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New American
02 June 2009

North Korea's Kim May Have a Successor

“North Korea's Kim moves to anoint youngest son as heir,” Reuters announced in the title to a June 2 release. The North's current communist dictator, Kim Jong-il, is apparently considering his youngest son, Kim Jong-un, to be his successor. *USA Today* reported also on June 2 that the South Korean paper *Dong-a Ilbo* was saying that North Koreans are singing a song “hailing the dictator's third son as ‘Commander Kim.’ ”

Reuters noted that analysts believe Kim Jong-il may be using the escalating tension over the North's nuclear testing and missile launches to better position himself with behind-the-scenes power elites in his country. It is believed that the dictator, who is in his late 60s, suffered a stroke last year and is either seeking to pass the torch of leadership or is being pressured to do so. U.S. intelligence indicates that more mid-range missile test launches may be coming in the near future, perhaps dictated by just how badly Kim Jong-il needs to solidify his grasp on power.

The degree of uncertainty about any of the North's internal affairs was highlighted by Cai Jian, an expert on North Korea at Shanghai's Fudan University. *USA Today* quoted him as saying that “no one outside North Korea really knows who will be picked as successor.” Choi Jin Wook, a North Korea analyst at the Korea Institute for National Unification in Seoul, thinks Kim Jong-un is “too young” and “doesn't have any experience.” Jong-un, 26, would be beating out his older brother, Jong Chol, 27, and his half brother, Jong Nam, 38. Choi and other analysts believe the youngest son may end up as a figurehead for someone else who would be the real power behind the throne.

Choi says that the person likeliest to be this power behind the throne is Kim Jong-il's brother-in-law, Jang Song Taek, 63. Jang married Kim's younger sister but fell out of favor five years ago after being perceived as a danger to Kim's hold on power. Since then he has apparently returned to Kim's good graces and now holds a prominent position on North Korea's National Defense Commission. Choi says Jang could work behind the scenes to gain control and eventually become the next dictator.

Another aspect to North Korea's recent nuclear and missile tests and its beating of the war drums is that the appointment of Kim Jong-il's youngest son could then be used as a way to lure the United States back to negotiations. The bait would be that Kim Jong-un is not his father and might be persuaded to soften his country's stance on developing nuclear weapons. The United States would then open the spigots of foreign aid while the North wouldn't really have to change anything.

North Korea knows that they have a good deal. Whenever they need to do some actual nuclear testing that they can't keep secret, or when their leadership needs to solidify its grasp on power, they can harden their stance and isolate themselves for a time. Then, when the need is past, they can appear to soften their stance and be paid off in aid while continuing to develop nuclear weapons technology in less noticeable ways.

When it's time for another live test explosion or a regime change, expect to hear the beat of war drums once again. And through it all, look for the UN to continue gaining in stature as it denounces North Korea but does nothing truly effective to bring about the end of communism in that unfortunate nation. The United Nations knows too that it has a good deal. The North's agitations will continue to create the apparent need for an international solution to nuclear proliferation, and the UN wants to become powerful enough so it can claim to be that solution. The status quo mutually benefits both North Korea and the United Nations while leaving the United States as the loser.

<http://www.thenewamerican.com/world-mainmenu-26/asia-mainmenu-33/1191>

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The Independent Co. UK.
2 June 2009

The Son Rises: Kim Jong-un Anointed Amid Missile Fears

He may like drinking, he may like basketball and he probably went to school in Switzerland. What appears increasingly certain, however, is that Kim Jong-un, the youngest of Kim Jong-il's three sons, has been anointed as the North Korean leader's successor.

Reports from South Korea said that North Korea's military chiefs, Communist Party officials and state employees were told to put their support behind the 26-year-old who had been chosen by his father to take the world's only communist dynasty into its third generation. Several South Korean politicians said they had been briefed on the developments by their intelligence services. One, Park Jie-won, said the regime in the north was already "pledging its allegiance to Jong-un".

It was once assumed that Kim Jong-il's eldest son, Kim Jong-nam, 38, was being groomed to take over from his father. However in 2001 he was discovered trying to enter Japan on a fake passport and reportedly told officials he wanted to visit Tokyo's Disney resort. According to claims by the North Korean leader's former sushi chef, Kim Jong-il considered his middle son, Kim Jong-chol, too effeminate for the role.

And so attention has turned to Kim Jong-un. Indeed, back in January a flurry of reports appeared, saying that the youngest son had been chosen as the successor but that the decision had not at that stage been widely circulated. In contrast, the latest reports suggest he is now being hailed as "Commander Kim," and people are learning the lyrics to a new song praising him as the next leader.

If true, the decision to anoint him might go some way to explaining some of North Korea's seemingly belligerent behaviour, including a nuclear test last week. Last month, the regime also began a "150-day battle" in which North Koreans were urged to work harder to build the country's economy. These actions may have been designed to build nationalist fervour and support for a successor. Kim Jong-il, who is believed to have suffered a stroke last year, is understood to want to name a successor by 2012, the centenary of the birth of his father and North Korea's, Kim Il-sung. "Before 2012, North Korea must convince the army and the public that Jong-un is the best successor," Atsuhito Iozaki, an assistant professor of North Korean politics at Tokyo's Keio University, told the Associated Press. "To pave the way for Jong-un's leadership, it is highly likely that North Korea will turn recent nuclear and missile tests into his achievements."

Kim Jong-il, who was once portly and known for his love of cognac and fine dining, made his first state appearance since last year's stroke at the opening session of the new parliament in the second week of April. Reports say he was much thinner, more grey and limping slightly. Very little is known about Kim Jong-un, although some reports say he might lead with the backing of his uncle, Jang Song-thaek, a member of the all-powerful National Defence Commission who has strong military and political connections.

Kim Jong-un is apparently the second son of former dancer Ko Yong-hi, Kim Jong-il's favourite wife who died of cancer in 2004. She apparently called him "Morning Star King". The Swiss weekly news magazine L'Hebdo said that as a boy he studied at the International School in Bern. A classmate recalled him as timid and introverted but an avid skier and basketball player who was a big fan of Michael Jordan and action hero Jean-Claude Van Damme. He was said to be humble and friendly with the children of American diplomats and often helped break up fights between classmates.

In a memoir recounting the days he spent as Kim Jong Il's personal chef, Kenji Fujimoto wrote: "When Jong-un shook hands with me he stared at me with a vicious look. I cannot forget the look in the Prince's eyes: it's as if he was thinking, 'This guy is a despicable Japanese'. He is a chip off the old block, a spitting image of his father in terms of face, body shape and personality."

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/the-son-rises-kim-jongun-anointed-amid-missile-fears-1695247.html>

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Agence France-Presse (AFP)
2 June 2009

US to Sell 'Bunker-Buster' Bombs to S Korea: Official

SEOUL (AFP) — The United States has agreed to sell "bunker-buster" bombs to South Korea that are capable of destroying underground facilities in North Korea, a military official said Tuesday.

Washington recently approved the sale of GBU-28 bombs, which were used during the 1990-91 Gulf War to destroy underground command centres in Iraq, a defence ministry official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

The laser-guided bombs, which could be used to hit North Korean missiles and aircraft stored underground, will be delivered to South Korea between 2010 and 2014, South Korea's Yonhap news agency reported.

It said that in the event of war South Korean jet fighters would carry the bombs to attack underground targets such as North Korea's nuclear facilities and artillery hidden in caves.

South Korea also plans to purchase other high-tech bombs such as JDAMs, JASSMs and GBU-24s, Yonhap said.

GBU-24s perform better at low altitudes and under poor visibility conditions. JDAMs with global positioning systems would be effective against North Korean artillery while JASSMs are precision cruise missiles, Yonhap said.

"These high-tech bombs are some of the most urgently needed weapons for us to deal with North Korean missile sites and artillery guns," a source told the news agency.

Military officials here say the North's artillery deployed in tunnels along the border poses a serious threat to South Korea.

General Walter Sharp, the top US commander in the South, said in April that the North has the world's largest artillery force.

He said the North is believed to have some 13,000 artillery pieces deployed along the border.

South Korea has generally favoured defence equipment from the United States, which has kept troops here since the 1950-53 Korean War to deter aggression by North Korea.

