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The Economist
May 28th 2009

The National Ignition Facility - On Target, Finally

WHAT do you get when you focus 192 lasers onto a pellet the size of a match head and press the “fire” button? The answer, hope physicists at the National Ignition Facility (NIF) in Livermore, California, is: the most powerful machine on the planet. The NIF, which is scheduled to go into operation on May 29th, is designed to create conditions like those found in stars—and also in the explosions of hydrogen bombs. To do that requires, for the brief instants when it is operating at full tilt (a total of three thousandths of a second a year), that it has a power of 500 trillion watts, about 3,000 times the average electricity consumption of the whole of planet Earth.

The pellets at which this energy is directed are made of frozen hydrogen. The aim is to make those pellets undergo nuclear fusion—the process that causes stars to shine and hydrogen bombs to explode. Although the justification for building the NIF has changed over the years (originally there was talk of it being a prototype for fusion-based power stations), it is the resemblance to bombs which has saved the project from the budgetary chop. For the NIF provides America with a way to carry out nuclear-weapons tests without actually testing any weapons.

Had the NIF been a purely scientific project, it would almost certainly have been cancelled. It has cost \$4 billion so far, almost four times the original estimate, and is running more than five years behind schedule. Construction started in May 1997 but the initial design proved impractical and was sent back to the drawing board. In 2000 the Department of Energy, which is responsible for the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, the NIF’s host, altered the design and revised its budget and deadlines. And in July 2005 Congress actually voted to suspend construction of the machine—relenting only when extra money was found to compensate for cost overruns that had threatened to penalise the work of two other energy-department laboratories that drew their cash from the same pot.

Testing, testing

What ultimately saved the NIF from cancellation was that its backers persuaded politicians it was vital to the “stockpile stewardship” programme for America’s nuclear bombs. Although America has not ratified the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty, it suspended the testing of its nuclear weapons in 1992. Instead of weapons development, nuclear-weapons scientists are now engaged in a programme intended to ensure that the country’s existing warheads will continue to function predictably as they age. This work uses “subcritical” tests that do not involve full nuclear detonations, and computer simulations of how a weapon would explode.

Such simulations are all well and good, but they must, from time to time, be tested against the real world. That is where the NIF comes in. It will, if it works, create real nuclear explosions, not subcritical phutts. These explosions will be too small to count as nuclear tests within the meaning of the treaty (which America tries to abide by, even though it has not signed). They will, however, be big enough to yield information useful to nuclear-weapons scientists.

Each laser pulse will begin as a weak infra-red beam. This is split into 48 daughter beams that are then fed into preamplifiers which increase their power 20 billion times. Each of the daughters is split further, into four, and passed repeatedly through the main amplifiers. These increase the beams’ power 15,000 times and push their wavelengths into the ultraviolet.

The pellet itself contains a sphere of deuterium (a heavy form of hydrogen, with nuclei consisting of a proton and a neutron) and tritium (even heavier hydrogen, with a proton and two neutrons) that is chilled to just a degree or so above absolute zero. The beams should compress the sphere so rapidly that it implodes, squeezing deuterium and tritium nuclei together until they overcome their mutual repulsion and fuse to form helium (two protons and two neutrons) together with a surplus neutron and a lot of heat. If enough heat is generated it will sustain the process of fusion without laser input, until most of the nuclear fuel has been used up.

Physicists hope that in the coming year or so the NIF will become the first machine to achieve a nuclear-fusion reaction that produces more energy than it takes to ignite, albeit for only a fraction of a second. Sceptics reckon that the machine may not be capable of such a feat. Creating a sustained nuclear-fusion reaction that could generate power is the goal of another mammoth experiment, the International Experimental Thermonuclear Reactor, which is being built in Cadarache, France. Plenty of people are sceptical about the likely success of that project, too. Like the

NIF, it appears to be slipping behind schedule. Full experiments to test nuclear fusion as a power source seem likely to be delayed until 2025.

If the NIF does work, the bomb-scientists will be ecstatic. Astrophysicists will be pretty pleased, too. Although they will get only about 200 of the annual budget of between 700 and 1,000 runs, they will be able to use their time on the machine to simulate the interiors of giant planets, stars and exploding supernovae, by varying the compositions of the pellets to match what they think those things are made of. Bombs or no bombs, astronomy will start to move from being an observational to an experimental science. At a mere \$140m a year, then, the NIF is a snip.

http://www.economist.com/science/displaystory.cfm?story_id=13726730

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Associated Press of Pakistan
29 May 2009

Nuclear Weapons Country's Cornerstone: PM

ISLAMABAD, May 29 (APP): Prime Minister Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani on Friday said nuclear weapons are the cornerstone of Pakistan's deterrence strategy and enjoy complete national consensus and support. Referring to an "orchestrated campaign" against Pakistan's nuclear programme by some detractors, the Prime Minister said, "We are determined to retain nuclear deterrence at all cost and no compromise will be made on our core security interest."

Chairing a meeting of Strategic Planning Division at PM House, where he was briefed on the qualitative upgrades in Pakistan's nuclear programme, the Prime Minister appreciated the ongoing progress in the areas of development strategy and consolidation of force goals.

He expressed his government's full support to the country's strategic programme which was a vital component of Pakistan's national security.

Advisor to PM on Finance Shaukat Tareen, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Tariq Majeed, Director General SPD, Lt. General (retd) Khalid Ahmed Kidwai and other senior government official attended the meeting.

http://www.app.com.pk/en /index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=77421&Itemid=2

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Los Angeles Times
May 29, 2009

Program to Refurbish Aging Nuclear Warheads Faces Setbacks

By Ralph Vartabedian

A decadelong effort to refurbish thousands of aging nuclear warheads has run into serious technical problems that have forced delays and exacerbated concerns about the Energy Department's ability to maintain the nation's strategic deterrent.

The program involves a type of warhead known as the W76, which is used on the Navy's Trident missile system and makes up more than half of the deployed warheads in the U.S. stockpile.

The refurbishment program is aimed at replacing thousands of parts that have aged since the bombs left the factory 20 and 30 years ago.

The \$200-million-a-year program is a cornerstone of America's nuclear deterrent strategy, and the Energy Department has been under growing pressure from the military and Congress to meet tough deadlines to get the weapons ready.

In February, the department's National Nuclear Security Administration announced that the "first refurbished W76 nuclear warhead had been accepted into the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile by the Navy."

But no delivery was ever made. The warhead is in pieces inside a production cell at the Energy Department's Pantex plant in Amarillo, Texas, according to an engineer at the facility.

The delay in retrofitting the warheads appears to validate long-standing concerns about an erosion of technical expertise at the Energy Department, as Cold War-era scientists and engineers retire and take with them detailed knowledge about the bombs.

Although the nation's nuclear weapons are functional and reliable, the W76 issue represents one of the most serious setbacks in the nuclear weapons program at least since the end of the Cold War and raises questions about the future, several experts told The Times.

"I wouldn't say the deterrent has been affected at all," said Philip Coyle, a former deputy director at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory and former assistant secretary of Defense. "It is, however, a reminder that expertise about nuclear weapons is a precious thing and needs to be maintained."

He said the W76 problem underscored concerns experts have long raised about maintaining nuclear weapons decades after they were designed, manufactured and tested.

As the nation reduces the size of its stockpile under treaty agreements with Russia, he said, the reliability of the remaining weapons becomes more important.

Damien LaVera, a spokesman for the National Nuclear Security Administration, said the department had not lost its crucial skills, but he acknowledged that retaining experienced weapons scientists and training a new generation of scientists were "an ongoing concern."

At issue with the W76, at least in part, is a classified component that was used in the original weapon but that engineers and scientists at the Energy Department's plant in Oak Ridge, Tenn., could not duplicate in a series of efforts over the last several years.

The component, known by the code word "fogbank," is thought to be made of an exotic material and is crucial to a hydrogen bomb reaching its designed energy level in the microseconds before it blows apart.

