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Yonhap News
May 25, 2009

N. Korea Conducts Second Nuclear Test Following Rocket Launch

By Sam Kim

SEOUL, May 25 (Yonhap) -- North Korea said Monday it successfully carried out a second nuclear test to bolster the "might" of its arms, less than two months after it launched a rocket that neighbors fear could be turned into a ballistic missile capable of hitting the U.S.

Its official media said the test was "successful" and "helped satisfactorily settle the scientific and technological problems" that may have surfaced after it conducted its first test in October 2006.

South Korea said its weather agency detected tremors of "an artificial earthquake" measuring at 4.4 on the Richter magnitude scale in the northeastern part of the communist neighbor at 9:54 a.m. The agency initially said it measured 4.5. The 2006 test registered a magnitude of 3.6, according to South Korean officials.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff said North Korea coupled the latest underground detonation with a short-range missile test launched from the same coastal base that it used to conduct its April 5 rocket launch.

A North Korean diplomat in Moscow threatened his country may step up its nuclear testing "if the U.S. and its allies continue their policy of intimidation," Itar-Tass news agency reported.

The U.S. refrained from confirming the North Korean announcement, but President Barack Obama called the situation "a threat to international peace."

"The danger posed by North Korea's threatening activities warrants action by the international community," he said. Russia said the "nuclear" blast appears to have had a force of up to 20 kilotons, according to its state media. A nuclear test is considered successful if it produces a yield of 5-15 kilotons. The U.S. believes the North's 2006 explosion yielded less than a kiloton. A kiloton is equivalent to 1,000 tons of TNT.

"The current nuclear test was safely conducted on a new higher level in terms of its explosive power and technology of its control," the North's Korean Central News Agency said, monitored in Seoul.

The test, which South Korea said appears to have taken place in Poongkye-ri, North Hamgyong Province -- the site of the 2006 blast -- was aimed at "further increasing the power of nuclear weapons and steadily developing nuclear technology," the report said.

"The nuclear test is a serious threat to peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula," South Korean presidential spokesman Lee Dong-kwan said in a statement, calling it "intolerable" and "a serious challenge to the international regime on nuclear non-proliferation."

The Unification Ministry in Seoul temporarily barred its nationals from traveling to the communist neighbor, with the exception of those traveling on business to the joint industrial complex in the North Korean border city of Kaesong.

In a meeting with his Japanese counterpart Hirofumi Nakasone, South Korean Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan agreed to push for a U.N. Security Council emergency meeting, while the defense ministry in Seoul placed its 655,000 troops on a heightened alert.

Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi, in his talks with Yu, urged that regional peace and stability be given top priority in dealing with North Korea's action. Diplomatic sources said Pyongyang gave Beijing prior notice of its nuclear test.

Since the U.N. Security Council condemnation of its rocket launch, North Korea has threatened additional nuclear and missile testing, vowing to toughen its "nuclear deterrent against U.S. hostilities."

Pyongyang claims it put a satellite in orbit with the launch while Seoul and Washington say nothing entered space, calling the move a provocative test of long-range ballistic missile technology.

South Korean and U.S. experts downplay the ability of the communist regime to tip its intercontinental ballistic missiles with nuclear bombs. Protesting the international objection to its rocket launch, North Korea has vowed to jettison the six-nation denuclearization-for-aid talks and expelled outside monitors from its nuclear facilities.

The North is believed to have plutonium enough to create up to six nuclear bombs. It has vowed to restore its Yongbyon nuclear reactor, which had been undergoing disablement under a pact signed by the two Koreas, the U.S., Japan, Russia and China.

Yang Moo-jin, a professor at the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul, said North Korea is stepping up its pressure on Washington so it can squeeze "maximum" concessions.

Its leader Kim Jong-il also knows that U.N. sanctions, imposed after the 2006 test, would have little economic impact on his already isolated country, Yang said. "Kim is following his roadmap under meticulous calculations," he said. "After the sanctions and temporary condemnations, he is looking at maximizing profits North Korea may get by holding nuclear disarmament talks with the U.S." Yang added North Korea appears to be expecting increased internal military unity as a result of the nuclear test.

South and North Korea remain technically at war after the 1950-53 Korean War ended in a truce rather than a peace treaty. Their ties deteriorated to their worst level in a decade after President Lee Myung-bak took office in Seoul early last year with a pledge to tie reconciliation to North Korean efforts to disarm.

The latest test came hours after Kim Jong-il sent condolences over the death of former South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun, who leapt from a cliff on Saturday amid pressure from a corruption scandal involving his confidants and family. Roh and Kim met in Pyongyang in 2007 for the second-ever summit between the two countries. The first was held in 2000, leading to a series of reconciliatory projects, including the Kaesong complex.

South Korea's stock and currency markets briefly tumbled after the North Korean announcement of a nuclear test, but recovered most of their earlier losses.

The benchmark Korea Composite Stock Price Index (KOSPI) fell 2.85 points, or 0.2 percent to 1,400.90. The local currency closed at 1,249 won to the U.S. dollar, down 1.6 won from Friday's close.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2009/05/25/52/0401000000AEN20090525010400315F.HTML>

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Washington Post
Monday, May 25, 2009

N. Korea Conducts 'Successful' Underground Nuclear Test

By Blaine Harden

TOKYO, May 25 -- North Korea exploded a nuclear device Monday morning, which is its second underground test in three years and is part of a pattern of escalating belligerence this year that has included a missile launch and withdrawal from all nuclear negotiations.

The communist state's official Korean Central News Agency described the test as "successful." It occurred at 9:45 a.m. in a northeast part of the country near where the first test was conducted in October 2006, according to reports from the South Korean government.

"The republic has conducted another underground nuclear testing successfully in order to strengthen our defensive nuclear deterrence," the North Korean news agency said.

The explosion produced a 4.7-magnitude tremor, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. The previous nuclear test registered 3.58 on the Richter scale.

"We are aware of the reports of a nuclear test by North Korea," a State Department official said late Sunday, speaking on condition of anonymity because the test was not yet confirmed. "We are consulting with our allies. Once we have established the facts, we will have more to say."

The test challenges the Obama administration, which came into office saying it was eager to make progress on the nuclear impasse with North Korea.

The president appointed a special envoy, Stephen Bosworth, who has signaled he is willing to begin bilateral talks with Pyongyang, as well as continue negotiations in a six-nation disarmament forum. North Korea has rejected talks, accusing Washington of continuing the Bush administration's "hostile policy."

Pyongyang may be calculating that it will gain diplomatically from a test. The 2006 explosion pushed the Bush administration to negotiate directly with North Korea, including removing it from the list of state sponsors of terrorism, to persuade it to give up its nuclear weapons.

North Korea began threatening late last month to explode another nuclear device after the U.N. Security Council condemned its April 5 launch of a long-range missile.

The country is believed to have enough plutonium to make six to eight bombs. Last month it said it would reopen its plutonium factory at Yongbyon to produce more.

Staff writer Glenn Kessler in Washington and special correspondent Stella Kim in Seoul contributed to this report.
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/05/24/AR2009052403054.html>

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London Guardian
Monday 25 May 2009

North Korea Escalates the Arms Race

The nuclear club just keeps growing, as diplomacy fails to keep out nations such as North Korea, Pakistan and Iran
Robert Fox

The announcement of North Korea's major nuclear test today has caused outrage, but little surprise. Relations had been deteriorating since last month's launch of a communication satellite rocket – taken by some as an ill-disguised ballistic missile test – brought widespread international condemnation.

Today Pyongyang said the improvement of its nuclear arsenal made the Korean peninsula a safer place. "The Democratic People's Republic of Korea successfully conducted one more underground nuclear test on May 25 as part of the measures to bolster up its nuclear deterrence for self-defence in every way as requested by its scientists and technicians."

The chairman of the US joint chiefs of staff, Admiral Mike Mullen, said he had been expecting the move for some days now, particularly after North Korea said it wouldn't return to the six-power talks on nuclear disarmament last week. While the admiral said he didn't think armed conflict was imminent, it is evident that the Obama administration doesn't envisage a resumption of direct talks with Pyongyang soon.

It may be a further symptom of the instability of Kim Jong-il's grasp on power in the reclusive neo-Stalinist state – as Simon Tisdall has written in Comment is free today. The beloved leader is clearly still in bad shape after his stroke last year, and the latest bout of erratic behaviour by Pyongyang may be an early showing of symptoms that the succession battle is already under way.

Today's underground test has significance well beyond the domestic upheavals of North Korea. It is a bad day indeed for the attempt to control the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the run-up to the renewal, and possible replacement, of the current Nuclear Proliferation Treaty (1971) next year.

North Korea seems to have been working for more than a year to improve its nuclear weapons capability both in the weapons themselves and their delivery systems. Today's statement says that the new test was carried out to "correct" the problems encountered with the first underground test of a nuclear device in 2006. Since then the North Korean military has tested several intermediate and intercontinental missiles and rockets, with mixed results.

It looks very much as if we may be on the threshold of the biggest nuclear arms race so far. There are strong indications that Pakistan and Iran are expanding their nuclear capability, as well as North Korea – their historical partner in the exchange of military hardware and technology. If there is no effective international anti-proliferation control, we may well have between 20 and 30 declared and undeclared nuclear powers within 15 years – and several non-state organisations with nuclear technology at their fingertips.

The device detonated today was modest by historical standards, the equivalent of 20 kilotons of TNT, causing the equivalent of an earthquake registering 4.5 on the Richter scale, roughly the same strength of the bombs that devastated the core of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. The latest US assessment is that Pyongyang has created enough high-grade fissile material to make at least seven bombs of this capability.