More than 600,000 South Korean troops, backed by 28,500 US troops, are confronting the potential threat from the North's 1.1 million-strong military.

http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5jAxRpXvt-V_BwPRYw9gqhEebQAYw

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Reuters

3 June 2009

North Korea "Preparing Long-Range Missile Launch"

By Jack Kim

SEOUL, June 3 (Reuters) - North Korea is assembling a missile that could hit U.S. soil and may test-launch it as early as this month, a newspaper reported, as a U.S. envoy on Wednesday urged Pyongyang to cease provocations and return to disarmament talks.

The hermit state's nuclear test last week, putting it closer to having a working atomic weapon, has already prompted the U.S. and South Korean forces to raise their military alert for the divided peninsula.

North Korea, which began ratcheting up regional tensions when it fired a long-ranged rocket over Japan in April, also test-fired a barrage of short-range missiles last week and threatened to attack the South.

"The ICBM (intercontinental ballistic missile) is covered up so it's tough to be absolutely clear but it looks similar to the Taepodong-2 fired in April but longer," the JoongAng Ilbo quoted a South Korean government source as saying. The April launch triggered tightened U.N. Security Council sanctions that Pyongyang called unacceptable, threatening to launch an ICBM unless the world body apologised.

The newspaper said the missile has been moved to a hangar for assembly at the North's newly built west coast Tongchang-ri missile range for a launch that could come as early as mid-June.

The launch area is about 90 km (55 miles) west of Yongbyon, the North's main nuclear complex. However, weapons experts say the impoverished state does not yet have the technology to turn its nuclear material into a warhead to put onto a missile.

It also looks ready to test launch three to four mid-range missiles with ranges that can hit all of South Korea and most of Japan, South Korean lawmakers said on Tuesday after a defence briefing.

"Now is the time for North Korea, rather than continuing to take more dangerous and provocative actions, to recognise that the better course is to re-engage and to get back on the path of negotiations towards denuclearisation," U.S. Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg said after meeting foreign ministry officials in Seoul.

DYNASTIC CHANGE

Investors said the North's recent rumblings have raised concerns but have had no lasting effect on Seoul shares, whose main index .KS11 has increased about 9 percent since the April rocket launch. Foreign investors have been net buyers of stocks for 14 days in a row, the longest buying streak in four years.

The growing military tension has come amid reports that North Korean leader Kim Jong-il, whose country's economy has only grown weaker under his "military first" rule, is moving to anoint his youngest son as heir to the family dynasty.

A number of analysts said the latest military grandstanding was designed to give Kim, whose power base stems from his support for the military, greater leverage over power elites at home to nominate his successor.

A senior U.S. official in Washington said that now Kim appears to have set up Kim Jong-un as official heir, the North may start to reduce tensions.

Experts said North Korea, thought before the May test to have enough plutonium for six to eight nuclear bombs, would need extensive additional testing to develop a working nuclear device it could mount on a warhead.

The Pentagon says its own tests show it is now better able to shoot down any long-range missiles from North Korea. (Writing by Jon Herskovitz; Editing by Jonathan Thatcher and Alex Richardson)

<http://www.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUSSE0251521>

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Global Security Newswire

June 3, 2009

North Korean Missile Being Assembled, Report Says

Assembly appears to be under way on a North Korean missile with a flight range that could allow it to reach the United States, Agence France-Presse reported today (see *GSN*, June 2).

The weapon could be an improved version of the Taepodong 2 model Pyongyang is believed to have tested in April, according to the South Korean *JoonAng Ilbo* newspaper.

North Korea is attempting to conceal the weapon, "the length of its propulsion rocket seems to be longer than the last one fired in April although its shape looks similar," a government official told the newspaper.

Reports earlier this week indicated that a long-range missile had already been placed on a launchpad at an installation on the west coast of North Korea. The regime is also believed to be readying for test launches of a number of medium-range missiles (Agence France-Presse/Spacewar.com, June 3).

The South Korean report said the long-range missile launch could occur by the middle of this month, according to Reuters (Jack Kim, Reuters, June 3).

"After carrying out a missile test, it usually takes at least six months to adjust defects and prepare to fire another one," *JoonAng Ilbo* quoted a military official as saying. "Now, the North is preparing to do it again after just two months. It seems the North is in quite a hurry."

Some experts have speculated that Pyongyang's recent activities -- which have included an underground nuclear detonation and multiple short-range missile launches -- are part of an effort by dictator Kim Jong Il to reassert his authority in advance of handing over power to his youngest son, Kim Jong Un (Agence France-Presse).

http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20090603_4654.php

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Bloomberg.com

June 4, 2009

North Korea Missile Tests Don't Qualify as Terrorism, U.S. Says

North Korea's missile launches don't qualify as acts that would allow the U.S. to return the communist country to a list of nations sponsoring terrorism, the State Department said.

“There’s a legal requirement” to list a country, spokesman Philip Crowley said at a briefing in Washington yesterday. “What we’ve seen so far, I don’t think meets that legal test.”

North Korea tested six short-range missiles last week after carrying out a nuclear bomb test May 25. The regime is preparing to launch at least three medium-range missiles and a ballistic rocket, according to South Korean media reports.

The Bush administration removed North Korea from the list in October after Kim Jong Il’s regime agreed to allow inspectors to verify its nuclear declaration as part of six-nation disarmament talks. Kim’s government pulled out of the negotiations and threatened to restart its Yongbyon reactor in April after the United Nations criticized a North Korean ballistic missile test that month.

The U.S. may apply sanctions to listed countries under laws that restrict foreign assistance, ban defense exports and sales and impose financial and other restrictions. Cuba, Iran, Sudan, and Syria are designated as state sponsors of terrorism.

Two U.S. journalists are scheduled to go on trial today in Pyongyang after they were detained in March for allegedly entering the country illegally from China. President Barack Obama said in a statement on May 1 he was “especially concerned” about the pair.

Tensions Rise

The U.S. is looking for ways to “help North Korea understand it has obligations under international law,” Crowley said, according to a State Department transcript. “We are looking to North Korea to return to a process” and fulfill its obligations toward achieving a denuclearized Korean peninsula.

The missile and bomb tests increased tensions on the peninsula, with South Korea’s Defense Ministry saying yesterday it sent a warship to the maritime border with North Korea. South Korea is moving attack helicopters and howitzers to its western sea border, according to the country’s Yonhap News.

“In the end they will see that having dialogue is in their interest,” Stephen Bosworth, the U.S. special representative on the country, said yesterday in Seoul at a meeting with his South Korean counterpart Wi Sung Lac. “I don’t think it’s useful to try to persuade them to do what they don’t want to do.”

‘Effective Dialogue’

U.S. Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg, also visiting Seoul yesterday, said North Korea needs to realize it’s on the wrong path.

“We are prepared, if they are prepared to change course, to enter effective dialogue that will really lead to complete and verifiable denuclearization of the peninsula,” said Steinberg, deputy to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

China, North Korea’s closest ally, agreed last week with the U.S., Japan and Russia to work toward a UN Security Council resolution to censure North Korea for its tests.

Russia supports a call for a “serious” new Security Council resolution condemning North Korea, as well as consideration of mechanisms to “restrain” the country’s nuclear program, President Dmitry Medvedev said.

Russia expects North Korea to return to the six-party talks “because there’s no other solution to this problem,” Medvedev said in a June 1 interview with CNBC.

North Korea will boost “self-defense capabilities in the face of the U.S. and its supporting forces that are trying to crush and isolate” the country, according to a report carried two days ago by the official Korean Central News Agency.

<http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601087&sid=aRo6hvP3EJTA#>

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RIA Novosti
4 June 2009

Medvedev Ready to Back Sanctions Against N. Korea

MOSCOW (RIA Novosti) - Russian President Dmitry Medvedev has said he is ready to support economic sanctions to deter North Korea's nuclear program, and will discuss Pyongyang's nuclear test with his U.S. counterpart.

The UN Security Council denounced Pyongyang's May 25 nuclear test as a violation of Resolution 1718 and the international non-proliferation regime, and is currently drafting a resolution that could impose sanctions against the North, already under a number of UN sanctions over its first nuclear test, carried out in 2006.

"We need to think about measures to curb those programs that are being conducted," Medvedev said in an interview with the U.S. television network CNBC broadcast on Wednesday night.

"I am ready to discuss the issue during the meeting with the U.S. President [Barack Obama] to be held in Moscow in July, and we will also communicate with him through other formats," the Russian leader said.

