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Ha'aretz Daily – Israel
16 June 2009

Mossad: Iran will have Nuclear Bomb by 2014

By Haaretz Service

Mossad Chief Meir Dagan warned on Tuesday that Iran was capable of developing and launching its first nuclear weapon by 2014.

"Launching a bomb these days is no problem, technically speaking," Dagan told members of the Knesset Foreign Affairs Committee. "If the project has no technical glitches, and if Iran's program does not malfunction in any way, they will have a bomb to launch by 2014."

"This is a significant existential threat for the State of Israel. We must distance this threat," he said. The Mossad chief referred to the ongoing violence which has erupted in Tehran in the wake of a disputed presidential election as "an argument between Iran's elite?. This is an internal matter, not external."

Inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency found earlier this year that Iran has crossed the "technological threshold," and has built up one ton of enriched uranium.

If the material undergoes further processing at the Natanz enrichment facility, it will be sufficient to produce one nuclear bomb.

Military Intelligence Chief Amos Yadlin said in March that the Islamic Republic's strategy is not merely to produce one bomb, which could force them into a conflict with the world, but to enrich a large amount of fissionable material at a low level of 4.5 percent. But Iran claims that it needs to do this for civilian purposes only, Yadlin said.

<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1093357.html>

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Mainichi Daily News – Japan
17 June 2009

Lower House Approves Resolution Urging Nuclear Arms Reductions, Disarmament

The House of Representatives unanimously adopted a resolution at a plenary session on Tuesday calling for stepped up efforts for global nuclear arms reductions, disarmament and nonproliferation.

The first Diet resolution calling for nuclear disarmament states that "Japan, as the sole country to have suffered nuclear attacks, has the responsibility to take the lead in a campaign toward nuclear disarmament."

"The government should step up efforts toward nuclear disarmament, nuclear arms reductions and the prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons," the resolution says. It also calls for the establishment of an effective nuclear verification system.

It notes that U.S. President Barack Obama declared that the country will pursue a nuclear-free world and the United Nations Security Council adopted a resolution condemning North Korea for its nuclear test.

"The government must take this opportunity to strive to generate a global trend of nuclear disarmament -- in particular regional responses including the nuclear issue in North Korea," it says.

The resolution states that Japan should play a leading role in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference to be held in New York in 2010 and encourage other countries to support the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty to ensure that it will come into force at an early date.

Opposition parties proposed the resolution following President Obama's declaration that the U.S. will pursue a nuclear-free world, and discussed its details with the ruling coalition.

The House of Councillors is expected to pass a similar resolution at a plenary session on Wednesday.

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/news/20090616p2a00m0na014000c.html>

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Christian Science Monitor

June 16, 2009

CIA Declassifies Report on Israel's Nukes

By Walter Pincus

Washington Post

"We do not believe that Israel will embark on the development of nuclear weapons with the aim of actually starting a nuclear war," reads the declassified 48-year-old CIA Special National Intelligence Estimate.

The estimate, publicly released June 5 by George Washington University's National Security Archives, continues, "Possession of a nuclear weapon capability, or even the prospect of achieving it, would clearly give Israel a greater sense of security, self-confidence and assertiveness."

"In any public announcement concerning their nuclear reactor program, the Israelis would almost certainly stress the peaceful nature of their efforts, but they would also, as time goes on, make plain that henceforth Israel is a power to be accorded more respect than either its friends or its enemies have hitherto given it," reads the estimate.

The December 1960 intelligence analysis, which still has elements redacted, is interesting in today's context as the Obama administration confronts the nuclear weapon ambitions of North Korea and Iran.

Does the understanding of why a friendly country seeks a nuclear weapon apply when the analysis involves two countries that are potential U.S. enemies? No, is the safe bet when public reaction is considered.

But shouldn't intelligence analysts recognize that friends - and potential foes - may have similar reasoning for nuclear ambitions: to deter potential invaders and to promote their standing among allies and enemies alike? Wouldn't that be worth understanding even in unpredictable and potentially unstable governments? It might when trying to talk them out of it - though it has to be noted that it didn't help with Israel, a stable ally.

The authors of the 1960 estimate suggest the possession of a nuclear weapon - in this case, Israel's - would be used to deter others from attacking it. "It probably would make it increasingly clear that an Arab attack on Israel would be met with nuclear retaliation," reads the estimate.

On the diplomatic side, however, the analysts saw that a nuclear weapon could also make a country more of a challenge. The estimate noted: "Israel would be less inclined than ever to make concessions and would press its interests in the area more vigorously."

That certainly rings true today for North Korea and Iran.

In another ironic twist, the estimate said Israel's enemy, the UAR (United Arab Republic, the then-combination of Egypt and Syria) "as a last desperate resort ... might try to destroy the Israeli program through preventive military action."

U.S. military experts today have argued that any Israeli attempt to knock out Iran's nuclear program would fail and create havoc. Back in 1960, American intelligence analysts believed that the main Arab leader attempting such an effort against Israel also would have been counterproductive. "Given present relative military capabilities," the estimate said, Gen. Gamal Abdel Nasser, UAR president, "would almost certainly realize that such military action would precipitate a war which he is likely to lose."

According to recent estimates, Israel has approximately 200 nuclear bombs and warheads.

<http://features.csmonitor.com/politics/2009/06/16/cia-declassifies-report-on-israel%E2%80%99s-nukes/>

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Reuters

June 16, 2009

Tight-Fisted Donors "Bastardizing" IAEA: ElBaradei

By Mark Heinrich

VIENNA (Reuters) - Countries balking at raising the International Atomic Energy Agency's budget have "bastardized" the U.N. watchdog to the point where it is struggling to combat growing proliferation threats, the IAEA chief said on Tuesday.

"If you come to me and say in your wisdom to cut here and cut there, I and my colleagues will not assume responsibility if in a couple of years we see another Chernobyl (nuclear plant meltdown) or a nuclear terrorist or a clandestine nuclear (weapons) program," Director-General Mohamed ElBaradei told a closed-door meeting of the IAEA's 35-nation board of governors. The governing body has for months held up a request for an 11 percent budget hike, with some major donors insisting on further zero real growth at a time of financial crisis while danger mounts of atom bomb know-how reaching volatile regions.

The United States, the IAEA's biggest financier, said on Tuesday it was raising its budget contribution by 20 percent, or \$10 million, in keeping with President Barack Obama's call for IAEA funds to be doubled over the next four years.

But the board again failed to agree a new budget at this week's meeting and ElBaradei, who has welcomed Obama's break from longtime U.S. zero-real-growth funding policy, said penny-pinching imperiled the agency's credibility.

"What you are reaping today is what you have sewn for the past 20 years (of tight funding)," he said in unusually undiplomatic remarks betraying frustration of IAEA staff trying to uphold a mandate covering non-proliferation inspections and aid for nuclear security, safety and peaceful uses of the atom.

"BASTARDISATION" OF KEY U.N. AGENCY

"The whole idea that we now have to borrow money or stretch out our hat and say please give us money to do security, safety, is really a bastardization of an international organization that is supposed to be a spearhead of peace and security," ElBaradei said on a tape of his speech obtained by Reuters.

"We will not assume responsibility for a budget which I know is not ... right. I will be cheating world public opinion to create the impression that we are doing what we're supposed to do, when we know we don't have the money to do it," he said.

The board was expected to reconvene in emergency session in coming weeks in another bid to pass a budget. It must be done in time for rubber-stamping by all 145 member states in September.

Among the IAEA's mounting challenges are investigations into suspected covert nuclear work in Iran and Syria that the United States and some allies suspect was intended to yield atom bombs.

The specter of militant groups such as al Qaeda stealthily acquiring materials and knowledge for a nuclear weapons is another specter haunting the non-proliferation cause.

The IAEA will also have to grapple in coming years with demand from 63 countries, some in the proliferation-prone Middle East, for help in developing nuclear energy industries.

The budget deadlock has become a theme in an election race to succeed ElBaradei, who retires in November.

Japan is the IAEA's second biggest donor and is among major powers clinging to a zero real growth funding approach. Japan is also fielding the leading contender to replace ElBaradei.

ElBaradei's draft proposal seeks a rise in the operational regular budget to 336 million euros (\$466.8 million) in 2010 and for a 1.5 percent increase in 2011 to 341 million euros.

