also poured cold water on some of the more sensational statements emanating from Washington. "There is obvious concern but it is not at the same level as the state department. We are not concerned Pakistan is about to collapse. The Taliban are not going to take Islamabad. There is a lot of resilience in the Pakistani state," one official said.

The warnings about Pakistan's nuclear weapons come ahead of a summit meeting in Washington this week between Obama, President Asif Ali Zardari of Pakistan and President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan. The three leaders are

expected to discuss implementation of the US's new integrated strategy for the Afghan-Pakistan region, which includes a "surge" of 17,000 US troops plus additional Nato forces in Afghanistan and further non-military development aid and assistance for Pakistan.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/may/03/pakistan-nuclear-security>

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New York Times

May 4, 2009

Pakistan Strife Raises U.S. Doubts on Nuclear Arms

By DAVID E. SANGER

WASHINGTON — As the insurgency of the Taliban and Al Qaeda spreads in Pakistan, senior American officials say they are increasingly concerned about new vulnerabilities for Pakistan's nuclear arsenal, including the potential for militants to snatch a weapon in transport or to insert sympathizers into laboratories or fuel-production facilities.

The officials emphasized that there was no reason to believe that the arsenal, most of which is south of the capital, Islamabad, faced an imminent threat. President Obama said last week that he remained confident that keeping the country's nuclear infrastructure secure was the top priority of Pakistan's armed forces.

But the United States does not know where all of Pakistan's nuclear sites are located, and its concerns have intensified in the last two weeks since the Taliban entered Buner, a district 60 miles from the capital. The spread of the insurgency has left American officials less willing to accept blanket assurances from Pakistan that the weapons are safe.

Pakistani officials have continued to deflect American requests for more details about the location and security of the country's nuclear sites, the officials said.

Some of the Pakistani reluctance, they said, stemmed from longstanding concern that the United States might be tempted to seize or destroy Pakistan's arsenal if the insurgency appeared about to engulf areas near Pakistan's nuclear sites. But they said the most senior American and Pakistani officials had not yet engaged on the issue, a process that may begin this week, with President Asif Ali Zardari scheduled to visit Mr. Obama in Washington on Wednesday.

"We are largely relying on assurances, the same assurances we have been hearing for years," said one senior official who was involved in the dialogue with Pakistan during the Bush years, and remains involved today. "The worse things get, the more strongly they hew to the line, 'Don't worry, we've got it under control.'"

In public, the administration has only hinted at those concerns, repeating the formulation that the Bush administration used: that it has faith in the Pakistani Army.

"I'm confident that we can make sure that Pakistan's nuclear arsenal is secure," Mr. Obama said Wednesday, "primarily, initially, because the Pakistani Army, I think, recognizes the hazards of those weapons falling into the wrong hands." He added: "We've got strong military-to-military consultation and cooperation."

But that cooperation, according to officials who would not speak for attribution because of the sensitivity surrounding the exchanges between Washington and Islamabad, has been sharply limited when the subject has turned to the vulnerabilities in the Pakistani nuclear infrastructure. The Obama administration inherited from President Bush a multiyear, \$100 million secret American program to help Pakistan build stronger physical protections around some of those facilities, and to train Pakistanis in nuclear security.

But much of that effort has now petered out, and American officials have never been permitted to see how much of the money was spent, the facilities where the weapons are kept or even a tally of how many Pakistan has produced. The facility Pakistan was supposed to build to conduct its own training exercises is running years behind schedule.

Administration officials would not say if the subject would be raised during Mr. Zardari's first meeting with Mr. Obama. But even if Mr. Obama raises the subject, it is not clear how fruitful the conversation might be.

Mr. Zardari heads the country's National Command Authority, the mix of political, military and intelligence leaders responsible for its arsenal of 60 to 100 nuclear weapons. But in reality, his command and control over the weapons are considered tenuous at best; that power lies primarily in the hands of the army chief of staff, Gen. [Ashfaq Parvez Kayani](#), the former director of Inter-Services Intelligence, the country's intelligence agency.

For years the Pakistanis have waved away the recurring American concerns, with the head of nuclear security for the country, Gen. Khalid Kidwai, dismissing them as “overblown rhetoric.”

Americans who are experts on the Pakistani system worry about what they do not know. “For years I was concerned about the weapons materials in Pakistan, the materials in the laboratories,” said Rolf Mowatt-Larssen, who ran the Energy Department’s intelligence unit until January, and before that was a senior C.I.A. officer sent to Pakistan to determine whether nuclear technology had been passed to Osama bin Laden.

“I’m still worried about that, but with what we’re seeing, I’m growing more concerned about something going missing in transport,” said Mr. Mowatt-Larssen, who is now at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government.

Several current officials said that they were worried that insurgents could try to provoke an incident that would prompt Pakistan to move the weapons, and perhaps use an insider with knowledge of the transportation schedule for weapons or materials to tip them off. That concern appeared to be what Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton was hinting at in testimony 10 days ago before the House Appropriations Committee. Pakistan’s weapons, she noted, “are widely dispersed in the country.”

“There’s not a central location, as you know,” she added. “They’ve adopted a policy of dispersing their nuclear weapons and facilities.” She went on to describe a potential situation in which a confrontation with India could prompt a Pakistani response, though she did not go as far as saying that such a response could include moving weapons toward India — which American officials believed happened in 2002. Other experts note that even as Pakistan faces instability, it is producing more plutonium for new weapons, and building more production reactors.

David Albright and Paul Brannan of the Institute for Science and International Security wrote in a recent report documenting the progress of those facilities, “In the current climate, with Pakistan’s leadership under duress from daily acts of violence by insurgent Taliban forces and organized political opposition, the security of any nuclear material produced in these reactors is in question.” The Pakistanis, not surprisingly, dismiss those fears as American and Indian paranoia, intended to dissuade them from nuclear modernization. But the government’s credibility is still colored by the fact that it used equal vehemence to denounce as fabrications the reports that Abdul Qadeer Khan, one of the architects of Pakistan’s race for the nuclear bomb, had sold nuclear technology on the black market.

