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China View
5 June 2009

Top ASDF Officer: Japan's Missile Interceptors Ready to be Deployed Swiftly

TOKYO, June 5 (Xinhua) -- Japan's Patriot ballistic missile interceptors could be swiftly deployed if the defense minister gives the order, the top officer of the Air Self-Defense Force (ASDF) said on Friday.

At a press conference, ASDF Chief of Staff General Kenichiro Hokazono made the remarks in response to rumors that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) is likely to test-fire intercontinental ballistic missiles.

Once the order is issued, Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) guided missiles could be moved for deployment within three hours, said Hokazono.

The PAC-3 units will be deployed to northeastern Japan and areas in and around Tokyo to shoot down possible rocket fragments if the DPRK launches the missile.

Talking about the possibility of Pyongyang's test-firing of the ballistic missile, Hokazono said that Japan must make preparations on the assumption that the DPRK will do what it has said.

The DPRK appears to be preparing for a long-range missile test as an intercontinental ballistic missile was recently spotted on a cargo train near Pyongyang, South Korea media have reported. And the launch could possibly be scheduled for mid-June.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-06/05/content_11494470.htm

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New York Times
June 6, 2009

Talks On North Korea Sanctions Stall Over Inspections

By Neil MacFarquhar

Negotiations over toughening sanctions against North Korea in the wake of its underground nuclear test last month have stalled over the issue of inspecting cargo ships on the high seas, according to two Security Council diplomats. China has yet to sign off on the idea that North Korean vessels could be stopped and searched, the diplomats said. Ambassadors from the five permanent members of the Security Council — the United States, Russia, China, Britain and France — plus Japan and South Korea, locked in intensive bargaining sessions all week, have agreed on other issues, including widening an arms embargo and financial restrictions, the diplomats said. North Korea has declared cargo inspections an act of war.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/06/world/asia/06briefs-Nations.html>

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Japan Times
June 6, 2009

ASDF Readies PAC-3s In Case Of North ICBM

By Kyodo News

The Air Self-Defense Force is ready to deploy its Patriot ballistic missile interceptors at short notice in connection with a rumored missile test by North Korea, the top Air Self-Defense Force general said Friday.

"We are now at the stage of collecting and analyzing intelligence, but we are making preparations to swiftly deploy (the interceptors) if the defense minister gives us a deployment order," ASDF Chief of Staff Gen. Kenichiro Hokazono told a news conference.

Hokazono said units capable of firing Patriot Advanced Capability-3 guided missiles can be moved for deployment within three hours of an order being issued.

On the possibility that North Korea might test-fire an intercontinental ballistic missile, Hokazono said, "We must make preparations on the assumption that they will do what they said they will."

After the U.N. Security Council condemned Pyongyang's April 5 rocket launch, the North said it would take "self-defense measures" unless the council apologizes.

The country has since followed through on its threats by conducting a second underground nuclear test on May 25 and is now believed to be preparing to test-fire an intercontinental ballistic missile.

<http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/nn20090606b1.html>

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Yonhap News

6 June 2009

N. Korea Pledges to Retaliate against South Korea for Joining PSI

SEOUL, June 6 (Yonhap) -- North Korea pledged anew Saturday to retaliate against South Korea for joining a U.S.-led anti-proliferation drive, saying it would trigger a war on the Korean Peninsula.

In response to North Korea's latest nuclear test, South Korea last week announced its full participation in the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), a global campaign aimed at curbing the spread of weapons of mass destruction. One of its main targets is North Korea.

"South Korea's full participation in the PSI is a wanton violation of the DPRK's sovereignty and an open declaration of war against it," the North's main newspaper, Rodong Sinmun, said in a commentary, using the acronym of the country's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

"South Korea will be wholly accountable for the disastrous consequences as it has followed foreign forces in utter disregard of the DPRK's sovereignty and dignity," said the commentary, carried by the North's Korean Central News Agency.

The PSI, launched in 2003, allows its member countries, which currently hovers over 90, to interdict airplanes or ships suspected of carrying missiles and other weapons of mass destruction.

Tension has risen sharply in the region in recent weeks, with North Korea test-firing a series of missiles. U.S. spy satellites reportedly found signs that North Korea is gearing up an inter-continental missile test-launch.

Following the North's May 25 nuclear test, the United Nations Security Council as well as South Korea and Japan are negotiating possible sanctions on North Korea.

Experts say the power of the nuclear device North Korea detonated this time is similar to that of the U.S. bombs that flattened two Japanese cities, Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Separately, the United States is reportedly preparing to impose its own financial sanctions against North Korea.

World powers, including North Korea's traditional ally China, unanimously condemned the North's latest nuclear test, declaring that it clearly violated an earlier U.N. sanctions resolution adopted in 2006 soon after Pyongyang conducted its first test.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2009/06/06/47/0401000000AEN20090606001900320F.HTML>

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Baltimore Sun

June 7, 2009

Clinton says US, Allies Working on Ways to Cut off North Korea Nuclear Tech, Weapons Shipments

By Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Obama administration wants help from U.S. allies and possibly China to cut off North Korean shipments that may be carrying nuclear technology or other weapons.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said in an interview broadcast Sunday that failing to take aggressive and effective action against North Korea could spark an arms race in northeast Asia.

"We will do everything we can to both interdict it and prevent it and shut off their flow of money," Clinton said of possible attempts by North Korea to ship nuclear material. She spoke on ABC's "This Week."

She said one of the positive developments to come from North Korea's "very provocative and belligerent behavior" is that it has brought the countries trying to deal with North Korea much closer together. Those nations include China, Japan, South Korea, and Russia.

We are working very hard," Clinton said. "I've personally talked with all the foreign ministers."

Clinton also said the U.S. is considering adding North Korea back to a list of state sponsors of terrorism, after President Barack Obama pledged "a very hard look" at tougher measures because of the North's nuclear stance.

The communist country has conducted recent nuclear and missile tests, and there are concerns about the North's shipping nuclear material to other nations.

Obama's strong language on North Korea appeared to point toward nonmilitary penalties such as financial punishments, either within the United Nations or by Washington alone. Obama made the comments Saturday during his visit to France.

The Bush administration agreed to remove North Korea from the U.S. list of terrorist states after the North said it would dismantle its nuclear weapons facilities. It later refused to go forward with the dismantlement.

Clinton was asked about a letter that some senators wrote Obama about returning North Korea to that list.

"We're going to look at it. There's a process for it," Clinton said in the interview, taped Thursday in Egypt. "Obviously we would want to see recent evidence of their support for international terrorism."

She added, "We're just beginning to look at it. I don't have an answer for you right now."

North Korea, she said, was "taken off of the list for a purpose and that purpose is being thwarted by their actions."

<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/sns-ap-us-clinton-nkorea,0,4069125.story>

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Global Security Newswire

June 8, 2009

North Korea Not Yet Ready to Test ICBM, Report Says

Although North Korea appears to be preparing tests of a long-range ballistic missile and several medium-range missiles, it is unlikely the reclusive nation will conduct any launches in the immediate future, the Associated Press reported yesterday (see *GSN*, June 5).

The Stalinist state has not yet placed a missile tracking radar system at the new Dongchang-ni launch site, indicating that it is not yet ready to launch an ICBM, according to the South Korean *JoongAng Ilbo* newspaper. It cited sources within the South Korean government as saying construction of the installation was not yet complete.

However, sources added that Pyongyang is increasing preparations for a long-range missile launch, which would follow the North's nuclear and short-range missile tests last month. The firing could occur near June 16, when U.S. President Barack Obama plans to meet with South Korean President Lee Myung-bak in Washington.

The last week has also seen continued preparations for the launch of medium-range missiles from six mobile platforms deployed in the Anbyon region along the west coast of North Korea, *JoonAng Ilbo* reported (Jae-Soon Chang, Associated Press/Yahoo News, June 8).

http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20090608_9412.php

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New York Times
June 8, 2009

U.S. Weighs Intercepting North Korean Shipments

By David E. Sanger

WASHINGTON — The Obama administration signaled Sunday that it was seeking a way to interdict, possibly with China's help, North Korean sea and air shipments suspected of carrying weapons or nuclear technology.

The administration also said it was examining whether there was a legal basis to reverse former President George W. Bush's decision last year to remove the North from a list of states that sponsor terrorism.

The reference to interdictions — preferably at ports or airfields in countries like China, but possibly involving riskier confrontations on the high seas — was made by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton. She was the highest-ranking official to talk publicly about such a potentially provocative step as a response to North Korea's second nuclear test, conducted two weeks ago.

While Mrs. Clinton did not specifically mention assistance from China, other administration officials have been pressing Beijing to take such action under Chinese law.

Speaking on ABC's "This Week," Mrs. Clinton said the United States feared that if the test and other recent actions by North Korea did not lead to "strong action," there was a risk of "an arms race in Northeast Asia" — an oblique reference to the concern that Japan would reverse its long-held ban against developing nuclear weapons.