The W76 is designed to release energy equal to about 100 kilotons of TNT, through both fission and fusion of atoms.

When it came time to make new batches of fogbank for the refurbishment program, the current workforce was unable to duplicate the characteristics of the batches made in the 1970s and 1980s, according to a March report by the Government Accountability Office.

"I don't know how this happened that we forgot how to make fogbank," Coyle said. "It should not have happened, but it did."

Given the problems, the technical staff at the Pantex plant was stunned by the Energy Department announcement in February that the warhead had been delivered to the Navy, according to an engineer who spoke on condition of anonymity.

B&W Pantex, the private company that operates the plant, was still awaiting delivery of a classified part from another facility and cannot assemble the warhead, the engineer said.

Navy spokesman Lt. Clay Doss told The Times on Thursday: "We have not received delivery of any refurbished W76 warheads. The answer is none."

LaVera defended the accuracy of the February announcement, saying a federal council had decided to accept the final design of the weapon and therefore it was technically a part of the stockpile.

The failure of the Energy Department to actually deliver a W76 was brought to the attention of The Times by the Project on Government Oversight, a Washington-based watchdog group that has long expressed concern about poor performance at the nation's weapon sites.

"NNSA gets away with producing shoddy work . . . and even lying to the public," said Danielle Brian, the group's executive director. "Our confidence in the stockpile cannot depend on lies."

The technical problems with the W76 were also partially disclosed in the report from the GAO, which said the Energy Department had failed to "effectively manage cost, schedule and technical risks" not only on the W76 program but on another refurbishment effort for a warhead known as the B61.

In the case of the B61, the Energy Department boasted that it had completed the job ahead of schedule and under cost, even though it sharply reduced the number of bombs that it rebuilt and curtailed the scope of the work on each bomb, the GAO said. The cost of refurbishing each bomb doubled, the office said.

LaVera said all issues with fogbank had been resolved. The only remaining W76 issue involves potential minor defects in its arming, fusing and firing system, the safety controls that prepare a nuclear weapon for detonation.

He said the existing design of the arming system had been certified, though the department was continuing to examine the issue.

"It is inaccurate to say that we are unable to ship the weapons because there is an issue or problem," LaVera said.

Not everybody agrees that the fogbank problem raises broad concerns about a loss of expertise.

Since the late 1990s, the nation has embarked on a program to invest billions of dollars in scientific research to keep the old weapons viable.

The issue is highly sensitive because many arms control advocates worry that such a loss could become a rationale for a resumption of nuclear testing.

The Energy Department's scientific program to support the stockpile "has done very well so far. Most people would say it has been a terrific success," said Sydney Drell, a nuclear weapons expert at Stanford University.

The department plans to deliver the first batch of W76s in late fall, LaVera said.

That would put it about two years behind schedule, a delay that has caused logistical problems for the Navy, the GAO said.

It is not yet clear how long it will take for the department to refurbish all 2,000 warheads in its current plan, but the process of gradually taking warheads out of service, refurbishing them and returning them to service could take an additional 10 years.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-broken-warheads29-2009may29,0,1881124,full.story>

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National Journal Magazine

OPINION

May 30, 2009

Road to Zero Nukes Remains Fraught

James Kitfield

On May 19, President Obama and his top national security advisers huddled in the Oval Office with an unlikely collection of Cold Warriors. After meeting for more than an hour with the bipartisan group that some have dubbed "the four horsemen of the anti-apocalypse," Obama emerged with critical backing for the administration's plans for resuscitating a moribund nuclear nonproliferation regime.

"I don't think anybody would accuse these four gentlemen of being dreamers. They're hard-headed, tough defenders of American interests and American security," Obama told the press, motioning to former secretaries of State Henry Kissinger and George Shultz, former Defense Secretary William Perry, and former Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Sam Nunn. "But what they have come together to help galvanize is a recognition that we do not want a world of continued nuclear proliferation, and that in order for us to meet the security challenges of the future, America has to take leadership in this area."

Ever since a signed article by the four former officials ran in a January 2007 issue of *The Wall Street Journal* under the headline "**A World Free of Nuclear Weapons**," they have galvanized the debate over nuclear proliferation. Absent urgent action by the United States, they argued, the world will soon enter a new nuclear age that "will be more precarious, psychologically disorienting, and economically even more costly than was Cold War deterrence."

As a candidate, Obama embraced the officials' vision, promising to put the United States back on "the long road toward eliminating nuclear weapons." In a speech in Prague on April 5, Obama outlined the difficult steps that his administration will take to begin the journey.

The United States will move quickly to negotiate a new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty with Russia, Obama pledged, as well as a multilateral Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty to end the production of weapons-grade uranium and plutonium. He called for creating an international fuel bank to safely supply civilian nuclear energy programs and for more-robust verification inspections and tougher sanctions for cheaters to strengthen the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Obama also pledged to fully secure global stockpiles of nuclear materials within four years, and

he promised to "aggressively pursue" U.S. ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, which the Republican-led Senate rejected in 1999.

"I know that there are some who will question whether we can act on such a broad agenda," Obama said in Prague. "There are those who doubt whether true international cooperation is possible, given inevitable differences among nations. And there are those who hear talk of a world without nuclear weapons and doubt whether it's worth setting a goal that seems impossible to achieve. But make no mistake: We know where that road leads."

Lost Time

Taken together, these measures represent a dramatic departure from a Bush administration approach that viewed arms control treaties and multilateral nonproliferation agreements as inherently unverifiable and overly constraining on U.S. freedom of action.

The Bush White House thus ignored the CTBT; withdrew from the Antiballistic Missile Treaty to pursue a national missile defense system; and signed a cursory arms reduction treaty with Russia that didn't even include counting measures, let alone verification. The administration proposed developing a nuclear bunker-buster weapon; explored the option of putting anti-missile weapons in space; and reached a nuclear cooperation deal with India, which is not a party to the nonproliferation treaty. Bush also tried unsuccessfully to coerce nuclear rogues through threats of pre-emption.

Whatever you think about that approach, even proponents have conceded that the results were disappointing. During the Bush administration's watch, North Korea tested a nuclear weapon. On May 25, Pyongyang exploded a second, just weeks after testing a long-range missile. It has also kicked out international inspectors again, and taken steps to begin reprocessing plutonium.

For its part, Iran has announced a significant increase in the number of centrifuges being used to enrich uranium, and Tehran also recently tested a long-range missile capable of reaching Israel and other targets in the Middle East. If Iran and North Korea become established nuclear weapons states, many experts predict a cascade of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East and Asia. Such an occurrence could collapse the structure of arms control treaties; multilateral and bilateral agreements; and threat-reduction and counter-proliferation programs that taken together form the international nonproliferation regime.

The Bush administration's argument that it needed new nuclear weapons and missile defense systems, and its perceived hostility to arms control agreements, has caused many countries to question the core pledge at the heart of the nonproliferation treaty. Under that treaty, the nuclear "haves" promised to reduce the role of such weapons and move toward disarmament on some indeterminable timeline, and to help non-nuclear powers with civilian nuclear power. In return, the 180 or so NPT signatories without nuclear weapons agreed not to pursue them.

"There's an old Winston Churchill saying that no matter how beautiful the strategy, occasionally you have to consider the results; and the results are pretty clear that we're heading in the wrong direction on nuclear proliferation," Nunn, co-chairman of the Nuclear Threat Initiative, told *National Journal* last year. "That's why [the four horsemen] tried to breathe new life into an old idea, because without the United States displaying leadership and a vision of a world that will someday be rid of nuclear weapons, we will not get the cooperation internationally for steps that are necessary to protect our own society."

Dramatic Cuts

Yet, as the Obama administration will soon discover, each of the steps it has proposed to reclaim leadership in the realm of nonproliferation is fraught with complexity and risk. On April 1 in London, for instance, Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev agreed to conclude a follow-on strategic reduction treaty by December 5, when the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty expires. To meet that deadline, the outline of a deal will probably have to be ready in July for a planned Obama summit with the Russians in Moscow, in order to leave time for Senate ratification hearings in the fall. By traditional standards, that represents arms control negotiations on fast-forward.