In the end, those reports turned out to be true.

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/04/world/asia/04nuke.html?_r=1&hp=&pagewanted=print

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Washington Post
May 4, 2009

Mullen says He Believes Pakistan Nukes are Secure

By LOLITA C. BALDOR
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON -- The Pentagon's top military officer said Monday that he is comfortable that Pakistan's nuclear weapons remain secure, but is gravely concerned about Taliban advances there and in Afghanistan.

Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told reporters that the United States has worked with the Pakistanis to improve the security of their nuclear arsenal and he believes that country's military is focused on keeping them secure.

While he acknowledged that there is a limit to what the United States knows about the nuclear weapons, he believes that Pakistan's military leaders understand the threat if it falls into the insurgents hands.

"I know what we've done over the last three years, specifically, to both invest, assist (Pakistan), and I've watched them improve their security fairly dramatically over the last three years," Mullen said.

He said he does not believe that Pakistan's nuclear weapons will fall into the hands of terrorists. But when asked if he would say he is confident _ rather than just comfortable _ with the state of Pakistan's nuclear security, he stuck with the latter.

Instead, Mullen said his greater worry is Pakistan's ability to sustain their military operations, as Taliban violence surges in the region.

"I'm gravely concerned about the progress they (the Taliban) have made in the south and inside Pakistan," Mullen said. "The consequences of their success directly threaten our national interests in the region and our safety here at home."

U.S. administration and military leaders have said that success in the Afghanistan war is linked to security in Pakistan. And officials will meet this week with leaders from both countries. Part of those meetings will focus on setting benchmarks for economic, political and military progress there.

Mullen would not detail the benchmarks under discussion, but he said that the U.S. must have patience as it works to solidify a relationship with Pakistan, that can lead to a more secure region.

"We're just going through a very hard time right now in building it, and that's going to take considerable effort," said Mullen, adding that it also will take "an extended period of time to get this right."

Associated Press Writer Pauline Jelinek contributed to this report.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/05/04/AR2009050401838.html>

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Yonhap News
3 May 2009

N. Korea has Small Nuclear Arsenal but Lacks Deployment Ability: U.S. Report

By Sam Kim

SEOUL (Yonhap) -- North Korea possesses "a small nuclear arsenal" but may have yet to develop the capability to deploy weapons, according to a recent U.S. report.

"North Korea has already built a small nuclear arsenal and shows no signs of being willing to negotiate it away," said the report co-authored by former U.S. Secretary of Defense William Perry, who served as U.S. Secretary of Defense under President Bill Clinton from 1994-1997.

But the country, which tested an atomic device in October 2006, "may not have the ability to deploy nuclear weapons," it said.

The report was published last month by the Council on Foreign Relations, an independent U.S. think tank based in New York.

U.S. and South Korean officials say North Korea has enough plutonium stockpiled to create up to six nuclear bombs, but they refuse to categorize it as a nuclear state.

Experts are split on whether the 2006 nuclear test was a success because it is believed to have resulted in a yield of just 1kt. The bomb dropped on Hiroshima produced an explosion of about 15kt.

North Korea recently threatened it would conduct another nuclear test if the United Nations Security Council fails to withdraw its condemnation of the April 5 rocket launch by Pyongyang.

The report, also chaired by former U.S. National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft, urged Washington to engage in "aggressive diplomacy" to revive multilateral talks aimed at ending the nuclear pursuit.

The negotiations, which also include South Korea, Japan, Russia and China, have been stalled for months, while North Korea recently declared them "defunct" in anger over the U.N. action.

"Any chance of success with North Korea and Iran will require aggressive diplomacy that fully involves the Obama administration in close cooperation with other relevant international actors," the report said.

"The United States will need to strengthen the resolve of the six-party coalition ... to keep any dismantlement on track," it said, adding such an effort will require the coordination of "competing interests among coalition members."

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2009/05/03/78/0401000000AEN20090503000600315F.HTML>

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Korea Herald
4 May 2009

'Pyongyang Likely to Conduct Nuclear Test'

By Kim So-hyun

A senior U.S. government official mentioned for the first time that North Korea is likely to conduct a nuclear test before it is forced back to the six-party talks.

U.S. President Barack Obama's policy coordinator for weapons of mass destruction, Gary Samore, said Pyongyang was trying to divide the five other countries involved in the disarmament negotiations and was looking for ways to provoke problems.

"It's very clear that the North Koreans want to pick a fight," he said at an event at the Brookings Institution on Friday. "They want to kill the six-party talks."

Asked if he expected North Korea to carry out another nuclear test, Saymore said, "I think they will. That's what they are threatening to do."

Pyongyang, which conducted its first atomic test in 2006, is believed to have enough plutonium to make at least half a dozen nuclear bombs.

North Korea said last week that it will conduct nuclear and intercontinental ballistic missile tests in protest against the U.N. Security Council's condemnation of its missile launch on April 5.

Saymore said Washington was committed to the six-nation talks and forecast that Pyongyang would be forced back to the negotiations within nine months, without revealing any specific reasons.

"We'll just wait," he said. He added that he believed other major powers would support further sanctions against North Korea if it goes ahead with a test.

"The Chinese are very, very angry at the North Koreans."

North Korea possesses a small nuclear arsenal but doesn't seem to have the ability to deploy nuclear weapons, a U.S. think tank said in a recently released report.

"North Korea has produced a small stockpile of plutonium it says it has used to build a small arsenal of first-generation nuclear bombs," reads the report co-authored by William Perry, who served as U.S. Secretary of Defense under President Bill Clinton from 1994-1997, and Brent Scowcroft, former U.S. National Security Advisor.