So far it is not clear how far the Chinese are willing to go to aid the United States in stopping North Korea's profitable trade in arms, the isolated country's most profitable export. But the American focus on interdiction demonstrates a new and potentially far tougher approach to North Korea than both President Clinton and Mr. Bush, in his second term, took as they tried unsuccessfully to reach deals that would ultimately lead North Korea to dismantle its nuclear arsenal.

Mr. Obama, aides say, has decided that he will not offer North Korea new incentives to dismantle the nuclear complex at Yongbyon that the North previously promised to abandon.

"I'm tired of buying the same horse twice," Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates said last week while touring an antimissile site in Alaska that the Bush administration built to demonstrate its preparedness to destroy North Korean missiles headed toward the United States. (So far, the North Koreans have not successfully tested a missile of sufficient range to reach the United States, though there is evidence that they may be preparing for another test of their long-range Taepodong-2 missile.)

In France on Saturday, Mr. Obama referred to the same string of broken deals, telling reporters, "I don't think there should be an assumption that we will simply continue down a path in which North Korea is constantly destabilizing the region and we just react in the same ways." He added, "We are not intending to continue a policy of rewarding provocation."

While Mr. Obama was in the Middle East and Europe last week, several senior officials said the president's national security team had all but set aside the central assumption that guided American policy toward North Korea over the past 16 years and two presidencies: that the North would be willing to ultimately abandon its small arsenal of nuclear weapons in return for some combination of oil, nuclear power plants, money, food and guarantees that the United States would not topple its government, the world's last Stalinesque regime.

Now, after examining the still-inconclusive evidence about the results of North Korea's second nuclear test, the administration has come to different conclusions: that Pyongyang's top priority is to be recognized as a nuclear state, that it is unwilling to bargain away its weapons and that it sees tests as a way to help sell its nuclear technology.

"This entirely changes the dynamic of how you deal with them," a senior national security aide said.

While Mr. Obama is willing to reopen the six-party talks that Mr. Bush began — the other participants are Japan, South Korea, Russia and China — he has no intention, aides say, of offering new incentives to get the North to fulfill agreements from 1994, 2005 and 2008; all were recently renounced.

"Clinton bought it once, Bush bought it again, and we're not going to buy it a third time," one of Mr. Obama's chief strategists said last week, referring to the Yongbyon plant, where the North reprocesses spent nuclear fuel into bomb-grade plutonium.

While some officials privately acknowledged that they would still like to roll back what one called North Korea's "rudimentary" nuclear capacity, a more realistic goal is to stop the country from devising a small weapon deliverable on a short-, medium- or long-range missile.

In conducting any interdictions, the United States could risk open confrontation with North Korea. That prospect — and the likelihood of escalating conflict if the North resisted an inspection — is why China has balked at American proposals for a resolution by the United Nations Security Council that would explicitly allow interceptions at sea. A previous Security Council resolution, passed after the North's first nuclear test, in 2006, allowed interdictions "consistent with international law." But that term was never defined, and few of the provisions were enforced.

North Korea has repeatedly said it would regard any interdiction as an act of war, and officials in Washington have been trying to find ways to stop the shipments without a conflict. Late last week, James B. Steinberg, the deputy secretary of state, visited Beijing with a delegation of American officials, seeking ideas from China about sanctions, including financial pressure, that might force North Korea to change direction.

"The Chinese face a dilemma that they have always faced," a senior administration official said. "They don't want North Korea to become a full nuclear weapons state. But they don't want to cause the state to collapse." They have been walking a fine line, the official said, taking a tough position against the North of late, but unwilling to publicly embrace steps that would put China in America's camp.

To counter the Chinese concern, Mr. Steinberg and his delegation argued to the Chinese that failing to crack down on North Korea would prompt reactions that Beijing would find deeply unsettling, including a greater American military presence in the region and more calls in Japan for that country to develop its own weapons.

Mrs. Clinton seemed to reflect this concern in the interview on Sunday. "We will do everything we can to both interdict it and prevent it and shut off their flow of money," she said. "If we do not take significant and effective action against the North Koreans now, we'll spark an arms race in Northeast Asia. I don't think anybody wants to see that."

While Mrs. Clinton also said the State Department was examining whether North Korea should be placed back on the list of state sponsors of terrorism, she acknowledged that there was a legal process for it. "Obviously we would want to see recent evidence of their support for international terrorism," she said.

That evidence may be hard to come by. While North Korea has engaged in missile sales, it has not been linked to terrorism activity for many years. And North Korea's restoration to the list would be largely symbolic, because it already faces numerous economic sanctions.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/08/world/asia/08korea.html>

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Boston Globe
June 8, 2009

Clinton says North Korea could Return to Terror List

By Washington Post

WASHINGTON - The United States could reinstate North Korea on a list of state sponsors of terrorism, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said yesterday on ABC's "This Week" as the administration continued to ratchet up pressure on Pyongyang after recent nuclear and missile tests.

"Well, we're going to look at it," Clinton said when asked about a letter last week from Republican senators demanding that North Korea be put back on the list.

"There's a process for it," said Clinton. "Obviously we would want to see recent evidence of their support for international terrorism."

The administration is also pushing for a UN Security Council resolution that would punish the country financially and give the international community the power to interdict suspect North Korean cargo, but Clinton acknowledged that some countries have "legitimate concerns" about targeting international shipments.

"We will do everything we can to both interdict it and prevent it and shut off their flow of money," Clinton said. "If we do not take significant and effective action against the North Koreans now, we'll spark an arms race in Northeast Asia. I don't think anybody wants to see that."

"And so part of what we're doing," Clinton said, "is again sharing with other countries our calculus of the risks and the dangers that would lie ahead if we don't take very strong action."

The North conducted its second nuclear test last month, test-fired short-range missiles, and announced that it was no longer bound by the 1953 armistice that ended hostilities on the Korean peninsula. President Obama on Saturday called North Korea's actions "extraordinarily provocative."

Newt Gingrich, appearing on CBS's "Face the Nation," welcomed Clinton's statement.

"I was delighted to see that they are responding to North Korean threats with a serious proposal," said the former House speaker.

"In the long run, we're going to have to find a strategy that uses diplomatic and economic means to replace the current dictatorship," said Gingrich, a Republican. "I mean, this is - this is an inevitably terrifying dictatorship that is desperately trying to get enough nuclear weapons." ■

http://www.boston.com/news/world/asia/articles/2009/06/08/us_considering_putting_north_korea_back_on_terror_list/

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Times of London
June 8, 2009

Dear Leader Kim Jong Il's Successor Kim Jong Un is a Schwarzenegger Fan

Roger Boyes in Berlin

The man who may one day have his finger on the North Korean nuclear button was taught basketball by an Israeli and is a fan of Japanese cartoons and Arnold Schwarzenegger, aka the Terminator, a former schoolmate revealed yesterday.

Kim Jong Un, the son of the Dear Leader and grandson of the Great Leader, was a bright outgoing pupil when he entered his teenage years at the International School of Berne, according to the former fellow pupil.

Mystery surrounding the health of the North Korean dictator Kim Jong Il, who seems to have nominated his son as his political heir, has made the trivia of Mr Kim Jr's schooldays interesting to intelligence services.

Will Kim Jong Un, 26, open up one of the most closed societies in the world? What are his views on non-bodybuilding Americans? And how itchy will that trigger finger be?

"He had a sense of humour; got on well with everyone, even those pupils who came from countries that were enemies of North Korea," said the pupil, speaking anonymously to the German newspaper Welt am Sonntag. "Politics was a taboo subject at school . . . we would argue about football, not politics."

Kim Jong Un was enrolled at the international school between 1993 and 1998 under the name Chol Pak. He was chauffeured to lessons every day — not unusual at a school whose pupils were drawn from diplomatic or rich Swiss families — and it was kept vague about whether he was the son of the chauffeur or of a senior envoy. He lived in the North Korean Embassy and would be seen in town eating with the Ambassador.

So far the main anecdotal information about Kim Jong Un has come from his father's Japanese sushi chef, writing under the pen name Kenji Fujimoto. The chef worked in Kim Jong Il's kitchens for 20 years and in his memoirs describes Kim Jong Un as pleasant, overweight, capable of holding his drink and a fan of the US basketball player Michael Jordan.

He learnt to play basketball at his Swiss school, even though he was on the short side — some reports say he is 5ft 6in.

"An Israeli pupil taught him the basketball moves," the fellow pupil said, "and he spent a lot of time with a South Korean, I think because the South Korean could draw comic strips well and Chol Pak was a fan of the Japanese manga characters."

Kim Jong Un's mother, the former dancer Ko Yong Hi, was Japanese-born. She reportedly died of cancer in 2004 after Kim Jong Un had returned to Pyongyang.

Another North Korean pupil, Kwang Chung, joined the school at the same time as Chol Pak. It was suspected that he was Kim Jong Un's bodyguard.