The bulk of IAEA funding comes from Western member states on a voluntary basis. Some of the cash is tied to certain issues on which the money must be spent, or other politicized conditions.

The increased U.S. contribution would help fund core IAEA activities not covered by the regular budget including security of nuclear installations and upgraded equipment for inspectors.

U.S. envoy Geoff Pyatt told the governors their inability to reach the required consensus on a budget was regrettable since a "significant real increase" was urgently needed.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUSTRE55F5Q320090616?sp=true>

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New York Times
June 17, 2009

U.N. Atomic Energy Chief Says Iran Wants Bomb Technology

By ALAN COWELL

PARIS — Mohamed ElBaradei, the chief of the United Nations nuclear watchdog agency, said it was his “gut feeling” that Iran’s leaders wanted the technology to build nuclear weapons “to send a message to their neighbors, to the rest of the world: ‘Don’t mess with us.’ ”

He spoke in a BBC interview broadcast Tuesday and Wednesday as protesters took to the streets of Tehran and other Iranian cities, demanding that last Friday’s disputed election result be overturned and confronting President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad with the leadership’s biggest domestic challenge since the Islamic Revolution three decades ago.

Dr. ElBaradei has made similar points in the past, officials at the International Atomic Energy Agency, of which he is director general, said Wednesday, but his latest remarks were less hedged with diplomatic caveats than previously.

Dr. ElBaradei, whose term of office is to expire in November, said in the interview that countries in possession of nuclear weapons were treated differently from others, citing the example of North Korea, which was invited to negotiations while Iraq under Saddam Hussein — which did not have a nuclear capacity — was “pulverized.”

“It is my gut feeling that Iran would like to have the technology to enable it to have nuclear weapons,” Dr. ElBaradei said in the interview at the organization’s headquarters in Vienna.

“They want to send a message to their neighbors, to the rest of the world, ‘Don’t mess with us,’ ” he said, urging outside powers to engage with Iran to remove the incentive for making a bomb.

He said he believed that Iran’s “ultimate aim” was to be “recognized as a major power in the Middle East.”

Nuclear weapons technology, he said, was “the road to get that recognition, to get that power and prestige.

“It is also an insurance policy against what they have heard in the past about regime change.”

Iran has publicly acknowledged that it is expanding its program to enrich uranium, a potential precursor to building a bomb, but it denies that it is seeking to acquire nuclear weapons, saying its enrichment program is for civilian purposes. Mr. Ahmadinejad insists that Iran is entitled to develop its nuclear program.

The disputed election result has deepened concerns in the region about the Iranian nuclear program. In Israel, which has hinted that it may carry out a military strike on Iran to disable its nuclear equipment, officials said soon after the announcement of the election results that Mr. Ahmadinejad’s victory underscored the threat from Tehran and the need for a tough response rather than patient diplomacy.

But Arab diplomats and political analysts said that they did not believe that Iran would change its nuclear policy regardless of who won the election — Mr. Ahmadinejad or Mir Hussein Moussavi, the main opposition candidate who says the election was so flawed that its result should be annulled to make way for a new vote.

But administration officials in Washington have said it is not clear that Mr. Moussavi would be any more flexible about Iran’s nuclear ambitions than Mr. Ahmadinejad has been.

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/18/world/18nuke.html?_r=1&em

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Straits Times – Singapore
June 17, 2009

China Builds Railway to Nuke Site

BEIJING - CHINA has started building a railway to a remote desert region known as 'the sea of death', state media said Wednesday, a place once used as a test site for nuclear bombs.

The 360-kilometre railroad from the China-Mongolian border to the Lop Nur area in the northwestern region of Xinjiang will help the nation in its quest for resources, the Xinhua news agency reported.

It will improve access to potassium salt, an ingredient in some fertiliser products, and will also make it easier to reach important coal reserves in the region, according to the agency.

But apart from that, the railroad, expected to be completed in two years, will also help open up one of China's most mysterious areas.

Lop Nur was home to a little-known civilisation, Luolan, which disappeared in the third century, possibly because of an environmental disaster.

In 1980, archaeologist Peng Jiamu went missing on his fourth expedition to Lop Nur and was never found.

Lop Nur was also picked as the site for China's first nuclear bomb detonations in the 1960s. -- AFP

http://www.straitstimes.com/Breaking%2BNews/Asia/Story/STIStory_391650.html

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Agence France-Presse (AFP)
Hosted News by Google
17 June 2009

Bombshell: Iran Envoy in Nuclear Weapon Slip-Up

VIENNA (AFP) — Iran's envoy to the UN atomic watchdog caused a buzz among journalists on Wednesday when he apparently misspoke and said his country had the right to a nuclear weapon.

After saying as usual that Iran was only pursuing nuclear energy for civilian purposes, Ali Asghar Soltanieh strayed alarmingly from the Islamic republic's usual line.

"The whole Iranian nation are united... on (the) inalienable right of (having a) nuclear weapon," the envoy to the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency said.

He later got back on track, concluding: "We will not deprive our great nation from benefitting from peaceful uses of nuclear energy."

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 programme amid fears from Western powers that it wants to build an atomic bomb.

But Tehran has ignored such calls, insisting it wants to produce civilian nuclear energy.

<http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5jw0vXnsf2qDqmPikKzjsi-hr8iaQ>

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London Daily Telegraph
17 June 2009

Trident Nuclear Deterrent Should Be Scrapped, says Nick Clegg

By Murray Wardrop

Mr Clegg became the most senior politician to say that Trident should not be renewed when it expires in 2024.

He said that Britain still needs a deterrent but that a "like for like" replacement for the submarine-based missile system was not necessary in the post-cold war world.

The country also cannot now afford to fund the multi-billion pound programme due to the dire state of the public finances, Mr Clegg added.

In an interview with *The Guardian*, Mr Clegg said: "New leadership in Russia, new leadership obviously in the White House and a wider geostrategic appreciation means that a Cold War missile system designed to penetrate Soviet defences and land in Moscow and St Petersburg at any time, in any weather, from any location anywhere round the planet, is not our foremost security challenge now.

"Given that we need to ask ourselves big questions about what our priorities are, we have arrived at the view that a like-for-like Trident replacement is not the right thing to do."

Speaking to the BBC, he added: "We have to be realistic and candid about what we can and can't afford as a nation."

Both Labour and the Conservatives support Trident, although 97 Labour MPs opposed the move by Tony Blair to renew it in 2007.

Liam Fox, the shadow defence secretary, suggested last month that the Trident replacement may be cut from four Vanguard class submarines to three under a Tory government, due to pressure on public funds.

Mr Clegg's stance marks a departure for the Lib Dems, who although long sceptical about Trident, have previously not dismissed the programme out of hand.

In the leadership contest of 2007, Mr Clegg clashed with his rival Chris Huhne – a firm opponent of Trident – over the subject but said he had now "changed his mind".

Mr Clegg added: "I have grappled with this, because it is not where I started in my leadership. But the world has changed, the facts have changed, you've got to change with them."

Mr Clegg said that while he had asked former party leader Sir Menzies Campbell to look at whether Britain could operate a scaled-down deterrent, it would be an "unhappy event" if his review led to Britain retaining a nuclear capability.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newsttopics/politics/defence/5554410/Trident-nuclear-deterrent-should-be-scrapped-says-Nick-Clegg.html>

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Global Security Newswire
June 18, 2009

Iran Denies Seeking Nuclear-Weapon Capability

Iran yesterday rejected a suggestion by the top U.N. nuclear official that it was seeking the capability to build nuclear weapons, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported (see *GSN*, June 17).

"It is my gut feeling that Iran would like to have the technology to enable it to have nuclear weapons," International Atomic Energy Agency chief Mohamed ElBaradei told the BBC this week. The United States and other Western nations suspect that Iran's nuclear program is geared toward nuclear-weapon development, an allegation that Tehran has denied for years.

"If you quoted him right, he is absolutely wrong," Ali Asghar Soltanieh, Iran's ambassador to the U.N. nuclear watchdog, told reporters. "We don't have any intention of having a nuclear weapon at all. A nuclear weapon is not in our defense doctrine."

"We do not consider a nuclear weapon (to be) any advantage. We consider it as [a] vulnerability for us. We never had this and we will never have [a] nuclear weapon," Soltanieh said.

In an apparent verbal slip-up, he added: "The whole Iranian nation are united ... on (the) inalienable right of (having) nuclear weapon."