"It tested a nuclear device that produced a small explosive yield in October 2006, and claimed earlier this year that it had produced nuclear weapons from its plutonium stockpile."

The report was published last month by the Council on Foreign Relations based in New York.

"Throughout much of 2008, North Korea made significant progress on disabling its ability to make additional plutonium for bombs and had agreed to dismantle its nuclear weapons programs," the report said.

"The United States will need to strengthen the resolve of the six-party coalition that also includes China, Japan, Russia and South Korea to keep any dismantlement on track."

The report said it was uncertain whether North Korea was producing highly enriched uranium for a uranium-based nuclear program in parallel to its known plutonium-based program.

"It seems clear that any chance of success with North Korea and Iran will require aggressive diplomacy that fully involves the Obama administration in close cooperation with other relevant international actors," the report said.

North Korea's foreign minister reiterated last week that his country will not return to the six-nation talks at an international meeting, the Korean Central News Agency said yesterday.

The North Korean state media reported that its foreign minister Park Eui-choon said at a ministerial meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement, an international organization of state considering themselves not formally aligned with or against any major power bloc, in Cuba last week that Pyongyang will focus on securing strong war deterrents.

http://www.koreaherald.co.kr/NEWKHSITE/data/html_dir/2009/05/04/200905040006.asp

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Yonhap News
5 May 2009

N. Korea has Cyber War Unit Targeting S. Korean, U.S. Military: Sources

SEOUL, May 5 (Yonhap) -- North Korea operates a cyber warfare unit that seeks to disrupt South Korean and U.S. military networks and visits U.S. military sites more frequently than any other country, intelligence sources in Seoul said Tuesday.

The General Staff of the North's Korean People's Army has been operating for years a "technology reconnaissance team," which is exclusively in charge of collecting information and disrupting military computer networks in South Korea and the U.S., the sources said on condition of anonymity.

Roughly 100 hackers, mostly graduates of a leading military academy in Pyongyang, work on the team, hacking into South Korean and U.S. computer networks, withdrawing classified information and establishing combat simulations, they said.

"This unit tries to hold control of South Korean and U.S. military information system by hacking into their computer networks and taking out classified data. When necessary, they may spread computer viruses to disrupt the networks," one of the sources said.

After years of tracking which countries access U.S. military Web sites and networks, the U.S. military has found that users inside North Korea logged on most frequently.

The North Korean unit has also set up simulated war training softwares and extensive data on South Korean high-ranking military personnel, according to the sources.

South Korea and the U.S. signed a memorandum of understanding on April 30 to bolster cooperation in fighting cyber terrorism against their defense networks.

The U.S. maintains 28,500 troops in the South as a deterrent against North Korea.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2009/05/05/30/0401000000AEN20090505001000315F.HTML>

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London Daily Telegraph
May 2, 2009

Robert Gates: Bombing Iran Would Not Stop Nuclear Threat

By David Blair, Diplomatic Editor

Testifying before the Senate Appropriations committee, Mr Gates outlined the central objection to using force to halt Iran's nuclear programme.

All of the country's known nuclear installations, notably the crucial uranium enrichment plant in Natanz, could in principle be destroyed. But the Iranian regime would eventually be able to rebuild them - and it would almost certainly do so without admitting the inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency, who presently monitor Iran's most important nuclear plants.

A military strike would only delay Iran's nuclear programme, while the regime's resolve to build a weapon, if it so chooses, may only be hardened.

"Even a military attack will only buy us time and send the programme deeper and more covert," said Mr Gates, during the hearing on Thursday.

The attitude of Iran's regime was, he added, the crucial factor. Mr Gates said that America's key aim should be to make clear to Tehran that developing a nuclear arsenal was not in Iran's own interests.

"Their security interests are actually badly served by trying to have nuclear weapons. They will start a nuclear arms race in the Middle East and they will be less secure at the end than they are now," said Mr Gates.

If Iran were to acquire a nuclear bomb, rival powers in the Middle East, especially Egypt and Saudi Arabia, would probably follow suit. Since Iran began enriching uranium on a large scale in 2006, 13 countries across the Middle East have embarked on nuclear energy projects.

While all these programmes are civilian - and there is no question of any safeguards being breached so far - experts believe the nations concerned may be keeping their future options open.

Mr Gates, who became defence secretary under the Bush administration in 2006 and was reappointed by President Barack Obama, has previously made clear his opposition to striking Iran.

In 2007, he told a private meeting of Congressmen that bombing Iran would "create generations of jihadists, and our grandchildren will be battling our enemies here in America," according to the New Yorker.

Mr Obama has chosen diplomatic and economic pressure to persuade Iran to refrain from developing nuclear weapons. In particular, five United Nations Resolutions have urged Tehran to stop enriching uranium.

This process could be used to produce weapons-grade uranium: the crucial component of a nuclear weapon. In February, Iran had produced almost a ton of low-enriched uranium, according to the IAEA.

Experts believe the country could produce enough weapons-grade material for one nuclear bomb by the end of next year.

Benjamin Netanyahu, the new Israeli prime minister, has described a nuclear-armed Iran as the greatest threat to world peace. Mr Gates may also be trying to dissuade Israel from launching a unilateral strike on Iran's nuclear plants.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iran/5257343/Robert-Gates-bombing-Iran-would-not-stop-nuclear-threat.html>

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Gulf News – UAE

May 03, 2009

Hitting Nuclear Sites would Drive Iran to be more Covert

Bloomberg

Washington: Military strikes against suspected Iranian nuclear facilities would likely fail to inflict a long-term, crippling blow and would simply push Iran into a "more covert" effort, US Defence Secretary Robert Gates has said.