Nor are the potential disagreements between Moscow and Washington trivial. Under the 1991 START, both the United States and Russia are limited to 6,000 deployed nuclear warheads. The 2002 Moscow Treaty called for reducing that number to between 1,700 and 2,200 strategic nuclear warheads by 2012, but the agreement lacked verification mechanisms.

Many arms control advocates want the new treaty to limit deployed strategic warheads to a maximum of 1,000. Such a dramatic decrease, however, raises other contentious issues, such as the U.S. missile defense system proposed for Eastern Europe; Russia's much larger stockpile of tactical nuclear warheads; and the nuclear arsenals of third-party

nations, including China, France, Great Britain, India, Israel, and Pakistan. Meanwhile, the Pentagon will not complete a congressionally mandated Nuclear Posture Review in time to influence the negotiations this year, a sticking point sure to be raised by lawmakers.

"My personal preference would be a treaty that limits deployed warheads to 1,000. But with the Nuclear Posture Review still under way and only seven months to complete the START follow-on, I think they should set the limit at a more modest 1,500 warheads and address the more-contentious issues at a later date," said Steven Pifer a visiting fellow at the Brookings Institution who wrote a recent paper on the subject. "In his Prague speech, President Obama made pretty clear that this treaty only represents a first step in an arms reduction process that will eventually tackle issues such as missile defense, tactical nukes, and third-party arsenals."

Test Ban Battle

Even if a new agreement with Russia is signed and ratified by December, a nonproliferation treaty review conference scheduled for the spring of 2010 imposes another difficult deadline. At the last NPT review, in 2005, the Bush administration infuriated many participants by sending a midlevel delegation that essentially stood on the sidelines and ignored calls for strengthening the treaty. At the 2000 conference, the Clinton administration committed to resurrecting the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Because the Senate's 1999 rejection of the CTBT is seen by many as the first sign that the United States was stepping back from a nonproliferation regime largely of its own making, many delegations at the upcoming review conference will be expecting the Obama administration to have made good on its pledge to ratify the treaty.

In that regard, the recent report by the bipartisan Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States was not encouraging. Although the commission supported further, unspecified reductions in U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals, it split down the middle on the goal of ratifying the test ban treaty and disagreed on the desirability of seeking a world without nuclear weapons.

"On the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, I believe the United States will not be able to assume leadership in the world on nonproliferation if we do not ratify the treaty, but I must say the commission is split by that issue," said Co-Chairman William Perry, speaking recently at the U.S. Institute of Peace. "About half our members disagree with the goal of ratifying CTBT; and indeed, if the Senate proceeds to hold hearings on that, I suspect some of our members may be testifying on one side of the issue and others will testify on the other side."

The test ban treaty has well-known weaknesses in terms of verification and definitions of exactly what constitutes a nuclear test. Some experts believe that the commission's inability to reach consensus on such a fundamental issue, however, reveals the same party-line divisions that scuttled the agreement in 1999. That raises the possibility that a unified Republican caucus could deal Obama's nonproliferation agenda a potentially crippling blow with a vote to once again reject the test ban.

"The Obama administration talks a lot about the need for bipartisanship, and they are going to find it's absolutely critical on arms control treaties that require a two-thirds Senate majority for ratification," said John Isaacs, executive director of the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation. "My reading at this point is that there are likely 60 Democrats in the Senate united in favor of ratifying the CTBT, and 40 Republicans united in opposition. At the end of the day, it's probably going to come down to Obama or [Vice President] Biden sitting down with seven to 10 key Republicans and saying, 'OK, what do you need in order to pass this treaty?'"

Wild Cards

The most significant challenge to the nonproliferation regime and the Obama agenda comes, of course, from former or current NPT signatories, such as North Korea and Iran, respectively, who circumvent its strictures with secret nuclear weapons programs. Such nuclear rogues not only erode confidence in the nonproliferation regime itself but also pose the threat of starting a chain reaction as neighboring states and potential adversaries scramble for their own nuclear deterrent. Presented with the reality of an Iranian nuclear test one day or further nuclear weapons development by North Korea, and the possibility that the U.S. nuclear umbrella will have to be extended, the Senate is unlikely to look favorably on dramatic reductions in America's nuclear arsenal or a test ban treaty.

"There's no question that the NPT regime has become a little shaky in recent years, but the truth is that what the United States does in that regard is less important than what Iran does," said James Schlesinger, the former Energy and Defense secretary who co-chaired the Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States. "If Iran achieves a nuclear weapons capability, it would probably end our hopes for nonproliferation."

With the nonproliferation regime rocked by repeated blows in recent years, other experts believe that it must be shored up quickly to avoid an outright collapse. In this view, the sequence of arms reductions, treaty enhancements,

and confidence-building measures outlined by the Obama administration can rebuild a firewall that makes a nuclear breakout less likely.

Joseph Cirincione is a longtime arms control advocate who now heads the Ploughshares Fund, a nonprofit grant-making organization. "There's no question that nuclear proliferation threats are still growing, having built up a fierce momentum over the past six or seven years. President Obama is not going to be able to reverse that momentum quickly, but already he has changed the dynamic by indicating that the way to solve the problem of Iran and North Korea is to first look at our own obligations and responsibilities," he said in an interview.

Cirincione believes that the disarmament steps Obama has outlined will eventually lead to more cooperation on preventing proliferation, which will increase security, making room for further disarmament and cooperation. "With luck, that coin will just keep flipping over and over, until eventually a lot of things become possible," he said. "My biggest concern, however, is the cynicism that has built up on this issue that tends to disparage the whole nonproliferation agenda. That cynicism chills politicians and officials who are worried about looking weak, and it demoralizes those who fear they are wasting time on a hopeless agenda. That kind of fatalism really is our greatest adversary."

http://www.nationaljournal.com/njmagazine/nj_20090530_1512.php

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FOXNews.com

May 29, 2009

Obama Creates 'Cyber Czar' Position to Fight Digital Threats

WASHINGTON -- President Obama announced Friday the creation of a "cyber czar" to oversee an enhanced security system for U.S. computer networks.

The position is part of a long-awaited plan stemming from a review he ordered shortly after taking office. Obama did not announce who will get the job during Friday's unveiling of the review but he said the cyber czar will be a special assistant to him and will be supported by a new cyber directorate within the National Security Council. The cyber czar will also work with the National Economic Council. The czar's authority will not include private sector networks or Internet traffic.

Officials close to the issue say a handful of experts -- both in and out of government -- are under consideration for the post.

Obama has called digital security a top priority, whether it's guarding the computer systems that keep the lights on in a city and direct airliners to the right runway or those protecting customers who pay their bills online.

"Make no mistake, this world, cyberspace is a world that we depend on every single day," he said. "Cyberspace is real. So are the risks that come with it."

Obama laid out broad goals for dealing with cyber threats while depicting the U.S. as a digital nation that needs to provide the education required to keep pace with technology and attract and retain a cyber-savvy work force. He also called for a new education campaign to raise public awareness of the challenges and threats related to cyber security.

"The task I describe will not be easy," he said. "Protecting our prosperity and security in this globalized world is going to be a long difficult struggle demanding patience and persistence over many years.

"But we need to remember we're only at the beginning," he said, asserting the information age is only in its infancy.

The review will not dictate how the government or private industry should tighten digital defenses. Critics say the cyber czar will not have sufficient budgetary and policymaking authority over securing computer systems and spending.

The special assistant title is not as high in the White House hierarchy as some officials sought. It would not give the czar direct, unfettered access to the president. Instead, the official would report to senior NSC officials -- a situation many say will make it difficult to make major changes within the calcified federal bureaucracy.

Government and military officials have acknowledged that U.S. computer networks are constantly assailed by attacks and scans, ranging from nuisance hacking to more nefarious probes and attacks. Some suggest that the actions at times are a form of cyber espionage from other nations, such as China.