Asked to elaborate, Soltanieh corrected himself.

"I said our peaceful uses of nuclear energy -- and of course our condemnation of nuclear weapons," he said. "We will not deprive our great nation from benefiting from peaceful uses of nuclear energy" (Simon Morgan, *Sydney Morning Herald*, June 18).

In a reference to the United States, Soltanieh called on "those who have declared a change in their foreign policy" to abandon "provocative conducts" in favor of "dialogue," the Associated Press reported.

The United States blamed Iran for delaying dialogue by refusing to cooperate with a U.N. investigation of its nuclear activities or to halt its uranium enrichment program, an effort that could produce nuclear power plant fuel but also nuclear weapon material.

"Iran's current posture ... deeply undermines Iran's assertion that its nuclear program is exclusively peaceful in nature," Geoffrey Pyatt, U.S. deputy chief of mission, said at a closed meeting of the IAEA governing board.

Washington remains open to freezing new sanctions if Tehran agrees to suspend its uranium enrichment work, Pyatt said (George Jahn, Associated Press I/Yahoo!News, June 17).

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton yesterday reaffirmed the Obama administration's commitment to pursuing nuclear dialogue with Iran despite the contested results of the country's presidential election.

"We are obviously waiting to see the outcome of the internal Iranian processes, but our intent is to pursue whatever opportunities might exist in the future with Iran" to engage in discussions, Clinton said (Robert Burns, Associated Press II/Google News, June 17).

Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who wields absolute authority over Iran's nuclear policies, is unlikely to be unseated despite the widespread protests now gripping the country, a high-level administration official told the *Washington Post*.

"We can't lose sight of the fact that [the Iranians] are enriching uranium every day," the official said. "They were a threat before the election. They are a threat today, and the clock keeps ticking" (Glenn Kessler, *Washington Post*, June 18).

The disputed election has the potential to be a "game changer" on Iran's nuclear policy, nonproliferation expert Joseph Cirincione, president of the Ploughshares Fund, wrote in the Huffington Post yesterday.

"This is no longer Khamenei's Iran," he wrote. "The clerical regime has been delegitimized for millions of Iranians. Even under the best case for the regime -- a recount that declares [incumbent President Mahmoud] Ahmadinejad the winner by a majority -- the president will be weakened. He will be the imposed leader, not the hero of the disfranchised against the corrupt elite. He will be unable to use the nuclear issue to stir nationalist passions, posing as the hero-president defending the nation against the oppressive West. He will be the oppressor."

"The [nuclear] program has nothing to do with Iran's real problems. It offers no solution to the economy, to equality, to security. It is a drain on the country, not its salvation. It will not be abandoned quickly, but its role and importance could be greatly reduced, its progress slowed, its threat contained," he wrote (Joseph Cirincione, Huffington Post, June 17).

http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20090618_4401.php

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Washington Post
June 16, 2009

U.S. to Confront, Not Board, North Korean Ships

By DAVID E. SANGER

WASHINGTON — The Obama administration will order the Navy to hail and request permission to inspect North Korean ships at sea suspected of carrying arms or nuclear technology, but will not board them by force, senior administration officials said Monday.

The new effort to intercept North Korean ships, and track them to their next port, where Washington will press for the inspections they refused at sea, is part of what the officials described as "vigorous enforcement" of the United Nations Security Council resolution approved Friday.

The planned American action stops just short of the forced inspections that North Korea has said that it would regard as an act of war. Still, the administration's plans, if fully executed, would amount to the most confrontational approach taken by the United States in dealing with North Korea in years, and carries a risk of escalating tensions at a time when North Korea has been carrying out missile and nuclear tests.

In discussing President Obama's strategy on Monday, administration officials said that the United States would report any ship that refused inspection to the Security Council. While the Navy and American intelligence agencies continued to track the ship, the administration would mount a vigorous diplomatic effort to insist that the inspections be carried out by any country that allowed the vessel into port.

The officials said that they believed that China, once a close cold war ally, would also enforce the new sanctions, which also require countries to refuse to refuel or resupply ships suspected of carrying out arms and nuclear technology.

"China will implement the resolution earnestly," said Qin Gang, a spokesman for the Chinese Foreign Ministry, said.

One official in Washington said the administration was told by their Chinese counterparts that China "would not have signed on to this resolution unless they intended to enforce it."

The strategy of ordering ships to stop but not provoking military action by boarding them was negotiated among Washington, Beijing and Moscow. It is unclear to what degree South Korea or Japan, at various times bitter adversaries of North Korea, would order their naval forces to join in the effort to intercept suspected shipments at sea, largely because of fears about what would happen if North Korean ships opened fire.

A senior administration official said Monday evening that the United States believed that it already had sufficient intelligence and naval assets in the Sea of Japan to track North Korean ships and flights. The country's cargo fleet is relatively small, and the North is wary, officials say, of entrusting shipments banned by the United Nations to Panamanian-flagged freighters or those from other countries.

Until now, American interceptions of North Korean ships have been rare. Early in the Bush administration, a shipment of missiles to Yemen was discovered, but the United States permitted the shipment to go through after the Yemenis said they had paid for the missiles and expected delivery. Under the new United Nations resolution, American officials said they now had the authority to seize such shipments.

The senior administration officials outlined Mr. Obama's approach a day before the president was to meet for the first time on Tuesday with South Korea's president, Lee Myung-bak, a conservative who has been far more confrontational in his dealings with North Korea than most of his predecessors.

The resolution authorizes nations to seek to stop suspect North Korean shipments on the high seas, but they do not authorize forcible boarding or inspections. "The captains will be confronted," one official said, speaking on the condition of anonymity because he was discussing a security operation that America's key allies had only been partially briefed on.

Even if they refused to allow inspections, the official said, "These guys aren't going to get very far."

While the captain of a ship may refuse inspection, as the North Koreans almost certainly would, the Obama administration officials noted that most North Korean vessels have limited range and would have to seek out ports in search of fuel and supplies.

American officials believe that previous North Korean shipments of nuclear technology and missiles have gone undetected. The North Koreans were deeply involved in the construction of a reactor in Syria until September 2007, when the reactor was destroyed in an Israeli air raid. But no ships or aircraft carrying parts for that reactor were ever found.

Mr. Obama's decisions about North Korea stem from a fundamentally different assessment of the North's intentions than that of previous administrations. Nearly 16 years of on-and-off negotiations — punctuated by major crises in 1994 and 2003 — were based on an assumption that ultimately, the North was willing to give up its nuclear capability.

A review, carried out by the Obama administration during its first month in office, concluded that North Korea had no intention of trading away what it calls its "nuclear deterrent" in return for food, fuel and security guarantees.

Mr. Obama's aides have said that while the new president is willing to re-engage in either the talks with North Korea and its neighbors, or in direct bilateral discussions, he will not agree to an incremental dismantlement of the North's nuclear facilities.

"There are ways to do this that are truly irreversible," said one of Mr. Obama's aides, declining to be specific.

North Korea is already working to reverse the dismantlement of some of its facilities negotiated in Mr. Bush's last days in office.

In the weeks ahead of and after its second nuclear test, conducted May 25, North Korea has disavowed its past commitments to give up those weapons, and said it would never bow to the demands of the United States, its allies, or the United Nations. On Saturday the North said that it would reprocess its remaining stockpile of spent nuclear fuel into plutonium, adding to an existing stockpile believed sufficient to make six or eight weapons.

Such announcements have heightened fears that North Korea's next step could be to sell more of its nuclear or missile technology, one of the few profitable exports of a broken, starving country. The result is that Mr. Obama, in his first year in office, is putting into effect many of the harshest steps against North Korea that were advocated by conservatives in the Bush White House, including Vice President Dick Cheney.

The new approach, officials said, will also exploit elements of the Security Council resolution to try to close down the subsidiaries of North Korean missile makers in China, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East, where the North has its biggest customers.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/17/world/asia/17korea.html?ref=global-home>

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Canberra Times
16 June 2009

Fears of More Test Sites in N Korea

BY HYUNG-JIN KIM
IN SEOUL

North Korea may have built more underground nuclear test sites in the north-eastern district, where it staged its first two tests, a news report says.

South Korean intelligence sources quoted by Yonhap news agency yesterday said the North could have built two or three such sites in and around Punggyeri in Kilju district near the coast.