"My view is that the only way to eliminate an Iranian determination to have nuclear weapons is for that government to make that decision," Gates told the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Gates backed the Obama administration's diplomatic strategy of engaging Iran on suspending uranium enrichment work that might be used to make a nuclear bomb. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has said Iran would face severe sanctions should it rebuff constructive talks over the dispute.

Democrats and Republicans in the US Senate want to target Iran's gasoline imports from Europe and India as a way to strengthen sanctions designed to squeeze the regime into paring its nuclear development programme.

Senators led by Indiana Democrat Evan Bayh, Arizona Republican Jon Kyl and Connecticut independent Joe Lieberman announced legislation this week to penalise companies that continue to supply gasoline and other refined petroleum products to Iran, possibly including cutting them out of the US market.

Iran says its nuclear pursuits are a legitimate effort to develop energy for its economy.

"All of the information we get indicates that, however, imperfect the UN resolutions against Iran are, the Iranians hate it when one of those resolutions passes, because it makes clear how isolated they are in the world," Gates said.

UN request: 'Explain arms cargo'

The United Nations Security Council made a second request to Iran and Syria to explain an arms shipment that the US says was seized by Cyprus en route to the Syrian port city of Latakia from Iran.

The Security Council committee created to enforce UN sanctions against Iran, which include a ban on arms exports, agreed today to seek an explanation about the January shipment in letters to the governments in Tehran and Damascus.

Neither Iranian nor Syrian officials responded directly to a similar request in March. The Russian-owned, Cypriot-flagged vessel Monchegorsk was intercepted by Cyprus on January 29.

<http://www.gulfnews.com/region/Iran/10309723.html>

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San Francisco Sentinel
3 May 2009

Israel Will Not Allow Iran to Obtain Nuclear Weapons, Says New Israeli Ambassador

BY NATASHA MOZGOVAYA

Israel will not allow Iran to obtain nuclear weapons, Israeli media on Sunday quoted Michael Oren, who is slated to be Israel's next ambassador to the U.S., as telling pro-Israel lobbyists.

Oren, a noted historian, was quoted as saying that Israel would not remain passive while a regime that has sworn to wipe it off the map acquired the means to do this, referring to comments made by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

He reportedly made the comments at the annual conference of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee in Washington.

Former Deputy Defense Minister Ephraim Sneh, meanwhile, warned the lobbyists of the dire consequences that Iran's attainment of nuclear weapons would have on Israel and the entire Middle East.

"The terrorists across the region will raise their heads because they will have nuclear backing... it will spark a nuclear arms race in the Middle East," Sneh told the AIPAC summit.

"Immigration to Israel will stop; parents will encourage their children to leave the country; investment in Israel will drop significantly; moderates in the Middle East will become more extreme."

The event drew more than 6,000 participants, including politicians, students, Jewish community activists and academics. Much of the discussion at the conference was devoted to Iran's nuclear ambitions, which Israel and the United States say are aimed at producing atomic weapons.

Sneh also touched on the much-touted possibility of an Israeli military strike against Iran's nuclear facilities.

"From what we know about the progress of Iran's nuclear program, this is the deadline for a decision," he said.

"This is an undiplomatic answer, but you need to assume that we have a [military] operational solution, and this is based on what we can do on our own, without permission and without support."

The former lawmaker's comments came after the French magazine L'Express reported on Saturday that the Israel Air Force recently staged military exercises between Israel and the British colony of Gibraltar near southern Spain.

The fact that the drills were held 3,800 kilometers away from Israel "confirms that the Israel Defense Forces is making concrete preparations" to attack Iran over its refusal to cooperate with the international community over its contentious nuclear program, according to L'Express.

<http://www.sanfranciscosentinel.com/?p=25126>

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Islamic Republic News Agency – Iran
4 May 2009

Policy of Sanction, Threat against Iran Ineffective: Qashqavi

Tehran, May 4, IRNA – Foreign Ministry spokesman Hassan Qashqavi said on Monday that the policy of threat and sanctions against the Islamic Republic has become ineffective.

Addressing his weekly press briefing, he said the sanctions have no effect on the national will of the Iranian nation to pursue its legal rights including access to nuclear energy.

He regretted that the Zionist lobbies are trying to mislead the new US administration, warning President Barack Obama's administration against such moves.

Referring to Washington's double-standard policies, Qashqavi reiterated that such policies have been failed.

On Iran's scientific and technological achievements, he said the Iranian youth have conquered those fields that the West had made them forbidden for the Iranian nation.

<http://www.irma.ir/En/View/FullStory/?NewsId=468030&IdLanguage=3>

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Washington Post

May 4, 2009

U.S. Sanctions will not halt Nuclear Work: Iran

Reuters

TEHRAN (Reuters) - Iran will not suspend its disputed nuclear program even if the United States imposes sanctions targeting companies that ship fuel to the Islamic Republic, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said Monday.

Twenty-five U.S. senators from both parties have proposed giving President Barack Obama new leverage in the dispute over Tehran's nuclear ambitions. The bill gives Obama the authority to sanction companies supplying petrol to Iran.

The United States and its Western allies suspect Iran is aiming to develop nuclear bombs under the cover of a civilian program and want it to halt sensitive uranium enrichment. Iran rejects the allegation and says it will not bow to pressure.

"We can cope with such measures (U.S. sanctions). Sanctions and threats will not stop Iran from continuing its nuclear work," Foreign Ministry spokesman Hassan Qashqavi told a weekly news conference.

Iran is the world's fourth-largest oil exporter but lacks refining capacity to meet domestic demand and so relies heavily on international imports to guarantee fuel at the pumps.

Washington has threatened "crippling" sanctions against Iran if it did not end its sensitive nuclear activities.

During his 2008 presidential campaign Obama expressed interest in using Iran's dependence on imports of refined petroleum products as leverage in the nuclear standoff. But U.S. lawmakers say that under current law his powers to do so are limited.