Medvedev reiterated Russia's stance on Pyongyang's nuclear test and missile launches last week, calling them "measures that disrupt international security."

"This is our shared concern. And we must make a decision on this," he said.

Earlier this week, Russia's envoy to the United Nations, Vitaly Churkin, urged the international community to give a "strong" response to North Korea's nuclear test.

However, he said the resolution "will not aim to impose any kind of economic embargo on North Korea."

Medvedev said any expansion of the nuclear club must be prevented, and expressed hope that the North Korean authorities would return to the negotiating table, as "there is no other solution to the problem."

The six-nation talks involving North and South Korea, Russia, Japan, China and the United States, ended in deadlock last December over a U.S. demand that nuclear inspectors be allowed to take samples out of the country from North Korean facilities for further analysis.

<http://en.rian.ru/russia/20090604/155164714.html>

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Korea Herald
5 June 2009

N.K. Completes New Missile Site

New satellite images showed yesterday that North Korea's new missile launch site on its western coastal area has been ready for use.

Sources said Pyongyang may test-fire a long-range missile in mid-June, possibly from the Dongchang-ni site.

Tim Brown, a senior fellow with GlobalSecurity.org, was quoted as saying that the launch tower and what appears to be construction materials on the launch pad are seen in the images.

He speculated the debris may be there to make the pad appear as though it is still under construction, the Associated Press reported.

North Korea is said to have begun assembling a missile believed capable of striking U.S. soil.

The communist regime has defied international criticism of its second nuclear test last week by firing a volley of short-range missiles and threatening to attack the capitalist South.

It is now said to be preparing to test-launch an intercontinental ballistic missile as well as several medium-range missiles.

The North is believed to have started putting together a long-range missile that may be a modified version of the Taepodong-2 which it fired over Japan in April.

Analysts believe ailing North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il is trying to bolster his authority so he can put in place a succession plan reportedly involving his third son, 26-year-old Kim Jong-un.

The Yonhap news agency reported that North Korea plans to conduct a third nuclear test within this year, citing Chinese sources.

North Korea is on the verge of complete its own ICBM that will carry a nuclear warhead after years of development, the sources was quoted as saying.

Former Foreign Minister Song Min-soon warned Thursday that North Korea will continue to test nuclear weapons.

Song, an opposition Democratic Party lawmaker who served as foreign minister during the Roh Moo-hyun presidency, also forecast that the communist North is likely to continue to test-launch its missiles of various ranges in a bid to improve their accuracy and precision.

"(The development of nuclear weapons) is usually completed after five to six tests," said Song at a DP workshop in southern Seoul Thursday night.

"Chances are high that North Korea's missile tests would be persistent, intensifying tension on the Korean Peninsula. Tests of short-range, long-rang and surface-to-ship missiles are intended to improve their accuracy. It may be true that the North has military conflicts in the western sea border and a countermove to South Korea's PSI participation in mind," said Song, referring to the U.S.-led security campaign dubbed the Proliferation Security Initiative.

North Korea has launched a round of short-range missiles and made gestures at firing a long-range ballistic missile after claiming it successfully conducted its second nuclear test on May 25.

On Thursday, a North Korean navy patrol boat crossed into South Korean waters and stayed almost one hour before retreating.

Seoul has deployed a high-speed patrol boat armed with ship-to-ship missiles near the disputed West Sea border with the North, the scene of bloody clashes in 1999 and 2002.

The boat crossed the West Sea border and stayed for 50 minutes before retreating to its own side after three warnings from South Korean craft, Seoul's Joint Chiefs of Staff said.

A spokesman said it apparently was chasing Chinese boats that were operating illegally in the rich crab fishing area, but did not exclude the possibility it was a planned intrusion to raise tensions further.

http://www.koreaherald.co.kr/NEWKHSITE/data/html_dir/2009/06/06/200906060030.asp

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Taiwan News
5 June 2009

US-China Diplomats Meet Amid Korea Sanctions Drive

U.S. Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg met with top Chinese diplomats in Beijing on Friday, after reportedly telling South Korea it will impose its own financial sanctions on Pyongyang apart from those being considered by the United Nations.

Steinberg met with Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi on Friday morning and had afternoon meetings scheduled with State Counselor Dai Binguo, a senior diplomatic adviser, and Vice Foreign Minister Wu Dawei, who is China's top North Korean envoy.

Winning Chinese support for tough new sanctions is key because Beijing is one of five permanent veto-holding members of the United Nations Security Council, as well as North Korea's most important diplomatic ally and chief source of fuel and food aid.

China has also hosted six-nation talks aimed at ending the North's nuclear programs that Pyongyang has since turned its back on.

China criticized North Korea over last week's missile launches and underground nuclear test, but has consistently rejected economic sanctions that could destabilize the regime in Pyongyang.

A South Korean newspaper reported Friday that Steinberg told officials that Washington would impose sanctions that would blacklist foreign financial institutions that help the North launder money and conduct other questionable deals _ regardless of any steps taken by the U.N.

http://www.etaiwanews.com/etn/news_content.php?id=968459&lang=eng_news

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Washington Post
June 5, 2009

U.S. to Impose Financial Sanctions on North Korea: Report

By Jack Kim

SEOUL (Reuters) - The United States has told South Korea it is preparing financial measures to punish North Korea for illicit weapons trade and counterfeit activities in the wake of its nuclear test last week, a newspaper report said on Friday.

North Korea has been ratcheting up regional tensions since it fired a long-range rocket over Japan in April, and on Thursday the hermit state put two female U.S. journalists on trial accused of illegally entering its territory with "hostile intent."

Analysts say the pair, who were working for the Current TV network co-founded by former U.S. Vice President Al Gore, have become bargaining chips in high-stakes negotiations with the United States, which has long sought to end the North's nuclear ambitions.

In a separate move Friday, North Korea proposed talks with the South over a joint factory enclave that is the only major link between the rival states, more than a month after the last attempt at dialogue broke down in acrimony.

South Korea accepted the proposal for a June 11 meeting over the Kaesong park just inside the communist state, where about 100 South Korean firms use cheap North Korean labor and land to make goods, a Unification Ministry official said.

North Korea in May declared all contracts there invalid in what analysts said a hard-nose ploy to squeeze more money from the South. It has also been holding a South Korean worker there for about three months on suspicion of insulting its leaders.

Plans to hit the North's finances were discussed during a four-day visit to Seoul by U.S. Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg, the South Korean daily newspaper Chosun Ilbo said.

"The U.S. delegation led by Steinberg explained when visiting President Lee Myung-bak and others Washington's own sanctions against the North centered around financial sanctions," the paper quoted a presidential Blue House official as saying.

Envoys from the five permanent U.N. Security Council members, Japan and non-council member South Korea met at the U.S. mission to the United Nations in New York for several hours Thursday to try to hammer out an agreement on a resolution that would expand sanctions against Pyongyang for its recent nuclear test.

PAST PUNISHMENT

In 2005, the Bush administration imposed financial sanctions on the North over counterfeiting and drug-running. The move focused on a Macau bank and effectively shut off the North's access to the international financial system.

"If BDA (Banco Delta Asia in Macau) was against a single bank, this time it is about cutting off transactions with banks that are suspected of being involved in the North's WMD (weapons of mass destruction) trade," the newspaper report said.

The 2005 crackdown on BDA froze about \$25 million in funds of Pyongyang's leadership. Most banks around the world steered clear of North Korean funds as a result, fearful of being snared themselves by U.S. financial authorities.

Bankers at the time said that as a result North Korea was forced to move its money around in suitcases of cash.

The North boycotted six-party nuclear disarmament talks, involving the two Koreas, the United States, Russia, Japan and China, until Washington executed an elaborate scheme to transfer its money in BDA to the North in 2007..

U.S. officials said they also had suspected the bank of aiding in North Korea's counterfeiting of U.S. currency.

South Korean authorities are now working with the U.S. Treasury to investigate so-called "supernotes" -- high quality counterfeit U.S. dollars -- that have surfaced in the southern port city of Busan and may have originated in the North, a government source told Reuters.

The Chosun, in a separate report, quoted a diplomatic source as saying Gore may visit Pyongyang as early as this weekend in an effort to secure the release of the two journalists once a widely expected guilty verdict has been delivered.