US intelligence sources quoted by US television networks said last week the North intended to respond to new United Nations sanctions with a third nuclear test.

A source told Yonhap, "There are no signs yet of preparations for a third test."

JoongAng Ilbo newspaper, quoting intelligence sources, said South Korean and US officials had intensified satellite monitoring of 11 underground site for a possible test.

It said some sites were in the north of the country and included Kumchang-ri in the north-west, which came under suspicion in 1998 as a possible hidden atomic facility.

The United States gave the North 600,000 tonnes of food aid in return for permission to inspect the site but US visits in 1999 revealed only empty tunnels.

An intelligence source said the North's activities were being closely monitored but it was not true that 11 sites were being watched.

"It's not easy to pick a multiple number of possible nuclear test sites and closely monitor all of them," the official said.

South Korea's President said the country's alliance with the US was key to resolving North Korea's nuclear and missile threats, before he flew to Washington for a summit with President Barack Obama.

The summit, scheduled for today, comes in the wake of North Korea's weekend declaration that it would step up its nuclear bomb-making program. It also threatened war with any country that tries to stop its ships on the high seas as part of new UN Security Council sanctions passed in response to the May 25 nuclear test.

President Lee Myung-bak said, "We cannot stress enough the importance of diplomacy at a time when a security crisis is intensifying due to North Korea's nuclear and missile threats. In particular, the South Korea-US diplomacy is key to that diplomacy. I will use this summit to reconfirm the strong Korea-US alliance."

The strong ties between South Korea and the US are a thorn in the side of North Korea, which accuses the two countries of a desire to topple the communist regime.

The two Koreas technically remain at war because their three-year conflict ended in a truce, not a peace treaty, in 1953, and they remain divided by a heavily fortified border. The United States has 28,500 troops in South Korea.

The US fears North Korea will sell its nuclear technology to rogue nations, spreading the atomic threat. North Korea is believed to have enough weaponised plutonium for at least half a dozen atomic bombs. It has threatened to weaponise all of its plutonium. Both plutonium and uranium are key ingredients for making atomic bombs. AFP/AP

<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/news/world/world/general/fears-of-more-test-sites-in-n-korea/1541443.aspx?storypage=0>

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Global Security Newswire
June 16, 2009

Work Continues on New North Korean ICBM Launch Site

North Korea is making progress on construction of a new site designed to launch ICBMs, Agence France-Presse reported today (see *GSN*, June 8).

The Dongchang-ri site, on the country's northwest coast, appears now to have a launch structure and a hangar, according to the South Korean newspaper *Chosun Ilbo*.

"Large girders have recently been installed and the two or three months of preparatory work at the launchpad have been completed," a South Korean government source told the newspaper.

"However, no radar has been set up and no missile has been brought to the launchpad," the source added. "A launch is not imminent."

North Korea this year has already conducted a number of missile tests and its second underground nuclear blast (see related *GSN* story, today). Reports have indicated that the state could launch another long-range missile and several medium-range weapons.

Judging by satellite photos, the launch structure appears to be approximately 165 feet in height -- nearly 60 feet taller than its counterpart at Musudan-ri, the North's other long-range missile site. At that height, it should be able to accommodate a 130-foot missile (Agence France-Presse/Spacewar.com, June 16).

http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20090616_5267.php

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London Guardian
17 June 2009

North Korea Threatens Merciless Attack If It Is Provoked

Justin McCurry in Tokyo

North Korea today warned that it would launch a "merciless" attack if provoked by the US and its allies, hours after President Barack Obama described the state's nuclear and missile programmes as a "grave threat" to the world.

"If the US and its followers infringe upon our republic's sovereignty even a bit, our military and people will launch a one hundred or one thousandfold retaliation with [a] merciless military strike," the state-controlled Minju Joson newspaper said.

The newspaper described Obama as a hypocrite for supporting a nuclear-free world while making what it claimed were "frantic efforts" to develop new nuclear weapons at home. "The nuclear programme is not the monopoly of the US," it said.

Russia, which shares a border with North Korea, quickly responded that any missile heading for Russian airspace would be promptly shot down. "We will see it and shoot it down," the deputy defence minister, Viktor Popovkin, said, according to Interfax.

The North Korean warning came as reports in Japan and South Korea said the regime could be preparing to test launch two long-range ballistic missiles, possibly in retaliation against sanctions agreed by the UN security council at the weekend.

The security council imposed stiffer measures as punishment for North Korea's controlled nuclear explosion last month, including a ban on all weapons exports from North Korea and the import of all but small arms.

The security council also called on member states to stop and search North Korean ships suspected of carrying nuclear and ballistic weapons technology.

Obama said today that every effort would be made to enforce the sanctions. While he repeated his offer of negotiations, Obama said that "belligerent, provocative behaviour that threatens neighbours will be met with significant and serious enforcement of sanctions that are in place".

A South Korean newspaper reported that North Korea had started withdrawing money from bank accounts in Macau to prevent it from being frozen under UN sanctions.

North Korea has responded to UN action by threatening to conduct more missile launches, enrich uranium and weaponise all its plutonium. There are also fears that it is preparing to carry out another nuclear test, its third since October 2006.

Reports in South Korea said a train capable of transporting intercontinental ballistic missiles had been spotted arriving at a launch site in Musudan-ri on the north-east coast, weeks after it had taken a missile to a newer site in the north-west.

Any tests would be likely to involve an improved version of the Taepodong-2 missile, which has a theoretical range of 4,800 km, enough to put it within striking distance of Alaska. In previous tests the missile has either failed or fallen harmlessly into the Pacific ocean.

A senior US military official warned this week that North Korea could pose a real threat to the US west coast in "three to five years" if its missile development continued unchecked.

"It does not include how long it takes to build that warhead," General James Cartwright, vice-chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, told a senate hearing on missile defence. "And that assumes a lot of luck on their part in moving forward."

North Korea's rhetorical outbursts serve two purposes: to intimidate its enemies and whip up support for the regime at home.

The country's leader, Kim Jong-il, is consolidating his position as he prepares to hand over power to his youngest son, Kim Jong-un.

Today North Korea denied Japanese media reports that Jong-un had flown to Beijing earlier this month to meet the Chinese president, Hu Jintao.

The Asahi Shimbun newspaper said Jong-un, 26, had told Chinese officials he held a senior position in the ruling Korean workers' party and had been officially anointed to succeed his ailing father, who suffered a stroke last summer.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/jun/17/north-korea-threatens-merciless-attack>

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China View
17 June 2009

DPRK's Nuclear Programs are for "Self-Defense": Rodong Sinmun

PYONGYANG, June 17 (Xinhua) -- The nuclear programs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) was not intended to threaten anyone, as it was a measure for "self-defense," the official Rodong Sinmun said on Wednesday.

The United States is "pushing the situation on the Korean Peninsula to the brink of war by massively deploying armed forces in South Korea and its vicinity," the newspaper said in a commentary.

The U.S. was using the DPRK's nuclear test as a pretext for its "invasion of the DPRK," it said, adding that the DPRK would "decisively counter the enemy's confrontation with all-out confrontation."

In a separate commentary, the newspaper said the purpose of the DPRK building up of its military deterrent was to guarantee its security.

The DPRK "will not imperil South Korea under any circumstances," it said.

The UN Security Council on Friday unanimously approved wider sanctions against the DPRK over its May 25 nuclear test.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-06/17/content_11556863.htm

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Los Angeles Times

June 17, 2009

U.S. May Be In N. Korea Missile Range In 3 Years

By Julian E. Barnes

WASHINGTON -- North Korea may be able to overcome technical difficulties and assemble a missile capable of hitting West Coast cities within three years, a top Defense Department official said Tuesday, but it is unlikely to be able to deliver a nuclear warhead in that time frame.

The U.S. assessment came as North Korea's rulers show signs of preparing for additional weapons tests in the face of international condemnation and new United Nations sanctions.

The estimate of three to five years was provided in congressional testimony by Marine Gen. James Cartwright, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who previously oversaw America's nuclear forces as head of Strategic Command. It follows North Korea's most recent tests, including a nuclear detonation last month and a multistage missile launch in April that indicated progress but also highlighted flaws in the country's technology.

At the White House, President Obama met Tuesday with South Korea's president, saying he would end the cycle in which the North Korean government provokes international crises to obtain aid.