Under the bill, a foreign oil company found to be in violation would be prevented from owning retail petrol stations in the United States or delivering crude oil to the U.S. Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

Similar legislation has been introduced in the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Though Iran holds some of the world's biggest crude oil reserves, it imports 40 percent of its gasoline to meet growing domestic demand. Expensive government subsidies help keep gasoline in Iran much cheaper than elsewhere.

(Writing by Parisa Hafezi, Editing by Michael Roddy)

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/05/04/AR2009050400891.html>

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Washington Post

May 2, 2009

Al-Qaida used Hotmail, Simple Codes in Planning

By PAMELA HESS

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON -- In the days following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, alleged al-Qaida operations mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed intended to use his free Hotmail account to direct a U.S.-based operative to carry out an attack, according to a guilty plea agreement filed by Ali Saleh Kahlah al-Marri in federal court.

The document shows how al-Qaida, at least in 2001, embraced prosaic technologies like pre-paid calling cards, public phones, computer search engines and simplistic codes to communicate, plan and carry out its operations.

Al-Marri also surfed the Internet to research cyanide gas, using software to cover his tracks, according to the document filed Thursday in federal court in Peoria, Ill. He marked the locations of dams, waterways and tunnels in the United States in an almanac. The government claims this reflects intelligence that al-Qaida was planning to use cyanide gas to attack those sites.

As a result of his guilty plea, al-Marri could be sentenced up to a maximum 15-year term in federal prison.

In a stipulation of facts filed as part of the plea agreement, al-Marri admitted that he trained in al-Qaida camps and stayed in terrorist safe houses in Pakistan between 1998 and 2001. There, he learned how to handle weapons and how to communicate by phone and e-mail using a code.

After arriving in the U.S. on Sept. 10, 2001 _ a day before al-Qaida's long-plotted terror strikes in New York and Washington _ Al-Marri stored phone numbers of al-Qaida associates in a personal electronic device.

He used a "10-code" to protect the numbers _ subtracting the actual digits in the phone numbers from 10 to arrive at a coded number, according to a person close to the investigation.

In a 10-code, eight becomes a two, for example. Other al-Qaida members used the same code, according to the plea agreement.

Al-Marri sent e-mails to Khalid Sheikh Mohammed's hotmail account _ HOR70@hotmail.com _ addressed to "Muk" and signed "Abdo." The details of that code were included in an address book found in an al-Qaida safehouse in Pakistan.

An attempt by The Associated Press to reach that address did not indicate the account had been closed, but it went unanswered.

Al-Marri initially tried to use a Yahoo e-mail account to contact Mohammed, but it failed to go through. So he switched to Hotmail as well. When al-Marri arrived in the United States, he created five new e-mail accounts to communicate with Mohammed, using the 10-code to send him his cell phone number in Peoria.

From September to November, al-Marri tried and failed to contact members of al-Qaida in Pakistan using prepaid calling cards and public phones, sometimes traveling 160 miles to use a different phone.

Al-Marri was arrested in December 2001, three months after entering the U.S. on a student visa. He was shortly thereafter declared an "enemy combatant" and taken into military custody.

The "enemy combatant" designation was dropped when he was indicted by a federal grand jury in Illinois.

Suspected as an al-Qaida sleeper agent, he was held without charge for more than five years. His attorneys say he was tortured while in military custody. There is no indication in the plea agreement that al-Marri ever made contact with other alleged al-Qaida agents inside the United States.

Al-Marri admitted that before entering the U.S., he met and had regular contact with Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and with Mustafa Ahmad al-Hawsawi, who allegedly helped the Sept. 11 hijackers with money and Western-style clothing.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/05/01/AR2009050103102.html>

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London Guardian

3 May 2009

Russia to Build Floating Arctic Nuclear Stations

John Vidal in Tromsø, Norway
The Observer

Russia is planning a fleet of floating and submersible nuclear power stations to exploit Arctic oil and gas reserves, causing widespread alarm among environmentalists.

A prototype floating nuclear power station being constructed at the SevMash shipyard in Severodvinsk is due to be completed next year. Agreement to build a further four was reached between the Russian state nuclear corporation, Rosatom, and the northern Siberian republic of Yakutiya in February.

The 70-megawatt plants, each of which would consist of two reactors on board giant steel platforms, would provide power to Gazprom, the oil firm which is also Russia's biggest company. It would allow Gazprom to power drills needed to exploit some of the remotest oil and gas fields in the world in the Barents and Kara seas. The self-propelled vessels would store their own waste and fuel and would need to be serviced only once every 12 to 14 years.

In addition, designers are known to have developed submarine nuclear-powered drilling rigs that could allow eight wells to be drilled at a time.

Bellona, a leading Scandinavian environmental watchdog group, yesterday condemned the idea of using nuclear power to open the Arctic to oil, gas and mineral production.

"It is highly risky. The risk of a nuclear accident on a floating power plant is increased. The plants' potential impact on the fragile Arctic environment through emissions of radioactivity and heat remains a major concern. If there is an accident, it would be impossible to handle," said Igor Kudrik, a spokesman.

Environmentalists also fear that if additional radioactive waste is produced, it will be dumped into the sea. Russia has a long record of polluting the Arctic with radioactive waste. Countries including Britain have had to offer Russia billions of dollars to decommission more than 160 nuclear submarines, but at least 12 nuclear reactors are known to have been dumped, along with more than 5,000 containers of solid and liquid nuclear waste, on the northern coast and on the island of Novaya Zemlya.

The US Geological Survey believes the Arctic holds up to 25% of the world's undiscovered oil and gas reserves, leading some experts to call the region the next Saudi Arabia. But sea ice, strong winds and temperatures that can dip to below -50C have made them technologically impossible to exploit.