<http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2009/05/29/obama-set-create-cyber-czar-position/>

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New York Times
May 29, 2009

Pentagon Plans New Arm to Wage Wars in Cyberspace

By David E. Sanger and Thom Shanker

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon plans to create a new military command for cyberspace, administration officials said Thursday, stepping up preparations by the armed forces to conduct both offensive and defensive computer warfare.

The military command would complement a civilian effort to be announced by President Obama on Friday that would overhaul the way the United States safeguards its computer networks.

Mr. Obama, officials said, will announce the creation of a White House office — reporting to both the National Security Council and the National Economic Council — that will coordinate a multibillion-dollar effort to restrict access to government computers and protect systems that run the stock exchanges, clear global banking transactions and manage the air traffic control system.

White House officials say Mr. Obama has not yet been formally presented with the Pentagon plan. They said he would not discuss it Friday when he announced the creation of a White House office responsible for coordinating private-sector and government defenses against the thousands of cyberattacks mounted against the United States — largely by hackers but sometimes by foreign governments — every day.

But he is expected to sign a classified order in coming weeks that will create the military cybercommand, officials said. It is a recognition that the United States already has a growing number of computer weapons in its arsenal and must prepare strategies for their use — as a deterrent or alongside conventional weapons — in a wide variety of possible future conflicts.

The White House office will be run by a “cyberczar,” but because the position will not have direct access to the president, some experts said it was not high-level enough to end a series of bureaucratic wars that have broken out as billions of dollars have suddenly been allocated to protect against the computer threats.

The main dispute has been over whether the Pentagon or the National Security Agency should take the lead in preparing for and fighting cyberbattles. Under one proposal still being debated, parts of the N.S.A. would be integrated into the military command so they could operate jointly.

Officials said that in addition to the unclassified strategy paper to be released by Mr. Obama on Friday, a classified set of presidential directives is expected to lay out the military’s new responsibilities and how it coordinates its mission with that of the N.S.A., where most of the expertise on digital warfare resides today.

The decision to create a cybercommand is a major step beyond the actions taken by the Bush administration, which authorized several computer-based attacks but never resolved the question of how the government would prepare for a new era of warfare fought over digital networks.

It is still unclear whether the military’s new command or the N.S.A. — or both — will actually conduct this new kind of offensive cyberoperations.

The White House has never said whether Mr. Obama embraces the idea that the United States should use cyberweapons, and the public announcement on Friday is expected to focus solely on defensive steps and the government’s acknowledgment that it needs to be better organized to face the threat from foes attacking military, government and commercial online systems.

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates has pushed for the Pentagon to become better organized to address the security threat.

Initially at least, the new command would focus on organizing the various components and capabilities now scattered across the four armed services.

Officials declined to describe potential offensive operations, but said they now viewed cyberspace as comparable to more traditional battlefields.

“We are not comfortable discussing the question of offensive cyberoperations, but we consider cyberspace a war-fighting domain,” said Bryan Whitman, a Pentagon spokesman. “We need to be able to operate within that domain just like on any battlefield, which includes protecting our freedom of movement and preserving our capability to perform in that environment.”

Although Pentagon civilian officials and military officers said the new command was expected to initially be a subordinate headquarters under the military’s Strategic Command, which controls nuclear operations as well as cyberdefenses, it could eventually become an independent command.

“No decision has been made,” said Lt. Col. Eric Butterbaugh, a Pentagon spokesman. “Just as the White House has completed its 60-day review of cyberspace policy, likewise, we are looking at how the department can best organize itself to fill our role in implementing the administration’s cyberpolicy.”

The creation of the cyberczar’s office inside the White House appears to be part of a significant expansion of the role of the national security apparatus there. A separate group overseeing domestic security, created by President George W. Bush after the Sept. 11 attacks, now resides within the National Security Council. A senior White House official responsible for countering the proliferation of nuclear and unconventional weapons has been given broader authority. Now, cybersecurity will also rank as one of the key threats that Mr. Obama is seeking to coordinate from the White House.

The strategy review Mr. Obama will discuss on Friday was completed weeks ago, but delayed because of continuing arguments over the authority of the White House office, and the budgets for the entire effort.

It was kept separate from the military debate over whether the Pentagon or the N.S.A. is best equipped to engage in offensive operations. Part of that debate hinges on the question of how much control should be given to American spy agencies, since they are prohibited from acting on American soil.

“It’s the domestic spying problem writ large,” one senior intelligence official said recently. “These attacks start in other countries, but they know no borders. So how do you fight them if you can’t act both inside and outside the United States?”

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/29/us/politics/29cyber.html?hp>

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Wall Street Journal
May 29, 2009

Obama Set to Create 'Cyber Czar' Position

By Siobhan Gorman and Yochi J. Dreazen

WASHINGTON -- President Barack Obama will announce on Friday the creation of a "cyber czar" position, stepping up his administration's efforts to better protect the nation's computer networks.

The White House appointment will be followed in coming days by the formal creation of a new military cyber command that will coordinate the defense of Pentagon computer networks and improve U.S. offensive capabilities in cyberwarfare.

The cybersecurity chief will report to both the National Security Council and the National Economic Council, a compromise resulting from a fierce White House turf battle over the responsibilities and powers of the new office.

Mr. Obama won't announce on Friday the person who will fill the new job. That isn't expected for at least a few more days.

Acting White House cybersecurity chief Melissa Hathaway, who ran the administration's broad review of its cyber policies, is one candidate. Other potential candidates are thought to include Microsoft Corp. Vice President Scott Charney, a former government official who ran the Justice Department's computer-crime unit, and Maureen Baginski, who has held senior posts at the National Security Agency and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The moves come amid growing evidence that sophisticated overseas hackers are waging a widening assault on important U.S. networks. The Defense Department detected 360 million attempts to penetrate its networks last year, up from six million in 2006. The Pentagon alone has spent \$100 million in the past six months repairing damage from cyberattacks.

U.S. officials acknowledge that the hackers, believed to be mainly from Russia and China, are having some success. The Wall Street Journal reported this spring that cyberspies breached both the nation's electricity grid and the Pentagon's biggest weapons program, the \$300 billion Joint Strike Fighters.

"I'd like to say that our networks are secure, but that would not be correct," Army Lt. Gen. Keith Alexander, who runs the National Security Agency, told lawmakers this month. "We have vulnerabilities."

Gen. Alexander is expected to run the new military cyber command that will be created after the White House rolls out the results of its 60-day review of the government's efforts to protect key public and private networks.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124355914259564961.html>

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New York Times

May 29, 2009

Poland Seeks Missiles Regardless of Shield

By JUDY DEMPSEY

BERLIN — The Polish government is pushing hard to reach agreement with the United States over stationing a battery of Patriot missiles near Warsaw by the end of this year, despite President Barack Obama's decision to examine the costs and reliability of deploying a separate, and controversial, missile defense system in Eastern Europe, Polish officials said this week.

If Poland succeeds, it will represent a success for Donald Tusk's center-right government, which had taken a tough stance with the Bush administration after it proposed stationing the missile defense system there.

Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski, Poland's chief negotiator, had insisted that an agreement to deploy 10 interceptors for the antimissile system depended on another accord whereby the United States would modernize Poland's air defense system by providing Patriots.

Last August, days after Russia invaded Georgia and after months of wrangling between Warsaw and Washington over the terms of deploying the interceptors, Poland signed a strategic cooperation agreement with Washington, alongside a missile defense accord.

But when Mr. Obama took office in January and soon afterward called for a review of the missile system, the Polish government moved quickly to speed up talks over stationing the Patriot missiles on its territory — concerned about backtracking or attempts to link the future of missile defense to the stationing of the Patriot missiles.

"The declaration on strategic cooperation from August of last year clearly says that the installation of the first battery of Patriot missiles should take place no later than the end of this year," Bogdan Klich, Poland's defense minister, said this week in interviews. "We stick to this date in talks with our American partners."