"Once he [Kwang] kicked a pencil out of the mouth of a pupil," the former classmate said. "A normal child couldn't have done that — he must have been trained in martial arts, perhaps a soldier who looked particularly young.

"Kwang . . . was more popular than Chol because he was so good at sports. They talked about Schwarzenegger films the whole time."

The boy called Chol was good at maths — "but he wasn't a nerd" — and he was involved in school charity projects.

"Probably the North Korean in him is stronger than his upbringing as a pupil of an international school, but sometimes I think: at least he has experienced Western culture in its best form," the schoolfriend said.

Kim Jong Un went on to attend the North Korean military academy. He has two brothers who, according to South Korean intelligence, have been ruled out of the succession.

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article6451519.ece>

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Gulf News

June 9, 2009

N Korea to Use Nuclear Weapons as 'Merciless Offensive Means'

Agencies

Seoul: North Korea says it could use nuclear weapons as an "offensive means" in a new salvo of bellicose rhetoric against critics.

Pyongyang's state-run Minju Joson newspaper said Tuesday its atomic weapons will not be a means of self-defense only.

It says the weapons will also be used as a "merciless offensive means to deal a just retaliatory strike to those who touch the country's dignity and sovereignty even a bit."

The tough talk came as the UN Security Council is seeking to punish the communist regime for its May 25 nuclear test.

The North's main Rodong Sinmun newspaper said on Monday that it will consider any sanctions a declaration of war and will respond to it with "due corresponding self-defense measures."

<http://www.gulfnews.com/world/Korea/10321179.html>

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Los Angeles Times

June 6, 2009

Iran Nuclear Program Advancing, U.N. Agency Says

By Borzou Daragahi

Reporting from Tehran — Iran has significantly boosted its supply and output of reactor-grade nuclear material, according to a quarterly report issued Friday by the United Nations' arms control division.

Meanwhile, in Syria, international inspectors reported finding unexplained particles of modified uranium at a lab in Damascus, far from an alleged nuclear site.

The inspectors said they discovered the artificially modified uranium particles in samples taken last year from a facility in the Syrian capital called the Miniature Neutron Source Reactor. The report disclosed few other details about the discovery or Syria's response to the agency's request for an explanation.

The uranium particles found at the facility "are of a type not included in Syria's declared inventory of nuclear material," the report says.

The reports by the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency, or IAEA, came a day after President Obama, during his visit to Cairo, called on Iran and other nations to avoid a Middle East nuclear arms race and strive for a world without atomic weapons.

The U.S. and its Western allies allege that Iran is violating the spirit of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty by using a civilian nuclear energy program as a cover for developing the means to produce atomic weapons, a charge Iranian leaders deny.

Iran's nuclear research program has also become a domestic campaign issue ahead of next Friday's presidential elections here. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has touted the program as a point of national pride, even adding the symbol of the atom to his campaign posters, while his challengers say he has isolated Iran with his tough talk and uncompromising stance.

Arms control experts say the IAEA report on Iran suggests that Tehran continues to master the enrichment process without running into any major glitches.

"Iran's nuclear program comes across to me as if Iran has its head down and burrowing forward," said Jacqueline Shire, an arms control expert at the Institute for Science and International Security, a Washington think tank. "It's not stopping. It's not looking up. It's not taking the temperature of the political situation. They're just bearing ahead."

The dryly worded reports, delivered to the governing board of the agency and obtained by The Times, say Iran has increased its supply of low-enriched uranium during the last three months by 30%, to nearly 3,000 pounds, and is now feeding uranium gas into about 5,000 high-speed centrifuges, up 25% since February, the time of the last report. It also has an additional 2,000 centrifuges spinning in preparation for being fed uranium gas to turn into nuclear material.

Scientists say 3,000 pounds of low-enriched, or reactor-grade, uranium of the type Iran has would be more than enough to build a single nuclear weapon if Iran were to boot out international inspectors, renege on treaty obligations and further refine its supplies.

Shire estimates that Iran is producing about 6 pounds of low-enriched uranium a day.

The U.N. Security Council has passed several resolutions calling on Iran to stop enriching uranium. Friday's report says the agency has made no progress in resolving questions raised by Western intelligence agencies about alleged tests and studies that suggested Iran was explicitly pursuing nuclear weapons until 2003. Iran insists that the evidence, which it has not been allowed to see, is forged.

The agency report also says that Iran continues to deny it access to the heavy-water reactor near the west-central city of Arak and has not yet provided it with design information for a planned nuclear power plant near the southwestern Iranian town of Darkhovin. Iran says that under its treaty obligations, it need not provide such information until just before it introduces nuclear material to a site.

So rapidly is Iran's nuclear program growing that the agency said it has begun talks to upgrade its "containment and surveillance" systems. The agency often uses mounted cameras to keep track of nuclear material stockpiles around the world. It has long wanted to install remotely monitored cameras in Iran's uranium-enrichment facility in the central city of Natanz, so that it doesn't incur the cost and hassle of sending inspectors to Iran to change the film.

In Syria, international inspectors previously have reportedly found modified uranium particles in soil samples taken at Dair Alzour, the site of a building bombed by Israeli aircraft in 2007. Syria insisted that the site, about 260 miles northeast of Damascus, was an unused military facility, whereas U.S. intelligence officials alleged it was the site of a future plutonium reactor. Syria suggested that the uranium particles at the site came from Israeli munitions, an explanation the agency found implausible.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-iran-nuclear6-2009jun06.0.515299.story>

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New York Times

June 6, 2009

Iran Has Centrifuge Capacity for Nuclear Arms, Report Says

By WILLIAM J. BROAD and DAVID E. SANGER

A week before Iran's presidential election, atomic inspectors reported Friday that the country has sped up its production of nuclear fuel and increased its number of installed centrifuges to 7,200 — more than enough, weapon experts said, to make fuel for up to two nuclear weapons a year, if the country decided to use its facilities for that purpose.

In its report, the International Atomic Energy Agency said that it had found no evidence that any of the fuel in Iran's possession had been enriched to the purity needed to make a bomb, a step that would take months.

But it said that the country had blocked its inspectors for more than a year now from visiting a heavy-water reactor capable of being modified to produce plutonium that could be used in weapons. It also said that Tehran had continued to refuse to answer the agency's questions about reports of Iranian studies obtained by Western intelligence agencies that suggest that its scientists had performed research on the design of a nuclear warhead.

Iran is required under three United Nations Security Council resolutions to cease the enrichment of uranium and to provide answers to those questions. The Iranian authorities have vigorously denied the authenticity of the studies on warhead design.

The report, one of a series made quarterly to the agency's board, described how the pace of enrichment and the installation of new centrifuges is accelerating at an enormous underground bunker in the desert at Natanz. It said that nearly 4,920 centrifuges were currently enriching uranium, and that 2,300 more were ready to go. That represents an increase of 30 percent in the total number of installed centrifuges since a February report.

Campaigning for re-election next week, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has vowed that he will never bend to demands from the West or the United Nations that Iran halt its uranium enrichment. His political opponents have largely agreed, but have urged a more cooperative attitude.

Meanwhile, Israel is constantly assessing Iran's capability of producing a nuclear weapon. Last year, it asked the Bush administration for the equipment needed in case it decided to take unilateral military action against Iran. Mr. Bush declined to provide the equipment.

In a separate report released Friday, the agency said it had found new evidence to support the claim that the complex that Israel bombed in the Syrian desert in 2007 was in fact a clandestine nuclear reactor. The clue, it said, was information uncovered on Syria's procurement of "a large quantity of graphite," a material that American intelligence officials have said was central to the reactor's operation.

The agency also reported its discovery of particles of uranium in a Damascus laboratory and their "possible connection" to uranium traces already discovered at the bombed desert site. Firming up that link, it added, would require further analysis.

Significantly, the agency's Iranian report disclosed an expansion not only in the number of centrifuges, but also in the production of nuclear fuel, said David Albright, president of the Institute for Science and International Security, a private group in Washington that tracks nuclear proliferation. "They're improving the output," he said. "And they can do better" by feeding uranium into the 2,300 machines that now stand empty.

Gary Milhollin, director of the Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control, a research organization in Washington, said Iran's 7,200 centrifuges, if suitably arranged, could annually produce enough nuclear fuel for up to two bombs. "The facts on the ground continue to change," he said in an interview, "and not in our favor."

The report from the International Atomic Energy Agency noted that Iran is refusing not only to let inspectors visit a heavy-water reactor that Tehran has under construction, but also to let them verify design information about the sprawling project, as the agency's statutes require.

The report also said Tehran had refused to give access to "relevant Iranian authorities" who could address allegations surrounding Iran's research on the design of nuclear warheads. In the absence of that cooperation and enhanced powers of inspection, the report said, the agency "will not be in a position to provide credible assurance" about nuclear materials and activities.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/06/world/middleeast/06nuke.html?ref=world>

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Washington Times
June 6, 2009

Iran Closer to Nuclear Weapon Capacity

By Eli Lake

Ignoring overtures for talks from the Obama administration, Iran has continued to build a stockpile of low-enriched uranium and could, within three to six months, convert the material into a nuclear weapon, according to nuclear specialists.