Russia, Norway, Denmark, Canada and the US have all claimed large areas of the Arctic in the past five years. Russian scientists used a mini-submarine to plant a flag below the North Pole in 2007 and have claimed that a nearby underwater ridge is part of its continental shelf.

Last week, ministers from many Arctic countries heard scientists and former US vice-president and Nobel prize winner Al Gore say that the Arctic could be free of ice in the summer within five years, with drastic consequences for the world's climate and human health.

But many countries bordering the Arctic see climate change as the chance to exploit areas that were once inaccessible and to open trade routes between the Pacific and Atlantic.

According to a new report by the Arctic Council, an intergovernmental forum, Russia is considering other nuclear plants for power-hungry settlements. "The locations that have been discussed include 33 towns in the Russian far north and far east. Such plants could be also used to supply energy for oil and gas extraction," says the report by the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/may/03/russia-arctic-nuclear-power-stations>

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RIA Novosti
05 May 2009

Russia to Start Building World's First Offshore Nuclear Plant

ST. PETERSBURG (RIA Novosti) - A St. Petersburg-based shipyard will start building the world's first offshore nuclear power plant on May 18, the city's governor said on Tuesday.

"There is no analogue to the plant, which is being built at the Baltiysky Zavod, in the world. If all goes well, we will have an excellent chance of entering the international market," Valentina Matviyenko said.

Baltiysky Zavod has so far finished assembling eight steam generators for the offshore NPP.

The contract to build the facility worth 9.9 billion rubles (\$303 million) for the Rosatom state-run nuclear power corporation was signed in late February 2009.

Demand for offshore nuclear power plants is expected to be high in regions experiencing power shortages and requiring stable energy supplies.

A number of countries, including developing economies have already shown an interest in the project on condition that Russia develops a sample model first.

The Baltiysky Zavod shipyard is expected to complete the offshore NPP in the fourth quarter of 2012

<http://en.rian.ru/business/20090505/121448724.html>

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RIA Novosti
05 May 2009

Japan to Grant Russia Extra \$40 mln for Submarine Disposal

TOKYO (RIA Novosti) - Japan is to allocate Russia an extra 4 billion yen (\$40 million) to dismantle decommissioned Russian nuclear submarines in the Far East, Japanese media reported on Tuesday.

This decision is due to be announced by Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso during Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's visit to Japan on May 12, Kyodo said, citing Japanese officials.

Japan earlier allocated 2 billion yen (\$20 million) towards dismantling some 70 nuclear submarines. The additional funding is aimed at highlighting the East Asian country's commitment to the nuclear non-proliferation process and preventing potential environmental damage from abandoned nuclear submarines.

Kyodo said that the project, involving some 20 countries, is expected to be completed in the spring of 2010. The funding is expected to be spent on cranes and the construction of mini-docks in Russia's Pacific port city of Vladivostok.

Kyodo also said that Japan may contribute funds for the construction of facilities to store spent nuclear fuel.

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20090505/121439382.html>

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China View
2 May 2009

Indian Defense Secretary to Visit Moscow for Defense Deals

NEW DELHI, May 2 (Xinhua) -- India and Russia will try hard to resolve the aircraft carrier Admiral Gorkshov issue and other defense deals during the visit of Indian Defense Secretary V.K. Singh in Moscow on Sunday, local media reported on Saturday.

Singh will hold talks with Russian counterparts on the financial aspects of modernizing the Russian aircraft carrier, according to a report by the Hindi daily Navbharat Times.

Also on agenda are talks on Russia selling nuclear submarines to India.

The report said Russia has told India that when Gorkshov aircraft issue is resolved, the remaining deals will also hang in balance.

Senior members from the Indian defense forces will accompany Singh on his visit, according to the report.

India and Russia currently disagree on the costs of modernization of Gorkshov.

Russia had promised to give India the aircraft carrier for free with India bearing the modernization costs. However due to disagreement, the carrier has not yet been delivered to India, even as time for delivery elapsed long ago.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-05/02/content_11300721.htm

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China View
3 May 2009

India to Set Up Nuclear Reactors in Kazakhstan

NEW DELHI, May 3 (Xinhua) -- India will set up an unspecified number of nuclear reactors in Kazakhstan under a memorandum of understanding (MoU) reached between the two countries early this year, said the local newspaper Mail Today on Sunday.

The MoU was signed during Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev's visit to India in January, the newspaper quoted unidentified sources as saying.

The two countries have also reached an advanced stage in discussions on nuclear cooperation and Kazakhstan could well be the first foreign destination for India-made reactors, said the report.

Such reactors would be of medium size, with a capacity to generate 200 to 300 megawatt of power each, according to the report.

Kazakhstan has also agreed to supply over 2,000 tons of uranium to India to make fuels for its nuclear plants.

Kazakhstan is the world's second biggest uranium producer and has 15 percent of the global uranium reserves.

India has already signed nuclear cooperation deals with Russia, France and the United States.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-05/03/content_11304309.htm

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RIA Novosti
30 April 2009

Russian Scientists could Create Swine Flu Vaccine in 3 Months

MOSCOW, April 30 (RIA Novosti) - Russian scientists could create a vaccine to combat swine flu in three months, the head of Russia's Flu Research Institute said in an interview with RIA Novosti on Thursday.

The scientists develop a vaccine for seasonal influenza every year, but the current task is to "adjust it to a new highly pathogenic strain," Oleg Kiselyov said, adding that Russian specialists "will try to create the vaccine in three months."

Kiselyov also said Russian tablets to meet the global swine flu outbreak could appear in early 2010.

"I don't think that we will be ready by October -November, although production is underway. But next year they will appear for sure," he said.

Earlier this week, Dmitry Lvov, director of the Virology Research Institute at the Russian Academy of Medical Sciences, said the vaccine against swine flu could be developed within six months.