Russia strongly opposes any plans to deploy the interceptors in Poland and a radar system in the Czech Republic, both satellites of the Soviet Union. Moscow even threatened to retaliate by placing missiles in the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad, which is sandwiched between Poland and Lithuania.

It has since dropped those threats as the United States and Russia seek to improve ties, particularly in nuclear weapons control and in trying to work together to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons.

Defense Secretary Robert Gates had already said in March that if there were no Iranian threat, there would be no need for the missile defense system in Europe.

That stirred security concerns in Warsaw and Prague, where the missile shield is seen as an extra layer of American guarantees of security because it would entail the physical presence of U.S. troops in each country. Mr. Obama moved quickly to try to allay the Polish and Czech suspicions, saying there was no linkage between Iran's nuclear program and the scrapping of plans for a missile shield in Eastern Europe.

Despite the optimistic assessment on the Patriot negotiations this week from Mr. Klich, the Foreign Ministry said negotiations on stationing those missiles still faced several hurdles before the missiles could be delivered.

Poland is insisting that after a certain period of time, the Patriot missiles should be based permanently on its soil. So far, the United States is prepared only to rotate the missiles, sending them for a couple of months at a time from Germany to Poland, where U.S. personnel would train the Poles.

“Poland eventually wants the missiles to be based permanently in Poland,” said a U.S. official who requested anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue. “If not, then Poland might even consider purchasing them.”

Both sides are also discussing a status of forces agreement, which regulates the legal and judicial status of any U.S. troops based in Poland. This means establishing tax rules and determining under which judicial system any American soldier would be placed if accused of a crime. Under the terms of almost all such accords, American troops stationed abroad are subject to trial under the U.S. judicial system. Up to 110 Americans would be stationed in Poland once the Patriot missiles were sent there.

Further talks are expected in June and July, said a State Department official who insisted on anonymity.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/29/world/europe/29iht-shield.html?ref=world>

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New York Times

OPINION

May 29, 2009

The Hoped-For Laser Miracles

The world's most powerful installation of lasers will be dedicated in California on Friday before a throng of well-wishers. The new National Ignition Facility, or NIF, is touted as an important step toward maintaining the nation's nuclear deterrent, developing fusion energy and conducting basic research. We hope its next few years will go a lot better than its problem-plagued development phase. There is a high risk of failure.

NIF, in a building the size of a football stadium, is built on an awesome scale, as described by William J. Broad in Science Times on Tuesday. It will use 192 lasers to fire light beams through a complicated array of mirrors and amplifiers to pulverize a tiny target filled with hydrogen fuel. The resulting heat and compression are supposed to fuse the hydrogen atoms into helium, releasing transient bursts of thermonuclear energy.

When first proposed in 1994, the facility at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory was expected to cost \$1.2 billion and be completed by 2002. But technical, practical and managerial problems caused repeated delays and drove up costs to \$3.5 billion or more. Now NIF will be coming into operation barely ahead of a competing laser facility under construction in France.

The project's primary purpose has always been to help weapons scientists ensure the reliability of the American nuclear arsenal without underground testing. The notion is that experiments under the extreme conditions of fusion would allow bomb makers to study the physics of nuclear weapons without exploding them and check the accuracy of computer codes that calculate how well weapons will perform. It is a worthy goal, but some experts believe there are better ways to ensure reliability and question NIF's importance.

The latest focus, at least in promoting the project, has been the potential to achieve fusion energy, a carbon-free, widely available source of power should it ever prove attainable. The principal goal over the next year or two is to reach self-sustaining “ignition,” the point at which more energy is produced from fused atoms than is applied to make it happen. Scientists at NIF seem confident that they will succeed, but so many things have to go right simultaneously that many experts deem ignition unlikely any time soon. And even ignition is a long way from achieving practical, economical fusion power.

A more immediate payoff could come from basic research on processes that occur under pressures and temperatures typically found at the cores of stars or giant planets. Some critics view NIF as an expensive toy for weapons scientists. But the energy potential is alluring enough that all of us should root for NIF to succeed.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/29/opinion/29fri3.html>

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Reuters

Russia, China Back "Convincing Response" to N.Korea

Dmitry Solovyov

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russia and China want a "convincing response" to North Korea's nuclear test from the United Nations Security Council, Russia's Foreign Ministry said on Tuesday.

"Sergei Lavrov and Yang Jiechi expressed their common opinion on the necessity of a convincing response from the Security Council on the inadmissibility of ignoring the U.N. Security Council's resolution and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction," the ministry said in a statement.

A phone conversation took place between the two ministers on Monday at the request of the Chinese foreign minister, it said.

"At the same time, it was stressed that the solution of the problem is possible only via political and diplomatic means, including by resuming six-party talks as the most important tool to solve the Korean peninsula's nuclear problem and assuage North Korea's justified security concerns," the ministry said.

Last week, North Korea conducted a nuclear test that put it closer to producing a working atomic bomb, test-fired a barrage of short-range missiles and threatened to attack the South, raising tension close to its highest since the 1950-53 Korean war.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/newsMaps/idUSTRE55130M20090602>

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Global Security News

June 2, 2009

North Korea Prepares Multiple Missiles for Launch

"Many vehicles mounted with mobile launchers are being spotted" in eastern North Korea, a South Korean official told the Yonhap News Agency. "It looks like at least three missiles will be launched."

The latest news follows reports yesterday that a Taepodong 2 ICBM had been transported by rail to a known launch site on the nation's west coast. The Stalinist state last week conducted its second nuclear test and test-fired several short-range missiles (see related *GSN* story, today; Eric Talmadge, Associated Press/[Taiwan News](#), June 2).

The medium-range missiles could be either the Rodong model, which is capable of striking targets within 800 miles, or a new weapon with more than twice that range, Agence France-Presse reported (Agence France-Presse/[NASDAQ.com](#), June 2).

http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20090602_4862.php

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Associated Press

2 Jun 09

NKorea Prepares Missiles; South Beefs Up Defenses

By ERIC TALMADGE

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea prepared to test-fire missiles at launch pads on both of its coasts, reports and experts said Tuesday, as South Korea beefed up its naval defenses.

The moves further heightened soaring tensions in the region following North Korea's underground nuclear test last week, and came as speculation grows that leader Kim Jong Il has selected his third son to inherit rule of the secretive communist country.

North Korea may soon launch three or four mid-range missiles, believed to be modified versions of its Rodong series, from its east coast, South Korea's Yonhap news agency reported. An American military official confirmed an intercontinental ballistic missile capable of striking the U.S. was being readied at a base on the North's west coast.

The U.N. Security Council is considering measures to punish the North for the nuclear test, and U.S. Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg said Tuesday that Washington is looking for "creative ideas."

"There are a number of very creative ideas that we are sharing with partners," he said after a talk with Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso in Tokyo.

Pyongyang has countered that it will not accept any punishment and has warned it won't respect the 1953 truce that ended the Korean War if it is provoked.

Fearing skirmishes off its coast, South Korea, whose troops are already on high alert, sent a high-speed ship equipped with guided missiles to its western waters, where the North was reportedly staging amphibious assault training.

The ship is ready to "frustrate North Korea's naval provocation intentions and destroy the enemy at the scene in case of provocations," the navy said in a statement.

South Korea is also sending coast guard ships to escort fishing boats near the western sea island of Yeonpyeong.

The long-range missile being prepared by the North could be timed to coincide with a June 16 summit in Washington between South Korean President Lee Myung-bak and President Barack Obama.

It is believed to have a range of up to 4,000 miles (6,500 kilometers), the JoongAng Ilbo newspaper reported, citing an unnamed South Korean official. That would put Alaska and the Pacific island of Guam, which has major U.S. military assets, within range.

Satellite images indicated the North had transported the missile to the new Dongchang-ni facility near China, Yonhap reported.

A U.S. official confirmed the Yonhap report and said the missile was moved by train, although he did not comment on where it was moved to, and said it could be more than a week before Pyongyang was ready to launch. He spoke on condition of anonymity because it was an intelligence-related issue.

