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RIA Novosti
30 June 2009

Moscow Hopes Russian-U.S. Arms Deal on Track

MOSCOW, June 30 (RIA Novosti) - Moscow hopes progress will be made during the U.S. president's visit on July 6-8 both on missile defense and strategic arms cuts, the Russian foreign minister has said.

In an article entitled, Russian-U.S. Relations: Reaching New Heights, published on Tuesday, Sergei Lavrov said both parties "have dragged their feet too long" on strategic arms reduction and missile defense, and now it is time "to make up lost ground."

"Real progress in this area will give hope of an advance towards the ultimate goal - a nuclear-free world," he said.

The minister added that over the past few months Russian-U.S. links had acquired a new dynamic, while relations between the two countries "have entered a period of change."

He said Barack Obama's visit to Russia "is destined to become a landmark in this process."

The chief of the Russian military's General Staff said on Friday a Russian-U.S. military cooperation agreement would be signed during Obama's visit.

Army Gen. Nikolai Makarov said a draft had been finalized with Adm. Michael Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who made a three-day visit to Russia.

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev has said that any strategic arms cuts will only be possible if the United States eased Russia's concerns over Washington's plans for a missile shield in the Czech Republic and Poland.

The U.S. military recently reiterated its commitment to missile defense, citing a growing threat from North Korea and Iran, but suggested plans for a European site may change.

U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates suggested that Russian facilities could be part of the missile defense system, but Moscow has rejected this idea, saying there could be no partnership "in building facilities that are essentially designed to counter Russia's strategic deterrence forces."

Meanwhile, Russia and the U.S. are involved in talks on a new strategic arms reduction deal to replace the START I treaty, which expires in December.

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

However, Russia has insisted that the deployment of a planned U.S. missile defense system in Europe would greatly impede progress on strategic arms reductions.

<http://en.rian.ru/russia/20090630/155391807.html>

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RIA Novosti
30 June 2009

Missile Defense No Impediment to Russian-U.S. Arms Deal - Expert

MOSCOW, June 30 (RIA Novosti) - It is unrealistic to expect the U.S. to scrap its missile-defense plans for Europe, but this does not mean the end of a possible strategic arms reductions deal, a Russian arms expert said on Tuesday.

Pavel Zolotaryov, deputy director of the Institute of North American Studies, said the current U.S. administration could not afford to review its missile-defense plans even if it wanted to, as any backtracking would see it "devoured by the domestic opposition."

He also said a top-level framework agreement setting out the basic parameters for a new arms deal would greatly facilitate progress toward Moscow's ultimate goal of a nuclear-free world.

The Russian foreign minister said earlier on Tuesday that Moscow hoped progress would be made on both missile defense and strategic arms cuts during U.S. President Barack Obama's July 6-8 visit to the Russian capital.

Sergei Lavrov said that Russian-U.S. ties had received a boost over the past few months, while relations between the two countries "have entered a period of change." He also said that Obama's visit to Russia would become "a landmark" in improving relations.

The chief of the Russian military's General Staff said on Friday that a Russian-U.S. military cooperation agreement would be signed during Obama's visit.

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<http://en.rian.ru/russia/20090630/155393748.html>

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Wall Street Journal
July 1, 2009

U.S. And Russia Seek More Extensive Weapons Cuts

By Jonathan Weisman

WASHINGTON -- The U.S. and Russia are expected to launch new talks aimed at reducing the number of strategic and other nuclear weapons on both sides, a senior Obama administration official said Tuesday, in an ambitious effort that could help ease bilateral tensions over other issues as well.

The effort would begin one of the most ambitious arms-control agendas ever -- and one of the trickiest, arms-control experts said. Presidents Barack Obama and Dmitry Medvedev, at a summit in Moscow on July 6, are set to announce the status of a less-ambitious strategic-arms reduction treaty which is under negotiation.

The administration official said both sides intend to pivot to new, broader arms-control talks by December, as soon as the first treaty is concluded. That treaty would reduce strategic weapons -- deployed nuclear weapons which could be used by each country against the other -- to fewer than 1,700 apiece, and limit delivery vehicles for such weapons to fewer than 1,600. The time frame wasn't immediately clear.

The broader treaty will be more difficult and could take two to three years to negotiate, arms-control experts said. Besides addressing strategic weapons, this treaty would also limit tactical "battlefield" nuclear weapons and nondeployed warheads, the administration official said.

Battlefield nuclear weapons are more mobile, easier to hide and less catalogued in terms of numbers or locations. That would make it difficult to verify pledged reductions. "This is going to require a lot of creativity," said Richard Burt, chief U.S. negotiator of START, the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty concluded in 1991 by President George H.W. Bush with Moscow.

Both the U.S. and Russia are looking for an announcement on arms control in hopes it could help ease strains over other issues, from Russia's relationship with Iran to simmering tensions over Moscow's invasion of Georgia.

After meeting in London in April, Messrs. Obama and Medvedev pledged to conclude a strategic arms-control treaty by early December, when the two-decade-old START expires. The START treaty and its follow-on limit each side to 2,200 deployed strategic nuclear weapons.

On Monday, the two leaders are set to announce a status report on the START follow-on treaty. Administration officials said an announcement to reduce the original 2,200 target would be less dramatic than it may seem. Russia's decaying arsenal has left it with roughly 1,500 working warheads. And reductions in U.S. launch systems have likely limited the number of U.S. weapons on alert.

Thousands of warehoused weapons and battlefield warheads would remain in existence on each side. Daryl Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association in Washington, which promotes reductions in nuclear weapons, said the biggest threat posed by nuclear weapons is their potential acquisition by terrorists, either by theft or by purchase. In that sense, tactical weapons may be more dangerous than strategic weapons.

Mr. Burt, the chief START negotiator, said both sides have good reason to seek an agreement. Mr. Obama promised in Prague last spring to pursue a "world without nuclear weapons," and the White House says an arms-control push could help isolate Iran and North Korea ahead of an international conference on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty next year.

Officials at the Russian Embassy in Washington weren't immediately available to comment.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124640822266777143.html>

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RIA Novosti

1 July 2009

Russia, U.S. Arms Reduction Deal Closer than Expected - Diplomat

MOSCOW, July 1 (RIA Novosti) - Russia and the United States have made more significant progress in the preparation of a new strategic arms reduction treaty than the sides expected, a Russian deputy foreign minister said on Wednesday.

"Progress is more significant than we expected when we started the talks on the issue," Sergei Ryabkov said in an interview with RIA Novosti prior to the visit of U.S. President Barack Obama to Russia on July 6-8.