North Korea's KCNA news agency said the trial of Euna Lee and Laura Ling, who were arrested in March near the border with China while working on a story, would begin Thursday, but has not reported on the proceedings.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-yn/content/article/2009/06/05/AR2009060500407.html>

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RIA Novosti
05 June 2009

Russia Calls for Tighter Nonproliferation Regime

ST. PETERSBURG (RIA Novosti) - Russia and the United States should elaborate "tougher rules of the game" relating to the international nuclear nonproliferation regime, a Russian deputy prime minister said on Friday.

Speaking at the St. Petersburg Economic Forum, Sergei Ivanov said the existing nonproliferation regime was "weak."

He said that the ongoing global economic crisis was lending a special urgency to the issue.

"In the context of the crisis, those who possess [enrichment] technology or even enriched uranium could be tempted to sell their technology or materials on the side," he said.

He said there were an increasing number of potential buyers, especially among terrorist and extremist organizations.

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said earlier on Friday he intended to discuss nuclear proliferation at his upcoming meeting with U.S. President Barack Obama.

The two presidents are due to meet in Moscow in early July.

Medvedev said proliferation concerns had increased following North Korea's nuclear test last month, adding that Russia and the United States were aware of their responsibility but "uncontrolled proliferation of nuclear weapons threatens the whole of mankind."

He said it was necessary to monitor very closely the ongoing processes in "threshold states," which were developing nuclear weapons without an international mandate.

He previously said Russia was ready to support economic sanctions to deter North Korea's nuclear program.

Russia's UN envoy said earlier on Friday the five permanent members of the UN Security Council are "close" to passing a draft resolution on North Korea that would include new sanctions against the reclusive communist regime.

The ambassadors from Russia, the United States, China, Britain and France, as well as envoys from Japan and South Korea, held a new round of closed-door consultations late on Thursday in an attempt to determine what should be included in the sanctions following Pyongyang's latest nuclear test and missile launches.

The UN Security Council has denounced Pyongyang's May 25 nuclear test as a violation of Resolution 1718 and the international non-proliferation regime. North Korea is under a number of UN sanctions over its first nuclear test, carried out in 2006.

Possible new sanctions may include a ban on importing and exporting all arms and not just heavy weapons, additional asset freezes and travel bans for North Korean officials, and placing more firms on a UN blacklist, according to UN sources.

Once the representatives have agreed the draft text, it will be sent to their governments for approval. The resolution will then be voted on by the 15-nation Security Council.

<http://en.rian.ru/russia/20090605/155181415.html>

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Global Security Newswire
June 5, 2009

New North Korean Missile Base May Be Operational, Analyst Says

Satellite photographs suggest that an advanced North Korean missile launchpad is now operational, the Associated Press reported yesterday (see *GSN*, June 3).

The photographs, published Wednesday by the company DigitalGlobe, show debris on the launchpad at the new Tongchang-ri missile base. However, that debris might have been deliberately placed there to make analysts believe the site was still being built, said Tim Brown, a senior fellow with GlobalSecurity.org.

The launchpad itself appears to be in working order, Brown said.

Tongchang-ri is the North's most sophisticated missile base to date. The site has been under construction for almost a decade, and it features a 10-story tower designed to accommodate long-range ballistic missiles. The launchpad at Tongchang-ri is movable and capable of testing multiple missiles within a short period of time (Pamela Hess, Associated Press/Google News, June 4).

http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20090605_2250.php

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RIA Novosti

01 June 2009

Only 8 Russian Strategic Submarines are Combat-Ready - Analyst

MOSCOW, June 1 (RIA Novosti) - Russia's navy has 12 nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines in service, but only eight of them are combat-capable, a Russian military analyst said on Monday.

"Out of 12 vessels, Northern Fleet's Typhoon class Dmitry Donskoi submarine has been overhauled to test new Bulava sea-based ballistic missiles, six Delta-IV class units are being refitted with modernized version of the R-29RM (SS-N-23) missile, known as Sineva, and five Delta-III class submarines are deployed with the Pacific Fleet" said Mikhail Barabanov, editor-in-chief of the Moscow Defense Brief magazine.

"Submarines of the Delta-III class are being gradually decommissioned. About eight [strategic] submarines in total are considered combat-ready," the analyst said.

He added that two Typhoon class submarines, the Arkhangelsk and the Severstal, remain in reserve at a naval base in Severodvinsk in north Russia, but they are not fitted with missiles and need further repairs.

Typhoon class subs will be replaced by new-generation Borey class strategic submarines, which will be equipped with Bulava sea-based ballistic missiles. Russia started mooring trials of the first Borey class vessel, the Yury Dolgoruky, in March.

The vessel is 170 meters (580 feet) long, has a hull diameter of 13 meters (42 feet), a crew of 107, including 55 officers, maximum depth of 450 meters (about 1,500 feet) and a submerged speed of about 29 knots. It can carry up to 16 ballistic missiles and torpedoes.

Two other Borey class nuclear submarines, the Alexander Nevsky and the Vladimir Monomakh, are currently under construction at the Sevmasht shipyard and are expected to be completed in 2009 and 2011. Russia is planning to build a total of eight submarines of this class by 2015.

In addition, the Russian Navy has about 30 nuclear-powered attack subs equipped with either SS-N-19 Shipwreck long-range anti-ship cruise missiles or torpedo tubes, but only 17 of them are operational, the analyst said.

Diesel-electric submarines are represented by about 20 Kilo class vessels. They will be gradually replaced by Project 667 Lada class submarines. The sub features a new anti-sonar coating for its hull, an extended cruising range, and advanced anti-ship and anti-submarine weaponry, including Club-S cruise missile systems.

According to Barabanov, the Russian Navy has at least seven 'special purpose' submarines designed for testing of new technologies and weaponry. Some open sources earlier reported the existence of Project 20120 B-90 Sarov diesel-electric submarine, which has a nuclear reactor as a supplementary power generator.

The vessel was commissioned in 2007 and according to some reports may be used by Russia's Northern Fleet as a spy vessel in northern waters.

<http://en.rian.ru/russia/20090601/155137755.html>

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Wall Street Journal

JUNE 2, 2009

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

EUROPE NEWS

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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RIA Novosti
05 June 2009

Russia Rules out Nuclear Arms Cut While U.S. Shield Plans Unclear

MOSCOW (RIA Novosti) - Russia will not cut its nuclear arsenal while the U.S. missile defense plans for Europe remain unclear, the chief of the General Staff said on Friday.

"We have left the Missile Forces practically unchanged [during military reforms]," Gen. Nikolai Makarov said. "As long as the situation in the world, including with the U.S. missile shield plans, remain unclear, we will not alter our nuclear arsenal."

Experts believe that controversy over U.S. plans for a missile shield in Europe may prevent Washington and Moscow from striking a new strategic arms reduction deal before yearend.

Russia opposes Washington's plans to deploy interceptor missiles in Poland and a tracking radar in the Czech Republic as a threat to its security. The United States says the shield elements are needed to counter possible strikes from rogue states such as Iran.

Russia's envoy to NATO, Dmitry Rogozin, expressed hope on Thursday that the new U.S. administration would revise its missile shield plans before the visit of President Barack Obama to Moscow in early July.

"The leading American scientists voiced skepticism over the missile shield, everybody says it is not beneficial for the U.S. either from a political or military-technical standpoint," Rogozin said on Ekho Moskvy radio station.

"We hope the U.S. plans will be finalized before Barack Obama's visit to Russia, and disclosed during talks with the Russian president," he said.

Russian and U.S. negotiators have held two rounds of full-format talks on a replacement for the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START-1), which is set to expire on December 5, 2009, and agreed to report the first results of the work on a new treaty at a Russian-U.S. summit in Moscow.

START 1, signed in 1991, obliges Russia and the United States to reduce nuclear warheads to 6,000 and their delivery vehicles to 1,600 each. In 2002, a follow-up agreement on strategic offensive arms reduction was concluded in Moscow. The agreement, known as the Moscow Treaty, envisioned cuts to 1,700-2,200 warheads by December 2012.

According to a report published by the U.S. State Department in April, as of January 1 Russia had 3,909 nuclear warheads and 814 delivery vehicles, including ground-based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM), submarine launched ballistic missiles (SLBM) and strategic bombers.

The same report stated the United States had 5,576 warheads and 1,198 delivery vehicles.

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and his U.S. counterpart, Barack Obama, agreed during their London meeting in early April on an immediate start to talks on a new strategic arms reduction treaty.