It was not clear when the U.N. Security Council would agree to a new resolution.

The United States and Japan, which is concerned because it is within striking range of North Korean missiles, have pushed hardest for tough new measures, but China and Russia — traditionally closer to the North — have been more restrained.

Russia's U.N. envoy said a strong response to North Korea is needed but warned that new sanctions must not further isolate it, according to an interview published Tuesday.

Ambassador Vitaly Churkin told a government daily, the Rossiyskaya Gazeta, that a new resolution should help encourage Pyongyang to return to the six-nation talks aimed at disarming the North.

Complicating the situation for Washington is Thursday's trial in Pyongyang of two American journalists, Laura Ling and Euna Lee, accused of entering the country illegally and engaging in "hostile acts."

North Korea also has custody of a South Korean worker detained at a joint industrial complex at the border. He has been transferred to Pyongyang, Yonhap said Tuesday. It said North Korea has refused to allow the delivery of daily necessities to him.

<http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5iURO8fOyWVOA0ytFlaAGuC9F7R9wD98IIA082>

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AFP

Jun 02, 2009

China Urges 'Balanced' Approach to NKorea

TOKYO, JAPAN - China's foreign minister, in talks with his Japanese counterpart Tuesday, called for a "balanced approach" toward North Korea, the Japanese government said in a statement.

China's Yang Jiechi also expressed the view that "a UN resolution and sanctions alone would not solve the problem," Japan's foreign ministry said, paraphrasing Yang's comments.

Yang expressed the view that "it is necessary to raise pressure while bringing North Korea back to the negotiating table," the ministry said after his talks with Japan's Hirofumi Nakasone.

The two ministers spoke by phone Tuesday while talks continue at the UN Security Council in New York on how to deal with Pyongyang over its recent nuclear test and series of missile launches.

China, one of the council's five veto-wielding permanent members, has in the past blunted calls led by Washington and Tokyo for strong punishment of the isolated regime over its nuclear programme.

Yang's message to Nakasone was that China "will support the Security Council in showing a proper response and adopting a balanced resolution," according to the Japanese government statement.

North Korea's recent actions and warnings of military confrontation have raised tensions in Northeast Asia, where US Assistant Secretary of State James Steinberg continued a regional tour Tuesday.

Steinberg - travelling with Washington's top North Korea official Stephen Bosworth - met Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso Tuesday before he was to fly on to China, to be followed by stops in South Korea and Russia.

Speaking in Tokyo before his departure for Beijing, Steinberg said: "I think that the Chinese are very actively engaging in these discussions, they have a number of good ideas of their own.

"We think about the options what the alternatives are and we're going from here to Beijing, to share these ideas as well," he said.

Regional tensions have run high for the past week after Kim Jong-Il's regime staged its second nuclear test, launched a series of short-range missiles and threatened possible attacks on South Korea.

South Korean reports said Monday that the North appeared to be planning another launch after it delivered a long-range missile to a base in Dongchang-ri in the country's north-west.

<http://news.asiaone.com/News/Latest%2BNews/Asia/Story/A1Story20090602-145680.html>

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San Francisco Chronicle

June 2, 2009

North Korea Readies Long-Range Missile Test

John Glionna

North Korea has positioned its most sophisticated long-range ballistic missile at a launch site for a test-firing that could come within weeks, a Seoul newspaper reported Monday.

The regime, which in May raised tensions worldwide by conducting a nuclear test, could fire its missile June 16, when South Korean President Lee Myung-bak meets with President Obama in Washington, according to the report.

And today, South Korean media reported that North Korean leader Kim Jong Il's youngest son, Kim Jong Un, has been picked to be the reclusive nation's next leader. The decision came after its May 25 nuclear test, and North Korean diplomats have been instructed to respect the decision, according to a South Korean lawmaker and Seoul-based newspapers Hankook Ilbo and Dong-a Ilbo.

That was not entirely unexpected. In late April, South Korea's Yonhap news agency reported that the son was named to the National Defense Commission - an appointment indicating the 26-year-old was being groomed to take power.

Opposition lawmaker Park Jie Won, an intelligence committee member, said during a radio interview today that he was briefed by the government on the North's move and that the regime is "pledging allegiance to Kim Jong Un," according to an interview transcript provided by his office. Dong-a Ilbo said the North is teaching its people a song lauding the son.

In recent days, North Korea has ordered all shipping traffic from waters off its western coast, a ban it said was effective through July.

The moves come as the U.N. Security Council contemplates new sanctions against North Korea for conducting the underground nuclear test and launching five short-range missiles in May.

Dong-a Ilbo reported that the new missile set for launch from Dongchang-ni site on North Korea's west coast might be a version of the Taepodong-2 that Pyongyang fired in April. The report, citing unnamed sources, said the missile had a range of 4,000 miles and could reach Alaska.

South Korea and Japan acknowledged Monday that a new missile test could come within weeks.

"Given that North Korea has carried out a nuclear test, we can't deny the possibility that they will further test-fire an intercontinental ballistic missile," Chief Cabinet Secretary Takeo Kawamura told a news conference in Tokyo.

Without mentioning the new North Korean missile, Lee said in a radio address that South Korea would not tolerate further provocations from the North.

"North Korea's second nuclear test last week brought great disappointment and shock not only to our people, but the entire world," Lee said, echoing Defense Secretary Robert Gates' previous assertion that the world would not accept a nuclear-armed North Korea.

During a news conference Monday in Manila, where he was meeting with Filipino military officials, Gates confirmed that North Korea appeared to be preparing a long-range missile. But, Gates added, "at this point, it's not clear what they're going to do."

Gates spoke before boarding a U.S. military jet for Alaska, where he was scheduled to view a key part of the U.S. missile defense system, the ground-based interceptor silos.

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2009/06/02/MNCF17UU4A.DTL>

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ABC NEWS

June 2, 2009

North Korea to Launch Missile that Can Reach US?

By JOOHEE CHO

The [nuclear standoff](#) between North and South Korea is [elevated](#) to a new level as North Korea appears to be preparing for [a long-range missile launch](#) that could possibly reach the United States, according to South Korea's Yonhap News.

North Korea is also [preparing to test-fire](#) three to four mid-range missiles at the same time, an unnamed national lawmaker who was briefed by defense officials told Yonhap News today.

An [inter-continental ballistic missile](#), typically designed for [nuclear weapons](#) delivery, has a range of over 3,500 miles.

That would allow the missile to reach Alaska or to strike U.S. bases on the Pacific island of Guam.

According to South Korea's daily newspaper Chosun Ilbo, citing an unnamed government official, North Korea had completed production of at least three ICBM-standard missiles as of last year. One was fired on April 5 that reportedly flew 1,900 miles, a bit short of its capacity of 2,300 miles, from Musudan-ri, at the northeastern tip of the Korean peninsula.

Recent satellite images indicate that a second ICBM has been transported to a new Dongchang-ni facility on the west coast, 124 miles from Pyongyang. Construction of two launch pads is underway and both are reportedly automated and modernized.

"Among many sites, [North Koreans](#) chose this place for a good reason," says Young-Tae Jeung, a senior researcher at the Korea Institute for National Unification. "The place is closer to China. That means if the United States decides to militarily strike the area, it will have to take China into consideration."

Analyst views on exactly when the ICBM will be launched varies from "within in a week" to "around June 16 summit in Washington between South Korean President Lee Myung-bak and President Barack Obama," Chosun Ilbo reported.

There is "a high possibility of North Koreans still having one or two left in stock," according to the newspaper.

Analysts also warn that the automation of the launch pad poses a grave threat because from the moment North Korea decides to launch the ICBM to the time of its actual launch, it will only be a matter of days, not weeks as it had been in the past. This gives little time for the outside world to prepare for interceptions, analysts say. The previous Musudan-ri facility was manually operated, which is why the test-fire took place 12 days after the long-range missile was spotted on the launch pad.