North Korea in the past has promised to curtail its nuclear program in exchange for energy and economic aid.

"This is a pattern they've come to expect," Obama said. "We are going to break that pattern."

At a news conference with President Lee Myung-bak of South Korea, Obama called North Korea a "grave threat." He emphasized that a chief U.S. concern is that North Korea may spread nuclear technology to other countries or extremist groups. But he also stressed the importance of negotiations.

Cartwright outlined the potential threat posed by North Korean missiles in testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee. North Korea's Taepodong 2 missile is designed to reach the West Coast of the U.S., but test launches to date have been partial failures.

Analysts believe the Taepodong 2 is inaccurate and so far has failed to reach a third stage, a critical leap to be able to hit the United States.

Cartwright said that in three to five years, the government in Pyongyang might be able to overcome its technical problems.

But he said that time frame did not include development of a warhead.

He did not estimate how long it might take the communist regime to develop a warhead small enough to put on a long-range missile.

Cartwright also stressed that his assessment represented an estimate.

"My crystal ball's not going to be any better than anyone else's," he said.

Under questioning from Sen. Evan Bayh (D-Ind.), Cartwright said he was "90%-plus" confident that the U.S. could shoot down a missile launched at the United States from North Korea.

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates has proposed trimming the overall U.S. missile defense budget, but has requested \$900 million to maintain and improve interceptor missiles now based in California and Alaska.

North Korea detonated a nuclear device last month, its second test in three years. Some U.S. officials have said North Korea may be making preparations for a third nuclear test.

William J. Lynn, the No. 2 Pentagon official, said that although North Korea's future behavior was unpredictable, Pyongyang had accelerated its missile and nuclear tests, justifying additional U.S. investment in defensive systems.

"It could present a threat to the U.S. homeland, and we think that's a strong reason to maintain a ground-based interceptor system and to upgrade it," Lynn said.

www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-north-korea-missiles17-2009jun17,0,6469747.story

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Daily Yomiuri - Japan

June 18, 2009

DPRK 'May Launch Missile toward Hawaii' / Govt. Studying Interception over Aomori

The Yomiuri Shimbun

A long-range ballistic missile North Korea is believed to have been preparing to launch from its Tongchang-ri facility in the country's northwest highly likely will be launched toward Hawaii, which would take it over Aomori Prefecture, according to analysis by the Defense Ministry.

Sources said the ministry also believes such a launch will be made as soon as early next month.

Based on the analysis and intelligence gathered by U.S. reconnaissance satellites, the ministry has moved into top gear its study on optimally deploying Aegis-equipped destroyers equipped with Standard Missile 3 (SM-3) interceptor missiles and ground-to-air Patriot Advanced Capability 3 (PAC-3) missiles.

According to the ministry, it has been confirmed that North Korea has missile launch bases in Kitteryong near the military demarcation line with South Korea and at Tongchang-ri near the Yellow Sea, in addition to a base at Musudan-ri in northeastern North Korea, where a long-range missile was launched on April 5.

At the Tongchang-ri facility, either a Taepodong-2 missile or an upgraded Taepodong-2 was believed to have been brought from a missile manufacturing facility near Pyongyang on May 30, according to the sources.

Based on the assumption that this latest missile is a two- or three-stage type and has capability equal or superior to the long-range ballistic missile North Korea launched in April, the Defense Ministry predicted the possibility of a launch toward Hawaii, with a launch toward Okinawa Prefecture and Guam also seen a possibility.

If it took the Okinawan path, when the first-stage booster detaches it could fall in the vicinity of a Chinese coastal area and might anger China.

In the case of the Guam path, the missile must overfly South Korea and Japan's Chugoku and Shikoku regions, which means the booster would be dumped onto a land area. Therefore, the ministry sees both possibilities as quite low, according to the sources.

In case of the Hawaii route, the booster could be dumped into the Sea of Japan. If such a long-range test launch was successful, North Korea would be able to pose a great military threat to the United States, which until now has not regarded North Korean missiles as a threat to North America or Hawaii. Therefore, the ministry concluded the Hawaii route is most probable of the three scenarios, the sources said.

However, while the distance from North Korea to the main islands of Hawaii is about 7,000 kilometers, an upgraded Taepodong-2 only has a range of 4,000 to 6,500 kilometers.

The ministry believes even if the missile took the most direct route over Aomori Prefecture, it would not reach the main Hawaiian Islands, the sources said.

Though U.S. intelligence satellite images showed a missile launch pad had already been set up at the Tongchang-ri base, it takes more than 10 days to assemble and fuel a missile before launch, according to the sources.

The ministry said it believes North Korea is likely to launch a missile sometime between July 4 and 8, because the 1996 launch of the Taepodong-2 missile took place on the July 4 U.S. Independence Day (July 5 Japan time) and July 8 falls on the anniversary of the 1994 death of former North Korean leader Kim Il Sung.

It came to light Wednesday that North Korea may have transported a missile to a launch site in Musudan-ri.

At the missile launch base in Kitteryong on the country's eastern coast, preparations are under way to launch a Rodong missile, which can target all of Japan, as well as a new medium-range missile, according to sources.

Therefore, the ministry is considering starting preparations to intercept missiles based on the possibility North Korea launches missiles from all three bases simultaneously.

<http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/national/20090618TDY01305.htm>

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Associated Press (AP)

18 June 2009

Analysts: NKorea's Chemical Arms as Grave as Nukes

By JAE-SOON CHANG

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea's massive stockpile of chemical weapons is as threatening as its nuclear program, analysts said Thursday, highlighting an aspect of the secretive regime's pursuit of weapons of mass destruction that is rarely talked about.

Adding to already high tensions in the region, a Japanese report said North Korea may fire its most advanced ballistic missile toward Hawaii around Independence Day — the day when the regime test-fired a long-range missile three years ago, though it failed seconds after liftoff.

A new missile launch — though not expected to reach U.S. territory — would be a brazen slap in the face of the international community, which punished North Korea with new U.N. sanctions for conducting a second nuclear test on May 25 in defiance of a U.N. ban.

North Korea spurned the U.N. Security Council resolution with threats of war and pledges to expand its nuclear bomb-making program.

The missile now being readied in the North is believed to be a Taepodong-2 with a range of up to 4,000 miles (6,500 kilometers), and would be launched from North Korea's Dongchang-ni site on the northwestern coast sometime around July 4, Independence Day in U.S., the Yomiuri newspaper said.

It cited an analysis by Japan's Defense Ministry and intelligence gathered by U.S. reconnaissance satellites.

Pyongyang's missile and nuclear programs are centerpieces of the regime's catalog of weapons of mass destruction.

But the impoverished nation, which has put most of its scarce resources into boosting its military capabilities under its "army-first" policy, also has a large chemical arsenal, as well as capabilities to produce biological weapons.

On Thursday, an international security think tank warned that these weapons are no less serious a threat to the region than the North's nuclear arsenal.

The independent International Crisis Group said the North is believed to have between 2,500 and 5,000 tons of chemical weapons, including mustard gas, phosgene, blood agents and sarin. These weapons can be delivered with ballistic missiles and long-range artillery and are "sufficient to inflict massive civilian casualties on South Korea."

"If progress is made on rolling back Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions, there could be opportunities to construct a cooperative diplomatic solution for chemical weapons and the suspected biological weapons program," the think tank said in a report.

It also called on the U.S. to engage the North in dialogue to defuse the nuclear crisis, saying "diplomacy is the least bad option." It said Washington should be prepared to send a high-level special envoy to Pyongyang to resolve the tension.

South Korea's annual defense report, published early this year, said that in addition to chemical weapons, the North is believed to be capable of producing biological weapons with agents like anthrax and smallpox.

But of immediate concern is Pyongyang's ballistic missile program, which would get a major boost if it is able to fire the Taepodong-2, which was last tested on July 4, 2006. That missile fell into the water about 40 seconds after takeoff.

Disregarding the setback, North Korea conducted its first-ever atomic test blast three months later.

While the Yomiuri speculated the latest Taepodong-2 could fly over Japan and toward Hawaii, it said the missile would not be able to hit Hawaii's main islands, which are about 4,500 miles (7,200 kilometers) from the Korean peninsula.

A spokesman for the Japanese Defense Ministry declined to comment on the report. South Korea's Defense Ministry and the National Intelligence Service — the country's main spy agency — said they could not confirm it.