Moscow, which proposed a new arms reduction agreement with Washington in 2005, expects the United States to agree on a deal that would restrict not only the numbers of nuclear warheads but also place limits on all existing kinds of delivery vehicles.

Moscow also insists on the effective use of control mechanisms and procedures, "which the previous administration ignored categorically," according to Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

<http://en.rian.ru/russia/20090605/155178574.html>

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New York Times
2 June 2009

U.S. Accidentally Releases List of Nuclear Sites

The federal government mistakenly made public a 266-page report, its pages marked "highly confidential," that gives detailed information about hundreds of the nation's civilian nuclear sites and programs, including maps showing the precise locations of stockpiles of fuel for nuclear weapons.

The publication of the document was revealed Monday in an online newsletter devoted to issues of federal secrecy. That set off a debate among nuclear experts about what dangers, if any, the disclosures posed. It also prompted a flurry of investigations in Washington into why the document had been made public.

On Tuesday evening, after inquiries from The New York Times, the document was withdrawn from a Government Printing Office Web site.

Several nuclear experts argued that any dangers from the disclosure were minimal, given that the general outlines of the most sensitive information were already known publicly.

“These screw-ups happen,” said John M. Deutch, a former director of central intelligence and deputy secretary of defense who is now a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. “It’s going further than I would have gone but doesn’t look like a serious breach.”

But David Albright, president of the Institute for Science and International Security, a private group in Washington that tracks nuclear proliferation, said information that shows where nuclear fuels are stored “can provide thieves or terrorists inside information that can help them seize the material, which is why that kind of data is not given out.”

The information, considered confidential but not classified, was assembled for transmission later this year to the International Atomic Energy Agency as part of a process by which the United States is opening itself up to stricter inspections in hopes that foreign countries, especially Iran and others believed to be clandestinely developing nuclear arms, will do likewise.

President Obama sent the document to Congress on May 5 for Congressional review and possible revision, and the Government Printing Office subsequently posted the draft declaration on its Web site.

As of Tuesday evening, the reasons for that action remained a mystery. On its cover, the document attributes its publication to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. But Lynne Weil, the committee spokeswoman, said the committee had “neither published it nor had control over its publication.”

Gary Somerset, a spokesman for the printing office, said it had “produced” the document “under normal operating procedures” but had now removed it from its Web site pending further review.

The document contains no military information about the nation’s stockpile of nuclear arms, or about the facilities and programs that guard such weapons. Rather, it presents what appears to be an exhaustive listing of the sites that make up the nation’s civilian nuclear complex, which stretches coast to coast and includes nuclear reactors and highly confidential sites at weapon laboratories.

Steven Aftergood, a security expert at the Federation of American Scientists in Washington, revealed the existence of the document on Monday in Secrecy News, an electronic newsletter he publishes on the Web.

Mr. Aftergood expressed bafflement at its disclosure, calling it “a one-stop shop for information on U.S. nuclear programs.”

In his letter of transmittal to Congress, Mr. Obama characterized the information as “sensitive but unclassified” and said all the information that the United States gathered to comply with the advanced protocol “shall be exempt from disclosure” under the Freedom of Information Act.

The report details the locations of hundreds of nuclear sites and activities. Each page is marked across the top “Highly Confidential Safeguards Sensitive” in capital letters, with the exception of pages that detailed additional information like site maps. In his transmittal letter, Mr. Obama said the cautionary language was a classification category of the International Atomic Energy Agency’s inspectors.

The agency, in Vienna, is a unit of the United Nations whose mandate is to enforce a global treaty that tries to keep civilian nuclear programs from engaging in secret military work.

In recent years, it has sought to gain wide adherence to a set of strict inspection rules, known formally as the additional protocol. The rules give the agency powerful new rights to poke its nose beyond known nuclear sites into factories, storage areas, laboratories and anywhere else that a nation might be preparing to flex its nuclear muscle. The United States signed the agreement in 1998 but only recently moved forward with carrying it out.

The report lists many particulars about nuclear programs and facilities at the nation’s three nuclear weapons laboratories — Los Alamos, Livermore and Sandia — as well as dozens of other federal and private nuclear sites.

One of the most serious disclosures appears to center on the Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee, which houses the Y-12 National Security Complex, a sprawling site ringed by barbed wire and armed guards. It calls itself the nation’s Fort Knox for highly enriched uranium, a main fuel of nuclear arms.

The report lists “Tube Vault 16, East Storage Array,” as a prospective site for nuclear inspection. It said the site, in Building 9720-5, contains highly enriched uranium for “long-term storage.”

An attached map shows the exact location of Tube Vault 16 along a hallway and its orientation in relation to geographic north, although not its location in the Y-12 complex.

Tube vaults are typically cylinders embedded in concrete that prevent the accidental formation of critical masses of highly enriched uranium that could undergo bursts of nuclear fission, known as a criticality incident. According to federal reports, a typical tube vault can hold up to 44 tons of highly enriched uranium in 200 tubes. Motion detectors and television cameras typically monitor each vault.

Thomas B. Cochran, a senior scientist in the nuclear program of the Natural Resources Defense Council, a private group in Washington that tracks atomic arsenals, called the document harmless. "It's a better listing than anything I've seen" of the nation's civilian nuclear complex, Mr. Cochran said. "But it's no national-security breach. It confirms what's already out there and adds a bit more information."

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/03/us/03nuke.html?ref=global-home>

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Times Union

June 3, 2009

'Dirty Bomb' Scenario without the Blasts

By ROBERT GAVIN, Staff writer

COLONIE -- Imagine a "dirty bomb" exploding in downtown Albany.

Now envision two bombs going off only blocks apart.

That very possibility was simulated Tuesday as hundreds of federal, state and local law enforcement officials staffed would-be command posts on Albany Shaker Road to prepare for the potentially catastrophic event.

The reaction to the exercise, part of a three-day effort called "Empire 09," was staged around the county hockey facility near Albany International Airport. It featured radiation screenings, officials in white "space suit"-type outfits and aircraft to watch contaminated areas from the sky.

The exercise, hosted by the New York State Disaster Preparedness Commission, was sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy. It comes only weeks after the FBI arrested four alleged conspirators in a plot to blow up two synagogues in the Bronx and shoot down military planes at Stewart International Airport in Newburgh.

"Our enemies are patient and they are ruthless," said Mary Kavaney, assistant secretary for public safety for the state Division of Criminal Justice Services. "We can't let our guard down and this exercise shows we will not let our guard down."

The drill showed the aftermath of the "attack" -- two radioactive dirty bombs going off during the workday, one at Eagle and State streets, the other at Eagle Street and Madison Avenue.

Projected maps show evacuations, from mandatory to voluntary, would stretch from a wide swath of downtown Albany across the Hudson River to the city of Rensselaer.

Dirty bombs, which combine radioactive materials with conventional explosives, should not be confused with the nuclear weapons, said Dennis Michalski, spokesman for the state Emergency Management Office.

The two blasts in Albany would be expected to kill an estimated six people at the least, but also wreak untold havoc to the surrounding environment, officials said.

Among other drills, workers using laptop computers filled the inside of the county's hockey arena. Officials also allowed the media to not only inspect the various command posts, but wear necessary protective clothing.

Joseph Krol, associate administrator for the U.S. Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration, said such drills are valuable, in part, to see what mistakes are made "so when the real thing happens, we will really be prepared."

The drill will continue through Thursday. Officials said residents may see a helicopter fly over or workers collecting would-be "samples" from downtown Albany and along the Hudson River and the Crossings park in Colonie.

"Part of what we have to do, whether it's an exercise or the real thing, we have to determine the boundaries," Darwin Morgan, a spokesman for the Department of Energy said. "It should be pretty transparent to the normal person seeing anything."

<http://www.timesunion.com/AspStories/story.asp?storyID=806113>

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Reuters

June 3, 2009

Double Blast against Obama Shows Strain on Qaeda

By William Maclean, Security Correspondent

LONDON (Reuters) - A double blast from al Qaeda against Barack Obama shows the group is as worried as ever by the persuasive skills of the U.S. president, who makes a speech to Muslims on Thursday.

Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, in an audio recording aired on Wednesday by Al Jazeera television, said Obama had planted the seeds of "revenge and hatred" toward the United States in the Muslim world and he warned Americans to prepare for the consequences.