Iran insists that its program at Natanz, south of Tehran, is for peaceful purposes only and that the facility is regularly inspected by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the U.N. nuclear watchdog. However, according to an analysis of the latest IAEA report on Iran by the Institute for Science and International Security a Washington think tank that focuses on nuclear proliferation Iran produced an additional 329 kilograms (724 pounds) of low-enriched uranium from November through May, a 20-percent improvement in Iran's capacity to make the fuel.

The IAEA report, also released Friday, said Iran is operating more than 5,000 centrifuges at its declared nuclear facility in Natanz and has a total of more than 1,300 kilograms (2,860 pounds) of low-enriched uranium. This form of uranium is used for civilian power plants but can be further refined to make fuel for weapons. The difference lies in the concentration of a uranium isotope, U-235, whose atoms can be split apart to produce vast amounts of energy. For civilian use, fuel must contain about 5 percent of the isotope; for weapons, more than 80 percent.

Nuclear weapons 'breakout capability' is a scenario that involves enriching LEU [low-enriched uranium] to weapon-grade uranium, said the analysis by nuclear specialists David Albright and Jacqueline Shire.

This could be accomplished within three to six months at either the Natanz facility or a clandestine gas centrifuge facility. It provides a measure of Iran's growing nuclear weapons capabilities. Whether Iran intends to pursue this approach is unknown, the analysis said.

Whether Iran has a clandestine nuclear program is a matter of dispute. The unclassified version of a U.S. National Intelligence Estimate released in December 2007 said Iran had suspended its nuclear weaponization program, which it distinguished from uranium enrichment and the development of ballistic missiles, shortly after the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003.

European intelligence services and Israel assert that Iran is operating an active weapons program in secret.

Last month, President Obama appeared to let slip that he also believed the Iranians were seeking a weapon.

I think that pursuing Israeli-Palestinian peace is something that is in Israel's security interests and the United States' national security interests even if Iran was not pursuing a nuclear weapon, the president said after talks at the White House with Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister.

In congressional testimony, Dennis C. Blair, the director of national intelligence, has said he agrees with the 2007 intelligence estimate.

Iran has proven they can build things in secret, Mr. Albright, of the Institute for Science and International Security, told The Washington Times. The Natanz facility was kept hidden from nuclear inspectors until its existence was revealed by an Iranian dissident group in 2002. Mr. Albright said the Kalaye Electric laboratory that conducted centrifuge research development in the 1990s was also kept from inspectors.

That said, Mr. Albright maintains that it is still unclear whether Iran had a parallel weapons program. We just don't know, he said.

The reports of Iranian nuclear advances come as Iran prepares for presidential elections next Friday. The Obama administration is expected to renew calls for negotiations, which have so far been rebuffed, after the Iranian vote. Mr. Obama has said he will review U.S. policy by the end of the year if there is no progress toward a negotiated agreement limiting Iran's nuclear program.

The IAEA report gave little indication of Iranian cooperation. It said that the Iranians have prohibited inspectors from visiting a heavy water plant in Arak that could potentially produce plutonium another bomb fuel and failed to turn over design information on a planned new facility at Darkhovin, where a reactor is slated to be built.

A second IAEA report released Friday found traces of uranium at a previously undisclosed site in Syria, raising the prospect that the Middle Eastern nation could be preserving nuclear capacity after Israeli jets bombed a fledgling North Korea-style reactor in Syria in 2007.

http://washingtontimes.com/news/2009/jun/06/specialists-warn-possible-break-out-3-6-months/?feat=home_headlines

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Scotland on Sunday

07 June 2009

Iran Stockpiles Enough Uranium to Make Nation's First Nuclear Bomb

By David Leask

IRAN now has enough nuclear material to make its first atomic bomb, it was claimed last night.

The Islamic republic, whose president has threatened to "wipe Israel off the face of the Earth", has nearly doubled stockpiles of enriched uranium in the last six months, the United Nations said yesterday.

Experts believe it would take no more than six months for Iran to turn its stocks into enough weapons-grade material for a bomb – if it decides to defy warnings from US President Barack Obama not to do so.

Officials from the United Nations' International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) yesterday reported huge rises in the amount of low-enriched uranium or LEU in Iran and the number of centrifuges needed to make it.

David Albright, a former weapons inspector who leads the Washington-based Institute for Science and International Security, said Iran already had enough LEU to enrich for one bomb and could have enough for a second by the end of this year.

He added: "Whether Iran intends to pursue this approach is unknown." The country has denied it has any interest in having a nuclear bomb.

America, Britain and their allies are eager to prevent Iran developing weapons that could be used to threaten Israel and other nations. They are already facing a stand-off with Communist North Korea, which tested a second nuclear device late last month.

Iran and North Korea, are feared to have developed informal military links, despite their huge ideological differences. Their two football teams played out a scoreless draw in the North Korean capital Pyongyang yesterday.

The latest report from the IAEA revealed Iran's stockpile of low-enriched uranium, which is the fuel used in nuclear power stations, had leapt to 1,300 kilos in the last six months, up 500 kilos.

The agency also discovered the Islamic nation had 7,000 centrifuges that could be used to make LEU, although only 5,000 were in operation. Inspectors have been denied access to one facility amid confusion over whether Iran has been trying to enrich its LEU to make weapons.

One UN source, who declined to be named, said: "There is now a forest of 7,000 machines – that's quite a lot. It's a very impressive place, and they will be installing more which could mean 9,000 soon. That makes it increasingly difficult to do the surveillance."

Iran has said its centrifuges are only needed to produce fuel for nuclear power stations – Russian contractors are currently completing a electricity plant in the country's south. Western experts are sceptical that Iran, one of the biggest oil producers, needs an alternative source of energy.

Albright, however, stressed it could take Iran "one or two years" to overcome technical hurdles in producing an effective bomb. Even if it starts to enrich its uranium to weapons-grade, it would still have to perfect the technology for miniaturising the substance, making it small enough to fit into a modern warhead.

He stressed there was no evidence that Iran was trying to weaponise its LEU at its main processing plant in Nantanz. He added any effort to move LEU from Nantanz to a covert facility would be noticed by inspectors within months.

Iran is this week expected to announce it has developed new ground-to-air missiles amid speculation Israel could carry out a pre-emptive strike on its nuclear facilities.

Defence minister Mostafa Mohammad Najjar said: "The range of this defence system is more than 40km and it is able to pursue and hit the enemy's airplanes and helicopters on a smart basis and at supersonic speed."

Israel has sent out mixed messages on whether it would attack Iran. Its defence minister said all options should be open. Israel has carried out similar attacks on both Syria – where IAEA inspectors found evidence of uranium enrichment in a report also published yesterday – and on Saddam Hussein's Iraq.

Israel, widely believed to be the Middle East's only nuclear power, has repeatedly described Iran's nuclear programme as a threat.

Iranian leaders often dismiss talk of a possible strike by Israel, saying it is not in a position to threaten Iran, the world's fifth-largest oil exporter. They say Iran would respond to any attack by targeting US interests and Israel. The Islamic state often makes announcements of advances in its defence capabilities.

Military experts say Iran rarely reveals enough detail about its new military equipment to determine its efficacy but say the Islamic Republic, despite having much less firepower than US forces, could still cause havoc in the Gulf if it was pushed.

Last month, it said it had tested a missile that defence analysts say could hit Israel and US bases in the Gulf.

Experts said the announcement on air defence systems comes after Russia announced it would not go ahead with a lucrative contract to supply Iran with one of the most formidable anti-aircraft missiles in the world, the S-300.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is currently facing an election challenge from more moderate politicians. He does so after Obama made a passionate speech in Egypt, calling for the West and the Islamic world to set aside their differences.

<http://scotlandonsunday.scotsman.com/world/Iran-stockpiles-enough-uranium-to.5342066.jp>

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Bloomberg.com

June 7, 2009

Clinton Says Strike to Follow If Iran Attacks Israel

By Indira A.R. Lakshmanan

(Bloomberg) -- Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said a nuclear attack by Iran on Israel would be followed by retaliation against the Islamic Republic.

"I don't think there is any doubt in anyone's mind that were Israel to suffer a nuclear attack by Iran, there would be retaliation," she said in a taped interview airing today on ABC's "This Week" program.

Clinton was asked whether her statement as a presidential candidate that Iran would "incur massive retaliation" for attacking Israel is now official U.S. policy. "I think it is U.S. policy to the extent that we have alliances and understandings with a number of nations," Clinton said. "I think there would be retaliation."

Clinton said the U.S. needs to make clear to Iran that pursuing nuclear weapons will undermine peace and security for Iran and the entire region. With Arab states and Israel anxious about Iran's intentions, there's danger of "a Middle East arms race which leads to nuclear weapons being in the possession of other countries," she said.