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and Obama agreed in April to launch discussions on a new agreement to replace the START 1 treaty, which expires in December.

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

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

Russian and U.S. experts have held three rounds of behind-closed-doors talks on a new deal since April and agreed to report the results at the Russian-U.S. summit in Moscow in July.

Ryabkov said he was almost certain that the sides will be able "to prepare a comprehensive document outlining the verification measures and information exchange procedures, which contain provisions to ensure equal security and significant reduction of strategic offensive weapons through effective verification" by December this year.

The "significant reduction" will be made in comparison to both the START 1 and the Moscow Treaty, the diplomat added.

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

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

<http://en.rian.ru/russia/20090701/155400771.html>

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Global Security Newswire
July 1, 2009

Broader U.S.-Russian Nuclear Reductions Could Follow START Successor

The United States and Russia plan to pursue additional reductions to their strategic and tactical nuclear arsenals after completing a deal to replace the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, the *Wall Street Journal* reported today (see *GSN*, June 30).

A START follow-up pact is likely to require both nations to drop their arsenal of deployed strategic weapons below 1,700 warheads and the number of delivery vehicles below 1,600. The former Cold War rivals are now required by the 2002 Moscow Treaty to reduce their deployments to between 1,700 and 2,200 strategic weapons. The Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty expires in December, though it remains uncertain when its successor might be signed.

Moscow and Washington might need two to three years of talks on a further treaty, which would mandate restrictions on strategic and tactical nuclear weapons, along with stockpiled warheads.

The two nations are both believed to hold thousands of tactical and reserve warheads.

Enforcing limits on tactical, or "battlefield," nuclear weapons could prove difficult, though, because their numbers and locations are less thoroughly recorded and they are easier to transfer and conceal. "This is going to require a lot of creativity," said Richard Burt, the top U.S. negotiator in the original START talks of the early 1990s (Jonathan Weisman, *Wall Street Journal*, July 1).

Negotiations of the START successor agreement are moving forward faster than anticipated, a senior Russian official said today. Diplomats have held three rounds of talks to date.

"The degree of progress is beyond the expectations that existed when we started," Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said, according to Agence France-Presse.

Meanwhile, U.S. President Barack Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev had a "detailed" telephone discussion about their planned summit in Moscow next week, the Kremlin indicated yesterday.

"In particular, the presidents placed significant emphasis on the topic of reducing strategic nuclear weapons. They discussed various aspects of the nuclear weapons issue in light of the positions that have been reached by the two countries' negotiating teams," the Kremlin said in a statement.

"The two leaders agreed to instruct their negotiators to intensify efforts in order to reach concrete results," says the release (Agence France-Presse/Spacewar.com, July 1).

The Obama administration firmly supports nuclear-weapon reductions, said Bruce Blair, president of the World Security Institute.

"It is understood that it is in the mutual interests of the two countries. There won't be substantial opposition," Blair told the Xinhua News Agency.

The United States does not feel it must "rely on 10,000 nuclear weapons to protect itself from Iran or other small countries or future proliferators," he said, because its conventional military power is "more than sufficient to handle small proliferators."

However, Blair said the process could be tripped up by potential inclusion of Ukraine and Georgia in NATO -- which is "very provocative and unacceptable to Russia" -- and by possible deployment of U.S. missile defenses in Europe.

"Why allow a minor program like missile defense limit the bigger vision of elimination of nuclear weapons?" Blair said (Xinhua News Agency/*Investors Business Daily*, June 30).

The U.S. proposal to field missile defense elements in Poland and the Czech Republic is intended to give NATO nations a first-strike nuclear capability, former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev suggested yesterday. Moscow recently indicated it would not consider significant nuclear arsenal cuts unless Obama ruled out the Bush administration's missile shield plan.

"I think that those who say that this is done to create such a situation in which a first strike may be made are right," Gorbachev said yesterday (Interfax, June 30).

Russia's stance on the missile shield could make negotiating a START successor more difficult, warned Council on Foreign Relations analysts Stephen Sestanovich and Charles Ferguson.

"There can't be an agreement unless there's also a formal renunciation by the U.S of the missile defense plan. That's rather unlikely to happen, and if the Russian[s] stick to that line, the chances of arms control are (slim)," the Talk Radio News Service quoted Sestanovich as saying.

"The (Obama) administration has a review of its missile defense policy on the way, and that makes it a little more difficult for them to reach any specific understandings with the Russian about this issue. They can't offer certain kinds of assurances," Ferguson said.

"What we are looking at is a much smaller, much more modest missile defense system" than what Russia perceives, he added. "There's really no technical reasons for the Russians to be worried at this stage about missile defense as it is currently proposed" (Celia Canon, Talk Radio News Service, June 30).

U.S. political support for the missile shield might force the Obama administration to move forward with the project, but deploying the defenses would not necessarily threaten arms control talks, said Pavel Zolotaryov, deputy head of Russia's Institute of North American Studies (RIA Novosti, June 30).

http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20090701_2780.php

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Reuters.com
June 30, 2009

North Korea Trying to Enrich Uranium, South says

By Jon Herskovitz

SEOUL (Reuters) - North Korea appears to be enriching uranium, potentially giving the state that has twice tested a plutonium-based nuclear device another path to making atomic weapons, South Korea's defense minister said on Tuesday.

"It is clear that they are moving forward with it," Defense Minister Lee Sang-hee told a parliamentary hearing, adding such a programme was far easier to hide than the North's current plutonium-based activities.

North Korea earlier this month responded to U.N. punishment for its most recent nuclear test in May by saying it would start enriching uranium for a light-water reactor.

Experts said destitute North Korea lacks the technology and resources to build such a costly civilian reactor but may use the programme as a cover to enrich uranium for weapons.

North Korea, which has ample supplies of natural uranium, would be able to conduct an enrichment programme in underground or undisclosed facilities and away from the prying eyes of U.S. spy satellites.

The North's plutonium programme uses an aging reactor and is centered at its Soviet-era Yongbyon nuclear plant, which has been watched by U.S. aerial reconnaissance for years.

Proliferation experts said the North has purchased equipment needed for uranium enrichment, including centrifuges and high-strength aluminum tubes, but they doubt that Pyongyang has seriously pursued the project.

"It seems unlikely that North Korea will succeed in establishing a substantial enrichment capability ... in the near term," nuclear expert Hui Zhang wrote in an article this month in the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, adding outside help from the likes of Pyongyang's ally Iran could speed up the process.