A day earlier, the militant network's second-in-command Ayman al-Zawahri urged Egyptians not to be seduced by Obama's 'polished words' when he makes a major address in Cairo seeking to repair ties with the Muslim world.

For some, al Qaeda's concerted attempt to upstage Obama is a propaganda own goal that shows its normally media-savvy operatives in disarray following the departure of Obama's predecessor George W. Bush. They found Bush easy to stereotype as a belligerent, Muslim-hating cowboy.

"Zawahri is right to be worried," said Edwin Bakker, a senior research fellow at the Dutch Clingendael Institute in the Hague.

"Al Qaeda partly lives on anti-Americanism and the 'war on terror'. Now Bush has gone and been replaced by a guy who's second name is Hussein. And they fear his speech really is going to have a positive effect."

Obama has chosen Egypt to make an address to the Islamic world that he had promised for early in his presidency.

He will seek to dispel resentments inflamed by U.S. involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan following the September 11 attacks on New York and Washington by militant Islamists

"Obama and his administration have planted seeds for hatred and revenge against America," the Saudi-born bin Laden declared, saying Obama was treading in the footsteps of his predecessor.

"Let the American people prepare to continue to reap what has been planted by the heads of the White House in the coming years and decades," bin Laden said.

In an audio recording posted on an al Qaeda-linked Islamist website, Zawahri, an Egyptian, said Obama was not welcome in Egypt and urged Egyptians to "stand united in the face of this criminal."

Zawahri's language was somewhat milder than his denunciation of Obama published in November in which he accused Obama of betraying his race and his father's Muslim heritage.

Zawahri then attacked Obama as a "house Negro," a racially-charged term used by 1960s black American Muslim leader Malcolm X to describe black slaves loyal to white masters.

But Abdel-Bari Atwan, editor of London-based daily al-Quds al-Arabi, said Zawahri's words showed al Qaeda was panicking.

"They know Obama is popular in a huge part of the Arab and Muslim world because the man is actually trying to address America's record in the region," he said.

ZAWAHRI "DESPERATE"

"Zawahri is desperate. There is no substantial argument in his piece: He cannot say like he did with Bush that 'this is the man who killed a million Iraqis and supports the Israelis'. Everybody knows Obama is at odds with the Israelis."

Others say Zawahri had little choice but to speak out now.

"Zawahri and Obama are competing for votes, if you will, and this can be seen as a 'publicity steal' in which he grabs the headlines first," said Raphael Perl, an official of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

"I wouldn't characterize al Qaeda's reaction to Obama as panic, but there is certainly concern."

Henry Wilkinson of Janusian, a security consultancy, agreed that Zawahri had little choice but to speak now, since Obama's speech, once made, would dominate media coverage.

"I suspect he was addressing his followers rather than those who are undecided about al Qaeda. He is showing the leadership is aware of the importance of the Cairo speech and wants to denounce it head of time."

The success of Obama's diplomatic initiatives in the Middle East, such as advancing Israeli-Palestinian peace and halting Iran's nuclear program, may depend on how well Obama is able to repair broader U.S. relations with the Islamic world.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/newsOne/idUSTRE5523MO20090603>

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Washington Times

June 3, 2009

EXCLUSIVE: Al Qaeda Eyes Bio Attack from Mexico

U.S. counterterrorism officials have authenticated a video by an al Qaeda recruiter threatening to smuggle a biological weapon into the United States via tunnels under the Mexico border, the latest sign of the terrorist group's determination to stage another mass-casualty attack on the U.S. homeland.

The video aired earlier this year as a recruitment tool makes clear that al Qaeda is looking to exploit weaknesses in U.S. border security and also is willing to ally itself with white militia groups or other anti-government entities interested in carrying out an attack inside the United States, according to counterterrorism officials interviewed by The Washington Times.

The officials, who spoke only on the condition they not be named because of the sensitive nature of their work, stressed that there is no credible information that al Qaeda has acquired the capabilities to carry out a mass biological attack although its members have clearly sought the expertise.

The video first aired by the Arabic news network Al Jazeera in February and later posted to several Web sites shows Kuwaiti dissident Abdullah al-Nafisi telling a room full of supporters in Bahrain that al Qaeda is casing the U.S. border with Mexico to assess how to send terrorists and weapons into the U.S.

"Four pounds of anthrax -- in a suitcase this big -- carried by a fighter through tunnels from Mexico into the U.S. are guaranteed to kill 330,000 Americans within a single hour if it is properly spread in population centers there," the recruiter said. "What a horrifying idea; 9/11 will be small change in comparison. Am I right? There is no need for airplanes, conspiracies, timings and so on. One person, with the courage to carry 4 pounds of anthrax, will go to the White House lawn, and will spread this 'confetti' all over them, and then we'll do these cries of joy. It will turn into a real celebration."

In the video, obtained and translated by the Middle East Media Research Institute, al-Nafisi also suggests that al Qaeda might want to collaborate with members of native U.S. white supremacist militias who hate the federal government.

Sean Smith, a spokesman for Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano, said the U.S. takes such threats seriously. "We can never stop being vigilant while there are individuals who seek to do harm on the American people," he said. "We continue to step up our efforts with additional personnel and better technology along the northern and southern borders and continue to strengthen our sea, land and air ports of entry."

A U.S. counterterrorism official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said al-Nafisi is a "person of interest" and a veteran recruiter for al Qaeda. Misidentified on some blog sites as a professor, he is a Kuwaiti dissident and al Qaeda associate who is thought to have communicated with senior al Qaeda leaders in recent years, the counterterrorism official said. The recruiter is also said to have close ties to Mullah Mohammed Omar, the senior Afghan Taliban leader now thought to be in Pakistan.

Al-Nafisi "is a significant ideological player in terrorist circles, and that makes him dangerous because he can inspire his followers to do extremely bad things," the official said.

Drug Enforcement Administration and Defense Department officials have been paying close attention to links between various terrorist organizations, such as Hezbollah, and drug cartels in South America, Central America and Mexico.

"It shouldn't be a surprise to anyone that terrorist organizations would utilize the border to enter the U.S.," said a DEA official who also asked not to be named because of his involvement in ongoing intelligence operations. "We can't ignore any threat or detail when it comes to al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations bent on attacking the U.S."

The Times first reported in March that Hezbollah -- an Iran-backed group based in Lebanon -- is using routes that Mexican drug lords control to smuggle contraband and people into the United States to finance operations.

While Hezbollah appears to view the U.S. primarily as a cash cow to finance its operations elsewhere, "it should not be viewed lightly, as the money raised can be used against the U.S. or assets in future operations," another counterterrorism official said.

No confirmed attacks in the U.S. have been linked to Hezbollah.

In the video, al-Nafisi emphasized that al Qaeda had chemical laboratories in Afghanistan prior to the U.S. invasion. He described his admiration for Hezbollah and said that al Qaeda continues to have scientists and resources at its disposal.

"The Americans are afraid that the [weapons of mass destruction] might fall into the hands of 'terrorist' organizations like al Qaeda and others," he told followers. "There is good reason for the Americans' fears. ... [Al Qaeda] had laboratories in north Afghanistan. They have scientists, chemists and nuclear physicists. They are nothing like they are portrayed by these mercenary journalists - backward Bedouins living in caves. No, no, by no means. This kind of talk can fool only naive people. People who follow such things know that al Qaeda has laboratories, just like Hezbollah."

Intelligence officials said the video provides important insights into al Qaeda recruitment methods and views of the West.

In the 10-minute clip, al-Nafisi suggested that al Qaeda might want to make common cause with what he claimed are "300,000" members of white supremacist and other militias in the U.S.

"These militias even think about bombing nuclear plants within the U.S.," he said. "May God grant them success, even though we are not white, or even close to it, right? They have plans to bomb the nuclear plant at Lake Michigan. This plant is very important. ... May God grant success to one of these militia leaders, who is thinking about bombing this plant. I believe that we should devote part of our prayers to him."

http://washingtontimes.com/news/2009/jun/03/al-qaeda-eyes-bio-attack-via-mexico-border/?feat=home_top5_read

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Herald Sun
June 04, 2009

Bin Laden Tries to Spoil Obama Speech to Arab World

Carly Crawford in New York

But the White House yesterday dismissed the tape as a tactic to deflect the spotlight from President Barack Obama's historic speech in Cairo, to be delivered at 8pm tonight Melbourne time.