Asked whether she was skeptical that President Barack Obama's policy of engagement can succeed in forestalling Iran's nuclear ambitions, Clinton replied, "Well, I am someone who is going to wait and see."

While dialogue would give both sides better information about one another, the U.S. has "to be willing to sit and listen and evaluate without giving up what we view as a primary objective of the engagement, which is to do everything we can to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear weapons state."

UN Investigation

Iran, which has been under investigation by the United Nations International Atomic Energy Agency since 2003, has enough low-enriched uranium to produce the minimum amount needed for a bomb if the material were further enriched to weapons grade. The government in Tehran denies that it wants atomic weapons, saying the enriched uranium is to fuel a nuclear reactor.

On the issue of Israeli settlements on the West Bank, Clinton refuted recent statements by former and current Israeli government officials that the Bush administration had verbally agreed for Israel to continue building structures within existing Jewish settlement areas.

“That was never made a part of the official record of the negotiations as it was passed on to our administration,” Clinton said. “In fact, there is also a record that President Bush contradicted even that oral agreement” to which Israeli officials have referred.

Israeli Settlements

Obama and Clinton have repeatedly said Israel must cease any further settlement construction in order to abide by their commitments under the “road map” for Middle East peace that Israel and the Palestinians entered into under the Bush administration.

Clinton also said she was worried about “an arms race in Northeast Asia” in the aftermath of North Korea’s multiple missile tests, purported nuclear tests and threatening rhetoric against South Korea, which the U.S. is treaty-bound to defend against attack. The Korean peninsula remains technically at war, since the 1950-53 Korean War ended with an armistice, not a peace treaty.

Clinton said progress is being made in the UN Security Council toward imposing additional financial sanctions, an arms embargo and other measures “against North Korea with the full support of China and Russia.”

“We are working very hard to create a mechanism where we can interdict North Korean shipments,” to stop the Stalinist regime from proliferating weapons, as it has in the past, she said. If they try to ship nuclear material, “we will do everything we can to both interdict it and prevent it and shut off their flow of money.”

Terrorist Designation

Asked if the U.S. would put North Korea back on the list of state sponsors of terrorism, Clinton said, “We’re going to look at it. There’s a process for it. Obviously we’d want to see recent evidence of their support for international terrorism.”

North Korea was removed from the list last fall after the Bush administration certified that they were not promoting terrorism. The move was intended in part as a confidence- building measure to get the government in Pyongyang to return to stalled talks to eliminate their nuclear weapons program.

<http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601087&sid=aqCHpWT8Sqm8>

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Times of London
8 June 2009

Don’t Discount Israel Pre-Emptive Strike, Hillary Clinton Warns Iran

Tim Reid in Washington

Hillary Clinton refused yesterday to rule out a pre-emptive Israeli military strike on Iran. It was the first time that a senior member of the Obama Administration had openly discussed such a possibility.

The US Secretary Of State, speaking a few days before elections in Iran that will determine the fate of President Ahmadinejad, also warned that the country would face retaliation if it launched a nuclear attack on Israel.

As President Obama extends “an open hand”, seeking direct talks with Tehran in his attempt to halt its nuclear programme, Mrs Clinton appeared ready to unnerve the Iranian leadership with talk of a pre-emptive strike “the way that we did attack Iraq”. She said that she was trying to put herself in the shoes of the Iranian leadership, but added that Tehran “might have some other enemies that would do that [deliver a pre-emptive strike] to them”. It was a clear reference to Israel, where Binyamin Netanyahu, the Prime Minister, has talked about the possibility of military action to halt Iran’s nuclear programme — something he views as a threat to the Jewish state.

Mrs Clinton, interviewed on the ABC programme *This Week* a year after she conceded to Mr Obama in the Democratic primary race, said that it was US policy that a nuclear attack by Iran on Israel would be seen as an attack on the US.

“I don’t think there is any doubt in anyone’s mind that were Israel to suffer a nuclear attack by Iran, there would be retaliation,” she said, though she did not spell out who would retaliate. She was responding to a question about her statement as a presidential candidate last year, when she said Iran would “incur massive retaliation from the United States” if it attacked Israel.

Yesterday she said: "Part of what we have to make clear to the Iranians is that their pursuit of nuclear weapons will actually trigger greater insecurity." She noted that Israel and Arab states were "deeply concerned about Iran having nuclear weapons".

She added: "So, does Iran want to face a battery of nuclear countries?"

http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/middle_east/article6451892.ece

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Time Magazine

June 15, 2009

Can the U.S. Contain Iran's Nuclear Ambitions?

By Massimo Calabresi

In late April the Swiss ambassador to Tehran arrived in Washington with a secret message for the small team in charge of Barack Obama's outreach to Iran. The rulers in Tehran were getting ready to release the American journalist Roxana Saberi, who had been charged with spying. But they wanted the U.S. to know that if she was freed, it would not be a concession; it would be a test. For more than two years, U.S. forces in Iraq had been holding three Iranian diplomats they believed were members of Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps, linked to terrorist attacks in the region. Iran was not asking for the three men to be released in exchange for Saberi. But Tehran would be watching for the U.S. response.

The Swiss ambassador's message (Switzerland handles American interests in Iran, since Tehran and Washington do not have diplomatic relations) arrived at a delicate moment. Obama had personally launched a goodwill campaign to improve relations with Iran and restart negotiations over its nuclear program. But Iran was stalling on Obama's offer of nuclear talks, and now the U.S. team, led by veteran diplomat Dennis Ross, had to figure out where the Saberi gambit fit in. Her potential release could be a sign that moderates in Tehran were on the rise, in which case the U.S. should reciprocate. Or it could be a ploy by hard-liners in Tehran, who oppose détente with the West, to get the three Iranians released. In that case, the U.S. should stand pat. So which way to jump? The U.S. has never been good at making sense of Tehran's knotty power structure, and the distrust is mutual: many in Iran suspect that the U.S. is looking for an excuse to attack their nation, as it did Iraq.

In the effort to bridge the gap between two adversaries who do not understand each other very well, Obama has turned to Ross, who was appointed special adviser for the gulf and southwest Asia by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Taciturn and relentless, he is tasked with orchestrating a global effort to lure Iran to the table and persuade it to curtail its nuclear program. So far, there's little sign of success. Which is why the U.S. is not just hoping that diplomacy will work; it is also laying the groundwork for what will happen if it fails. And failure to find a solution to the problem of Iran's nuclear ambitions could result in war.

In so high-stakes a game, Obama and Clinton have at least bought experience. Ross, 60, has been at the center of high-level U.S. diplomacy since the 1980s. Throughout Bill Clinton's presidency, he led U.S. efforts to secure peace between Israel and the Arabs. Ross helped shape Obama's position on Iran during the 2008 campaign, and as the President makes a goodwill trip through the region, much of the business he is conducting in Arab capitals is in furtherance of Ross's Iran plan.

The diplomat has his work cut out for him. Iran, which in 2003 was found to have established a large-scale uranium-enrichment program, badly wants to be a nuclear power, though it claims its ambitions are peaceful. And the clock is ticking; after Iran holds presidential elections on June 12 (with a second round, if needed, on June 19), the U.S. and Europe will again push for talks on the nuclear issue, senior Administration officials say. If Tehran's diplomats haven't shown a real willingness to respond by September, the U.S. and Europe will announce tough new sanctions. The urgency comes from the possibility that with its centrifuges spinning day and night, Iran could have enough low-enriched uranium to make the highly enriched fuel for a nuclear weapon, according to an American analysis of a Feb. 19 report by the International Atomic Energy Agency. Senior U.S. and European officials say that Israel, which views an Iranian nuclear weapon as an existential threat, has bluntly told the U.S., Germany and others, "If need be, we will have to act." That implies if all else fails, Israel would unilaterally attack Iran's nuclear facilities. The consequences of such an attack would be dire.

The Long War

There is nothing new about enmity between the U.S. and Iran; they have been in a sort of low-level war for 30 years. After the hostage crisis began in 1979, the U.S. seized Iranian assets and cut diplomatic relations. U.S. officials have

alleged that Iran was behind the 1983 bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut. During the Iran-Iraq war of 1980-88, the U.S. tilted toward Iraq. Following the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, President George W. Bush lumped Iran with Iraq and North Korea in an "axis of evil," embraced a policy of regime change in Tehran and rebuffed Iran's offer of talks in 2003. By 2008, Tehran was on the way to building a nuclear weapon, which it saw as advancing its defense.

From outside government, Ross watched these developments with increasing alarm. He became convinced that Obama could change the context of the relationship with Iran. An Obama presidency, he thought, could transform the Iranian image of America and "make it easier to explain your policies and get more of a hearing" from Tehran, Ross told me last July. "Iran's almost reflexive suspicion of the U.S. would be removed. That's not insignificant.")