Key players in the nuclear standoff have been huddling with each other this week to discuss the crisis.

On Tuesday, President Barack Obama and South Korean President Lee Myung-bak met in Washington and agreed to build a regional and global "strategic alliance" to persuade North Korea to dismantle all its nuclear weapons.

In a rare move, leaders of Russia and China used their meetings in Moscow on Wednesday to urge the North to return to nuclear talks and expressed "serious concerns" about tension on the Korean peninsula.

The joint appeal appeared to be a signal that Moscow and Beijing are growing impatient with Pyongyang's stubbornness. Northeastern China and Russia's Far East both border North Korea, and Pyongyang's unpredictable actions have raised concern in both countries.

<http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5iURO8fOyWVOA0ytFlaAGuC9F7R9wD98T6QOO1>

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Times of London
June 19, 2009

Speculation Mounts over Kim Jong Il's Health

LEO LEWIS, IN TOKYO

Speculation over the declining health of Kim Jong Il, the Dear Leader of North Korea, has intensified after reports that Pyongyang may be on an emergency quest to buy high-tech medical equipment from abroad.

Reports in the South Korean media today suggested that the unpredictable Mr Kim, 67, could be in significantly worse shape than previously thought, and that doctors may be struggling to prevent a rapid downward spiral in his health.

Those efforts, said a report in the *Chosun Ilbo* newspaper, are thought to include requesting an emergency helicopter and medical equipment from China. The requested medical devices are likely to relate to the stroke that Mr Kim was believed to have suffered last year and which removed him from the public eye during several key national events.

The equipment is thought to be among items banned under a trade embargo put in place after the regime's first nuclear test in 2006. Previous speculation over Mr Kim's illness focused on the possible visits to North Korea by medical specialists from Europe.

The *Chosun Ilbo* report joins a growing number of speculative articles in the South Korean and Japanese press concerning Mr Kim's regime and its apparent state of flux. Japanese papers have run stories in recent days suggesting that two of Mr Kim's sons have travelled to Beijing to meet President Hu Jintao and declare themselves heirs to the regime.

Those claims were dismissed by the Foreign Ministry in Beijing, which said: "The recent reports by the relevant media read like a 007 novel. I wonder what they plan to write as sequels."

Mr Kim's health is closely linked to his country's destiny. The visibly ailing despot runs his country via an inherited personality cult that has emphasised the vigour, strength and youthfulness of the Dear Leader.

That image had been so important to the Pyongyang propaganda machine that it was hard to see how the authorities would cope with the reality that he was in clearly declining health, said Brian Myers, a North Korea expert at Dongseo University.

Analysis on North Korea's recent activity – the apparent detonation of a second nuclear bomb and a variety of missile tests – has concentrated on the theory that Mr Kim is raising the diplomatic temperature to create the ideal climate for his youngest son, Kim Jong Un, to succeed him.

According to the theory, the rockets and explosions, allow the 26-year old heir to ride into the crisis amid a huge show of military strength by the regime.

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article6533324.ece>

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Honolulu Advertiser

June 19, 2009

Hawaii Missile Defense Fortified

The U.S. military is positioning more missile defenses around Hawai'i as a precaution against a possible North Korean launch across the Pacific, Defense Secretary Robert Gates said yesterday.

"We do have some concerns if they were to launch a missile ... in the direction of Hawai'i," Gates said.

Ground-based long-range missile interceptors at Fort Greely in Alaska and Vandenberg Air Force Base in California would provide primary protection for Hawai'i, with the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system offering additional missile intercept capability from the Pacific Missile Range Facility on Kaua'i.

The THAAD system, designed to destroy short- to medium-range ballistic missiles minutes before they strike their target, has not been tested on long-range rockets. The mobile launcher recently was returned to Kaua'i from Vandenberg, where it underwent additional testing, according to U.S. Pacific Command spokeswoman Maj. Tracey Lewis.

In previous tests at the Kaua'i facility, it went a perfect 5 for 5 in knocking out incoming missiles. Lewis said one more test is scheduled before the end of September.

Gates also ordered use of the sea-based X-Brand Radar from Pearl Harbor, a move that was not taken when Pyongyang conducted its last missile test in April. The \$900 million SBX system features a 280-foot-high white dome that encases powerful radar meant to keep an eye out for rogue missiles flying toward the United States. The dome, which resembles a giant golf ball, sits atop a self-propelled oil platform.

The SBX was spotted heading out to sea on Wednesday.

Together, the systems theoretically could detect and shoot down a North Korean missile if it came to that.

In addition, 16 of the Navy's 18 Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense-equipped ships are assigned to the Pacific Fleet and could be deployed off the Korean Peninsula to shoot down errant rockets.

"The ground-based interceptors are clearly in a position to take action," Gates said. "So without telegraphing what we will do, I would just say, I think we are in a good position, should it become necessary to protect American territory."

A Japanese newspaper reported yesterday that North Korea might fire its most advanced ballistic missile — the Taepodong-2 — toward Hawai'i sometime around July 4. It is expected to be launched from the country's Dongchang-ni site on the northwestern coast, the Yomiuri Shimbun said, citing analysis by Japan's Defense Ministry and intelligence gathered by U.S. reconnaissance satellites.

Most experts doubt a North Korean missile could reach Hawai'i, roughly 4,500 miles from the Korean Peninsula and just out of reach of even an upgraded Taepodong-2, which has an estimated range of 4,000 miles.

So far, the missile has proven inaccurate and has failed to reach a third stage, a critical leap to be able to hit the United States.

A 2006 missile launch failed seconds after liftoff and fell into the ocean. In April, a Taepodong-2 rocket flew for about 13 minutes before plunging into the ocean 790 miles east of Japan as the second of its three stages was firing.

'PRUDENT' ACTION

Philip Coyle, a senior adviser at the Washington, D.C.-based Center for Defense Information and a former assistant secretary of defense in the Clinton administration, told The Advertiser yesterday that the heightened U.S. military reaction to reports of a missile launch next month shouldn't be taken as an indication of a greater threat to Hawai'i.

"The actions Secretary Gates is taking are prudent but they are, in part, intended to indicate to North Korea that they shouldn't be messing around, not because they can reach Hawai'i but because they shouldn't be messing around, in general, like they have been," he said.

Recent missile launches and last month's underground nuclear detonation by North Korea brought international condemnation and new United Nations sanctions. Coyle said the actions are attempts by the regime to gain international recognition and re-engage the United States in negotiations on energy, food aid and other issues.

"They would have to be suicidal to attack any part of the United States, even the farthest-out tip of the Aleutians. It would justify massive retaliation and bring an end to the regime. I'm the first to admit North Korea has done a lot of crazy things, but they are not suicidal," Coyle said.

"This is sword-rattling, and North Korea is very good at sword-rattling,"

Bruce Klingner, a senior research fellow for Northeast Asia at the Heritage Foundation, a conservative public policy research institute in Washington, D.C., offered further reassurance that Hawai'i is not being targeted by Pyongyang. He told The Advertiser that statements the missiles would be launched "toward Hawai'i" are misleading.

"What they simply meant was 'east,' " and from North Korea, "the largest expanse of open water is toward the east," he said.

Klingner also noted it is standard practice for space launches to fly in an easterly trajectory in the direction of the Earth's rotation. However, if North Korea has fixed the problems with the Taepodong-2, Klingner said "it could go significantly farther than it did in April."

He said clues to Pyongyang's intentions also can be found in the absence of strong rhetoric threatening a first strike.

Klingner speculated the SBX radar system wasn't deployed in April because the U.S. didn't want to "inflame the situation by indicating it may shoot down the missile. If it has been deployed this time, it's for intelligence gathering or to be more prepared if the missile is launched in a provocative manner."

At the time of the April missile test, the U.S. military said the radar system was in port for repairs.

PENTAGON CONFIDENT

Pentagon officials and experts said they are confident that U.S. missile defense systems would be able to intercept any missiles that might endanger Hawai'i.

Testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee on Tuesday, a top U.S. defense official said he was "90 percent-plus" confident the United States could shoot down a missile launched from North Korea.

Marine Gen. James Cartwright, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, estimated it would take at least three to five years for Pyongyang to overcome technical problems with its long-range missiles and develop the capability of hitting Hawai'i and the U.S. West Coast, and even longer to deliver a nuclear warhead.