Another concern is the new facility's proximity to North Korea's Yongbyon nuclear power plant, just 43 miles away. "From their point of view, it will be more convenient to be closer to Yongbyon, once they complete the technology to mount a nuclear warhead on a missile," said Choon-Geun Lee, director at the Science and Technology Policy Institute.

In response, South Korea's navy bolstered defenses on Tuesday near its west sea border with North Korea. A high-speed vessel armed with guided missiles, a 440-ton Yun Yeong Ha, was deployed after intelligence reported that the North Korean military has been conducting intensified naval landing exercises and has ordered its troops to double their ammunition.

South Korea Bolsters Its Defenses

North Koreans have already dug an underground tunnel around the Dongchang-ni area, confirmed in 1998, according to Chang Kwoun Park, director of the Korea Institute for Defense Analyses.

"We can't rule out the possibility that they have continued to build this," Park said.

Whether transported by road or underground and hidden from satellite images, the threat of closeness, Park said, cannot be ignored. *Jessica Kim, Heejin Kim, and Sehee Park contributed to this article.*

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<http://abcnews.go.com/International/story?id=7732196&page=1>

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Reuters

Jun 2, 2009

UPDATE 1-China Wary of U.S. Anti-Proliferation Plan

By Chris Buckley

BEIJING, June 2 (Reuters) - China expressed worry on Tuesday about a U.S.-led initiative that some governments hope will prevent nuclear weapons proliferation from North Korea, saying the effort may stray from international law.

A Foreign Ministry spokesman also confirmed that a senior Chinese official had called off a visit to North Korea, citing a scheduling conflict.

The Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) was created by the Bush administration in 2003 in an attempt to stifle trade in weapons of mass destruction.

Following North Korea's nuclear test on May 25, South Korea said it would join the ad hoc alliance, and Pyongyang promptly threatened to attack the South if it tried to search North Korean vessels under the programme.

But China has remained aloof from the PSI, and Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang said the initiative risked departing from international law. Those comments from Beijing, a key player in the nuclear crisis and neighbour of North Korea, are likely to mean PSI actions will remain heavily limited.

"China understands the PSI member countries' concerns about proliferation and approves the anti-proliferation intent of PSI, but we express concern about the possibility of it taking action entirely outside of international law," Qin told a news conference.

"The reservations or anxieties about PSI shared by China as well as other countries are precisely that some of its rules stand outside of international law and the framework of the U.N. Charter."

China has a 1,416-km (880-mile) border with North Korea, and Beijing's cooperation would be crucial to making PSI action against Pyongyang bite. But Qin's comments underscored how unlikely that prospect remains.

Some experts have argued that an earlier U.N. resolution imposing sanctions on North Korea after its 2006 nuclear test appears to give PSI a firm legal basis to intercept North Korean shipments. But others, clearly now including China, disagree.

DILEMMA FOR BEIJING

China's wariness of PSI comes during other signs that the government is trying to calibrate its actions to pressure North Korea without necessarily embracing the tough sanctions that Japan and other nations have urged.

Qin said that Chen Zhili, a vice chairwoman of China's National People's Congress, had postponed a visit to North Korea "because of her domestic schedule".

China's state-owned media have been less circumspect about their neighbour, piling criticism on Pyongyang.

Yet the government may not be so forceful when the U.N. Security Council considers fresh sanctions against the North, long seen by China as an important but brittle strategic buffer against the U.S. and its allies.

In 2006, China backed a U.N. resolution condemning the North's first nuclear test. But it fended off demands for sanctions that could choke its economic lifeline to Pyongyang.

"China will be extremely cautious about new sanctions this time," Liu Jianguo, an expert on East Asian security at Tsinghua University in Beijing, told Reuters.

"China won't agree to excessive sanctions that would only stoke conflict with North Korea," Liu said. "Actions like that might give psychological satisfaction to some countries, but they won't help solve the North Korean nuclear crisis." (Editing by Nick Macfie and Dean Yates)

<http://in.reuters.com/article/oilRpt/idINPEK13153220090602>

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Wall Street Journal

2 June 2009

U.S. and Russia Push Arms-Control Talks Forward

By JONATHAN WEISMAN

WASHINGTON -- U.S. and Russian arms-control negotiators arrived in Geneva on Monday to accelerate negotiations on the first major nuclear-arms reduction treaty in at least a decade, pressing for a framework agreement ahead of a Moscow summit next month.

The Obama administration is moving its arms-control agenda forward on multiple fronts, hoping to further isolate North Korea and Iran, a senior administration official said this weekend.

Last week, the White House scored a breakthrough on a long-stalled international treaty banning all production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons world-wide.

This month, the International Atomic Energy Agency will discuss a proposal, embraced by U.S. President Barack Obama, to set up "nuclear-fuel banks," where countries could acquire fuel for reactors without creating enrichment programs of their own.

The negotiations to secure significant reductions in Russian and U.S. offensive nuclear stockpiles and nuclear-weapons delivery systems appear to be on track for a framework agreement by the July 6 Moscow summit and a final treaty by December, White House officials say.

"We're working very hard to have something by Moscow," the senior U.S. administration official said.

Conservative arms-control analysts say they are alarmed by the speed with which the Obama team is moving forward. The administration hasn't finished a mandatory comprehensive study of U.S. nuclear-arms policy or a broader study of defense, known as the quadrennial review. Yet the White House is pressing to secure binding international treaties that presuppose the outcomes of those studies, said Baker Spring, an arms-control analyst at the conservative Heritage Foundation.

"You can always make progress if you make enough concessions," said John Bolton, a former ambassador to the United Nations in the Bush administration. "It gives the appearance of movement, but it's a retrograde movement."

However, White House officials and supporters in the arms-control community say the efforts are reinvigorating an international consensus against nuclear proliferation, and shifting international attitudes toward outliers, such as North Korea and Iran.

Two weeks ago, an international meeting agreed quickly on an agenda for next year's review of the international nonproliferation treaty, said Daryl G. Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association in Washington. Given the push from Washington, Mr. Kimball described the atmosphere at these meetings -- usually tedious -- as "electric."

The White House is willing to break with Bush policy. Multicountry negotiations on a fissile-materials ban stalled more than a decade ago. First, under the Clinton administration, some countries demanded that fissile-materials negotiations include formal talks on nuclear disarmament and a ban on weapons in space. Then the Bush administration said it wouldn't accept any verification procedures in any fissile-materials treaty.

Mr. Obama embraced a verifiable treaty in his April nuclear-arms-control speech in Prague.

Then, last week, the administration jumped on an Algerian proposal to accompany fissile-materials negotiations with informal discussions on space and disarmament.

White House officials wouldn't lay out their targets for the treaty with Russia, but the Arms Control Association's Mr. Kimball said deployed nuclear weapons in each country could be reduced by 30% to 40% from the current limit of 2,200. Warhead-delivery systems could be cut by half.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124390601703674919.html#>

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Washington Post

June 2, 2009

U.N. Hopes to Ban New Fissionable Material, Space-Based Weapons

Walter Pincus

It was a small step.

But after almost a decade of deadlock, the United Nations Conference on Disarmament last week approved a working group to negotiate a treaty banning the production of fissionable material for nuclear weapons and another to discuss preventing an arms race in outer space.

The U.N. group, which met in Geneva, had been unable to agree on a work agenda for the past 10 years. That was partly because of the U.S. refusal to give in to demands by the Chinese and Russians for the conference to study prevention of arms in space. In turn, those countries and others blocked negotiations sought by the United States to ban production of new fissile material for weapons without verification provisions.

Ambassador Idriss Jazairy of Algeria, the outgoing president of the Conference on Disarmament, thanked his country's president for helping break the stalemate.

However, don't expect quick action. The last international pact this 65-nation group successfully negotiated was the 1996 Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, which has yet to come into force, partly because the U.S. Senate has not voted for its ratification.

It was in 1993 that the U.N. General Assembly first passed a resolution calling for negotiations on a fissile-material treaty. Then two years elapsed before the underlying mandate for an "effectively verifiable" one was approved by the conference.