Last week the Pentagon assessed that Pakistan now had between 70 and 100 bombs or warheads of the same capacity, and this is being expanded. Asked at a congressional hearing last week if he thought Pakistan was boosting its nuclear weapons capability, Mullen replied with a terse "yes" and said he could not go into details for security reasons.

As if today's news from North Korea wasn't bad enough, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran has issued his note of defiance about his own nuclear programme. He flatly rejected the offer by the US and its allies to discuss a freeze on nuclear fuel enrichment in return for lifting sanctions. He rejected the terms, and said he did not plan to open any talks at all in the near future.

With diplomacy failing to curb the ambitions and programmes of the trio of North Korea, Pakistan and Iran, it is going to be hard to dissuade the aspirants to the nuclear club. Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Brazil are likely to be the first off the blocks, but candidates such as Hugo Chavez's Venezuela cannot be ruled out.

This is likely to put pressure on Britain, too, with America pressing for the UK to update its Trident ballistic missile programme in about 2025. America will have to replace its current fleet of Ohio class ballistic missile submarines only 10 years later. The thinking is now that the US navy can only man and deploy between eight and 10 nuclear patrols at the maximum, and the British and French contributions will be vital to mounting their own deterrent activity, particularly round the coasts of Africa and the Gulf.

The costs are likely to be far greater than the £20-25bn projected in the UK government's discussion document on Trident replacement of two years ago. Greenpeace countered that the programme over 50 years could reach £76bn at least.

Already Royal Navy planners are looking at a "Trident Lite" concept whereby the new Trident missiles could be adapted to fit the new class of Astute nuclear submarine.

But would Trident Lite deter a Dear Leader in Pyongyang or the successors of Ahmadinejad in Tehran from their ambitions to get their own nukes?

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/may/25/north-korea-arms-race>

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Times of India
25 May 2009

Usually Friendly, China Upset With North Korea Over Nuclear Test

Saibal Dasgupta , TNN

BEIJING: China, which is regarded as one of the very few countries close to North Korea, said on Monday it is "resolutely opposed" to the nuclear test carried out by that country. Beijing has been a key player in the six-party talks trying to achieve denuclearization of the Democratic

People's Republic of Korea, as North Korea is officially called. "The DPRK ignored universal opposition of the international community and once more conducted the nuclear test. The Chinese government is resolutely opposed to it," the foreign ministry said after the official Korean Central News Agency announced that DPRK has successfully conducted an underground nuclear test on Monday.

At the same time, Beijing is worried about possible sharp responses from the United States and Japan that might further complicate the delicate relationship between North Korea and rest of the world. China calls for a "calm response from all parties concerned and urged them to pursue peaceful resolution of the issue through consultation and dialogue" the foreign ministry said.

The Chinese government has been trying to achieve denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula and opposes proliferation of nuclear weapons in an effort to maintain peace and stability in northeast Asia.

Beijing asked DPRK to live up to its commitment to denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula, stop any activity that might worsen the situation and return to the track of the six-party talks. China would continue its unremitting efforts to this end, the statement added.

On its part, the DPRK government said the test was "part of [its] measures to bolster its nuclear deterrent for self-defense in every way, as requested by its scientists and technicians." North Korea did not give any details about the test and did not indicate its location.

Neighboring South Korea reported an "artificial earthquake" near the northeastern town of Kilju, about 10 km from the site where the DPRK staged its first nuclear test in October 2006.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/World/Usually-friendly-China-upset-with-North-Korea-over-nuclear-test/articleshow/4576578.cms>

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London Daily Telegraph
25 May 2009

World Unites to Condemn North Korea Nuclear Test

The world has united in condemnation of North Korea after the rogue Communist state tested a second nuclear weapon in defiance of UN resolutions.

By Peter Foster in Beijing and Malcolm Moore in Seoul

The test, which comes after six months of escalating diplomatic tensions on the Korean peninsula, led to renewed US calls for tough international action against the regime of the ailing dictator Kim Jong-il.

US President Barack Obama accused Pyongyang of "directly and recklessly challenging the international community" and seeking to undermine stability in the region.

"Such provocations will only serve to deepen North Korea's isolation. It will not find international acceptance unless it abandons its pursuit of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery," he warned.

The test, which occurred at 9.54am local time (12.54am GMT), caused a 40-second 5.3 magnitude tremor according to Japan's Meteorological Agency.

The blast at a test site 230 miles northeast of Pyongyang was estimated to be equal in power to the bomb dropped on Nagasaki in 1945 and four times as powerful as North Korea's first nuclear test in October 2006.

In the Chinese border city of Yanji, 130 miles northwest from the test site, a siren sounded warning of the imminent test. A receptionist at Yanji's International Hotel said she and several hotel guests felt the ground tremble.

China and Russia, who resisted US pressure for a new UN resolution against North Korea following a failed ballistic missile launch last month, joined the US in condemning the latest round of brinkmanship from Pyongyang.

Beijing expressed its "resolute opposition" to the test in a statement issued by the foreign ministry.

"The Chinese side vehemently demands North Korea abide by its denuclearisation promises, stop any actions which may worsen the situation and return to the six-party talks process," the statement added.

However Beijing also called for all sides to deal with the rising tensions "calmly and appropriately", a reflection of China's belief that pushing Pyongyang further into isolation would be counterproductive, analysts said.

As a long-standing ally of North Korea China is facing increasing international pressure to work harder to rein in Pyongyang which last month pulled out of nuclear disarmament talks and expelled UN nuclear inspectors.

Nancy Pelosi, the US House of Representatives speaker, on a visit to Shanghai, called on China to "use their influence" to bring Pyongyang back to the negotiating table. "Today's announcement makes that need all the more urgent," she added.

As diplomats prepared to meet at the UN, Russia said the nuclear test had threatened stability in the region and international efforts to strengthen the Nuclear Non-proliferation treaty.

"North Korea's latest actions cannot be evaluated as anything other than a violation of UN Security Council 1718, which among other things requires Pyongyang not to carry out nuclear tests," the statement added.

Gordon Brown denounced the test as "erroneous, misguided and a danger to the world" before hinting at the need for further international sanctions against the North which pulled out of the stalled Six Party talks last month after being censured by the UN for its missile test.

"The international community will treat North Korea as a partner if it behaves responsibly. If it does not, then it can expect only renewed isolation," he said.

Diplomatic sources said they had been expecting a North Korean nuclear test, and that the North was trying to win concessions from the United States.

"The reported test appears to be aimed at securing ultimate endorsement of its nuclear power status from the United States and bringing Washington to the negotiation table," said Kim Sung-han, a professor at Korea University.

The UN secretary-general General Ban Ki-moon, on a visit to Copenhagen, said he was "deeply disturbed" by the test and would be following discussions at the Security Council in New York closely.

Pyongyang, which also test-fired three smaller surface-to-air missiles, boasted that its latest test was more powerful "in terms of its explosive power" and more technologically advanced than its previous test.

"We successfully conducted another underground nuclear test on May 25 as part of measures aimed at strengthening our self-defence nuclear deterrent in every way," said the state-run North Korean news agency.

The test will "contribute to safeguarding our sovereignty and socialism and guaranteeing peace and safety on the Korean peninsula and the surrounding region," it added.

An unnamed North Korean official at Pyongyang's embassy in Moscow also refused to rule out the possibility of further tests "if the United States and its allies continue their policy of intimidation of North Korea.", reported Russia's ITAR-TASS news agency.

Japan and South Korea, the two states most immediately threatened by North Korea, also joined the US in condemning the test.

"It is an act that we can never tolerate," said Hirofumi Nakasone, Japan's Foreign Minister, after meeting his South Korean counterpart Yu Myung-Hwan in Hanoi.

"As it is a violation of UN Security Council resolutions, [Japan] condemns and protests it strongly. It is a challenge to the whole of the international community and increases tensions. We, as the only atomic-bombed nation, need to take stern action."

South Korea echoed those concerns, describing the test as a threat to world peace. "We are seriously concerned about North Korea's second test of a nuclear device," said the South Korean Foreign Minister "It's a direct threat against the peace and stability in the region as well as to the world."

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/northkorea/5383019/World-unites-to-condemn-North-Korea-nuclear-test.html>

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The Hindu
26 May 2009

[N Korea Informed US about Nuke Tests an Hour Before: Official](#)

Washington (PTI): North Korea had informed the US about its intention to test a nuclear device, less than an hour before it conducted the test that shocked the world and generated condemnation from across the globe.

A senior Administration official said, "North Korea notified the State Department of its intention to conduct a nuclear test, without citing a specific timing, less than one hour prior to 9:00 pm local time."

The US immediately notified the governments of Japan, South Korea, China and Russia about the information it received from North Korea, officials said, adding that the US technical agencies are working to confirm the details of what took place.

According to a US Geological Survey (USGS) report of a May 24 seismic event in North Korea, this event took place at approximately 9:00 pm local time close to the site of North Korea's prior test of a nuclear explosive device, the official said.

"The characteristics suggest a man-made event with an explosive yield of approximately a few kilotons TNT.

Additional analysis will continue for the next several days," the official added.

<http://www.hindu.com/thehindu/holnus/000200905261321.htm>

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Daily NK – North Korea

26 May 2009

Key Reasons behind North Korean Nuclear Test

By Jeong Jae Sung

At 9:45 on the morning of the 25th, North Korea carried out a second nuclear test. Although it was predicted, indeed announced, North Korea moved more quickly than the international community had predicted.

It had only been a month since the United Nations (UN) Security Council announced sanctions against North Korea, and a spokesperson for the North Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs subsequently warned, "If the UN does not immediately apologize, then we will conduct another nuclear test."

So, it has been suggested by various sources that this was a well-signposted move designed to improve Pyongyang's negotiating leverage while both gaining recognition as an established nuclear power and strengthening the solidarity of its regime following the apparent designation of a successor.