Arab broadcaster Al Jazeera aired the menacing recording after President Obama arrived in Saudi Arabia for his meeting with King Abdullah and as his next stop, the Egyptian capital, went into lockdown.

Osama bin Laden accused the president of inciting hatred towards the US by ordering Pakistan to crack down on militants and Islamic law in the Swat Valley.

Bin Laden, who has a \$A60.9 million bounty on his head and been in hiding for the past eight years, blamed the US for a campaign of "killing, fighting, bombing and destruction" that prompted the exodus of a million Muslims from Swat, in northwest Pakistan."

Elderly people, children and women fled their homes and lived in tents as refugees after they have lived in dignity in their homes," bin Laden said.

"Let the American people be ready to reap what the White House leaders have sown," he said.

"Obama and his administration have sown new seeds to increase hatred and revenge on America

"The number of these seeds is equal to the number of displaced people from Swat Valley."

The terror leader accused Obama of provoking Muslims in the same way he said George W Bush had done.

"He has followed the steps of his predecessor in antagonising Muslims ... and laying the foundation for long wars," bin Laden said, referring to deadly clashes in Pakistan between the US-backed government and Islamist militants.

"Obama and his administration have sowed new seeds of hatred against America," he said. "Let the American people prepare to harvest the crops of what the leaders of the White House plant in the next years and decades."

White House press secretary Robert Gibbs said the tape was consistent with past bin Laden messages. "I don't think it's surprising that al Qaeda would want to shift attention away from the president's historic efforts and continued efforts to reach out and have an open dialogue with the Muslim world," Gibbs said.

A US counterterrorism official said the tape was being analysed by US intelligence but said there had never yet been a fake bin Laden tape and the terror leader usually timed his dispatches to coincide with major events.

Obama has long sought to build bridges with the Muslim world, addressing Turkey to rousing applause during his first trip abroad in April.

His first television interview as president was with Muslim network Al Arabiya.

He is expected to discuss violent extremism, the US presence in Iraq and Israel-Palestinian conflict and how he thinks it should be solved. Washington has taken full control of security in Cairo for the eight-hour presidential visit.

Thirty-thousand army and intelligence personnel have been put on special duty under US command, Egyptian media reported.

The security effort will include about 1000 CIA and FBI agents, three special aircrafts loaded with armoured vehicles equipped with firearms and detector sensors and 3000 bodyguards.

Palestinian news reports said marine forces had been deployed on the banks of the Nile River, train stations, and other unknown routes in Cairo.

Before heading to Cairo, Obama opened his Mideast trip with a visit to Abdullah, the monarch of a country that's home to Islam's two holiest sites in Mecca and Medina.

"The United States and Saudi Arabia have a long history of friendship," Mr Obama said as he visited the monarch's desert horse farm.

The U.S. president called Abdullah wise and gracious, adding: "I am confident that working together that the United States and Saudi Arabia can make progress on a whole host of issues of mutual interest."

In turn, Abdullah expressed his "best wishes to the friendly American people who are represented by a distinguished man who deserves to be in this position."

<http://www.news.com.au/heraldsun/story/0,21985,25585618-663,00.html>

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Agence France-Presse (AFP)

4 June 2009

Iran Nuclear Showdown at 'Decisive Point': Obama

CAIRO (AFP) — US President Barack Obama said on Thursday that the nuclear showdown with Iran had reached a decisive point but that Tehran had the right to peaceful nuclear power if it abided by international treaties.

Obama, who broke with former US policy of isolating Tehran, said it would be hard to "overcome decades of mistrust" but he had made clear to Iran's leaders and people that the United States was prepared to move forward in relations with Iran.

"But it is clear to all concerned that when it comes to nuclear weapons we have reached a decisive point.

"This is not simply about America's interests. It is about preventing a nuclear arms race in the Middle East that could lead this region and the world down a hugely dangerous path."

In an apparent reference to Israel, believed to be only nuclear-armed power in the Middle East, Obama said he understood protests "that some countries have weapons that others do not."

He added that this was why he reaffirmed America's commitment to seek a nuclear-weapons-free world.

He said that "any nation -- including Iran -- should have the right to access peaceful nuclear power if it complies with its responsibilities under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty."

Iran has resolutely maintained its right to a nuclear programme which it insists is purely for peaceful means.

This has put it on a collision course with Western powers who suspect it of seeking nuclear weapons.

Iran's arch-foe Israel has refused to rule out a military strike to ensure Tehran does not become a nuclear-armed nation.

<http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5ix2OIrSv5CzQopxX5e8dSb02LHtw>

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Times of India

5 June 2009

Iran has Amassed 1,339 Kilos of Low-Enriched Uranium: IAEA

VIENNA: Iran is still defying the UN Security Council and has so far amassed 1,339 kilogrammes of low-enriched uranium hexafluoride (UF6), the UN atomic watchdog said on Friday.

Estimates vary, but analysts calculate that anywhere between 1,000-1,700 kilogrammes of low-enriched uranium would be needed to convert it into highly-enriched uranium suitable to make a single atomic bomb.

"Iran has estimated, that between November 18, 2008 and May 31, 2009 ... a total 500 kilogrammes of low-enriched UF6 was produced" at its enrichment plant in Natanz, the International Atomic Energy Agency said in a restricted report, a copy of which was obtained by AFP.

Prior to that, Iran had already amassed 839 kilos of low-enriched UF6.

In all, more than 7,000 uranium-enriching centrifuges were installed at Natanz, up from over 5,000 at the time of the IAEA's last report in February, the watchdog said.

The UN Security Council has ordered Iran to suspend all enrichment related activities, until the IAEA has been able to verify the exact nature of Tehran's controversial nuclear programme.

Western powers fear that Iran wants to build an atomic bomb, but Tehran insists it merely aims to produce civilian nuclear energy.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/Middle-East/Iran-has-amassed-1339-kilos-of-low-enriched-uranium-IAEA/articleshow/4622630.cms>

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Washington Post

June 5, 2009

Iran Running 5,000 Centrifuges, U.N. Oversight Harder

By Mark Heinrich

Reuters

VIENNA (Reuters) - [Iran](#) has expanded the number of centrifuges enriching uranium to almost 5,000 and this has made it harder for U.N. inspectors to keep track of the disputed nuclear program, according to an IAEA report seen by Reuters.

Friday's restricted International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) report also said Iran had increased its rate of production of low-enriched uranium (LEU) material, boosting its stockpile by 500 kg to 1,339 kg in the past six months.

Iran's improved efficiency in turning out potential nuclear fuel was sure to fan Western fears of the Islamic Republic nearing the ability make nuclear bombs, if it chose to do so.

David Albright of the Institute for Science and International Security, a think tank that tracks proliferation issues globally, said Iran now had accumulated enough LEU to convert into high-enriched uranium sufficient for one atom bomb.

But this would require reconfiguring Iran's centrifuge network, miniaturizing HEU to fit on a warhead - technical steps that could take 1-2 years or more -- and would not escape notice of UN inspectors unless done at an undeclared location.

There are no indications of any such secret site.

Iran says it is developing a uranium enrichment industry solely as fuel for electricity generation.

But it has stonewalled an IAEA investigation into alleged past research into bomb-making and continues to impose restrictions on IAEA inspections.

The U.N. nuclear watchdog report said Iran had 4,920 centrifuges, cylinders that spin at supersonic speed, being fed with uranium hexafluoride gas (UF6) for enrichment around the clock as of May 31, an increase of about 1,000 since February.

Another 2,132 centrifuges were installed and undergoing vacuum tests without material inside while a further 169 were being installed -- bringing Iran's total number of deployed centrifuges at its cavernous underground Natanz enrichment hall to 7,231 - with 55,000 eventually planned.

"The agency has informed Iran that given the increased number of cascades being installed and the increased rate of production of LEU, improvements to the containment and surveillance measures at (Natanz) are required in order for the agency to continue to fully meet its safeguards objectives," the report said, referring to basic inspections.

"The agency has proposed a solution and initiated discussions with Iran to that end."

A senior U.N. official familiar with the report said the IAEA was looking into changing the angles of its surveillance cameras and having Iran change "the walking routes" of workers handling equipment to keep pace with the nuclear expansion.

Up to now, Iran has been enriching with only a fragile, inefficient 1970s vintage machine known as the P-1, adapted from a model obtained from former Pakistani-run nuclear smugglers.