Ross is not naive; he did not think a new President — and nothing more — would be enough to persuade Iran to give up its nuclear goals. So he and Obama put together a policy they called "bigger carrots, bigger sticks." Iran would get real benefits if it halted its pursuit of nuclear weapons and incur real costs if it did not.

The key, in Ross's view, is the state of Iran's economy. Though it sits on the world's third largest reserves of oil, Iran faces a growing economic crisis. The government is dependent on oil exports for 85% of its revenue, but Iran's aging production capacity is diminishing by about 500,000 bbl. per year, according to some analyses. What oil it can produce, it has little ability to refine, importing as much as 50% of its gasoline. In 2007, Iran imposed gas-rationing, which set off riots.

Ross wanted to target that economic vulnerability. "If you're really going to concentrate the Iranian mind to what they stand to lose, they're going to have to see that the economic price goes up dramatically from where it is right now," he explained. But to make sanctions work, countries like Germany, China and Russia would have to join in an economic crackdown. To get those countries on board, Ross wrote last year, "there may be value in enlisting Israel to send a high-level delegation privately to European capitals to make the point that while others feel they can live with a nuclear Iran, Israel does not have that luxury." The implications of such a message would get anyone's attention.

Working the Back Channels

At first, the "bigger carrots, bigger sticks" approach seemed to show promise. When, after eight years away, Ross returned to the State Department in early February, he quickly assembled a seven-person team and began working through a long list of moves. The first and still the most important came on March 20, when Obama gave a speech to Iranians on the holiday of Nowruz. The President made it clear that the U.S. would seek full normalization of relations with Iran, that it recognized Iran as an Islamic republic, that it would not pursue regime change there and that his Administration would talk about any issue Iran wanted to discuss, without conditions.

Ross then laid the carrots on thick, dispensing with the formal line that the U.S. doesn't talk to Iran. On the weekend of March 27, a U.S. diplomat discussed economic issues with his Iranian counterpart in Moscow. Days later, the U.S. special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Richard Holbrooke, met with Deputy Foreign Minister Mohammed Mehdi Akhundzadeh at an international conference in the Hague. At a Friends of Pakistan meeting in Tokyo, one of Holbrooke's diplomats met with his Iranian counterpart. And in a secret back-channel outreach in April, State Department staffers working for Ross got clearance from Tehran for a possible trip there this summer by a U.S. diplomat, according to a senior Administration official and a senior European diplomat.

As if all this striped-pants nicety were not enough, on April 8, the State Department announced it would join the Europeans, Russia and China in nuclear talks with Iran without condition — meaning that Iran could continue enriching uranium while all sides figured out how to start talking, a concession the U.S. had never made before. The U.S. also backed the package of Western incentives offered to Iran in July 2008 — including economic, humanitarian and development aid — and formally invited the Iranians to talk.

For a while, it looked as if Iran was going to smile back. According to senior U.S. and European diplomats, Saeed Jalili, Iran's representative at the nuclear talks, told Javier Solana, the European Union's foreign policy chief, that Iran would accept the invitation to talks. But then Jalili stalled, they say. By the end of the month, the U.S. and Europe concluded that Iran would not make a move before its presidential elections. Reflecting American distrust, the U.S. decided it would not reciprocate when Saberi was released on May 11; according to a senior Administration official, there has so far been no change in the status of the three Iranians held by American forces in Iraq, though the U.S. is considering releasing them to the Iraqis.

This tough line on the part of the U.S. should not be seen as a surprise. Ross's policy is straightforward; if bigger carrots don't work, try bigger sticks. If Tehran doesn't enter serious negotiations by September, the U.S. intends to unveil a raft of penalties. In return for U.S. participation in the nuclear talks, Ross got the Europeans to help plan sanctions that would target Iranian businesses that have nothing to do with the nuclear program. The U.S. wants

bans on insuring Iranian energy firms and any companies that do business with them. It also wants to stop credit guarantees for Iranian energy companies and those that work with them, and it wants to halt all investments in the energy sector. And Ross doesn't want to stop there. The U.S. has pushed Russia, a major trading partner of Iran's, to be ready to commit to sanctions on businesses unrelated to Iran's nuclear program — something Russia has resisted. In a secret letter in early February to Russian President Dmitri Medvedev, Obama wrote that the U.S. would abandon its plans for missile defense in Poland and the Czech Republic — which the U.S. has always justified by referring to an Iranian threat — if Russia would help bring Iran into compliance with its international nuclear obligations. Back home, Ross has persuaded Howard Berman, the top Democrat on the House Foreign Relations Committee, to flip positions and introduce a bill that would impose a ban on the sale of refined petroleum to Iran.

Being Nice to Be Nasty

It makes you wonder, is Ross really serious about dialogue with the mullahs? "He favors a pro forma attempt at negotiations with Iran, followed by far more severe sanctions or even military action if and when they fail," says Gary Sick, a former National Security Council staffer who is now a professor at Columbia University. The Iranians, too, seem to smell a trap, telling European diplomats that they fear that the U.S. is extending a hand to Iran only in an attempt to build a united coalition against them when talks fail. Indeed, on his May trip to the Persian Gulf, Ross carried a message for Iran's Arab neighbors, all of whom worry that Tehran will get nukes if Obama makes too nice. "Right now we're trying to make this work," a senior Administration official said, paraphrasing Ross's talking points. But, he continued, "by drawing everyone in, we're also setting a stage that creates a justification if this doesn't work, to do [pause] dramatically different things."

The U.S., Europe and Russia all insist Obama's offer of talks is genuine and remains on the table. Perhaps the presidential election in Iran will bring a significant change; perhaps Tehran will negotiate its nuclear program back into compliance with international treaties. But few of those involved in Iran policy expect such events to happen. Dennis Ross has spent the first months of the Obama Administration peeling carrots. Don't be surprised if you see him soon sharpening sticks.

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1902841,00.html?iid=tsmodule>

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Washington Post
5 June 2009

U.N. Inspectors Find Traces of Uranium at Second Site in Syria

By Joby Warrick

U.N. inspectors probing allegations of a clandestine nuclear program in Syria have discovered traces of uranium at a second location, fueling concerns among nuclear experts that the country was secretly planning to build nuclear weapons.

A report yesterday by the International Atomic Energy Agency said the uranium traces were discovered during routine testing at a small research reactor in Damascus, the capital, that is subject to U.N. oversight. Lab analysis showed the particles to be a form of chemically processed uranium -- a "type not included in Syria's declared inventory of nuclear material," the report said.

The traces were discovered on equipment known as "hot cells," suggesting to some independent experts that Syria was experimenting with techniques that could be used in a more sophisticated facility to isolate plutonium from spent reactor fuel.

"The presence and origin of such particles . . . needs to be understood," the agency said in its report. Syria has not yet offered a credible explanation for the particles, the report said.

U.N. inspectors collected the samples last year as the watchdog agency was simultaneously investigating allegations that Syria had secretly constructed a plutonium-production reactor on the Euphrates River near the village of Al Kibar. The partially constructed facility was destroyed by Israeli warplanes in September 2007.

Syria insists that the bombed facility was not nuclear-related. But the government's denials were shaken last year by the IAEA's discovery of traces of a specialized form of uranium in soil around the ruined facility. Syria has so far failed to provide a convincing explanation for those traces, either; moreover, it has refused IAEA requests for further visits to that bombed site, or to three other facilities that U.S. officials suspect may have been part of a nascent nuclear weapons program.

U.N. officials also are pressing Syria to explain purchases of large quantities of graphite and barium sulfate, both key elements in certain kinds of reactors.

The most recent discovery of uranium particles "implies at least some kind of experimentation" by Syria, said David Albright, a former U.N. nuclear inspector and president of the Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS). In the worst case, he said, they could indicate that Syria "has not abandoned its ambition" to explore nuclear weapons, he said.

In an unrelated report also issued yesterday, IAEA officials noted further progress by Iran increasing its production of low-enriched uranium, the fuel used in nuclear power plants. The agency said Iran is now feeding uranium into nearly 5,000 centrifuges -- the standard machine used for enrichment -- and has an additional 2,100 on standby. With further processing, the same machines could produce the high-enriched uranium used in nuclear bombs.

In an analysis of the IAEA's latest data, ISIS concluded that Iran's production rate for enriched uranium had shot up by 20 percent, compared with a comparable period last year.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/06/05/AR2009060503248.html>

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Boston Globe
June 8, 2009

Obama Seeks Global Uranium Fuel Bank

By Bryan Bender, Globe Staff

WASHINGTON - As part of a new strategy to stop Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons, President Obama plans to seek the creation of the first-ever international supply of uranium that would allow nations to obtain fuel for civilian nuclear reactors but limit the capacity to make bombs, according to senior administration officials.

Many arms-control specialists consider the idea of a "fuel bank" controlled by the International Atomic Energy Agency a key way to test the sincerity of Iranian leaders, who maintain that their enrichment program is only for civilian use and necessary because they cannot be assured of energy supplies from other countries.