A U.S. accusation that Pyongyang was clandestinely operating a uranium enrichment plan led to the breakdown of a 1994 disarmament deal. New, six-way nuclear talks began in 2003 but are now dormant after the North quit the process in April.

MILITARY MOVES

South Korean officials said the North's recent military moves, which also included missile tests and threats to attack the South, were likely aimed at building internal support for leader Kim Jong-il, 67, as he prepares the ground for his youngest son to take over Asia's only communist dynasty.

Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso said on Tuesday it was necessary to put "strong pressure" on North Korea.

"We need to show (North Korea) that it would not benefit from any further act of provocation. On the other hand, we have not closed our door to resolving issues through talks," Aso said in a speech in Tokyo.

The U.S. point man for sanctions on North Korea aimed to stamp out its arms sales, one of the few sources of hard currency for the cash-short North, will arrive in Beijing on Thursday for discussion, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman said.

Spokesman Qin Gang also told a briefing there was no basis to reports in Japan's Asahi newspaper and Financial Times that Kim's son Jong-un had visited Beijing as a way of informing the North's biggest benefactor that he is the heir apparent.

Investors used to the North's military rumblings said the developments have not had any major impact on trading but have raised concern among market players.

North Korea is also preparing to test a long-range missile that could hit U.S. territory and mid-range missiles that could hit all of South Korea, which could further rattle regional security, a South Korean presidential Blue House official said last week.

A North Korean fishing boat briefly entered South Korean waters off the west coast on Tuesday afternoon, but was retrieved without a clash, Seoul's Yonhap News agency reported.

As the fishing boat with a broken engine drifted south in heavy fog, a South Korean military vessel notified the North of the incident. North Korea did not respond initially but its guard ship later tugged the boat north, Yonhap said.

Some analysts have speculated the North could push tensions further by engineering a naval clash on the disputed sea border.

(Additional reporting by Christine Kim and Rhee So-eui in SEOUL, Ben Blanchard in BEIJING and Yoko Nishikawa in TOKYO; Editing by Sanjeev Miglani and Alex Richardson)

<http://www.reuters.com/article/topNews/idUSTRE55T1FX20090630?sp=true>

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RIA Novosti
30 June 2009

South Korea says North 'Definitely' Enriches Uranium

SEOUL, June 30 (RIA Novosti) - North Korea seems to be pressing ahead with uranium enrichment, with a view to making more nuclear weapons, Yonhap agency said on Tuesday, citing South Korea's defense minister.

"It seems it is definitely being pursued," Defense Minister Lee Sang-hee told a parliamentary hearing, adding that a uranium enrichment program was easier to hide than reprocessing of plutonium.

"Uranium enrichment can be conducted in a space as small as 600 square meters," the minister said. "It is easier to hide than plutonium reprocessing."

The North's two underground nuclear tests, in May this year and in October 2006, used plutonium-based nuclear bombs.

North Korea vowed earlier this month to go ahead with uranium enrichment following a UN Security Council resolution that expands sanctions on the Communist state for the latest May 25 nuclear test.

South Korea says the North has about 40 kg of plutonium, enough to produce at least six warheads.

Six-nation talks to persuade Pyongyang to drop its nuclear program stalled after the North quit the process in April, accusing the U.S. of failure to meet its obligations under an aid-for-disarmament deal.

North Korea's recent military activities, which also included a series of missile launches, are widely believed to be aimed at bolstering the authority of leader Kim Jong-il, 67, who reportedly suffered a stroke last August, as he prepares to hand over power to his son.

Yonhap quoted the South Korean minister as saying that recent intelligence concerning Kim could suggest he is experiencing a relapse in his health.

"The military is intensely monitoring [the situation] while bearing in mind the possibilities that Kim's health has degraded," Lee said, citing reports that North Korea recently used an old photo of Kim to fabricate a news story about a recent field inspection.

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20090630/155393216.html>

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China View
30 June 2009

China again Stresses Addressing Korean Peninsula Nuclear Issue via Six-Party Talks

BEIJING, June 30 (Xinhua) -- China on Tuesday reaffirmed its desire to seek Korean peninsula denuclearization through the six-party talks.

"China will continue to keep communication and consultation with all parties on how to promote the six-party talks," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang told the regular briefing on Tuesday.

The six-party talks, which involve China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), the United States, the Republic of Korea (ROK), Russia and Japan, have been stalled since last December.

Qin's remarks came in response to the question on whether the five parties without the DPRK should meet to discuss the Korean peninsula nuclear issue.

At a U.S.-ROK summit in Washington in mid June, ROK President Lee Myung-bak proposed the five-party talks amid tensions aggravated by the DPRK's recent moves.

On June 12, the United Nations adopted the UN Security Council Resolution 1874 imposing tougher sanctions on the DPRK over its May 25 nuclear test.

Earlier, the DPRK announced to withdraw from the six-party talks after the U.N. Security Council adopted a presidential statement which said the DPRK's April 5 rocket launch was "in contravention of Security Council resolution 1718" and urging the early resumption of the six-party talks.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-06/30/content_11628373.htm

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Korea Herald

1 July 2009

Kang Nam may be Heading Back Home

By Kim Ji-hyun

The Kang Nam, a North Korean ship suspected to be carrying illicit weapons or related material, may be headed back home, according to diplomatic sources here.

"The ship is near our waters. That is about all I can say," said one diplomatic source on the condition of anonymity.

Experts said this could mean that the ship is on its way back to North Korea, indicating that the latest United Nations Security Council sanctions are taking a toll on the reclusive communist state.

"If the ship is on its way back, it would mean that Resolution 1874 is taking effect and causing the North to retreat," said Kim Tae-woo, vice president of the Korea Institute for Defense Analyses.

It has been almost two weeks since the Kang Nam set sail on June 17, but Seoul has claimed it has no information on the whereabouts of the ship.

The Kang Nam is the first North Korean ship to come under international scrutiny since the U.N. Security Council adopted Resolution 1874 that strongly recommends member states to help search and ground North Korean ships suspected of carrying illicit weapons or related material.

Some observers said the Kang Nam may have already unloaded such items, but others said the North would wait until the last minute, as the weapons and materials constitute a vital source of funds for the impoverished regime.

Myanmar, the alleged destination of the Kang Nam, has recently told the foreign press that it would not allow the ship to disembark if it is found to be indeed carrying such items.

The government of Myanmar already has an idea of the items on the ship as the Kang Nam must declare them in advance, according to Foreign Ministry officials.

"The fact that the Myanmar government has spoken out, if it has as some of the news reports claim, it indicates that the resolution is working," said one Foreign Ministry official.