The North also may have chosen to time the test to coincide with U.S. Memorial Day (25th) so as to demonstrate its military significance in response to the U.S.' policy of neglect, a policy that North Korea may have felt the U.S. was not applying to other states such as Iran.

Finally, North Korea may have wished to advertise its improved technological capabilities so as to maintain its position as an exporter of weaponry.

◆ Intent to negotiate with the U.S. by securing position as a "nuclear power"

When North Korea attempted its first nuclear test in 2006, the opinion of the international community was divided over whether the test was a success or a failure. Since radioactive isotopes were subsequently detected its occurrence was not in doubt, but many analysts saw the test as a "fizzle," a test that hadn't worked properly, and this appeared to show clear limitations to North Korean nuclear capabilities.

Accordingly, the negotiating power of the North vis-a-vis its nuclear capability was also seen as being limited. Consequently, the North must have felt the need to position itself as a genuine nuclear power by conducting an indisputably successful second test in anticipation of negotiations with the U.S.

Yoon Duk Min, a professor at the Institute of Foreign Affairs and Diplomacy, agrees, "North Korea faithfully and consistently took steps to develop its nuclear weapons. It saw the problematic technical and political issues surrounding the 2006 test, and carried out a second in order to raise confidence in the technological prowess of its nuclear devices."

Lee Gi Dong, a Senior Researcher at the Institute for National Security Strategy commented on the political angle, "After absolutely confirming its position as a nuclear power, its strategy is to negotiate with the U.S. The message here is that the U.S. should stop insisting on the North's 'nuclear abandonment' or 'denuclearization' and negotiate one nuclear power to another."

Kim Young Soo, a professor at Sogang University, said, "With the U.S.-South Korea Summit coming up in June, the North's aim is to secure its position as an established nuclear power beforehand, and then lead any future negotiations. The nuclear test had to take place sooner than planned to satisfy Kim Jong Il's desire to draw the eyes and ears of the world."

◆ A nuclear test to formalize succession and improve solidarity of regime

The Chosun Central News Agency (KCNA) also announced on test day, "The successful nuclear test has greatly stirred up our army and people who have stepped up as one for the 150-Day Battle, and has kindled a new revolutionary surge of flames to open the doors of a strong nation."

Such a proclamation from the North Korean authorities, along with the nuclear status which the North hopes the second nuclear test will confer, seems to suggest that the nuclear test satisfied a definite domestic political agenda.

Then, it has been proposed that the test was to assist in consolidating the regime and to prepare the foundations for the impending succession, a task that has taken on more urgency since rumors of Kim Jong Il's serious illness in August of last year.

"North Korea has been encountering slackness in its regime and economic and diplomatic hardship since Kim's illness. This move may well be a stepping stone to cement in the succession system," suggested Professor Yoon.

Lee explained, "The North must have considered the need to define the achievements of the successor. Now that a nuclear test has been executed, events like the official succession can take place in due course."

In addition, it has been suggested that a nuclear test being carried out during the mourning period for the former President Roh Moo Hyun may also be a sign of the fact that the inter-Korean relationship is no longer a factor in North Korea's thought processes. One expert on North Korea said, "[Through the recent test] the fact that inter-Korean relations are no longer a critical variable to North Korea has been confirmed."

◆ A display of progress in North Korea's nuclear capability

It certainly seems that through the recent nuclear test, North Korea has demonstrated an improved nuclear capability over the first test.

The power and size of the second blast can be accurately calculated after detecting and measuring xenon and krypton isotopes in the water and air surrounding the test site, and they are not released immediately from the underground chamber which held the device.

However, the earthquake which accompanied this test measured 4.5-4.7 on the Richter scale, which is much stronger than the 3.9 observed during the first nuclear test. This is because there was either an increase in the amount of plutonium used or a significant advancement in North Korean nuclear technology.

Seoul University professor Lee Eun Chul (Department of Nuclear Physics) said, "It is difficult to accurately assess the nuclear weapons capability due to the fact that radioactive gases have not been emitted yet."

<http://www.dailynk.com/english/read.php?cataId=nk00400&num=4963>

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Press Trust of India

Pak Needs To Do More For Safety of Nuclear Weapons: Mullen

22 May 2009

Lalit K Jha

Washington, May 22 (PTI) Amid growing global concerns over Pakistan's atomic weapons falling in the hands of the Taliban, a top US military official today said Islamabad still needs to do more with respect to the security of its nuclear arsenal.

"I am extremely concerned about the whole issue of nuclear weapons in the region," Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen told members of Senate Foreign Relations Committee in response to a question.

Pakistan still needs to do more with respect to the security of its nuclear weapons, Mullen said, acknowledging that Islamabad is increasing its nuclear inventory.

"Senator (Jim) Webb asked me at a hearing last week about whether or not the Pakistanis were increasing their inventory. My answer to that was a single word, which was 'yes'," the top US military official said.

He also expressed concern over the increased tension between nuclear-armed India and Pakistan - the two South Asian neighbours - following terrorist attacks in Mumbai.

"I was struck with the Mumbai attacks, that 10 terrorists, obviously supported by more, with relatively simple technology, I mean AKs, hand grenades, cell phones and GPS receiver could move two nuclear states closer to war," Mullen said referring to the Mumbai terror attacks which killed more than 180 people, including six US nationals. PTI

<http://www.ptinews.com/pti%5Cptisite.nsf/0/27F5D2A414B2B34C652575BE0020A572?OpenDocument>

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The Hindu
22 May 2009

Kashmir Is the Issue, Says Pakistan

Nirupama Subramanian

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Thursday rebutted international concerns of its nuclear assets falling into the hands of Islamist militants, calling it a "malicious campaign" that had raised doubts in the minds of the Pakistani people about the motives of those engaging in this "propaganda".

Addressing Pakistani fears that the international community was conspiring to seize the country's nuclear weapons by raising the spectre of its falling into the wrong hands, Foreign Office spokesman Abdul Basit reiterated Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani's recent assertion that "no amount of coercion, direct or indirect, will ever force Pakistan to compromise on its core security interest".

Nuclear deterrence was the "cornerstone" of Pakistan's security, he said, and it would be maintained "in the light of changing regional environments". The weapons were safe under a "strong, effective and multilayered command and control" system.

Pakistan had always maintained "credible nuclear deterrence in the light of our national security imperatives", he said, and asked the international community to focus instead on pressing for a solution of the Kashmir issue. He also expressed the hope that India would return to the peace process, frozen since the November 2008 Mumbai attacks, "sooner rather than later".

"We are opposed to nuclear or conventional arms race in South Asia. At the same time, however, Pakistan cannot remain oblivious to increasing conventional asymmetries, unrelenting arms acquisitions as well as preferential treatment being accorded to certain countries in the region," he said. "Such developments disturb the strategic balance and Pakistan is constrained to adopt necessary safeguards as it deems fit."

While he did not specify what these safeguards were, he also dismissed reports that Pakistan was expanding its nuclear weapons programme.

Asked if Pakistan's national security policy did not contradict President Asif Ali Zardari's statements in Washington earlier this month that he did not regard India as a threat, the spokesman commented that "Pakistan has always believed that in order to have peace in the region, it is absolutely indispensable to solve all outstanding issues" with India.

"The way forward lies in conflict resolution and a peace process. We need to resolve the longstanding Jammu and Kashmir dispute. It is also important that our two countries adhere to the provisions of the Indus Waters Treaty of 1960," he said.

He urged the newly-elected government in New Delhi to return to the composite dialogue process "sooner rather than later". The need, he said, was for "irreversible and result-oriented dialogue because that is absolutely necessary in order to ensure lasting peace in the region".

The replies received from India to Pakistan's second set of questions on April 13 about the Mumbai attacks were to arrive in Islamabad on Thursday. Mr. Basit said they would be sent to the Interior Ministry first. Asked about Pakistan's claim earlier this week that France had offered a civil nuclear deal with it similar to the Indo-U.S. nuclear deal, the spokesman was non-committal.

<http://www.hindu.com/2009/05/22/stories/2009052255431900.htm>

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Hindustan Times
Press Trust Of India
Jerusalem, May 21, 2009

Israeli Experts Suspects Pak Hand in Iranian Missile Test

Israeli security experts suspect Pakistani hand in the technological advances shown by Iran in its latest Sejil-2 missile test, which with a range of 2,000 Kms can hit Israel, southern Europe and American bases in the Middle East.

Yiftah Shapir of the Institute for National Security Studies at Tel Aviv University was quoted by daily Ha'aretz as saying that Sejil 2 is closer to a Pakistani missile, unlike the Shehab 3 tested by Iran earlier which was based on Soviet and North Korean Scud technology.

"It is closer to a Pakistani missile, the Shaheen II, which is based on Chinese technology. This suggests that it might be the Pakistanis who transferred technology to Iran for the development of the Sejil ballistic missile," Shapir was quoted as saying by the daily.

The advantage of the new missile is not only its size, but its two-stage, solid-fuel propulsion system, experts said.

The Shehab missiles operate on liquid fuel, requiring longer preparation time for launch, and are therefore more vulnerable to attack, but solid-state rockets are quicker to launch and cut down on the warning time for the defenders.

Sejil-2 improves Iran's strategic capabilities and will shorten the response time for Israel's defences, they said.

However, the Israeli experts also said that the warhead capacity of the new missile is similar to that of Shehab, estimated at about 700 kilograms.

Deputy Israeli Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon downplayed the importance of the new missile, but suggested that its range "should worry the Europeans."