Despite the fact that the illness has so far only officially claimed eight lives, seven in Mexico and one in the U.S., the outbreak has sparked a number of dramatic media reports suggesting future death tolls "could" be in the tens of thousands or even millions.

Laboratory cases, with no fatalities, have also been reported by Austria (1), Canada (13), Germany (3), Israel (2), New Zealand (3), Spain (4) and the United Kingdom (5), according to World Health Organization.

<http://en.rian.ru/russia/20090430/121397630.html>

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RIA Novosti
04 May 2009

Over 1,000 People Infected with A/H1N1 Virus - WHO

NEW YORK (RIA Novosti) - The number of officially confirmed A/H1N1 virus (swine flu) cases worldwide has exceeded 1,000, Margaret Chan, the head of the World Health Organization, said Monday.

However, speaking by video link from Geneva, she said there is "no indication that we are facing a situation similar to that in 1918," referring to the flu pandemic that killed tens of millions of people.

Nikolai Filatov, the head of Russia's consumer rights regulator Rospotrebnadzor's Moscow department, said Monday the virus could reach Moscow within two weeks.

"In line with preliminary expert calculations, the A/H1N1 influenza pandemic could reach Western Europe in May. In such a situation, the virus could reach Moscow within the next two weeks," he told a sanitary commission session in Moscow.

Earlier in the day, the WHO reported that the number of swine flu cases worldwide had reached 985 in some 20 countries.

"Should no measures be taken, up to 7 million people could become infected in Moscow. Three million could be seriously affected by the disease, 2.7 million will need outpatient treatment, 480,000 people will need hospitalization," Filatov also said.

The WHO raised on April 29 its alert level for a pandemic from 4 to 5.

The global health body has said well-cooked pork and pork products carry no risk of infection from the virus.

Russia and China, which jointly buy 20% of exported American pork, have so far blocked pork imports from California, Texas, New York, Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, Oklahoma and Florida.

The Russian agricultural regulator Rosselkhoznadzor said the extended ban "applies to products produced after May 1."

Russia has also banned pork from Spain and three Canadian provinces - British Columbia, Nova Scotia and Ontario - which Rosselkhoznadzor listed as "risk zone 2."

The U.S. has urged Russia and China to lift their ban, citing the WHO's statements on the safety of pork.

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20090504/121433694.html>

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Wall Street Journal
MAY 4, 2009

New Strain of Flu Virus Spreads to 18 Countries

By BETSY MCKAY

New reports showed the A/H1N1 swine flu had spread to 18 countries, as the World Health Organization moved closer to officially declaring the new strain a global pandemic.

Incidents of the new flu continued to turn up, including in a herd of swine in Canada, U.S. officials said. But health officials cautioned that declaring a pandemic doesn't mean the disease, which has proven mild outside of Mexico, is deadly to most people or will sweep the entire globe.

"There is a lot of misunderstanding in terms of fear and death," said Margaret Chan, director-general of the WHO, in an interview. Declaring a pandemic "doesn't mean death in big numbers is going to happen."

WHO Director-General Margaret Chan, seated at center, in a photograph provided by the agency, at its Geneva headquarters on Sunday. The agency has moved closer to declaring the new strain of flu a global pandemic.

Last week, concerns about a deadly flu swept the world. Mexico, where 19 deaths have been blamed on the virus, shut schools and discouraged public gatherings. In Hong Kong, 300 guests and staff at one hotel were quarantined

after a Mexican visitor tested positive for A/H1N1. Cases were reported across the U.S., from New York to Sacramento, and some schools were closed, though by the end of the week most of the evidence suggested that most symptoms were mild.

Unease in the agriculture sector, particularly in the pork industry, was amplified by the weekend discovery of the flu in a swine herd in Canada, which raised the specter of a new avenue of transmission to humans. The infected herd was quarantined and the source of the virus was determined to be a worker recently returned from Mexico, officials said.

Officials have emphasized that people can't get the flu by eating pork products. Global transmission of the disease is the subject of intense research by scientists from the WHO, the Atlanta-based Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other agencies and governments.

The challenge for all of them has been to balance the genuine danger of a serious outbreak with the risk of overreacting, a decision that must be made before the virus's full lethality becomes clear.

"We cannot overreact and we cannot be complacent either," Dr. Chan said. "We haven't seen the full spectrum of the disease.... One thing I have learned is that with any new disease, they're unpredictable."

Michael Osterholm, director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota, said the WHO and CDC have been consistent and on target with their messages, stressing the disease needs to be taken seriously because it's new and it isn't clear yet how lethal it might eventually be. "It's the media that has really created the roller coaster in terms of over- and underreacting," he said.

Dr. Chan said she couldn't say when the WHO, a United Nations agency, would raise its alert level to phase 6, which signals all public-health authorities in the world to activate their pandemic-preparedness plans. The agency declares a pandemic when community outbreaks are occurring in two countries in one region of the globe and at least one country in another region. This would be the first flu pandemic since 1968.

The A/H1N1 strain had been reported in 18 countries and sickened 898 people as of Sunday, according to the WHO, which counts only cases that have been confirmed by a laboratory test. Those cases include 506 infections in Mexico, with 19 deaths -- far fewer than Mexican authorities originally indicated. The U.S. has reported 226 infections in 30 states and one death.

The disease is spreading within communities in the U.S. and Mexico, and case counts are mounting in Canada. Health officials have said community outbreaks could occur in other countries where case counts are fairly large, such as Spain and New Zealand. The WHO has lifted its global pandemic alert level twice in the past week, to phase 5 from phase 3.

Dr. Chan said the WHO acted appropriately in raising a global alarm over the new strain, given its unpredictability after it emerged at the tail end of this flu season. An initial outbreak of flu in spring 1918 was followed by a second, far deadlier wave months later that killed millions of people around the world, she said. "It may come back," Dr. Chan added. "The world should prepare for it."