Many specialists believe an internationally managed fuel bank could also remove the "peaceful use" justification for other nations that might be trying to use a civilian nuclear program as cover to make nuclear weapons.

"We want to give the Iranians an opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to peaceful nuclear energy and serve as a new model," said a top administration official involved in crafting arms-control policy. "What we can do is create a system of incentives where, as a practical matter for countries that want nuclear power, the best way to obtain their fuel and to handle fuel services is through a new international architecture."

The IAEA, the United Nations' nuclear watchdog, is also pursuing the fuel-bank idea, and in a pair of reports Friday highlighted the urgency of the issue. It said that Iran has expanded the number of centrifuges enriching uranium, making it more difficult for UN inspectors to keep track of the nation's disputed nuclear program. The agency also said it had discovered traces of processed uranium at a second site in Syria, where Israel in 2007 bombed a North Korean-designed reactor that US intelligence says was meant to produce weapons-grade plutonium.

Obama has outlined a goal of ridding the world of nuclear weapons and has pledged to reduce the US arsenal and take other steps toward that long-term vision. In his closely scrutinized speech to the Muslim world last week, he declared that "we have reached a decisive point" on the Iran nuclear weapons issue and that he is committed to "preventing a nuclear arms race in the Middle East that could lead this region and the world down a hugely dangerous path."

But he also said that "any nation - including Iran - should have the right to access peaceful nuclear power" if it follows nuclear weapons nonproliferation agreements.

The uranium fuel bank is a key building block of Obama's overall strategy, which is aimed at helping limit the further spread of the technology needed to build nuclear weapons - the same technology that provides nuclear energy.

The basic idea is to have a relatively small, but guaranteed supply of low-enriched uranium available as a backup should a country's supplies of civilian nuclear fuel from other nations be cut off for political or other reasons. Of the

dozen or so countries that now can enrich uranium, several - such as Brazil and South Africa - do so to guard against such disruptions, not to build nuclear weapons.

The most advanced proposal calls for the IAEA to maintain a uranium supply for purchase by member states. The agency has already received \$150 million in pledges from various countries and the Washington-based Nuclear Threat Initiative, a nonpartisan arms-control advocacy group. The agency's 35-member board of governors is scheduled to begin debating the issue at a meeting later this month.

Russia and Kazakhstan have offered to house an agency-supervised fuel bank, while Germany has called for the creation of a multinational enrichment company under the auspices of the IAEA.

"This is an idea that has pretty broad support," said Daryl G. Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association, a nonpartisan Washington think tank. "It addresses a problem that has been around for a long time. Nations that can make low-enriched uranium for nuclear power can use the same industrial capacity to make highly enriched uranium" for nuclear weapons.

Obama's support for the idea dates to his days as a senator from Illinois, when he cosponsored legislation calling for a US commitment to a fuel bank. The senior administration official, who was not authorized to speak publicly about internal deliberations, said Obama plans to discuss the issue with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev at a summit in Moscow next month.

But there remain significant political and economic hurdles to the fuel bank's creation, according to several US and European officials and nonproliferation specialists.

For example, some sectors of the nuclear power industry fear losing customers or profits if there is a new international provider of uranium. There are four main providers that sell nuclear energy fuel, one in Russia, one in the United States, one in France, and a German-British-Dutch consortium. But they can sell only to countries approved by their governments.

"Some in the industry are concerned that the material in the fuel bank may take away clients from them or the material could be dumped on the market [and] temporarily depress prices," said a European diplomat directly involved in the IAEA deliberations who was not authorized by his government to speak publicly.

Proponents, however, insist that at any given time the international supplies would be quite small and would have no measurable impact on the market.

For example, the Russian proposal calls for a supply of 120 tons of low-enriched uranium, according to IAEA documents obtained by the Globe, while the IAEA plan calls for between 60 tons and 80 tons - amounting to about a three-year supply for a 1,000-megawatt light water reactor, the most common type around the world, which produces enough electricity for about 1 million homes.

There is also skepticism from some non-nuclear nations who fear the move is designed to deprive them of their right under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to develop their own civilian nuclear power industries.

But an IAEA official insists the fuel bank would not have that effect. "No one is talking about restricting the rights of any country," said the official, who was not authorized to speak publicly about the issue.

Indeed, many specialists predict Iran will still insist on enriching uranium even with an international supply available for its nuclear reactors. But such a decision by Tehran would be new evidence that it has military uses in mind for its nuclear program and help build more international pressure to punish it.

Iran's refusal to take advantage of the fuel bank "may give the US and other countries a stronger argument that Iran's program is really designed to give them a nuclear weapon potential," Kimball said.

http://www.boston.com/news/nation/washington/articles/2009/06/08/with_eye_on_iran_obama_seeks_creation_of_world_uranium_fuel_bank/

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Daily Star – Lebanon
OPINION
Monday, June 08, 2009

Iran's Nuclear Program may Impose Hostile Stability

By Emily B. Landau

The first implication of Iran becoming a nuclear state will be to drive home the extreme helplessness of the international community in the face of a determined nuclear proliferator. This scenario will mark the failure to present a united and determined international front against Iran's defiance in the nuclear realm, a responsibility shared by all the actors that have faced Iran over the past seven years. The inability to secure the necessary international cooperation to implement painful economic sanctions as a prelude to more effective negotiations with Iran will be a particularly troubling aspect of that failure.

The ramifications of Iran attaining nuclear weapons will reverberate strongly both regionally and globally, especially if Iran decides to become an overt (rather than ambiguous) nuclear state, with proven missile capabilities to deliver nuclear warheads. Within the Middle East, a nuclear Iran means an even stronger regional presence that will gain an immediate and significant advantage over all of its non-nuclear neighbors. Due to Iran's already apparent hegemonic ambitions, the added status and potential for mass destruction will cast a heavy shadow over all.

But while Iran will seek to capitalize on this to impose its will on the region, the primary effect of nuclear weapons is psychological deterrence, which is a function of how other states react to their presence. It will take time before we see the real effect on inter-state dynamics and are able to appraise the full implications of Iran's enhanced regional potential.

In the meantime, however, fears among the non-nuclear states in the region are likely to push them more determinedly in the direction of attaining or developing their own nuclear capabilities. In a sense, this process is already under way: many regional states have expressed interest over the past three years in developing civilian nuclear programs. The United Arab Emirates has moved particularly quickly to conclude nuclear deals with France and the United States; but there are other serious contenders, not least Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The scenario of a chain reaction of nuclear proliferation is a dangerous one, although for most states this will mean a long and arduous process; these states are all parties to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and will thus have to proceed clandestinely. The sad reality is that the international community is unlikely to be better equipped to deal with these countries' nuclear ambitions than it was with Iran's - so if they are determined, they will probably get there.

Although the long, drawn-out process of seven or eight years of failed attempts to stop Iran through diplomacy will have left Israelis with no illusions as to the real prospects of their success, the news of a nuclear Iran will still be received in Israel with a degree of shock. It will be earth-shattering in the sense that it will eliminate a long-standing pillar of Israel's security and nuclear policy; and the frequent references to Iran as an existential threat will continue to ring in the ears of Israelis, eliciting fears that the fate of the country is now on the line. Surely the very fact that Iran is nuclear will introduce an unavoidable additional layer of caution whenever Israel contemplates action to confront threats to its security.

But because the stakes are so high, it is to be expected that both in the direct Israeli-Iranian context and with regard to broader regional dynamics, some kind of stability will ultimately begin to be established. The principles of the process will probably be similar to the US-Soviet experience - namely, mutual deterrent threats, then realization that nuclear exchange could result, beefed up missile defenses and finally some kind of tension-reduction process - but it remains to be seen what the specific path will be. A central question is just how dangerous it will get before new rules of the game for managing inter-state relations in the Middle East are put in place. The explosiveness of the region, especially due to Iran's ability to stir up tension and violence through Hamas and Hizbullah, does not bode well for the interim period.

At this advanced stage of Iran's nuclear activities, it is difficult to assess the implications of Iran going nuclear in isolation from the last effort to stop it. Will that be only a failed US negotiation effort or military action as well? As the US has signaled its distaste for military force and has given Israel a clear red light in this regard, the likely scenario at present is that this will come in the wake of a long, drawn-out and failed US attempt to engage Iran. After assuming the role of the major external player facing Iran, then abandoning both economic and military pressure, it will be primarily US President Barack Obama's failure when Iran ultimately goes nuclear. The US will be exposed globally as weak and ineffective, with an unsophisticated approach to negotiations.