Ayalon also underlined that Iran is trying to develop a ballistic missile with a range of 10,000 kilometers that could reach the coast of the United States.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage/StoryPage.aspx?sectionName=RSSFeed-News&id=cdbff58b-0dae-4da0-9d23-f59e820e1ca4&Headline=Israeli+experts+suspects+Pak+hand+in+Iranian+missile+test>

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Reuters.com
Sunday, May 24, 2009

Iran Within 3 years of Nuke: U.S. Military Chief

By Alan Elsner

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Iran could be within one to three years from developing a nuclear weapon and time is running out for diplomacy to defuse the problem, the top U.S. military officer said on Sunday.

The assessment from Admiral Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, matched that of some independent analysts but appeared to go further than recent official statements from the U.S. government.

"Most of us believe that it's one to three years, depending on assumptions about where they are right now. But they are moving closer, clearly, and they continue to do that," Mullen said on ABC's "This Week."

Since coming to power in January, President Barack Obama has made some diplomatic overtures to Iran that have so far been rebuffed. He said last week he would not pursue this policy indefinitely and would like to see some progress on the nuclear issue by the end of this year. Iran says its nuclear program is peaceful and intended to produce electricity.

Iran last week successfully tested a missile that analysts said could hit Israel and U.S. bases in the Gulf, a major source of crude oil for the United States.

SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES

Mullen said a military strike against Iranian nuclear facilities could have grave consequences -- but so would a nuclear-armed Iran.

"The unintended consequences of a strike against Iran right now would be incredibly serious," he said. In congressional testimony last week, he used the word "calamitous" to describe the same scenario.

Israel has said it could not accept a nuclear-armed Iran while the United States has also refused to rule out military action. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has repeatedly stated the Jewish state should not exist.

"That's why this engagement in dialogue is so important. I think we should do that with all options on the table as we approach them," Mullen said.

"And so that leaves a pretty narrow space in which to achieve a successful dialogue and a successful outcome, which from my perspective means they don't end up with nuclear weapons," he added.

His words went further than recent statements by Defense Secretary Robert Gates who said of Iran on March 1: "They're not close to a stockpile, they're not close to a weapon at this point and so there is some time."

Director of National Intelligence Dennis Blair told the U.S. Congress in February: "We continue to assess Iran probably has imported at least some weapons-usable fissile material but still judge it has not obtained enough for a nuclear weapon."

The United States and other Western powers are concerned that Iran could combine elements of its uranium enrichment and missile programs to create a nuclear weapon, although Tehran denies it intends to do this.

A recent report by the joint U.S.-Russian think-tank EastWest Institute said Iran could develop a basic nuclear device in 1-3 years and a missile-borne nuclear warhead five years after that.

Mullen did not respond when asked if it was possible to take out Iran's nuclear program militarily at an acceptable cost.

"I won't speculate on what we can and can't do. Again, I put that in the category of my very strong preference ... to not be put in a position where we -- where someone -- where Iran is struck," he said.

(Editing by Sandra Maler)

<http://www.reuters.com/article/newsOne/idUSTRE54N19G20090524>

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Rueters.com

Monday, May 25, 2009

Iran: No Nuclear, Missile Cooperation with N. Korea

TEHRAN (Reuters) - Iran has no missile or nuclear cooperation with North Korea, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said on Monday, after North Korea conducted a second and far more powerful nuclear test.

Former U.S. President George W. Bush branded both countries as part of an "axis of evil," but Iran says its nuclear program is for peaceful electricity generation. The West suspects its work has military aims.

"We don't have any cooperation (with North Korea) in this field. We oppose the production, the amassing and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction," Ahmadinejad told a news conference.

Scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan, revered by many Pakistanis as the father of the country's nuclear bomb, confessed to selling nuclear secrets to Iran, North Korea and Libya in 2004.

Military experts say Iran's Shahab-3 missile is based on the North Korean Nodong missile. Tehran says Shahab-3 has a range of 2,000 km (1,200 miles), which defense analysts say would put Israel and U.S. bases in the Gulf within range.

Iran last week said it test-fired another missile -- Sejil 2 -- with a similar range, a move likely to spark new Western concern about its nuclear ambitions.

Ahmadinejad said weapons of mass destruction were against humanity and the world should get rid of them.

"Why should the people of the two Koreas and China and Japan have disputes with each other? They are all from the same culture. Threat is to everybody's disadvantage," he said.

(Reporting by Parisa Hafezi and Zahra Hosseini; Writing by Fredrik Dahl; Editing by Andrew Roche)

<http://www.reuters.com/article/newsMaps/idUSTRE54O2EX20090525>

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Jerusalem Post

May 25, 2009

Israel: Venezuela Sends Uranium to Iran

Herb Keinon, THE JERUSALEM POST

In a sign the Foreign Ministry may be switching its focus from dealing primarily with the Palestinians to more "classic" functions involving the rest of the world, Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon will travel to South America next week to attend the meeting of the Organization of American States.

Ayalon's visit to Honduras will be a prelude to a visit there later this year by Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman, who has also said he will travel to Africa by the end of the year.

Ayalon told *The Jerusalem Post* that in the last few years Israel had not paid sufficient attention to Latin America, and that his trip was the beginning of efforts to rectify that situation.

He said that Israel had numerous business and political interests in South America, one of which is to "raise the flag" regarding inroads made both by Iran and Hizbullah in the region.

He pointed out that Hizbullah has " sleeper cells" in South America, including those believed to be responsible for the bombings in the early 1990s of the embassy and the Jewish community building in Buenos Aires.

Senior diplomatic officials said that devoting time to South America and Africa represented a significant change in the Foreign Ministry's direction, noting that it had been years since an Israeli foreign minister had traveled to either continent.

"In the last few years the foreign minister was mortgaged to the peace process, and the classic activities of the ministry - building relations with countries in South American and Africa - were abandoned," one senior official said.

Perhaps because Lieberman had little faith in the future of the peace process, he said, he was interested in focusing more on bilateral ties with smaller countries that might not be that involved in the diplomatic process, but with whom good, strong relations were very important.

Another official, however, took a somewhat different view, saying that Lieberman was indeed focusing more attention on South America and Africa than in the past, but that this was primarily due to a feeling that it was urgent to counter Iran, which was making inroads in both continents.

According to a Foreign Ministry document that was published on Ynet on Monday, Iran and Hizbullah are indeed making deep inroads into South America. According to the document, Hugo Chavez's Venezuela was not only helping Iran bypass UN Security Council economic sanctions, but also, along with Bolivia, was providing the Iranians with uranium.

According to the document, Iran moved into Latin America in 1982, through Cuba, and eventually opened a number of embassies in the region, in Mexico, Brazil, Colombia, Argentina, Chile, Venezuela and Uruguay. Teheran developed extensive economic ties with these countries that continue to this day.

Chavez was also responsible for Iran's developing ties with the leftist, anti-American bloc in Latin America made up of Bolivia, Nicaragua and - increasingly - Ecuador, according to the document.

Iran recently opened new embassies in Bolivia and Nicaragua, and Bolivia as well as Venezuela broke off diplomatic ties with Israel after Operation Cast Lead earlier this year.

Israeli concern about Teheran's inroads into Latin America is not new, and emerged at a meeting then-foreign minister Tzipi Livni held with her visiting El Salvadoran counterpart in November, during which she warned that South America was fast becoming a platform for spreading Iranian ideology.

"Iran is searching for openings, and countries it can penetrate, to compensate for the vulnerability created by the [economic] sanctions [against it]," Livni said at the time. "We are witness to the disturbing phenomenon of Iranian infiltration into South America, so much so that Latin America has become a convenient base for spreading Iranian political and economic ideology. The strengthening of ties between South American guerrillas and the Iranian terrorism activists is plain to see."

<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1243259516604&pagename=JPost%2FJPostArticle%2FShowFull>

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Reuters.com

May 25, 2009

Iran's Ahmadinejad Rejects Western Nuclear Proposal

By Parisa Hafezi and Zahra Hosseinian

TEHRAN (Reuters) - Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on Monday rejected a Western proposal for it to "freeze" its nuclear work in return for no new sanctions and ruled out any talks with major powers on the issue.

The comments by the conservative president, who is seeking a second term in a June 12 election, are likely to further disappoint the U.S. administration of President Barack Obama, which is seeking to engage Iran diplomatically.

The United States, Russia, China, France, Germany and Britain said in April they would invite Iran to a meeting to try and find a diplomatic solution to the nuclear row.

The West accuses Iran of secretly developing atomic weapons. Iran, the world's fifth-largest oil exporter, denies the charge and says it only wants nuclear power to generate electricity.

Breaking with past U.S. policy of shunning direct talks with Iran, Obama's administration last month said it would join nuclear discussions with Tehran from now on.

Ahmadinejad proposed a debate with Obama at the United Nations in New York "regarding the roots of world problems" but he made clear Tehran would not bow to pressure on the nuclear issue.

"Our talks (with major powers) will only be in the framework of cooperation for managing global issues and nothing else. We have clearly announced this," Ahmadinejad said.

"The nuclear issue is a finished issue for us," he told a news conference. "From now on we will continue our path in the framework of the (U.N. nuclear watchdog) agency."

He was asked about a so-called "freeze-for-freeze" proposal first put forward last year under which Iran would freeze expansion of its nuclear program in return for the U.N. Security Council halting further sanctions against Tehran.

NO COOPERATION WITH NORTH KOREA

Western diplomats say the proposal remains on the table and one such source said it was made clear in a meeting with Iran's chief nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili in Tehran on Sunday.

Ahmadinejad in April announced Iran had prepared its own proposals to end the stalemate and he said on Monday they would refer to Iran's opposition to weapons of mass destruction.

Obama has offered a new beginning of diplomatic engagement with Iran if it "unclenches its fist," but Washington has not ruled out military action if diplomacy fails.

Last week, the U.S. president set a rough timetable for his diplomatic outreach to Tehran for the first time, saying he wanted to see serious progress by the end of the year.