The Myanmar Embassy here said it had no comment.

A United States destroyer - USS John McCain led by Capt. Jeffrey Kim - is reportedly close on the Kang Nam's tail. But the destroyer is not authorized to forcefully search the North Korean ship.

Due to these limits, critics have said the resolution needs to plug the loopholes by allowing such actions by the member states.

http://www.koreaherald.co.kr/NEWKHSITE/data/html_dir/2009/07/01/200907010041.asp

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London Daily Telegraph

01 July 2009

North Korean 'Weapons to Burma' Ship Tracked by US

By Malcolm Moore in Shanghai and Thomas Bell in Bangkok

The Kang Nam 1, which is being monitored under new United Nations regulations to prevent the rogue state from dealing in arms, is in waters off the coast of Hong Kong.

"We've no idea where it's going," said a US official. "The US didn't do anything to make it turn around," he added.

South Korean newspaper reports said the ship is a known North Korean weapons trader and was probably heading for Burma.

Several details have come to light in recent weeks of military cooperation between the two Asian pariah states. North Korean engineers have helped Burma's military regime build a network of bunkers and underground command centres under their new capital, Naypidaw, including tunnels reportedly big enough to accommodate a truck.

This week Japan arrested a North Korean and two Japanese men accused of plotting to sell missile technology to Burma, which has also purchased North Korean artillery and other weapons in recent years.

The European Union last month called for an arms embargo on the military regime which has ruled Burma since 1962.

The UN passed new sanctions on North Korea after it carried out first a long-range ballistic missile launch in April and then a nuclear weapon test last month. Under the resolution, North Korean ships can be searched if they are suspected of carrying arms.

However, unnamed US officials told the New York Times that the Obama administration is not clear if the ship's voyage is another form of North Korean manipulation.

"The whole thing just doesn't add up," the newspaper quoted one senior administration official as saying. "My worry is that we make a big demand about seeing the cargo, and then there's a tense standoff, and when it's all over we discover that old man Kim set us up to look like George Bush searching for nonexistent (weapons of mass destruction)," he added.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/burmamyanmar/5709243/North-Korean-weapons-to-Burma-ship-tracked-by-US.html>

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New York Times
July 1, 2009
ON WASHINGTON

Second Thoughts on North Korea's Inscrutable Ship

By DAVID E. SANGER

Inside the White House, they are beginning to call it "The Cruise to Nowhere."

For more than two weeks now, White House officials have been receiving frequent updates on a rusting North Korean ship, the Kang Nam 1, as it makes its way dead-slow across the South China Sea. Earlier this month, Mr. Obama's aides thought the aging hulk — with its long rap sheet for surreptitious deliveries of missiles and arms — would be the first test of a United Nations Security Council resolution giving countries the right to hail suspect shipments, and order them to a nearby port for inspection.

But now some top officials in the Obama administration are beginning to wonder whether Kim Jong-il, the North Korean leader, ordered the Kang Nam 1 out on a fishing expedition — in hopes that a new American president will be his first catch.

"The whole thing just doesn't add up," said one senior administration official who has been tracking the cargo ship's lazy summer journey. "My worry is that we make a big demand about seeing the cargo, and then there's a tense standoff, and when it's all over we discover that old man Kim set us up to look like George Bush searching for nonexistent W.M.D."

Are the North Koreans really that wily?

Maybe so. For a country that prides itself on its hermetic seal, it has played a pretty impressive game for the past eight years. As the United States headed for Iraq, it amassed the fuel for six or eight nuclear weapons. Mr. Kim set off a nuclear blast in 2006, then got the United States to take the North off the terrorism list in return for hobbling its main nuclear facility. Now it has set off another test and appears to be reactivating that facility, prompting Mr. Obama's defense secretary, Robert M. Gates, to vow he would not "buy the same horse" a second time.

With the world on high alert to intercept North Korean shipments — maybe a load of missiles like it sent to Yemen a few years back, or reactor parts like those that helped Syria start a secret program — imagine the headlines if the United States and its allies chased after a ship full of innocuous cargo. Inside the administration, officials ranging from Vice President Joe Biden to the deputy secretary of state, James Steinberg, have cautioned the administration to go slow. The Navy seems to need no convincing. It has kept the the U.S.S. John McCain — named for the senator's father and grandfather — well beyond the horizon, so there is no sense of a low-speed chase at sea.

Pentagon officials are clearly not eager to confront the Kang Nam 1. The intelligence about what is on board is typically murky. Some say they suspect small arms, which are banned by the United Nations resolution but hardly a

major threat. Members of Mr. Obama's team who served in the Clinton administration remember past embarrassments, including the interception of a Chinese ship suspected of carrying chemical precursors in the early 1990s. When the ship was finally cornered, the cargo turned out to be benign.

Mr. Obama's top aides say they are acutely aware of the dangers if the same happened with the Kang Nam 1. Whatever momentum the administration has created to confront the North Koreans would be lost if the first intercepted ship was carrying sea bass, or Ping-Pong balls.

The Kang Nam 1 is hardly the only slow-burning confrontation with North Korea these days, or even the most important. The country's nuclear tests, while less than impressive, indicate that Mr. Kim's engineers are getting better at nuclear detonations. They are learning from the many mistakes made during their missile tests, and they may have scheduled another one for coming days.

(In 2006 the North set off missiles on July 4, and the nuclear test came on Memorial Day, showing a particular affection for American national holidays. Many expect the next missile test — one the North has suggested might be aimed at Hawaii — could come on Saturday. But if your holiday plans call for spending the day on Diamond Head, it is probably not worth cancelling your plans: There is no evidence yet the North's missiles can reach that far, and their aim is singularly unimpressive.)

But the Kang Nam 1 is a test of whether United Nations sanctions have some teeth. And in a bigger sense the caution about intercepting the ship reflects a bigger concern about going about sanctions in the right way — a way that keeps the allies and other nations on board. Mr. Obama is eager to demonstrate, his aides say, that he is not Mr. Bush and will not stretch the authorities granted by the Security Council. So American officials say they have no intention of boarding the Kang Nam 1 or any other North Korean-flagged ship on the high seas, a step the North has warned it would consider an act of war. They have been telling members of Congress that this is not the Cuban Missile Crisis — it is an effort to bring the Chinese and the Russians aboard for gradually escalating sanctions.

The country watching all this most closely, officials say they assume, is Iran. When the headlines about the election and potential vote fraud in Iran begin to fade, its nuclear facilities could be the next targets of a United Nations-sanctioned inspection regime.