And Obama's probable reaction once it is clear that Iran has become a nuclear state? Additional attempts to negotiate, no doubt - with Iran poised to get the best deal yet, at the expense of all

http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition_id=1&categ_id=5&article_id=102753#

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Moscow Times
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Kim Jong Il's Dangerous Ploy

By Alexander Lukin

Pyongyang's underground nuclear test on May 25 and its April 5 test-firing of a long-range missile that flew over Japan was condemned almost unanimously across the globe. It is easy to understand why. A small but extremely belligerent and reckless country has effectively undermined the existing system for resolving conflicts and providing collective security.

The nuclear militarization of North Korea creates a dangerous risk for Russia. Any nuclear explosion by North Korea in the region would mean that radiation fallout would inevitably spread to Russia's Far East. South Korea, China and Japan face the same risk.

Moreover, Pyongyang's actions have posed a serious challenge to the United Nations and other international organizations in terms of their fundamental ability to resolve global problems. This is clearly not in Russia's interests. Moscow has always supported the UN -- and above all the UN Security Council, where Russia is a permanent member -- as the leading authoritative international institution for resolving global conflicts.

North Korea produces very little other than weapons. The starving population is able to survive only because the country receives aid from China, its traditionally loyal Communist comrade, and Western nations.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Il's main strategy to secure a steady flow of food and oil is extortion -- foreign aid in return for a promise to back down from the military nuclear program. Pyongyang has used the ploy successfully for years.

It is important to note, however, that Washington also played a role in escalating the North Korean conflict. From the early 1990s, it has concluded agreements with Pyongyang that it never intended to carry out. The U.S. strategy was to buy time in hope that the Communist regime would collapse before it was able to develop nuclear weapons. In 1993, the United States promised to build two nuclear power stations in North Korea and to provide it with energy resources, but it never fulfilled that promise. One of the contributing factors to the current crisis was the U.S. failure to remove North Korea from its list of "terrorist states," although it had promised to do so as part of an agreement reached during the six-party negotiations in 2007, after which Pyongyang destroyed the cooling tower at its main nuclear facility in Yongbyon in June 2008. The United States finally started fulfilling some of its obligations after North Korea threatened to reverse its denuclearization program, but it was too little and too late in Pyongyang's opinion.

For its part, North Korea did not fulfill all of the terms of the 2007 agreement. It has not allowed international monitoring of its activities, even though the United States gave it \$5 million for a program to liquidate nuclear facilities.

In response to the crisis, Russia needs to take three basic steps. First, it should deploy missile defense batteries to protect its Far East region.

Second, Moscow should try to convince China, which holds the greatest economic leverage with North Korea, to take a tougher position against Pyongyang. Of course, China is concerned that if the Pyongyang regime collapses, it will result in a humanitarian catastrophe near its borders. Beijing also has no desire to see a newly unified, powerful and wealthy Korea allied with the United States. It might be necessary for Beijing and the other five members of the six-party negotiations to make a guarantee to Pyongyang that any sanctions or pressure they might apply are not intended to change the geopolitical situation on the Korean Peninsula. One good argument would be to point out that the North Korean threat is the main argument used by Japanese hardliners to justify building Japan's own full-fledged armed forces with the potential to initiate a war, something that is prohibited by Article 9 of the post-World War II Constitution imposed by the United States. China is also rightfully concerned about Kim's policies and should be concerned about Japan's aspirations to become an independent military force in the region.

Third, the Kremlin needs to explain to Washington that any failure to follow through on U.S. promises to North Korea will only exacerbate the problem. Moscow and Beijing could serve as mediators and guarantors to make sure that all obligations are met. As part of this agreement, of course, Kim must guarantee that North Korea will allow verification and negotiate on the particulars of any agreement without letting things reach another impasse.

It should be remembered, however, that the situation in North Korea could change at any moment, particularly since Kim's days are numbered.

<http://www.moscowtimes.ru/article/1016/42/378163.htm>

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Washington Post

OPINION

June 8, 2009

Reining In Pyongyang

By Henry A. Kissinger

The Obama administration entered office determined to give negotiations with North Korea every opportunity. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton hinted that she was seriously considering a visit to Pyongyang. Stephen Bosworth, a distinguished scholar and moderate diplomat, was appointed principal negotiator.

These overtures were vituperatively rejected. Pyongyang refuses to return to the negotiating table and has revoked all its previous concessions. It has restarted the nuclear reprocessing plant it had mothballed and has conducted nuclear weapons and missile tests. It has said the Korean Armistice Agreement of 1953 no longer applies.

The explanation for this may lie in a domestic struggle for succession to the clearly ailing "Dear Leader," Kim Jong Il. North Korea's leaders also seem to have recognized that no matter how conciliatory U.S. diplomacy, its goal of the abandonment of North Korea's nuclear weapons capability cannot be accepted. They apparently have concluded that no degree of political recognition could compensate them for abandoning the signal (and probably sole) achievement of their rule, for which they have obliged their population to accept unprecedented oppression. They may well calculate that weathering a period of international protest is their ticket to emerging as a de facto nuclear power.

Hence the issue for diplomacy has become whether the goal should be to manage North Korea's nuclear arsenal or to eliminate it. The administration has sent an interdepartmental team of senior officials to key countries to consult about the response. It will find no middle ground between the abandonment of the North Korean program and the status quo. Any policy that does not eliminate the North's nuclear military capability in effect acquiesces in its continuation. The negotiating process is on the verge of legitimizing North Korea's nuclear program by enabling Pyongyang to establish a fait accompli while diplomacy runs its stately course.

Acquiescence in the North Korean nuclear program would fly in the face of American foreign policy since we shepherded the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty through the international community in 1967, as well as of the policy President Obama put forward only two months ago in Prague. It would undermine the prospects of the proposed negotiations with Iran. If the North's methods of brazen confrontation are tolerated, nuclear proliferation could run out of control.

A long-term solution to the Korean nuclear problem cannot be achieved by America alone. Nor is it sustainable without the key players of Northeast Asia; that means China, South Korea, the United States and Japan, with an important role for Russia, as well. A wise diplomacy will move urgently to assemble the incentives and pressures to bring about the elimination of nuclear weapons and stockpiles from North Korea. It is not enough to demand unstated pressures from other affected countries, especially China. A concept for the political evolution of Northeast Asia is urgently needed.

China faces challenges that are perhaps more complex than even those facing the United States. If present trends continue, and if Pyongyang manages to maintain its nuclear capability through the inability of the parties to bring matters to a head, the proliferation of nuclear weapons throughout Northeast Asia and the Middle East becomes probable. China would then face nuclear weapons in all surrounding states in Northeast Asia and an unmanageable, nuclear-armed regime in Pyongyang. But if Beijing exercises the full panoply of its pressures without an accord with America and an understanding with the other parties, it has reason to fear chaos along its borders.

Too much of the commentary on the current crisis has concerned the deus ex machina of Chinese pressures on North Korea and complaints that Beijing has not implemented its full arsenal of possibilities. For China, the issue is not so much a negotiating position as concern about its consequences. If the Pyongyang regime is destabilized, the future of Northeast Asia would then have to be settled by deeply concerned parties amid a fast-moving crisis. They need to

know the American attitude and clarify their own for that contingency. A sensitive, thoughtful dialogue with China, rather than peremptory demands, is essential.

The outcome of such a dialogue is difficult to predict, but it cannot be managed unless America clarifies its own purposes to itself. A new argument in favor of acquiescence in North Korea's nuclear program contends that Pyongyang's conduct is really a cry for assistance against Chinese domination and thus deserves support rather than opprobrium. But turning North Korea into a ward of the United States is neither feasible nor acceptable to the countries whose support is imperative for a solution of the nuclear issue.

Furthermore, some public statements imply the United States will try to deal with specific North Korean threats rather than eliminate the capability to carry them out. They leave open with what determination Washington will pursue the elimination of the existing stockpile of North Korean nuclear weapons and fissionable materials. It is not possible to undertake both courses simultaneously.

De facto acquiescence in a North Korean nuclear program would require a reconsideration of U.S. strategic planning. More emphasis would need to be given to missile defense. It would be essential to redesign the American deterrent strategy in a world of multiple nuclear powers -- a challenge unprecedented in our experience. The enhanced role of non-state actors with respect to terrorism would have to be addressed. The concepts of deterrence against state actors are familiar, though not in a world of multiple nuclear powers. They have little or no relevance to non-state actors operating by stealth.

The ultimate issue is not regional but concerns the prospects for world order, especially for a Pacific political structure along the lines put forward by the thoughtful Australian prime minister, Kevin Rudd. There could scarcely be an issue more suited to cooperation among the Great Powers than nonproliferation, especially with regard to North Korea, a regime that is run by fanatics; located on the borders of China, Russia and South Korea; and within missile range of Japan. Still, the major countries have been unable to galvanize themselves into action.

In this multipolar world, many issues such as nuclear proliferation, energy and climate change require a concert approach. The major powers of the 21st century have proved to be heterogeneous and without much experience as part of a concert of powers. Connecting their purposes, however, needs to be their ultimate task if the world is to avoid the catastrophe of unchecked proliferation.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/06/07/AR2009060702097.html>

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