Iran says it is ready for "constructive" talks but has repeatedly rejected demands to halt sensitive uranium enrichment which can have both civilian and military purposes.

Ahmadinejad, facing a challenge in the election from moderates advocating detente with the West, has made angry rhetoric against the United States and it allies his trademark since he came to power in 2005.

He said Iran had no missile or nuclear cooperation with North Korea, after Pyongyang conducted a second and far more powerful nuclear test. Former U.S. President George W. Bush branded both countries as part of an "axis of evil."

"In principle we oppose the production, expansion and the use of weapons of mass destruction," Ahmadinejad said.

Military experts say Iran's Shahab-3 missile is based on the North Korean Nodong missile. Tehran says Shahab-3 has a range of 2,000 km (1,200 miles), which defense analysts say would put Israel and U.S. bases in the Gulf within reach.

Iran last week said it test-fired another missile -- Sejil 2 -- with a similar range.

(Writing by Fredrik Dahl)

<http://www.reuters.com/article/newsOne/idUSTRE54O25V20090525?sp=true>

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Global Security Newswire
Friday, May 22, 2009

European Missile Defense Plan Moving Ahead, U.S. General Says

A senior U.S. military official yesterday said President Barack Obama favors installing missile defenses in Europe despite adamant opposition from Russia, the Associated Press reported (see *GSN*, May 19).

The Obama administration has not formally stated whether it would pursue the Bush administration plan to deploy 10 missile interceptors in Poland and a radar base in the Czech Republic. Obama has indicated his decision would be based on the cost-effectiveness and efficacy of the technology and on the missile threat posed by Iran.

However, Lt. Gen. Patrick O'Reilly, director of the Missile Defense Agency, said that the administration has not backed away from the project.

"The instruction to me was to continue with that deployment, that planning to the greatest extent possible, allowable by law," he said.

Lawmakers in Washington have linked funding for the project to proof that the technology would work as intended (Desmond Butler, Associated Press/NJ.com, May 22).

The Obama administration intends to follow through on its predecessor's agreement to field a U.S. Patriot air defense battery in Poland, even if the European missile shield plan is never realized, Agence France-Presse reported yesterday (see *GSN*, May 18).

Warsaw requested the Patriot system in return for agreeing to host the missile interceptors. Obama "is committed to carrying out the terms" of the two nations' 2008 security deal, said State Department Spokesman Ian Kelly. He sought, though, to separate the interceptor and Patriot agreements.

"We're committed to supporting Poland's defense needs, including NATO interoperability," Kelly said. "We remain committed to, specifically to rotating in a battery, a Patriot battery."

A high-level Polish official confirmed that the U.S. military would field a 96-missile battery in his nation by the end of 2009.

"Everything indicates that we will be able to conclude negotiations in July," said Polish Deputy Defense Minister Stanislaw Komorowski. "That would leave enough time for a Patriot battery and about 100 U.S. soldiers to be deployed in Poland by the end of the year" (Agence France-Presse/Spacewar.com, May 21).

http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20090522_9702.php

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Global Security Newswire
Friday, May 22, 2009

Deployment of U.S.-Based Missile Interceptors Cut Off at 30

By Martin Matishak

WASHINGTON -- The head of the U.S. Army's Space and Missile Defense Command said yesterday that it "makes sense" to deploy no more than 30 missile interceptors in silos on U.S. soil. (see *GSN*, May 21)

The Ground-based Midcourse Defense System - which is scheduled to feature 30 interceptors fielded in California and Alaska by the end of this year -- is "capable of doing what we need it to do against the threat we designed it against; that threat, of course, was North Korea," Lt. Gen. Kevin Campbell said at a breakfast on Capitol Hill.

There are currently 25 interceptors at Fort Greeley, Alaska, and three at Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif., Missile Defense Agency spokesman Rick Lehner told *Global Security Newswire* in a telephone interview today. Ultimately, 26 weapons are planned for Alaska and four for California. The program costs \$35.5 billion.

"That number makes sense to us as we look at the threat and where the threat is going and how quickly we think the threat can get there," Campbell said.

On April 5, North Korea launched a rocket that flew 1,900 miles before splashing down in the Pacific Ocean. That is twice the distance reached in a 1998 rocket test and a significant improvement over Pyongyang's 2006 test of its Taepodong 2 long-range missile, which failed in under one minute. The regime also possesses an arsenal of shorter-range missiles (see related *GSN* story, today).

North Korea said the launch was a successful attempt to put a communications satellite into orbit; other nations claimed it was another test of long-range missile technology and that the rocket's payload never reached space.

Last week, U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates told senators that 30 ground-based interceptors "provide a strong defense" against "the level of [missile] capability that North Korea has now and is likely to have for some years to come." The system is designed to defend the United States against intermediate- and long-range missiles in the middle range of flight.

The choice to hold at 30 interceptors has not gone without criticism. U.S. Representative Trent Franks (R-Ariz.) last week argued that "the more interceptors we have in our arsenal the more chances we have at interdicting an incoming missile."

He called for the United States to maintain a three-to-one- or two-to-one advantage of interceptors over enemy missiles.

Campbell said the U.S. Missile Defense Agency plans to purchase 44 interceptors in all, though the final 14 would not be deployed. Rather, they would give the United States a "great advantage" in terms of "liability," he said.

"I think the advantage in this course of action is we can go back and if we have any missiles that have any problems we can go back and take out the oldest missiles and put in recently manufactured ones," the commander told the audience. The older models could then be used for testing, he added.

Ten of the additional interceptors would be used for testing, with the remaining four serving as "operational spares," Lehner said.

The production of all 44 interceptors is expected to continue until 2013, according to Campbell.

Lehner told *GSN* that not deploying the additional 14 interceptors would save roughly \$160 million that would have gone toward completing construction of a second silo field at Fort Greeley. However, there will be costs for capping the silos that have already been built.

Campbell said he had not read a report released earlier this week by the EastWest Institute but was told it concluded that the U.S. missile defenses proposed for deployment in Poland and the Czech Republic would not adequately safeguard Europe against a nuclear strike.

The report also declared that Iran's ability to carry out a nuclear strike against Europe is "not imminent."

Campbell was wary of the report's findings. "We've been surprised before and I think we should be very modest about our ability to predict the future," he said.

http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20090522_7280.php

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Washington Times
May 21, 2009

Inside The Ring – Iran's Nuclear Program & China missiles

By Bill Gertz

Iran's nuclear program

Rep. Peter Hoekstra, Michigan Republican and ranking member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, said Tuesday that Iran is continuing its nuclear program and an Obama administration one-year plan for diplomatic engagement poses national-security dangers.

"That's a high-risk strategy ... based on the estimates that we have that are out there" on when Iran could field a nuclear device or warhead, Mr. Hoekstra told reporters and editors of The Washington Times.

U.S. estimates of Iran's nuclear program are that Tehran could deploy a nuclear weapon by 2010 at the earliest if a decision were made to do so. Israeli intelligence estimates are that Iran could have a nuclear bomb sooner, according to published reports.

Mr. Hoekstra said any military option for dealing with Iran's nuclear program would be difficult. "I've got concerns whether we know where all their capabilities and things are [located]," he said.

A 2005 U.S. Energy Department report on the Iranian nuclear program stated that Iran had at least 13 facilities involved in nuclear research, many of them located in fortified underground facilities or disguised by camouflage.

Mr. Hoekstra said he favors a U.S. policy of organizing a "global coalition" of the United States, Europe, Russia and China to pressure Tehran with "a vigorous sanctions regime," rather than a yearlong diplomatic initiative favored by President Obama.

Iran's government has denied its nuclear efforts are part of a weapons program and claims that it is developing power-generating nuclear stations.

On the controversial 2007 National Intelligence Estimate that said Iran halted nuclear-weapons design in 2003, Mr. Hoekstra said Michael McConnell, until earlier this year the director of national intelligence, has stated that the wording of the NIE was "very inappropriate" in asserting Iran's nuclear program was stopped.

Mr. Hoekstra said Iran only halted one of the three elements of a nuclear program - weaponization - in 2003 and that the other two, fissile-material production and delivery systems, are continuing.

"The third one that could be done in the shortest period, we didn't know whether that had started up again or not," he said of the weaponization work. "That was just an awful document, poorly written."

CIA Director Leon Panetta said in a speech in California Monday that Iran's nuclear program remains a significant intelligence concern.

"On the nuclear front, the judgment of the intelligence community is that Iran at a minimum is keeping open the option to develop deliverable nuclear weapons," he said, noting that Iran halted weaponization in 2003, "but it continues to develop uranium-enrichment technology and nuclear-capable ballistic missiles."

"And that represents a danger for the future," he said.

Iran tested a missile Wednesday with a range of about 1,200 miles.

China missiles

China is rapidly expanding its arsenal of strategic nuclear missiles, and the buildup is being left out of the Obama administration's strategic arms initiative with Russia to limit U.S. strategic forces, according to a report in the trade publication Jane's Intelligence Review.

"This effort is expected to result in a relatively modest increase in missile numbers, but armed with far more capable, if not a larger number of warheads," wrote Richard D. Fisher Jr., a military-affairs specialist with the International Assessment and Strategy Center in the June edition of Jane's Intelligence Review.

The exclusion of China from the new U.S.-Russian strategic nuclear talks means "China will therefore continue to expand its nuclear arsenal."

Mr. Fisher identified up to five Chinese intercontinental ballistic missile systems deployed or in development in what he termed "China's most ambitious increase in intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) capability since the late 1980s."

Chinese military secrecy makes estimating the number of nuclear missiles difficult; however, published accounts by the Pentagon and State Department indicate that the Chinese missile force will grow from about 60 missiles today to as many as 120, including difficult-to-detect road-mobile missiles and new submarine-launched missiles, Mr. Fisher said.