The Iranians have, in the past, ranked among North Korea's biggest customers for missile parts, some shipped directly from North Korea. Now that there is renewed talk of sanctions aimed at Tehran — a likely subject of conversation at the meeting of leaders of the largest industrial nations in Italy next week — the outcome of the world's most lethargic race at sea may appear as important in the Strait of Hormuz as it does in the South China Sea.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/01/world/asia/01sanger.html?hp>

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Washington Post

July 1, 2009

U.S. Targets Firms Tied To N. Korea Arms Trade

By Glenn Kessler

Washington Post Staff Writer

The Obama administration yesterday began a campaign to curtail North Korea's ability to finance its trade in missiles and nuclear materials, with the Treasury and State Departments announcing actions against two North Korean companies, including one allegedly connected to the building of a nuclear reactor in Syria.

Administration officials said they are determined to ramp up pressure on the North Korean government in response to a series of missile tests and the detonation of a nuclear device -- its second -- this year. The playbook is drawn from similar efforts in the Bush administration -- and largely directed by the same person, Stuart Levey, Treasury's undersecretary for terrorism and financial intelligence -- that were abandoned by President George W. Bush in late 2006 in an effort to win North Korea's cooperation through diplomacy.

To strike a deal, Bush even authorized the return of \$25 million that North Korea had earned in part through counterfeiting and money laundering and removed the country from the State Department's list of state sponsors of terrorism. But the diplomatic effort fell apart before he left office, and North Korea has since restarted its nuclear program.

Obama administration officials said the lesson they learned is that pressure tactics cannot be dropped until North Korea takes "irreversible steps" to end its program.

Analysts say North Korea is planning another missile test, perhaps as early as this weekend.

The U.N. Security Council has imposed sanctions aimed at punishing North Korea for the nuclear and missile tests, and the United States is pressing for U.N. approval for additional sanctions against individual North Korean companies. Ambassador Philip S. Goldberg, who was named last week as coordinator for implementing the U.N. resolution, left yesterday for China for two days of meetings with senior officials, State Department spokesman Ian Kelly said.

The U.S. actions announced yesterday are unilateral steps that aim to cut off the companies from the global financial system by freezing their U.S. assets and prohibiting Americans from doing business with the firms.

The Treasury Department targeted Hong Kong Electronics, located on Kish Island, Iran, alleging that the company "has transferred millions of dollars of proliferation-related funds" to North Korea's Tanchon Commercial Bank and Korea Mining Development Trading Corp., both of which have been the subjects of earlier U.S. and U.N. sanctions.

Treasury said Hong Kong Electronics "has also facilitated the movement of money from Iran to North Korea" on behalf of Korea Mining, suspected to be an arms dealer and main exporter of goods and equipment related to ballistic missiles and conventional weapons. Tanchon, a commercial bank based in Pyongyang, is the financial arm of Korea Mining and is thought to have helped finance the sales of ballistic missiles from Korea Mining to Iran's Shahid Hemmat Industrial Group, which developed liquid-fueled missiles.

"North Korea uses front companies like Hong Kong Electronics and a range of other deceptive practices to obscure the true nature of its financial dealings, making it nearly impossible for responsible banks and governments to distinguish legitimate from illegitimate North Korean transactions," Levey said in a statement.

The State Department said it had moved against Namchongang Trading Corp., also based in Pyongyang, because it had been "involved in the purchase of aluminum tubes and other equipment specifically suitable for a uranium enrichment program since the late 1990s."

The Washington Post, in reports in 2003 and last year, documented how the company, also known as NCG, was a key intermediary in North Korea's efforts to acquire the materials for a uranium enrichment program and the country's building of a suspected nuclear reactor in Syria that Israeli jets destroyed in 2007.

Operating through an office in Beijing, NCG provided the critical link between Pyongyang and Damascus, acquiring key materials from vendors in China and probably from Europe, and secretly transferring them to a desert construction site near the Syrian town of Al Kibar, The Post reported, citing U.S. officials, European intelligence officials and diplomats.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/06/30/AR2009063004169.html>

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Yonhap News

1 July 2009

U.S. Delegation to Brief China on N. Korea's Illegal Activities: Officials

By Lee Chi-dong

SEOUL, July 1 (Yonhap) -- A U.S. official in charge of coordinating sanctions on North Korea is expected to inform the Chinese government of Pyongyang's illicit activities and Washington's plan to implement U.N. sanctions, officials here said Wednesday.

The aim is to get Beijing to review the information and subsequently help enforce the U.N. sanctions against the North for its recent nuclear test, they said.

The U.S. interagency team led by Philip Goldberg, coordinator for the implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1874, left Washington earlier in the day for related consultations in Beijing, according to the State Department.

The delegation, which includes officials from the National Security Council and Departments of Treasury and Defense, plans to meet with Chinese officials on Thursday and Friday, State Department spokesman Ian Kelly said at a press briefing. He did not provide specifics, however.

The trip to Beijing comes just days after the Obama administration appointed Goldberg, a former ambassador to Bolivia, to oversee domestic and international consultations on sanctions against Pyongyang. Analysts say the move reflects Washington's resolve to see that the sanctions are effectively enforced.

They are also in agreement that China's cooperation is critical, as it is a main food and energy provider for the impoverished North.

South Korean government officials privy to the issue said the U.S. delegation is unlikely to make a direct request for China to take its own punitive steps.

"The U.S. is likely to deliver information on North Korea's illegal and suspected activities to China. It will also brief China in detail on its measures to implement Resolution 1874," a senior foreign ministry official said, asking not to be named. "It is to help China make its own decision."

A series of visits to China last month by two U.S. government delegations -- one led by Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg and the other by Michele Flournoy, under secretary of defense for policy -- had a similar purpose, he added.

In its latest measure against North Korea, the U.S. imposed financial sanctions Tuesday on Iran's Hong Kong Electronics and North Korea's Namchongang Trading Corp., effectively freezing their U.S. assets and banning U.S. firms from engaging in business deals with them. The Treasury and State Departments said the two are involved in Pyongyang's suspected missile proliferation and trading of materials used in its nuclear program.

"North Korea uses front companies like Hong Kong Electronics and a range of other deceptive practices to obscure the true nature of its financial dealings, making it nearly impossible for responsible banks and governments to distinguish legitimate from illegitimate North Korean transactions," Stuart Levey, under secretary for terrorism and financial intelligence at the Treasury Department, said in a statement.

"Today's action is a part of our overall effort to prevent North Korea from misusing the international financial system to advance its nuclear and missile programs and to sell dangerous technology around the world," he added. The U.S. Navy has also been trailing a North Korean freighter, the Kang Nam 1, which is presumed to be carrying weapons banned under the resolution.