At the U.S. Pacific Command at Camp Smith yesterday, Lt. Cmdr. Chuck Bell said, "Our concerns about missile activity in North Korea are longstanding and we closely monitor that threat daily."

Gov. Linda Lingle would not comment yesterday on the anticipated North Korean missile launch, referring questions to Maj. Gen. Robert Lee, the state's adjutant general.

Lee said he was in touch with the local military leaders yesterday. "I'm very assured that our military forces under United States Pacific Command has Hawai'i protected against a North Korean missile. And that's all I am allowed to say at this point," he said.

Asked whether he had any concerns about the threat, Lee answered: "No."

Other Hawai'i residents seemed a little more worried at news of a possible rocket launch in the direction of Hawai'i.

"North Korea's threat is very, very scary because they don't seem to care," said Wai'anae resident Shawntae Calarruda, 25. "Just the fact that they have their nuclear weapons and are ready to launch makes me very uneasy."

Riki Ellison, chairman of the Washington, D.C.-based Missile Defense Advocacy Alliance, told The Advertiser he was encouraged to hear that the SBX radar system has been deployed. He criticized the decision not to use it for the April incident.

The nonprofit alliance supports a U.S. missile shield.

"North Korea is very close to being able to launch something much, much farther, and that's why we have more concerns. But I'm more confident with the engagement of the SBX system. It should have been used in the prior missile launch," Ellison said.

<http://www.honoluluadvertiser.com/article/20090619/NEWS01/906190360/Hawai+i+missile+defense+fortified>

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Global Security Newswire

June 16, 2009

Former Russian General Says Moscow's Missile Defense System is Dangerously Outdated

A former top Russian general has said Moscow's missile-defense technology is obsolete and incapable of effectively defending the capital from ballistic attacks, Interfax reported yesterday (see *GSN*, May 11).

"This system is physically already so old that it is doubtful that it would fulfill tasks as they were set," said retired Gen. Anatoliy Kornukov, former head of the Russian air force.

Kornukov said the aging system is a liability, particularly with a number of countries, such as Iran, investing in more sophisticated missile technology.

"Many countries possess operational strategic missiles, not to mention operational missiles," he said. "Even as these missiles have the range of 2,000, 2,500, and up to 3,000 kilometers -- they will reach the targets they need to reach. But how to fight them? So far there is nothing to fight them with" (Interfax I, June 9).

A U.S. official last week said Washington might be willing to cooperate with Moscow on a new missile defense system to protect against attacks from Iran and other countries, Interfax reported.

The official said he such as system might encompass Russian-based radars or sharing by the two nations of early warning data on fired missiles.

Moscow and Washington have been at odds over a proposed U.S. missile shield in Europe (Interfax II, June 16)

http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20090616_4545.php

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RIA Novosti

17 June 2009

U.S. Firm on Missile Defense but may Change European Plans

WASHINGTON (RIA Novosti) - The United States military has reiterated its commitment to missile defenses, citing a growing threat from North Korea and Iran, but suggested plans for a European site may change.

"The risks and dangers from missile proliferation are growing problems," Deputy Defense Secretary William Lynn told a Senate committee hearing in Washington on Tuesday.

"The president has made clear that we will move forward with missile defenses. They're affordable, proven and responsive to the threat," the Pentagon's second in command said, adding however that plans for missile defenses in Central Europe were only "one option."

"No final decisions have been made regarding missile defense in Europe. However, the U.S. approach to missile defense in Europe will be to seek cooperation with international partners - to include Russia - in order to reduce the threat from Iran," Lynn said in prepared remarks.

Recent suggestions by U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates that Russian facilities could be part of the missile defense system were rejected by Russia.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Andrei Nesterenko said last week that there could be no partnership "in building facilities that are essentially designed to counter Russia's strategic deterrence forces."

The previous U.S. administration of President George Bush agreed plans with Warsaw and Prague to deploy 10 interceptor missiles in Poland and a radar in the Czech Republic by 2013, saying the defenses were necessary to deter possible strikes from "rogue states" such as Iran.

Russia has consistently opposed the missile shield as a threat to its national security and the balance of power in Europe.

U.S. President Barack Obama has indicated he could alter or put on hold the plans for the third site for Washington's global missile defense system, which he said needed more analysis.

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20090617/155274693.html>

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Washington Post

June 18, 2009

Inventory Uncovers 9,200 More Pathogens

By Nelson Hernandez, Washington Post Staff Writer

An inventory of potentially deadly pathogens at Fort Detrick's infectious disease laboratory found more than 9,000 vials that had not been accounted for, Army officials said yesterday, raising concerns that officials wouldn't know whether dangerous toxins were missing.

After four months of searching about 335 freezers and refrigerators at the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases in Frederick, investigators found 9,220 samples that hadn't been included in a database of about 66,000 items listed as of February, said Col. Mark Kortepeter, the institute's deputy commander.

The vials contained some dangerous pathogens, among them the Ebola virus, anthrax bacteria and botulinum toxin, and less lethal agents such as Venezuelan equine encephalitis virus and the bacterium that causes tularemia. Most of them, forgotten inside freezer drawers, hadn't been used in years or even decades. Officials said some serum samples from hemorrhagic fever patients dated to the Korean War.

Kortepeter likened the inventory to cleaning out the attic and said he knew of no plans for an investigation into how the vials had been left out of the database. "The vast majority of these samples were working stock that were accumulated over decades," he said, left there by scientists who had retired or left the institute.

"I can't say that nothing did [leave the lab], but I can say that we think it's extremely unlikely," Kortepeter said.

Still, the overstock and the previous inaccuracy of the database raised the possibility that someone could have taken a sample outside the lab with no way for officials to know something was missing.

"Nine thousand, two hundred undocumented samples is an extraordinarily serious breach," said Richard H. Ebright, a professor at Rutgers University who follows biosecurity. "A small number would be a concern; 9,200 . . . at an institution that has been the focus of intense scrutiny on this issue, that's deeply worrisome. Unacceptable."

The institute has been under pressure to tighten security in the wake of the 2001 anthrax attacks, which killed five people and sickened 17. FBI investigators say they think the anthrax strain used in the attacks originated at the Army lab, and its prime suspect, Bruce E. Ivins, researched anthrax there. Ivins committed suicide last year during an investigation into his activities.

Kortepeter noted that since 2001 the lab has imposed multiple layers of security to check people entering and leaving, that there are now cameras in the labs, and that employees are subjected to a reliability program and random inspections.

"The bottom line is, we have a lot of buffers to prevent anybody who shouldn't be getting into the laboratory," Kortepeter said.

Sam Edwin, the institute's inventory control officer, said most of the samples found were vials with tiny amounts of pathogens that would thaw quickly and die once they were taken out of a freezer, making smuggling something off the base difficult.

The probe began in February, when a problem accounting for Venezuelan equine encephalitis virus triggered the suspension of most research at the lab. A spot check in January found 20 samples of the virus in a box of vials instead of the 16 listed in the institute's database. Most work was stopped until the institute could take a thorough inventory of its stock of viruses and bacteria.

Edwin said about 50 percent of the samples that had been found were destroyed. The rest were added to the catalog. Because the lab will now conduct an inventory every year, "it's really less likely that we will be in a situation like this again," he said.

Procedures have changed, too. Scientists who have worked at the lab said that in the past, departing scientists turned over their logbooks to their successors, but records were sometimes incomplete or complex. As generations of scientists passed through, the knowledge of what was in the freezers was lost. With a comprehensive database, every sample is now tracked until it is destroyed or transferred.

But some scientists are skeptical. Unlike uranium or chemical weapons, pathogens are living materials that can replicate and die. A small amount can easily be turned into a large amount. They said the strict inventories slow their work without guaranteeing security.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/06/17/AR2009061703271.html>

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Air Force Times

June 17, 2009

Few Exposed Troops Test Positive for DU

By Kelly Kennedy - Staff writer

New research using more sensitive testing found that only veterans who have fragments of depleted-uranium shrapnel still embedded in their bodies tested positive for chemicals indicating they have been poisoned.

The study, published in the journal *Environmental Health Perspectives*, included 1,769 urine samples from veterans and service members with a history of exposure to depleted uranium, or DU. Only three — those with embedded shrapnel — tested positive for DU exposure.