Evidence of the missile buildup in the report includes commercial satellite images showing a significant expansion of the Taiyuan Space Launch Center, China's main missile test facility, since 2006.

"The imagery shows that Taiyuan has doubled in terms of launch capability since 2006, a clear indication of a more robust strategic missile development intention," Mr. Fisher said in an interview.

China's state-run media also disclosed in February the warhead configuration of the DF-31A, the new long-range ICBM, which indicates that China has developed a maneuvering warhead equipped with thrusters similar to warheads reported on Russia's SS-27 ICBM.

"The objective for both warheads would be to defeat current and future U.S. missile defenses," Mr. Fisher said.

Chinese embassy spokeswoman Wei Xin said in response to the Jane's report that China has a "principled position" in strategic missile development.

"China always supports and actively advocates comprehensive prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons," she said.

"China endorses international nuclear disarmament and has made unremitting efforts in this regard. Given the completely explicit and transparent nuclear strategy and policy of China, any groundless accusations in this regard are totally unacceptable."

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/may/21/inside-the-ring-78665249/>

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Thaindian.com

22 May 2009

Al-Qaeda Headquarters Now Clearly in Pak: Admiral Mullen

Washington, May 22 (ANI): Worried by the ever expanding links between the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, the United States has reiterated that Al-Qaeda has shifted its base and is now headquartered in Pakistan.

Addressing the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mike Mullen said that there is no doubt that Al-Qaeda has shifted its base from Afghanistan, and its top leaders were operating from inside Pakistan's geographical boundaries.

Admiral Mullen told the Committee that growing links between the Taliban and Al-Qaeda was particularly worrying for the United States.

"While al-Qaida is not located in Afghanistan, it is headquartered clearly in Pakistan, what I have watched over the last couple of years is this growing integration between al-Qaida and the Taliban, and the various networks of the Taliban, whether it is (Jalaluddin) Haqqani, or (Baitullah) Mehsud or (Gulbuddin) Hekmatyar, and that has alarmed me in its growth and integration over the last couple of years," The News quoted Admiral Mullen, as saying.

Mullen also noted that Al-Qaeda was expanding its nefarious activities in other countries of the world with the primary aim of targeting America.

“Al-Qaida, which continues not to be just in Pakistan, but is now moving into Yemen, is connected very well in Somalia, and in other parts of the world. Their strategic objectives remain the same - to threaten us, to threaten the west,” he said.

Admiral Mullen also defended President Obama’s decision to send 21,000 additional troops to Afghanistan to bolster the ‘war on terror’. (ANI)

http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/south-asia/al-qaeda-headquarters-now-clearly-in-pak-admiral-mullen_100195666.html

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New York Times
May 24, 2009

U.S. Relies More on Aid of Allies in Terror Cases

By ERIC SCHMITT and MARK MAZZETTI

WASHINGTON — The United States is now relying heavily on foreign intelligence services to capture, interrogate and detain all but the highest-level terrorist suspects seized outside the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan, according to current and former American government officials.

The change represents a significant loosening of the reins for the United States, which has worked closely with allies to combat violent extremism since the 9/11 attacks but is now pushing that cooperation to new limits.

In the past 10 months, for example, about a half-dozen midlevel financiers and logistics experts working with Al Qaeda have been captured and are being held by intelligence services in four Middle Eastern countries after the United States provided information that led to their arrests by local security services, a former American counterterrorism official said.

In addition, Pakistan’s intelligence and security services captured a Saudi suspect and a Yemeni suspect this year with the help of American intelligence and logistical support, Pakistani officials said. The two are the highest-ranking Qaeda operatives captured since President Obama took office, but they are still being held by Pakistan, which has shared information from their interrogations with the United States, the official said.

The current approach, which began in the last two years of the Bush administration and has gained momentum under Mr. Obama, is driven in part by court rulings and policy changes that have closed the secret prisons run by the Central Intelligence Agency, and all but ended the transfer of prisoners from outside Iraq and Afghanistan to American military prisons.

Human rights advocates say that relying on foreign governments to hold and question terrorist suspects could carry significant risks. It could increase the potential for abuse at the hands of foreign interrogators and could also yield bad intelligence, they say.

The fate of many terrorist suspects whom the Bush administration sent to foreign countries remains uncertain. One suspect, Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi, who was captured by the C.I.A. in late 2001 and sent to Libya, was recently reported to have died there in Libyan custody.

“As a practical matter you have to rely on partner governments, so the focus should be on pressing and assisting those governments to handle those cases professionally,” said Tom Malinowski, Washington advocacy director for Human Rights Watch.

The United States itself has not detained any high-level terrorist suspects outside Iraq and Afghanistan since Mr. Obama took office, and the question of where to detain the most senior terrorist suspects on a long-term basis is being debated within the new administration. Even deciding where the two Qaeda suspects in Pakistani custody will be kept over the long term is “extremely, extremely sensitive right now,” a senior American military official said, adding, “They’re both bad dudes. The issue is: where do they get parked so they stay parked?”

How the United States is dealing with terrorism suspects beyond those already in the prison at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, was a question Mr. Obama did not address in the speech he gave Thursday about his antiterrorism policies. While he said he might seek to create a new system that would allow preventive detention inside the United States, the government currently has no obvious long-term detention center for imprisoning terrorism suspects without court oversight.

Mr. Obama has said he still intends to close the Guantánamo prison by January, despite misgivings in Congress, and the Supreme Court has ruled that inmates there may challenge their detention before federal judges. Some suspects are being imprisoned without charges at a United States air base in Afghanistan, but a federal court has ruled that at least some of them may also file habeas corpus lawsuits to challenge their detentions.

American officials say that in the last years of the Bush administration and now on Mr. Obama's watch, the balance has shifted toward leaving all but the most high-level terrorist suspects in foreign rather than American custody. The United States has repatriated hundreds of detainees held at prisons in Cuba, Iraq and Afghanistan, but the current approach is different because it seeks to keep the prisoners out of American custody altogether.

How the United States deals with terrorism suspects remains a contentious issue in Congress.

Leon E. Panetta, the director of the C.I.A., said in February that the agency might continue its program of extraordinary rendition, in which captured terrorism suspects are transferred to other countries without extradition proceedings.

He said the C.I.A. would be likely to continue to transfer detainees from their place of capture to other countries, either their home countries or nations that intended to bring charges against them.

As a safeguard against torture, Mr. Panetta said, the United States would rely on diplomatic assurances of good treatment. The Bush administration sought the same assurances, which critics say are ineffective.

A half-dozen current and former American intelligence and counterterrorism officials and allied officials were interviewed for this article, but all spoke on the condition of anonymity because the detention and interrogation programs are classified.

Officials say the United States has learned so much about Al Qaeda and other militant groups since the 9/11 attacks that it can safely rely on foreign partners to detain and question more suspects. "It's the preferred method now," one former counterterrorism official said.

The Obama administration's policies will probably become clearer after two task forces the president created in January report to him in July on detainee policy, interrogation techniques and extraordinary rendition.

In many instances now, allies are using information provided by the United States to pick up terrorism suspects on their own territory — including the two suspects seized in Pakistan this year.

The Saudi militant, Zabi al-Taifi, was picked up by Pakistani commandos in a dawn raid at a safe house outside Peshawar on Jan. 22, an operation conducted with the help of the C.I.A.

A Pakistani official said the Yemeni suspect, Abu Sufyan al-Yemeni, was a Qaeda paramilitary commander who was on C.I.A. and Pakistani lists of the top 20 Qaeda operatives. He was believed to be a conduit for communications between Qaeda leaders in Pakistan and cells in East Africa, Iran, Yemen and elsewhere. American and Pakistani intelligence officials say they believe that Mr. Yemeni, who was arrested Feb. 24 by Pakistani authorities in Quetta, helped arrange travel and training for Qaeda operatives from various parts of the Muslim world to the Pakistani tribal areas.

He is now in the custody of Pakistan's main spy agency, the Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence, but his fate is unclear. The Pakistani official said that he would remain in Pakistani hands, but that it would be difficult to try him because the evidence against him came from informers.

American officials said the United States would still take custody of the most senior Qaeda operatives captured in the future. As a model, they cited the case of Abd al-Hadi al-Iraqi, an Iraqi Kurd who is said to have joined Al Qaeda in the late 1990s and risen to become a top aide to Osama bin Laden, and who was captured by a foreign security service in 2006. He was handed over to the C.I.A., which transferred him to Guantánamo Bay in April 2007. He was one of the last detainees shipped there.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/24/world/24intel.html?ref=world>

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Los Angeles Times

May 24, 2009

[Al Qaeda Recruits Back in Europe, But Why?](#)

Four men say their training experience in Pakistan wasn't what they hoped for. Anti-terrorism officials wonder if they're just biding their time, ready to strike in Europe.

By Sebastian Rotella

Reporting from Brussels — Determined to die as martyrs, the French and Belgian militants bought hiking boots and thermal underwear and journeyed to the wilds of Waziristan.

After getting ripped off in Turkey and staggering through waist-deep snow in Iran, the little band arrived in Al Qaeda's lair in Pakistan last year, ready for a triumphant reception.

"We were expecting at least a welcome for 'our brothers from Europe' and a warm atmosphere of hospitality," Walid Othmani, a 25-year-old Frenchman from Lyon, recalled during an overnight interrogation in January.

Instead, the Europeans -- and at least one American -- learned that life in the shadow of the Predator is nasty, brutish and short.

Wary of spies, suspicious Al Qaeda chiefs grilled the half-dozen Belgians and French. They charged them \$1,200 each for AK-47 rifles, ammunition and grenades. They made them fill out forms listing next of kin and their preference: guerrilla fighting, or suicide attacks?