The 2,000-ton vessel was initially reported to be sailing towards Myanmar, perhaps by way of Singapore, but appears to have reversed its course, foreign news agencies cited unidentified U.S. officials as saying. It remains unclear whether the ship is heading back to the North or heading to another country.

The officials said the resolution seemed to have increased pressure on Pyongyang and is proving to be an effective tool in curbing its proliferation efforts.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2009/07/01/24/0401000000AEN20090701004800315F.HTML>

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Washington Post
July 2, 2009

N. Korea Test-Fires 4 Short-Range Missiles

By Blaine Harden
Washington Post Foreign Service

TOKYO, July 2 -- North Korea continued to rattle its neighbors Thursday by firing four short-range missiles into waters off its east coast.

The missile tests, monitored by the South Korean government, had been widely expected, since North Korea had warned ships to avoid the east coast through July 10 because of military exercises.

The four missiles were fired in the late afternoon and early evening from a base near the eastern coastal city of Wonsan, a South Korean defense spokesman told the South Korean news agency Yonhap. Other South Korean officials said the missiles splashed into the sea about 60 miles from the launch site.

South Korean military officials have told news media in Seoul that the North may be preparing to launch a number of mid-range missiles in coming days, perhaps to taunt the United States on its July 4th holiday.

Tension has been building in Northeast Asia since early spring, when North Korea launched a long-range missile over Japan. In late May it detonated its second nuclear bomb, which prompted a new round of U.N. sanctions and worldwide condemnation, even from the North's historical allies, China and Russia.

In furious reaction to the sanctions, the government of Kim Jong Il vowed last month that it would never give up nuclear weapons and would begin making a lot more of them, using enriched uranium. Prior to this threat, the North had repeatedly denied having a program to enrich uranium.

Many analysts attribute North Korea's recent brandishing of hardware and its many warnings of "merciless" war to a succession drama now underway in Pyongyang.

Kim, 67, who suffered a stroke last summer and looks sickly, is believed to be positioning his 26-year-old third son, Jong Un, to take over as leader of the communist state.

The highly visible belligerence of recent months, analysts say, may be for local consumption, as Kim demonstrates to members of his inner circle that Jong Un would be a strong leader.

In any case, North Korea has threatened to launch another long-range missile in the near future. After a Japanese newspaper reported last month that the North would aim such a missile at Hawaii and would fire it on July 4, the U.S. military increased its defenses around the Hawaiian islands.

But the missile technology of North Korea demands at least several days of preparation prior to long-range launch, and no such preparations have yet been observed, according to media reports in Seoul.

North Korea has a history of firing short-range missiles into the sea when the United States and other countries are moving to impose or enforce sanctions against it. It test fired five of them in the week after its May 25 nuclear test, as the U.N. Security Council formulated new sanctions.

The U.S. government has pressed in recent days to enforce some of those sanctions by creating a team to cut North Korea off from its foreign bankers. It has also moved to crack down on companies suspected of selling equipment that could be used in Pyongyang's missile and nuclear programs.

The United States is urging China, the North largest trading partner, to enforce the new sanctions. While China has harshly criticized the North's recent nuclear test, it remains unclear if it will follow through on sanctions. China's trade with North Korea has soared since 2006, when the U.N. Security Council imposed sanctions against Pyongyang for its first nuclear tests.

Peter Goldberg, who leads a U.S. government effort to implement the new sanctions, met in Beijing on Thursday with Chinese officials.

The United States has also been tracking a North Korea ship that was suspected of carrying illicit weapons. That ship, once thought to be headed for a port in Burma, changed course this week and may be returning to North Korea.

New sanctions allow states to seize banned weapons and technology found aboard North Korean ships, but it does not authorize the use of force.

North Korea warned that any move to seize its ship would trigger a military response.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/story/2009/07/02/ST2009070201335.html>

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Ha'aratz Daily – Jerusalem

30 June 2009

Kazakhstan Denies Selling Iran Nuclear Material

By Haaretz Service

Kazakhstan's president denied on Tuesday that his country is supplying Iran with nuclear material, according to Israel Radio.

Nursultan Nazarbayev made the statements following a meeting with his Israeli counterpart, Shimon Peres, who is on a historic visit to the region.

The Kazakh leader said he empathized with Israel's concern over the specter of a nuclear-armed Iran, Israel Radio reported.

Peres requested that Nazarbayev move to halt Kazakh sale of uranium ores to Iran, according to the report.

Nazarbayev said his country supported a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and that he was willing to assist in advancing this goal.

Peres also requested that Kazakhstan improve the prison conditions of an Israeli who has been incarcerated for the last three months.

Boris Shinkman, 62, was arrested by Kazakhstan's secret service on suspicion of bribing senior defense officials in order to promote deals with Israeli defense firms. Several Kazakhstani defense officials were also arrested, on suspicion of taking bribes from Israeli firms.

Iran recalled its ambassador to Azerbaijan for consultations on Monday, a day after Peres visited the country.

According to the Iranian news agency INSA, the envoy was recalled due to both Peres' visit and unspecified "threats" it said Israel's ambassador in Baku had voiced against Iran. The semi-official Fars News Agency carried a similar report.

Two weeks ago, the Iranian chief of staff visited Azerbaijan in an effort to forestall the visit, informing Baku in no uncertain terms that Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad wanted it called off. Iran also pressured Azerbaijan to cancel the visit via other diplomatic channels.

<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1096741.html>

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United Press International (UPI.com)
30 June 2009

Iranian Firm Targeted in N. Korean Probe

WASHINGTON, June 30 (UPI) -- The U.S. Treasury Department froze the assets of an Iranian company accused of being a front for North Korean activities.

Hong Kong Electronics in Kish Island, Iran, which started in 2007, transferred millions of dollars of proliferation-related funds on behalf of North Korea's Tanchon Commercial Bank and Korea Mining Development Trading Corp., the department said Tuesday.

The Iranian company was also accused of facilitating the movement of money from Iran to North Korea on behalf of Korea Mining.

Tanchon, based in Pyongyang, was identified as the financial arm for Korea Mining, which, the department said, is North Korea's premier arms dealer and main exporter of goods and equipment related to ballistic missiles and conventional weapons.

The action was taken under an executive order allowing for the freezing of assets of those who spread weapons of mass destruction, a department news release said.

The department said North Korea's Tanchon and Korea Ming have also been brought under the executive order, as well as U.N. Security Council Resolution 1718.