DU has been used since the 1991 Persian Gulf War in armor-piercing munitions, as well as in armor itself. It has since been used in Bosnia and, to a lesser degree than in 1991, in the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Because the U.S. did not fight against countries with DU capabilities, the embedded bits of shrapnel in U.S. troops resulted from friendly fire incidents.

However, veterans also have been concerned about DU poisoning after inhaling the substance during explosions or riding around with it in armored vehicles. But since 1998, only four veterans have tested positive for depleted uranium in their urine, and so far, they have had no health issues beyond "subtle changes in renal proximal tubule markers" — cells in the kidneys.

The new study also showed that 2.2 percent of Gulf War veterans and 1.5 percent of post-Gulf War vets had urine uranium rates higher than the researchers' cutoff level.

"The source of exposure for these individuals was most likely drinking water," the report states.

Researchers said some water tables have higher levels of uranium because of what is in the underlying bedrock. They also suggested those veterans might live near a uranium mill or mine.

Two previous studies have shown the same results, but this time, researchers at the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology used improved testing methods.

"Only three of the 1,700 specimens for which we completed isotopic determination showed evidence of DU," the researchers wrote. "Exposure histories confirmed that these three individuals had been involved in 'friendly fire' incidents involving DU munitions or armored vehicles."

Of those samples, 404 are from Gulf War vets, and 1,365 are from people who deployed after 1992.

“These findings suggest that future DU-related health harm is unlikely in veterans without DU fragments,” the report states. “For most veterans who are concerned about exposure to DU as a result of their deployment, urine [uranium] concentrations outside the normal range are a rare occurrence, and DU isotopic signatures are even more uncommon.”

The study was conducted by the Department of Medicine at the University of Maryland School of Medicine; Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Baltimore; and the Department of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine at the University of Maryland School of Medicine.

Service members and veterans concerned about DU exposure can be tested for it at any Department of Veterans Affairs medical center.

http://www.airforcetimes.com/news/2009/06/military_depleted_uranium_061609w/

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New York Times

OPINION

June 17, 2009

North Korea's Threats

North Korea is developing a frightening track record of making good on its threats. True to its word, in recent weeks it has conducted a second nuclear test and several missile tests. It also may have resumed making fuel for nuclear weapons. And the threats keep coming. Over the weekend, the North vowed to make more nuclear weapons and to take “resolute military actions” against efforts to isolate it.

Whether new sanctions adopted unanimously by the United Nations Security Council can deter even more dangerous actions is anyone’s guess. We know there is no chance if they are not implemented. The resolution leaves a lot of room for governments to avoid enforcement should they choose.

The resolution bars North Korea from selling weapons (ballistic missiles and parts are exports) or buying them. It authorizes states — but does not require them — to inspect cargo vessels and airplanes suspected of carrying North Korean weapons or nuclear technology. The North has sold missiles to Iran and other unsavory customers and a nuclear reactor to Syria.

It also calls on — but does not require — states and financial institutions to stop providing banking services, loans and credits that could support its nuclear or missile programs. That could have the biggest impact, if countries and banks heed the call.

It is encouraging that China, North Korea’s top supplier of food and fuel, and Russia were heavily involved in drafting the resolution. China’s ambassador endorsed what he called the international community’s “firm opposition” to the North’s nuclear ambitions.

But talk is cheap. China and Russia exposed their continued ambivalence by blocking efforts to make certain elements of the new sanctions mandatory. China also insisted on carving out an exception so that it could continue selling small arms to the North.

No one has more influence with the North Koreans than China, but it has repeatedly blocked tough sanctions for fear of destabilizing the North and unleashing a flood of refugees. The Obama administration is doing its part. It has said that it would confront any ship suspected of carrying banned items and is exploring new ways to squeeze the North financially.

After all that has happened, administration officials are understandably skeptical that any negotiated deal is possible. And they are right to insist that they will not keep paying the North to live up to commitments it has repeatedly made and then renege on. But they are also right to leave the door open to negotiations.

After meeting on Tuesday with South Korea’s president, Lee Myung-bak, President Obama called a nuclear-armed North Korea a “grave threat.” He also said that the North had “another path available” and that it could still come in from the diplomatic cold if it returns to the bargaining table and abandons its nuclear ambitions.

This is a very dangerous time. As the pressure mounts, no one can be sure how North Korea’s erratic leaders will respond. But it would be even more dangerous to allow the North to churn out more nuclear weapons or sell them to

the highest bidder. The United States and the other powers, starting with China, must use all of their influence to head off the worst.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/17/opinion/17wed1.html>

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RIA Novosti

OPINION

18 June 2009

Russia's Air Defenses: Issues and Problems

MOSCOW. (RIA Novosti military commentator Ilya Kramnik) - Early this week, some media circulated a statement by General of the Army Anatoly Kornukov, the former commander-in-chief of the Russian Air Force. The general claims that the Moscow air defense system has failed to live up to its mission. Moreover, he says, Russian air defense forces lack capabilities to intercept tactical missiles, which pose one of the main threats to developed nations.

As any statement of this kind, it contains a grain of truth, but not a full picture. To begin with, the present Moscow anti-ballistic missile system (A-135) was set up in the 1970s and 1990s to protect the Soviet capital against a large-scale nuclear strike.

It was to be equipped with two types of anti-missile missiles. The first, the 51T6 (NATO reporting name Gorgon), was meant for long-range (exoatmospheric) interception of missiles at altitudes of 80 km to 100 km and a distance of over 600 km. The second, the 53T6 (Western reporting name Gazelle), was intended for close-range (endoatmospheric) interception at altitudes of 50 km and a distance of 350 km.

The A-135 system was completed in the main by the mid-1980s. Successful tests confirmed the ability of anti-missiles to intercept ballistic targets, including such sophisticated ones as multiple individually targetable warheads. The A-135 firing systems, provided with a total of 100 anti-missile missiles, went on combat duty in 1995, following shakedown trials and workup.

All missiles need target designation. So radars and satellites of the early warning system formed a key part of the Space Missile Defense Force, established in 1967. In the twenty years that followed, the Soviet Union deployed a network of radars able to detect ballistic missiles coming in from any direction. Early warning satellites were to pinpoint missile launches and send the information to command centers and ground detection facilities. Currently, radar information is collected by the Space Missile Defense Force command post and the Don-2N radar, which serves to guide intercepting missiles onto targets.

Despite its capabilities, the Moscow air defense system is unable to deal with a large-scale nuclear strike. In fact, no country in the world - not even the United States - has such a system. The ultimate the Moscow system can do is to repulse a blow from second-tier nuclear powers - France, Britain, China and the "latest comers," such as India or Pakistan - or to intercept one-off and provocative launches. A bigger mission - to fight back a multiple strike from the U.S. - would fall short of missiles especially now that 51T6 endoatmospheric anti-missiles have been removed from operational status after they outlived their predicted life span.

The remaining 53T6 missiles, according to specialists, have enough power to destroy lone ballistic missiles, all the way up from tactical to strategic. This gives hope that Moscow will be defended in a conflict with some second-tier country having a small number of such missiles.

Still, trimmed as it is, the system makes Moscow the world's most protected city.

On the other hand, Moscow and its environs are not the only target sought by Russia's potential opponents. To intercept missiles in other areas, outside the A-135 umbrella, S-300 and latest S-400 mobile surface-to-air missile systems can be used.

In the S-300 family, there is a special S-300V series, designed to engage short- and medium-range ballistic missiles. In addition, S-300P systems, optimized to deal with aerodynamic targets, can also be used to intercept ballistic missiles, but with less effect.

The S-400 system, which began to be deployed in 2007, combines the advantages of both families, while the long-range 40N6E missile, some sources claim, is capable of bringing down warheads of intercontinental ballistic missiles, if necessary.

Currently, Russia's combined Air and Air Defense Forces have two battalions of S-400 surface-to-air systems, very much superior to the promising U.S. THAAD system, which is expected to be deployed this year. The rates of S-400 deployment are expected to quicken in the next few years. By 2015, the Air Defense Force must get 23 S-400 battalions, while in the longer term all existing air defense regiments, equipped with S-300 systems, will be refitted to S-400s.

It should be remembered, however, that the best defense is to destroy hostile missiles before they are employed. Therefore, the defense of Moscow and all of Russia should be seen in the context of the armed forces in general, their combat readiness and proficiency, above all those armed services that can engage the opponent at long range and with high precision - the Strategic Missile Force, the Air Force and the Navy.

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