President Obama has made a fissile-material treaty part of his arms-control agenda. But there are signs a fissile pact faces problems, in part because the conference approves only by consensus, meaning everyone must agree.

Pakistan's U.N. ambassador, Zamir Akram, made clear that verification of nuclear material manufacturing and stocks is "vital" to a fissile-material treaty "because of the nuclear cooperation arrangement in our neighborhood." That was a not-so-subtle reference to the U.S.-India nuclear agreement that made American nuclear technology available to the Indians while allowing New Delhi's military reactors to keep operating without international safeguards.

Indian Ambassador Nirupama Rao made clear that her country would participate in the fissile negotiations but would "not accept obligations" that hinder India's "strategic program" or research and development, or those that "place an undue burden on our military non-proscribed activities."

She added that India considers nuclear weapons to be "an integral part of our national security and will remain so pending the global elimination of all nuclear weapons on a universal, nondiscriminatory basis."

It was 1984 when the U.N. General Assembly first resolved that the conference should take up prevention of an arms race in outer space. In the 1980s and 1990s, when the United States opposed taking up a treaty to ban weapons in space, its representatives insisted the American ballistic missile defense systems being contemplated did not involve putting interceptors in space.

Two years ago, after China shot down one of its own dying satellites, the U.S. position at the conference was that the weapon used was ground-based. Although the United States insisted that it had the right to protect its satellites by whatever means it could, "the United States continued to believe that there was no arms race in space and, therefore,

no problem for arms control to solve," said its representative, Ambassador Christina Rocca. She added that negotiating any new treaty against weaponizing space was "unnecessary and counterproductive."

By that time, however, the Russians had joined the Chinese in seeking a space treaty. Moscow's representative, Ambassador Valery Loshchinin, noted that then-President Vladimir Putin had said the militarization of outer space could have "unpredictable consequences for the international community and provoke nothing less than the beginning of a nuclear era."

Last week's agreement called for establishment of a working group that would "discuss substantively, without limitation, all issues related to the prevention of an arms race in space" and report to the conference at the end of the session on its progress.

Speaking for the Obama administration, U.S. delegate Garold N. Larson noted that a verifiable fissile material cutoff treaty is "the top U.S. priority at the Conference on Disarmament." He emphasized "verifiable" as marking "a significant gesture" because the Bush administration had subverted attempts at negotiating such a treaty by proposing it be done without any verification provisions.

His talk did not mention the space weapons working group, referring only to beginning "serious discussions on the range of other disarmament matters that reflect the ongoing concerns of Conference on Disarmament members."

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/06/01/AR2009060103668.html>

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Guardian CO UK

2 June 2009

Obama Hopes to Break Iranian Nuclear Deadlock by December

Barack Obama said today that the US should be able to measure whether [Iran](#) is serious about nuclear negotiations by the end of this year.

The US president told the BBC that he did not want to put artificial timetables on the talks with Iran, but he did confirm that the diplomatic approach would be reviewed by December.

Obama also laid out a strategy for those talks, linking them to US-Russian – and ultimately global – negotiations on cutting the use of [nuclear weapons](#) as a means of breaking four years of deadlock over Iran's right to enrich uranium.

"Without going into specifics, what I do believe is Iran has legitimate energy concerns and legitimate aspirations. On the other hand the international community has a very real interest in preventing a nuclear arms race in the region," Obama said.

He recalled his agreement with Russian president Dmitry Medvedev to pursue significant cuts in the two countries' nuclear stockpiles, and added: "To the extent that Iran feels they are treated differently from everyone else, that makes them embattled.

"To the extent that we are having a broader conversation about how all countries have an interest in containing and reducing over time the nuclear proliferation threat, that I think has to be part and parcel of a broader agenda," Obama said.

The remarks are a clear sign that the new US administration sees little future in the carrot-and-stick approach to Iran that the international community has until now adopted towards the country's nuclear programme. It will seek to broaden the dialogue and come at the problem from a different angle.

Unspoken, but hovering in the background, is the possibility that the west could concede Iran's right to carry out some uranium enrichment, perhaps under control of an international consortium, in return for more intrusive UN inspections and safeguards.

"Although I don't want to put artificial timetables on [the negotiation] process, we do want to make sure that by the end of this year we've actually seen a serious process move forward. I think we can measure whether or not the Iranians are serious," Obama said.

"My personal view is that the Islamic state of Iran has the potential to be an extraordinarily powerful and prosperous country. They are more likely to achieve that in the absence of nuclear weapons that could trigger a nuclear arms race in the region," the president said. "And if what prevents them seeing that reality is 30 years of loggerheads between Iran and the US this may be the opportunity for us to open the door and see if they walk through."

Obama was speaking on the eve of a first visit to the Arab world. He will be in Saudi Arabia tomorrow and then in Egypt on Thursday, when he will deliver a keynote speech in Cairo.

He gave away few clues as to what would be in that speech, but made it clear he would not be mounting a serious attack on Egypt's and the region's human rights record. He described the Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak as a "stalwart ally" and said that his country's job is "not to lecture".

Obama said he thought that democratic rights reflected universal – not just western – values, but added: "The danger I think is that when the US or any country thinks that we can simply impose these values on another country with a different history and a different culture ... I think the thing we can do most importantly is serve as a role model."

Regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, he said he was hopeful he would be able to get "serious negotiations back on track". He stuck to the US demand for Israel to halt all settlement building on the West Bank, and shrugged off Israeli government refusals to do so.

"It's still early in the conversation," Obama said.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/jun/02/barack-obama-iran-nuclear-talks>

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REUTERS

Jun 2, 2009

Sarkozy to Meet Iran's Foreign Minister Wednesday

PARIS (Reuters) - French President Nicolas Sarkozy will meet Iran's foreign minister on Wednesday to discuss Tehran's nuclear program, in rare talks between a leader of a major power and a senior Iranian politician.

"The meeting will be an opportunity to discuss talks which the six (world powers) wish to relaunch with Iran on the question of nuclear proliferation," Sarkozy's office said in a statement.

The United States, Russia, China, France, Germany and Britain said in April they would invite Iran to talks to try to find a diplomatic solution to the nuclear row, but Tehran has so far rejected their overtures.

The Elysee said Sarkozy would see Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki at 4.30 p.m. (10:30 a.m. EDT).

Bilateral encounters at such a senior level between Iran and one of the countries involved in the nuclear issue are highly unusual. It will be the first time Sarkozy has met a top Iranian minister since he took office in 2007.

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman was not immediately available for comment.

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.

It has ruled out freezing its work on uranium enrichment, drawing a wave of U.N. sanctions.

OBAMA TALKS IN FRANCE

Sarkozy is due to meet U.S. President [Barack Obama](#) on Saturday in France and Iran is certain to be on the agenda.

Obama has rolled back George W. Bush's policy of isolating Iran, and U.S. officials have sought out Iranian representatives at recent international meetings.

Iran's Mottaki briefly chatted with U.S. special envoy Richard Holbrooke in April at a conference in Tokyo.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Tuesday he expected a positive outcome from six-party talks with Iran.

"Our proposals to Iran are well-known. We expect a constructive reaction from the Iranian administration," Lavrov told a news conference following a meeting with Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman in Moscow.

"We really have a good chance now, also taking into account the position of the new American administration to resolve the Iranian nuclear problem," he added.

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.

The meeting between Sarkozy and Mottaki takes place nine days before Iran's presidential election, in which the incumbent Mahmoud Ahmadinejad faces a challenge from moderates seeking a thaw in relations with the West.

Italy's foreign minister was scheduled to visit Tehran last month but the trip was canceled at the last minute after Iran launched a missile on the same day.

(Additional reporting by Conor Sweeney in Moscow and Fredrik Dahl in Tehran; writing by Crispian Balmer; editing by Andrew Roche)

<http://www.reuters.com/article/newsMaps/idUSTRE5512NN20090602?pageNumber=1&virtualBrandChannel=0>

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