Separately, the U.S. State Department targeted North Korea's Namchongang Trading Corp., identified as a nuclear-related company in Pyongyang under the executive order.

"North Korea uses front companies like Hong Kong Electronics and a range of other deceptive practices to obscure the true nature of its financial dealings, making it nearly impossible for responsible banks and governments to distinguish legitimate from illegitimate North Korean transactions," said Stuart Levey, Treasury's under secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence.

"Today's action is a part of our overall effort to prevent North Korea from misusing the international financial system to advance its nuclear and missile programs and to sell dangerous technology around the world."

http://www.upi.com/Top_News/2009/06/30/Iranian-firm-targeted-in-N-Korean-probe/UPI-51271246416110/

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China View
30 June 2009

Iran, Russia to Expand Nuclear Co-Op

TEHRAN, June 30 (Xinhua) -- Iran and Russia on Tuesday discussed new ways for the "expansion of peaceful nuclear cooperation", the official IRNA news agency reported.

Deputy head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran Mohammad Saeedi held talks in Moscow with Sergei Kiriyenko, head of Russia's Rosatom State Atomic Corporation, IRNA said.

"The Iranian delegation and officials of Rosatom held talks in a positive and constructive atmosphere," Saeedi told IRNA.

"During the talks, the two sides drew plans for future cooperation in nuclear field," he added.

According to the report, the inauguration of Iran's Bushehr nuclear power plant by Russia, which had already been set for mid-summer 2009, was discussed by the two sides.

In April, Iran's Energy Minister Parviz Fattah said Bushehr nuclear power plant would start to generate electricity from mid-summer.

"Bushehr nuclear power plant will generate 500 megawatt electricity from mid-summer," IRNA quoted Fattah as saying.

The operation of the nuclear power plant had been one of the Iranians' old dreams, he added.

The country's 1,000-megawatt nuclear power plant originally started in the mid-1970s by Siemens of Germany but was abandoned with the outbreak of the country's 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Iran and Russia, after reaching an agreement on nuclear cooperation in 1992, signed a contract in January 1995 to finish the construction of the plant, the completion of which has been repeatedly delayed.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-06/30/content_11628866.htm

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Times of London
July 2, 2009

Saddam Hussein was 'More Scared of Iran than the US'

Saddam Hussein let the world believe Iraq had weapons of mass destruction because he did not want to appear weak to Iran, according to the Washington Post.

In interviews with the FBI before he was hanged, the former Iraqi president also denounced Osama bin Laden as "a zealot" and said the United States was not Iraq's enemy, the Post reports.

In fact, he claimed, he felt so vulnerable to the threat from "fanatic" leaders in Tehran that he would have been prepared to seek a "security agreement with the United States to protect [Iraq] from threats in the region," according to declassified accounts of the interviews released on Wednesday and published in the Washington Post

Former president George W Bush, supported by former Prime Minister Tony Blair, ordered the invasion of Iraq six years ago on the grounds that Saddam's regime possessed weapons of mass destruction, despite the failure of UN weapons inspectors to uncover any such weapons.

During his interviews - 20 formal interrogations and five 'casual conversations' which were carried out in 2004, Saddam admitted that he should have allowed the United Nations to witness the destruction of his country's weapons stockpile after the 1991 Gulf War.

The FBI summaries of the interviews were obtained under the Freedom of Information Act by the National Security Archive, an independent non-governmental research institute, and posted on its Web site on Wednesday. The last

formal interview, held on May 1 was completely redacted but the others had few deletions, the Washington Post reports.

The formal interviews, held from February 7 to May 1, covered Saddam's rise to power, the Kuwait invasion, and the crackdown on the Shiite uprising in extensive detail, while the subject of the weapons of mass destruction and al-Qaeda were raised in the casual conversations, held after the formal interviews from May 10 to June 28.

George Piro, the agent who conducted the interviews, raised Iraq's alleged links with al Qaeda in his last conversation with Saddam but Saddam's replies negated the Bush administration's efforts to link him with Osama bin Laden.

Saddam told Mr Piro that he had never met bin Laden and that the two men did not share "the same belief or vision". He said that "he was a believer in God but was not a zealot . . . that religion and government should not mix."

When the FBI agent said there were reasons why Saddam and al-Qaeda should have cooperated, as they had the same enemies in the United States and Saudi Arabia, Saddam replied that the United States was not Iraq's enemy, and that he simply opposed its policies.

He also made it clear that he considered Iran a greater threat than the United States, saying that he was convinced Iran was trying to annex the largely Shiite southern Iraq.

"The threat from Iran was the major factor as to why he did not allow the return of UN inspectors," Mr Piro wrote. "Hussein stated he was more concerned about Iran discovering Iraq's weaknesses and vulnerabilities than the repercussions of the United States for his refusal to allow UN inspectors back into Iraq."

Saddam was later transferred to Iraqi custody, and he was hanged in December 2006.

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/iraq/article6621982.ece>

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Washington Post

July 2, 2009

Hussein Pointed to Iranian Threat

By Glenn Kessler

Washington Post Staff Writer

Saddam Hussein told an FBI interviewer before he was hanged that he allowed the world to believe he had weapons of mass destruction because he was worried about appearing weak to Iran, according to declassified accounts of the interviews released yesterday. The former Iraqi president also denounced Osama bin Laden as "a zealot" and said he had no dealings with al-Qaeda.

Hussein, in fact, said he felt so vulnerable to the perceived threat from "fanatic" leaders in Tehran that he would have been prepared to seek a "security agreement with the United States to protect [Iraq] from threats in the region."

Former president George W. Bush ordered the invasion of Iraq six years ago on the grounds that Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction and posed a threat to international security. Administration officials at the time also strongly suggested Iraq had significant links to al-Qaeda, which carried out the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States.

Hussein, who was often defiant and boastful during the interviews, at one point wistfully acknowledged that he should have permitted the United Nations to witness the destruction of Iraq's weapons stockpile after the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

The FBI summaries of the interviews -- 20 formal interrogations and five "casual conversations" in 2004 -- were obtained under the Freedom of Information Act by the National Security Archive, an independent non-governmental research institute, and posted on its Web site yesterday. The detailed accounts of the interviews were released with few deletions, though one, a last formal interview on May 1, 2004, was completely redacted.

Thomas S. Blanton, director of the archive, said he could conceive of no national security reason to keep Hussein's conversations with the FBI secret. Paul Bresson, a bureau spokesman, said he could not explain the reason for the redactions.

The 20 formal interviews took place between Feb. 7 and May 1, followed by the casual conversations between May 10 and June 28. Hussein was later transferred to Iraqi custody, and he was hanged in December 2006.