Then the trainees dodged missile strikes for months. They endured disease, quarrels and boredom, huddling in cramped compounds that defied heroic images of camps full of fraternal warriors.

"What you see in videos on the Net, we realized that was a lie," Othmani told police. "[Our chief] told us the videos . . . served to impress the enemy and incite people to come fight, and he knew this was a scam and propaganda."

Disenchantment aside, the accounts of four of the returning militants arrested in Europe combine with intercepts to paint a detailed picture of Al Qaeda's secret compounds. They also reinforce intelligence that a campaign of U.S. Predator drone airstrikes has sown suspicion and disarray and stoked tension with tribes in northwestern Pakistan, anti-terrorism officials say.

At the same time, the case shows that wily militant leaders still wage war in South Asia and train a flow of foreign recruits. The few trainees from the West remain an urgent concern. Anti-terrorism forces have detected at least one American, a convert to Islam, who trained with Al Qaeda in Pakistan during the last year, Western officials say.

Militant paths from the U.S. and Europe may cross: Prosecutors in Brussels have made a request to interrogate a witness now in the United States who was in Pakistan with the European suspects, a Belgian anti-terrorism official said.

Police in Europe tracked the group's radicalization and travel with the help of real-time U.S. intercepts that corroborate the confessions, and they exploited the men's reliance on the Internet. Fear of an imminent attack spurred their arrests here in December after Hicham Beyayo, 25, a Belgian just back from Pakistan, sent a troubling e-mail to his girlfriend.

"I am leaving for an O [operation] and I don't think I will return," Beyayo wrote Dec. 6, according to investigative documents. "My request has been accepted. You will get a video from me to you from the [organization]."

Beyayo told police that he was boasting to impress his girlfriend. But investigators believe the group may have been groomed for missions at home.

"They were much more valuable for operations in Europe," said the Belgian anti-terrorism official, who, like others interviewed, requested anonymity because the investigation is continuing. "Al Qaeda does not need Belgians and French to fight in Afghanistan."

Islamic resistance doesn't come cheap

Beyayo is about 5-foot-5, chubby and bespectacled. Like the others, he is of North African descent. He grew up in the tough Anderlecht neighborhood of Brussels, and his brothers have done time for robbery and arms trafficking. But he does not have a criminal record. He interspersed college courses with fundamentalist Islam.

"He is the intellectual of the family," said his lawyer, Christophe Marchand. "He bears no ill will against Belgium. He went to Afghanistan to join an Islamic resistance movement."

Islamic resistance is expensive. The unemployed Beyayo scrounged together about \$5,000 for the trip.

The Frenchman Othmani, a father of two, had to borrow about \$1,000 from his mother, and he spent hundreds on hiking boots, a sleeping bag, thermal underwear and a "big Columbia-brand jacket for the cold."

The leader was Moez Garsalloui, 42, a Tunisian married to the Belgian widow of a militant who killed Ahmed Shah Massoud, an anti-Taliban warlord, in a suicide bombing two days before the Sept. 11 attacks.

The balding, bearded Garsalloui sought recruits among visitors to a radical website run by his wife, who is revered in militant circles.

It was Garsalloui's first trip to South Asia, but he took advantage of his wife's strong Al Qaeda ties, investigators say. He organized smuggling contacts and met four Belgians and two French in Istanbul in December 2007. He carried a bag full of cash -- about \$40,000, according to the confessions.

Garsalloui went ahead alone, leaving the others to a harsh monthlong trek. Turkish smugglers frightened them by waving a pistol around, charged extra because they were "Arabs," and stole their gear and clothes, claiming it was for charity.

"They cleaned us out," Othmani recalled. "What they took was for the so-called poor, but evidently it was nothing of the kind."

Later, the recruits tried to burn their passports "because we all intended to die as martyrs in Afghanistan," Othmani said. But the smugglers confiscated the documents.

Next came a nocturnal mountain crossing into Iran. The recruits struggled through deep snow. A Belgian's foot turned blue. Beyayo fell repeatedly, dragged along by comrades as he moaned that this was the place where they would die.

After several men called their mothers from Iran, the group entered Pakistan via Zahedan, an Iranian border town that is a hub for militants and smugglers, the Belgian anti-terrorism official said. As they approached the tribal zone dominated by the Taliban, military patrols looked the other way and diners at a roadside restaurant seemed to know exactly where they were headed.

Their destination was a village in the Waziristan region about two hours past Bannu. But the reception was nothing like the heyday of the Afghan camps when Westerners, especially converts, got a chance to meet Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden himself.

Saudi Arabians armed with AK-47s emerged from a mosque looking hostile. They thought the French in particular could be spies, a senior French anti-terrorism official said. Increasing infiltration has contributed to recent captures and killings of militants, investigators say.

"They thought they would get a hero's welcome because they were Europeans," the Belgian official said. "That was not the case."

Tensions eased when Garsalloui showed up. But the recruits were kept in a kind of limbo. They had the misfortune of arriving just as U.S. forces unleashed a drone-fired missile barrage that would kill half a dozen veteran Al Qaeda chieftains in 2008. In an e-mail to his wife, Garsalloui said he narrowly escaped a strike that had killed a top Libyan. "I came close to dying," he wrote.

Fearful of the drones as well as informants spotting them and targeting hide-outs for missile strikes, the trainees hunkered inside during the day. They moved frequently among crowded, squalid houses shared with local families in mountain hamlets.

Hoping to fight the Americans

The suspects say they wanted desperately to fight American troops in Afghanistan. To their dismay, the chiefs made them cough up more cash for weapons. They were assigned to train with an Arab group numbering 300 to 500, but spread out in small units for security. Religious and military instruction took place indoors, with firearms and explosives sessions confined to courtyards for secrecy.

A Saudi chief named Morteza assured the Europeans that they would go to the Afghan front. But idle weeks followed.

"We were quite angry for different reasons," Beyayo recalled. "We waited and Morteza's promises didn't come true. Life as seven together plus the host family was not always easy. And . . . [Garsalloui] played the little boss and gave us orders."

Only Garsalloui and a strapping Belgian, who both spoke fluent Arabic, went to Afghanistan as part of a Saudi unit.

Garsalloui later e-mailed a photo of himself wielding a grenade launcher to his wife. He bragged to comrades that he had killed American soldiers with a bazooka. Investigators are trying to verify the claim.

Meanwhile, Beyayo and Othmani say they chafed in safe houses, cooking foul meals, cringing during bombardments, getting sick. Beyayo suffered a bout of malaria.

A slippery character named Amar appeared, worsening the mood.

"We realized with time that this individual was there to test us, to spy on us," Beyayo recalled.

"He also gave us a speech according to which we should not dream because we were not ready to fight. . . . The idea of going back to Belgium and France began to form among us. Morale-wise, we were crushed."

One Belgian stormed out, intent on reaching the nearest city on his own and making his way back to Europe, the Belgian anti-terrorism official said. After hours of hiking through a desolate valley, he realized that it was hopeless and turned back.

Late last year, Beyayo, Othmani and two others finally came home and into the clutches of police, who had monitored them closely. A central question: the extent of their involvement in terrorist activity.

Their defense lawyers insist that they are failed holy warriors.

"They just weren't tough enough," Marchand said.

Investigators have doubts. French police point out that the explosives instruction described by Othmani is far more extensive than that received by many previous trainees.

Police think the Europeans may have exaggerated their haplessness to conceal a dark purpose.

"We must therefore ask ourselves for what motive someone in [Pakistan] would take such a risk to shelter people who had no goal or usefulness as declared in some interrogations," a French police report concludes.

Assessing the threat is difficult: Sinister aspects mix with the mundane. The complaints about malaria, money and disrespect sum up the story. But so does the image of Garsalloui posing with his rocket launcher, eager to kill Americans.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-junior-jihadis24-2009may24,0,2193912.story>

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World Nuclear News
Friday, May 22, 2009

High-Enriched Uranium Removed From Australia

All US-origin highly enriched uranium (HEU) has now been removed from Australia and returned to the USA, the US National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) has announced.

The last shipment, consisting of some 14.5 kg (32 pounds) of HEU, left Australia on 16 March. It consisted of 159 used fuel elements resulting from the operation of the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organization's (Ansto's) former Hifar research reactor at Lucas Heights, near Sydney. The shipment was transported to the US Department of Energy's Savannah River Site by truck, rail and ship.

The NNSA said, "With the completion of this shipment, NNSA's Global Threat Reduction Initiative has successfully removed more than 100 kg (220 pounds) of US-origin HEU fuel from Australia since 1998."

This total includes used fuel resulting from the operation of both the former Moata and Hifar research reactors at Lucas Heights. The Hifar reactor has now been replaced with the new Opal research reactor, which is fuelled by low enriched uranium. Ansto said that it does not expect to ship any used fuel from Opal until after 2014.

NNSA principal deputy administrator Ken Baker commented, "The NNSA worked closely with Australia to oversee this important shipment of highly enriched uranium spent nuclear fuel." He added the removal was "another major milestone in NNSA's cooperative effort to reduce the threat of nuclear proliferation and demonstrates the strong international commitment to non-proliferation."

The shipment marks the 47th shipment of US-origin fuel safely returned to the USA and is the ninth shipment of its kind by Ansto since 1963.

Since its inception in May 2004, the US-origin fuel removal program has returned more than 1215 kilograms (2679 pounds) of US-origin HEU fuel to the USA from 27 countries. The program has now removed all eligible US-origin HEU fuel from the following 17 countries: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Italy, Philippines, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden and Thailand.

http://www.world-nuclear-news.org/RS-All_US_origin_HEU-removed_from_Australia-2205094.html

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New York Times

May 22, 2009

Despite Torture Video, U.S. and Emirates Sign Key Pact

By MARK LANDLER

WASHINGTON — The United States signed an agreement with the United Arab Emirates on Thursday to help develop its civil nuclear program, despite an outcry over a video depicting the torture of an Afghan man by a member of the ruling family of Abu Dhabi, one of the emirates.