It continues to test small numbers of a more sophisticated design, known variously as P-2s, A-2s or A-3s, at a separate pilot facility at Natanz. These models could refine uranium 2-3 times as fast as the P-1, analysts tracking Iran's nuclear program estimate.

(Editing by Matthew Jones)

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/06/05/AR2009060501818.html>

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The Hindu
2 June 2009

‘Ballistic Missile Defence System being Upgraded’

CUDDALORE: India has perfected Phase I of the ‘Ballistic missile defence system,’ under which it can successfully intercept and destroy an enemy missile having a range of up to 2,000 km, according to V.K.Saraswat, Chief Controller, Research and Development (Missiles), Defence Research and Development Organization, New Delhi.

Mr. Saraswat, who visited Chidambaram on Monday to attend the Staff Development Programme of the Faculty of Engineering and Technology of Annamalai University, told *The Hindu* that under Phase II, the country was attempting to enhance its missile defence capability to the extent of engaging missiles with a range of 5,000—6,000-km.

He noted that with the Western neighbours having missiles of 600 to 2,000-km range and the north-eastern neighbour armed with inter-continental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), it had become imperative for India to put in place the ballistic missile defence system.

Significance

The system acquired significance in the backdrop of certain neighbouring countries stockpiling missiles with nuclear warheads.

Such missiles would have catastrophic impact and hence the missile defence system was being constantly upgraded.

Mr. Saraswat underscored the point that India had adopted the “no first use” concept as regard to missile handling, but if any country chose to attack India, the latter should be prepared enough to duly counter it.

On two occasions the country had demonstrated its mettle in missile interception: in 2008, it successfully engaged a 1000-km range missile at an altitude of below 20 km and again last March (2009) it succeeded in countering a 2,000-km range missile at an altitude of 80 km.

To track the missile, on flight ground-based and airborne radars must be kept in fine fettle and the communication system must respond in milliseconds.

Counter missile

Soon after an enemy missile was airborne, the counter missile would be launched with a speed of 3,000 metres per second and the closing speed (while nearing the target) would be 5,000 to 6,000 metres per second, he said.

The “hit-to-kill” missile would get very close to the enemy missile and explode its warhead. For the purpose, “directional warhead method” was being adopted to make the counter missile directly zero in on the offensive missile.

AWACS

In this context, the arrival of the Air Borne Warning and Control System (AWACS) would help the country to track cruise missiles that generally flew at a low altitude of 10 to 12 km, Mr Saraswat said.

Unlike the ground-based radar system that could detect the missile only on its flight, the AWACS could locate the missiles even at the launch pad to enable the handlers to trigger the defence mechanism at the right moment, Mr. Saraswat added.

<http://www.thehindu.com/2009/06/02/stories/2009060254250500.htm>

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RIA Novosti
02 June 2009

Russian Navy to Commission Nerpa Submarine in Fall - Source

MOSCOW, June 2 (RIA Novosti) - A nuclear attack submarine involved in a fatal accident during sea trials last year will be commissioned by the Russian Navy in the fall and then leased to the Indian Navy, a source said on Tuesday.

The Nerpa nuclear-powered submarine was undergoing sea trials in the Sea of Japan on November 8 last year when its on-board fire safety system went off, releasing deadly gas into the sleeping quarters. Three submariners and 17 shipyard workers were killed. There were 208 people, 81 of them submariners, on board the vessel at the time.

"Following new official state sea trials in the summer, the sub will be put in service with the Navy in the fall of this year," the Russian naval source said.

He added that the Nerpa would be leased to the Indian Navy shortly after the commissioning, and said India had paid over \$500 million for a 10-year lease of the 12,000-ton nuclear attack submarine.

Indian media have reported that the construction of the vessel was partially financed by the country's government.

The construction of the Akula II class Nerpa nuclear attack submarine started in 1991, but was suspended for over a decade due to a lack of funding.

Akula II class vessels are considered the quietest and deadliest of all Russian nuclear-powered attack submarines.

India is one of the main buyers of Russian weaponry, with contracts including the delivery of Admiral Gorshkov aircraft carrier with at least 16 MiG-29K Fulcrum-D carrier fighters, the Smerch MLRS, and licensed production of T-90 tanks in India.

Russia signed in March last year a contract with the Indian Defense Ministry to upgrade around 70 MiG-29 fighters, in service since the 1980s, and agreed to develop a fifth-generation fighter together with India.

Russia and India jointly developed the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile, whose sea-based and land-based versions have been successfully tested and put into service with the Indian army and navy.

http://en.rian.ru/military_news/20090602/155144687.html

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Japan Times

OPINION

June 4, 2009

A Return to Arms Control (Editorial)

Despite North Korea's recent nuclear test, it has generally been a good year for arms control. For the past decade, the very idea of agreements limiting weapons and their delivery systems has been looked at with disdain. While it is tempting to blame the United States for this sad state of affairs; in fact, most nations have contributed to the delegitimization of arms control. The tide has turned, however, and arms control is once again a source of hope, not frustration and finger-pointing.

Last week, two important developments occurred. The first was a breakthrough at the Conference on Disarmament (CD), a 65-nation forum for arms control negotiations in Geneva. Established in 1979, it helped create the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). The CD has not yielded another agreement for over a decade; its members have been deeply divided over priorities. Some seek a treaty banning the production of fissile material such as enriched uranium and plutonium, which would make it harder to build nuclear weapons, while others focus on a treaty barring the militarization of space. Since the CD operates by consensus, the inability to find common ground meant its work ground to a halt.

That deadlock was broken last week when representatives adopted a "program of work" that will guide CD activities. The program will tackle disarmament generally, but will also focus on a fissile material regime. A working group will also be established "to prevent an arms race in outer space," while another group will tackle "negative security assurances," promises by states that have nuclear weapons that they will not use them against countries that do not.

Also last week, Russia and the U.S. formally opened a plant in Siberia that will destroy the huge stockpile of nerve agents that Russia accumulated during the Cold War. The facility, the largest in the world devoted to the destruction of chemical munitions, is intended to eliminate some 2 million artillery shells and warheads loaded with sarin, soman and VX. This vast stockpile is only about 14 percent of the 40,000 tons of chemical agents declared by Russia under the CWC; the U.S. had another 31,000 tons of its own. The CWC obligates both nations to destroy their entire stockpiles by 2012. By May, Russia had destroyed a little less than a third of those weapons, while the U.S. had doubled that amount. This new facility, built with \$1 billion of U.S. money, will help Russia pick up the pace.

There has been progress on other fronts too. The U.S. and Russia have resumed talks on extending the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), which expires at the end of this year. And last month, the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Review Conference of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) agreed on an agenda for that meeting. Discussions at the last review conference, in 2005, were crippled because the agenda was not agreed on until the meeting itself.

What accounts for the flurry of activity? Much of the credit goes to the new U.S. administration. The Bush administration was suspicious of arms control. It felt that such agreements would not work without extremely intrusive verification regimes and did not want U.S. hands tied.

The Obama administration has put arms control back on the U.S. diplomatic agenda. President Barack Obama signaled his desire to press for a world free of nuclear weapons in his landmark speech in Prague in April this year. Members of the CD credited the U.S. shift on verification measures with helping to break the logjam on the fissile materials treaty.

Mr. Obama recognizes that a nuclear-free world is a long way off and that nuclear weapons will continue to play an important role in the defense of the U.S. and its allies, by deterring any would-be adversary. Mr. Obama also understands that the U.S. must embrace the logic of a nonnuclear world to get other nations to back U.S. priorities, such as stronger efforts to fight the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

In fact, it is a mistake to blame the U.S. for the long silence at the CD, or for the failure of more general progress on arms control. This is not a problem just for the U.S., or the other four nuclear weapon states acknowledged in the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (Britain, China, France, Russia), or the four "gray nuclear states" (India, Israel, North Korea and Pakistan), or any of the other proliferation suspects. All nations must take seriously the entire NPT bargain — that nonnuclear states will forgo military nuclear options while nuclear weapon states will reduce and eventually eliminate their nuclear arsenals.

Success in this endeavor demands that all governments take their responsibilities seriously. All states must demand compliance with these obligations by all parties — even those that have opted out. Mr. Obama's shift signals a new approach by the U.S. He must follow through and other nations must now do their share as well.

<http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/ed20090604a1.html>

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