But a pandemic declaration "doesn't mean every country in the world will be affected by this wave of infection," Dr. Chan said. "We know fully from the data that most people make a full recovery and some people don't even need to take medicine." The new strain of A/H1N1 flu could remain mild or morph into a deadlier bug, so public health authorities must respond aggressively, she said.

Since being named to head the WHO in 2006, Dr. Chan has overseen the implementation of new international rules compelling countries to notify the agency quickly about outbreaks and other public health occurrences, instead of shielding threats from the outside world as China was accused of doing when SARS spread in 2003. Dr. Chan was director of Hong Kong's health department when SARS and H5N1 avian flu struck.

In recent years, the WHO has pushed countries to develop plans to contain outbreaks and has stockpiled antiviral drugs. The Geneva-based agency now tracks outbreaks in real time instead of scanning dated reports and trying to get besieged country health officials on the phone.

—*Lauren Etter, Scott Kilman and Peter Stein contributed to this article.*

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The Taliban's Atomic Threat

By JOHN R. BOLTON

At his press conference Wednesday evening, President Barack Obama endorsed Pakistan's official position that it has secure control over its nuclear-weapons arsenal. Mr. Obama said he was "gravely concerned" about the situation there, but "confident that the nuclear arsenal will remain out of militant hands."

His words are not reassuring in light of the Taliban's military and political gains throughout Pakistan. Our security, and that of friends and allies world-wide, depends critically on preventing more adversaries, especially ones with otherworldly ideologies, from acquiring nuclear weapons. Unless there is swift, decisive action against the Islamic radicals there, Pakistan faces two very worrisome scenarios.

One scenario is that instability continues to grow, and that the radicals disrupt both Pakistan's weak democratic institutions and the military.

Often known as Pakistan's "steel skeleton" for holding the country together after successive corrupt or incompetent civilian governments, the military itself is now gravely threatened from within by rising pro-Taliban sentiment. In these circumstances -- especially if, as Secretary of State Hillary Clinton testified recently, the nuclear arsenal has been dispersed around the country -- there is a tangible risk that several weapons could slip out of military control. Such weapons could then find their way to al Qaeda or other terrorists, with obvious global implications.

The second scenario is even more dangerous. Instability could cause the constitutional government to collapse entirely and the military to fragment. This could allow a well-organized, tightly disciplined group to seize control of the entire Pakistani government. While Taliban-like radicals might not have even a remote chance to prevail in free and fair elections, they could well take advantage of chaos to seize power. If that happened, a radical Islamicist regime in Pakistan would control a substantial nuclear weapons capacity.

Not only could this second scenario give international terrorists even greater access to Pakistan's nuclear capabilities, the risk of nuclear confrontation with India would also increase dramatically. Moreover, Iran would certainly further accelerate its own weapons program, followed inexorably by others in the region (e.g., Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Turkey) obtaining nuclear weapons, perhaps through direct purchase from Islamabad's new regime.

To prevent either scenario, Pakistan must move to the top of our strategic agenda, albeit closely related to Afghanistan. (Pashtuns on both sides of the border are the major source of Taliban manpower, although certainly not the only locus of radical support.) Contrary to Western "international nannies," the primary conflict motivators in both countries are ethnic and tribal loyalties, religious fanaticism and simple opportunism. It is not a case of the "have nots" rising against the "haves," but of True Believers on a divine mission. Accordingly, neither greater economic assistance, nor more civilian advisers upcountry, nor stronger democratic institutions will eliminate the strategic threat nearly soon enough.

We didn't get here overnight. We are reaping the consequences of failed nonproliferation policies that in the past penalized Pakistan for its nuclear program by cutting off military assistance and scaling back the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program that brought hundreds of Pakistani officers to the U.S. Globally, this extraordinarily successful program has bound generations of foreign military leaders to their U.S. counterparts. Past cut-offs with Pakistan have harmed our bilateral relationship. Perhaps inevitably, the Pakistani officers who haven't participated in IMET are increasingly subject to radical influences.

Moreover, the Bush administration, by pushing former President Pervez Musharraf into unwise elections and effectively removing him from power, simply exacerbated the instability within Pakistan's already frail system. Mr. Musharraf's performance against the terrorists left much to be desired, and he was no democrat. But removing him was unpleasantly reminiscent of the 1963 coup against South Vietnam's Diem regime, which ushered in a succession of ever-weaker, revolving-door governments, thus significantly facilitating the ultimate Communist takeover. Benazir Bhutto's assassination, while obviously unforeseen, was a direct consequence of our excessive electoral zeal.

To prevent catastrophe will require considerable American effort and unquestionably provoke resistance from many Pakistanis, often for widely differing reasons. We must strengthen pro-American elements in Pakistan's military so they can purge dangerous Islamicists from their ranks; roll back Taliban advances; and, together with our increased

efforts in Afghanistan, decisively defeat the militants on either side of the border. This may mean stifling some of our democratic squeamishness and acquiescing in a Pakistani military takeover, if the civilian government melts before radical pressures. So be it.

Moreover, we must strive to keep Indo-Pakistani relations stable, if not friendly, and pressure Islamabad to put nuclear-weapons proliferator and father of Pakistan's nuclear program A.Q. Khan back under house arrest. At the same time, we should contemplate whether and how to extract as many nuclear weapons as possible from Pakistan, thus somewhat mitigating the consequences of regime collapse.

President Obama's talks next week in Washington with the presidents of Afghanistan and Pakistan provide a clear opportunity to take the hard steps necessary to secure Pakistan's nuclear arsenal and defeat the Taliban. Failure to act decisively could well lead to strategic defeat in Pakistan.

Mr. Bolton, a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, is the author of "Surrender Is Not an Option: Defending America at the United Nations and Abroad" (Simon & Schuster, 2007).

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