The agreement now goes to Congress, where it will face resistance from some lawmakers, who say the gruesome video, at a minimum, raises concerns about the legal system in the Emirates and its ability to prevent sensitive nuclear technology from leaking to its neighbors.

These opponents are unlikely to amass the necessary two-thirds majority to strike it down. But Representative Edward J. Markey, a Massachusetts Democrat and a longtime critic of these agreements, filed a resolution opposing it.

“With the recent revelation of the U.A.E. torture tapes, it is clearer than ever that the rule of law in the U.A.E. cannot be trusted to safeguard sensitive U.S. nuclear technologies,” Mr. Markey said in a statement.

Supporters say the agreement contains unprecedented safeguards against the diversion of technology or fuel to a weapons program. Under the terms of the deal, the United Arab Emirates would not enrich or reprocess uranium.

The agreement is worth \$40 billion and could generate more than 10,000 jobs, according to the United States Chamber of Commerce, which lobbied for it. Among the potential American beneficiaries are General Electric, Westinghouse and Bechtel, the engineering giant.

“From the very beginning, the U.S. and U.A.E. were trying to provide a clear alternative for countries” to the Iranian example, said Danny Sebright, the president of the chamber’s United States-United Arab Emirates business council.

The agreement was negotiated by the Bush administration but not submitted to Congress. The Obama administration signed a slightly revised version of the agreement, and has now submitted it for Congressional approval.

The 45-minute video, first broadcast last month by ABC News, injected a volatile element into the debate. In it, uniformed police officers help Sheik Issa bin Zayed al-Nahyan torture a grain merchant with whips and a cattle prod, before driving over him with a sport utility vehicle.

Administration officials said the deal was delayed so the United States could strengthen its safeguards against proliferation, not because of the video. But the State Department spokesman, Ian C. Kelly, said the administration also raised concerns about the video with the United Arab Emirates.

“We understand that the judiciary in Abu Dhabi has announced it’s going to conduct a full and transparent review of what happened,” Mr. Kelly said Thursday. “We welcome that.”

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/22/world/middleeast/22emirates.html?ref=middleeast>

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Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Friday, May 22, 2009

Big Names, Bucks Back Nuclear Bank

Turner-Nunn group among several to offer fuel proposals.

By Charles J. Hanley
Associated Press

VIENNA — Buffett's bankroll, Obama's clout and the partnership of a savvy ex-Soviet strongman may turn the steppes of central Asia into a nuclear mecca, a go-to place for "safe" uranium fuel in an increasingly nervous atomic age.

The \$150 million idea, with seed money from U.S. billionaire Warren Buffett, must still navigate the tricky maze of global nuclear politics, along with a parallel Russian plan. But the notion of such fuel banks is moving higher on the world's agenda as a way to keep ultimate weapons out of many more hands.

Decisions may come as early as next month here in Vienna.

The half-century-old vision, to establish international control over the technology fueling atom bombs, was resurrected in 2003, when Iran alarmed many by announcing it would develop fuel installations — for nuclear power, it insisted. Mohamed ElBaradei, U.N. nuclear chief, then said the time had come to "multinationalize" the technology, to stop its spread to individual countries.

Last month, President Barack Obama gave the idea its biggest boost.

In Prague, the Czech capital, Obama detailed a plan for arms control, including plans for an international fuel bank, "so that countries can access peaceful power without increasing the risks of proliferation."

That's the fear: The centrifuges that enrich uranium with its fissionable isotope U-235, to produce power-plant fuel, can be left spinning to enrich it much more, producing fissile, highly enriched uranium for nuclear bombs .

"The real risk is that highly enriched uranium could be acquired by, say, terrorist groups," Russian government adviser Alexander Kononov told a conference in Rome. "All they need is 110 pounds of enriched uranium. All the rest [to make a bomb] can be found on the Internet."

The IAEA's 35-nation board of governors is expected to address the issue at its June meeting. A raft of proposals has surfaced, including a German idea to build an IAEA enrichment plant on "internationalized" soil, to sell fuel to countries committed to nuclear nonproliferation.

Only one proposal has upfront money behind it — the idea advanced by the Nuclear Threat Initiative, a Washington-based organization founded by philanthropist Ted Turner and former U.S. Sen. Sam Nunn of Georgia.

Calling it an "investment in a safer world," investor and NTI adviser Buffett pledged \$50 million to such a bank, provided governments put up an additional \$100 million. That threshold was passed in March .

The \$150 million would buy enough low-enriched uranium to fuel a 1,000-megawatt power plant, jump-starting a constantly replenished fuel stockpile that would be owned and sold by the IAEA.

The day after Obama's address, ex-Soviet republic of Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev, said, "If a nuclear fuel bank for nuclear energy was created, then Kazakhstan would consider hosting it."

"It has a lot of qualifications," Nunn said of Kazakhstan. "It would be highly symbolic to put the fuel bank in a country that got rid of nuclear weapons."

Nunn said a Kazakh or other multinational fuel bank, by involving Iran in an enterprise with international oversight, "could be a very useful tool, not the whole answer but part of an answer" to what he called "the Iranian challenge." But first, the tool must win IAEA approval, which is far from guaranteed .

Countries such as Italy, Egypt and South Africa, none of which enrich uranium, have balked at the notion of an international stockpile because such a framework would raise suspicions about any country that then chooses to enrich on its own .

The NTI plan may be put on hold until September while IAEA governors next month consider a Russian plan that is more developed and less ambitious, since it doesn't put the IAEA into the fuel sales business.

Instead, the Russians would maintain their own fuel stockpile , which they would make available via the IAEA, "depoliticizing" sales by leaving it to the U.N. agency to certify buyers.

<http://www.ajc.com/services/content/printedition/2009/05/22/nukebank0522.html>

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Washington Post
OPINION

No Magic Bullet on Iran

By David Ignatius
Sunday, May 24, 2009

When U.S. and Israeli officials say that "all options are on the table" for stopping Iran from gaining nuclear weapons, that's usually taken to mean aerial bombardment of Iranian nuclear sites at Natanz and other locations.

But there is another option for impeding the Iranian program -- a covert campaign to disrupt and deceive Iran's nuclear establishment. Despite the secrecy surrounding such efforts, reports about Israeli and U.S. sabotage efforts have surfaced recently in newspaper stories, which undoubtedly have been read with interest in Tehran.

These published reports raise an interesting question: Do secret sabotage programs offer a "magic bullet" for dealing with the Iranian nuclear threat -- raising the cost to Iran of pursuing its program, while avoiding the chaotic backlash that would follow a conventional military strike?

The answer, I'm afraid, is no. It's pretty clear these covert programs have been tried, but it's also pretty clear they haven't halted Iran's march toward mastery of the technologies necessary to produce a nuclear weapon.

The rationale for a sabotage program against Iran is obvious enough. Here's how one former CIA officer lays out the case, in theory: "A nuclear program is technically complex, requires a lot of precision materials, a steady flow of technical parts, and is inherently dangerous. Accidental fires, mechanical mishaps with equipment, technical failures, etc. slow the program, and most importantly, at some point will increase counterintelligence concern from within Iran."

The latest story about sabotage appeared May 16 in the Wall Street Journal in an op-ed by Israeli journalist Ronen Bergman, "Israel's Secret War With Iran." Bergman reported that when Gen. Meir Dagan was named director of Israel's intelligence service in 2002, then-Prime Minister Ariel Sharon told him to build "a Mossad with a knife between its teeth." Dagan's chief target was Iran, according to Bergman, who is a reporter for the Israeli daily Yedioth Ahronoth.

"The results have been tremendous," wrote Bergman. "During the last four years, the uranium enrichment project in Iran was delayed by a series of apparent accidents: the disappearance of an Iranian nuclear scientist, the crash of two planes carrying cargo relating to the project, and two labs that burst into flames."

Israeli officials describe Bergman as a well-informed reporter whose stories, in the words of one official, are "not totally made up." An Israeli source tells me that there has indeed been a disruption effort, in which the Israelis managed to penetrate the Iranian supply chain in at least three countries and introduce bogus equipment. But this source cautions that Bergman's claims of "tremendous" success are overstated.

My guru on Israeli intelligence is Yossi Melman, a columnist for Haaretz who has written several books on the Mossad. He says that Dagan did, indeed, make a commitment to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons after he took over Mossad, expressing that determination in a letter to the chiefs of other Israeli intelligence services. But Melman thinks that this covert effort has had only limited success. Whatever setbacks the Iranians experienced along the way, they have been able to keep moving.

"I don't think Mossad is capable of mobilizing a massive sabotage campaign that would halt the Iranian program," Melman told me last week.

U.S. sabotage efforts have been chronicled by David Sanger of the New York Times, in several news stories and in his recent book, "The Inheritance." Here's what Sanger wrote in a front-page story on Jan. 11: "The covert American program, started in early 2008, includes renewed American efforts to penetrate Iran's supply chain abroad, along with new efforts, some of them experimental, to undermine electrical systems, computer systems and other networks on which Iran relies. It is aimed at delaying the day that Iran can produce the weapons-grade fuel and designs it needs to produce a workable nuclear weapon."

But we have to be frank: The quiet, deniable covert activities undertaken so far haven't stopped the Iranian program, and they're not likely to do so in the future. There is no magic bullet. The best hope of stopping Iran from making a bomb is diplomacy, backed by the threat of tough sanctions, backed by the ultimate threat of overt military power.

The writer is co-host of PostGlobal, an online discussion of international issues.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/05/22/AR2009052202591.html>

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