The formal interviews covered Hussein's rise to power, the Kuwait invasion, and Hussein's crackdown on the Shiite uprising in extensive detail, while the subject of the weapons of mass destruction and al-Qaeda were raised in the casual conversations, after the formal interviews. Blanton said this suggests that the FBI received new orders from Washington to delve into topics of intense interest to Bush administration officials.

The FBI spokesman did not know why those subjects were raised in the later meetings. In an interview last year on CBS's "60 Minutes," George L. Piro, the agent who conducted the interviews, said he purposely put Hussein's back against the wall "psychologically to tell him that his back was against the wall," but he did not use coercive interrogation techniques, because "it's against FBI policy." The interviews released yesterday do not suggest any use of coercive techniques.

During the interviews, Piro, who conducted them in Arabic, often appeared to challenge Hussein's account of events, citing facts that contradicted his recollections. He even forced Hussein to watch a graphic British documentary on his treatment of the Shiites, though that did not appear to shake the former president.

At one point, Hussein dismissed as a fantasy the many intelligence reports that said he used a body double to elude assassination. "This is movie magic, not reality," he said with a laugh. Instead, he said, he had used a phone only twice since 1990 and rarely slept in the same location two days in a row.

Hussein's fear of Iran, which he said he considered a greater threat than the United States, featured prominently in the discussion about weapons of mass destruction. Iran and Iraq had fought a grinding eight-year war in the 1980s, and Hussein said he was convinced that Iran was trying to annex southern Iraq -- which is largely Shiite. "Hussein viewed the other countries in the Middle East as weak and could not defend themselves or Iraq from an attack from Iran," Piro recounted in his summary of a June 11, 2004, conversation.

"The threat from Iran was the major factor as to why he did not allow the return of UN inspectors," Piro wrote. "Hussein stated he was more concerned about Iran discovering Iraq's weaknesses and vulnerabilities than the repercussions of the United States for his refusal to allow UN inspectors back into Iraq."

Hussein noted that Iran's weapons capabilities had increased dramatically while Iraq's weapons "had been eliminated by the UN sanctions," and that eventually Iraq would have to reconstitute its weapons to deal with that threat if it could not reach a security agreement with the United States.

Piro raised bin Laden in his last conversation with Hussein, on June 28, 2004, but the information he yielded conflicted with the Bush administration's many efforts to link Iraq with the terrorist group. Hussein replied that throughout history there had been conflicts between believers of Islam and political leaders. He said that "he was a believer in God but was not a zealot . . . that religion and government should not mix." Hussein said that he had never met bin Laden and that the two of them "did not have the same belief or vision."

When Piro noted that there were reasons why Hussein and al-Qaeda should have cooperated -- they had the same enemies in the United States and Saudi Arabia -- Hussein replied that the United States was not Iraq's enemy, and that he simply opposed its policies.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/07/01/AR2009070104217_pf.html

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Earthtimes – Europe
30 June 2009

Romania Returns Last Remaining Enriched Uranium to Russia – Reports

Bucharest - Romania has returned the last of Soviet-era enriched uranium to Russia for final storage there, the Romanian agency Mediafax reported Tuesday. Citing the US nuclear security agency NNSA, Mediafax said that the highly-enriched uranium (HEU) was flown by plane late Monday, with the uranium to be stored in the Russian nuclear waste depots at Chelyabinsk and Dimitrovgrad.

The uranium was the last of the total of 53.7 kilograms of HEU which the then-Soviet Union had begun supplying in 1957 for Romania's research reactor at Magurele, outside Bucharest.

Romania has now become the 14th country to completely remove its stores of enriched uranium. The NNSA had worked with Romanian and Russian nuclear authorities as well as the International Atomic Energy Agency in organising the return of the uranium.

<http://www.earthtimes.org/articles/show/275446.romania-returns-last-remaining-enriched-uranium-to-russia--reports.html#>

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Associated Press (AP)
YahooNews.com
June 30, 2009

Dutch Supreme Court Upholds Mustard Gas Conviction

By MIKE CORDER, Associated Press Writer

THE HAGUE, Netherlands – The Dutch Supreme Court on Tuesday upheld the war crimes conviction of a businessman for selling chemicals to Saddam Hussein that his regime in Iraq turned into poison gas and unleashed on Kurds and Iranians.

However, the highest Dutch court rejected an appeal by 16 victims for compensation, saying their claims are too complicated. The court also shaved six months off the 17-year sentence handed to Frans van Anraat of the Netherlands because his case took so long.

In May 2007 a Hague appeals court upheld Van Anraat's 2005 conviction for complicity in war crimes and increased his sentence from 15 to 17 years. It rejected a prosecution appeal against his acquittal of complicity in genocide.

Danya Mohammad, who was 11 when she survived Saddam's notorious March 1988 gas attack on the Kurdish city of Halabja, Iraq, by sheltering in a cellar, said she was disappointed by the court's refusal to award damages.

"But the most important thing is that he stays in prison," she said.

Saddam, then Iraq's dictator, ordered the Halabja attack as part of a scorched-earth campaign to crush a Kurdish rebellion in the north, which was seen as aiding Iran in the final months of its war with Iraq. An estimated 5,600 were killed in the nerve and mustard gas attacks — the vast majority Kurds — and many still suffer the after effects.

Presiding Judge Leo van Dorst said that from the mid-1980s Van Anraat was Iraq's sole supplier of a chemical called TDG, or thiodiglycol, for its mustard gas production program.

"The suspect knew ... the TDG he was delivering was being used for mustard gas," Van Dorst said. "The suspect knew that the poison gas would be used in the (Iran-Iraq) war."

Lower court judges in The Hague called the sales a "heinous breach of international humanitarian law" that left thousands dead and thousands more maimed, and said Van Anraat was driven by "naked greed" to supply 1,100 tons of the chemical to Saddam.

Van Anraat and his lawyers did not attend Tuesday's brief sitting.

Victims' lawyer Liesbeth Zegveld also was disappointed by the court's refusal to award damages but vowed to continue their fight for compensation in Dutch civil courts.

"We now have a criminal conviction, so we have a clear and sound legal ground," she said. "There's no doubt they will get their decision in court and now they can also claim much higher compensation."

Zegveld said that the judges considered the compensation case too complex since they would have had to take into account laws in Iraq and Iran where the victims came from.

But there was a silver lining. Zegveld said that under the original claim filed in a criminal court, victims' compensation would have been capped at euro700 (\$984). In a civil procedure, she added, "they can go to the real value of their injuries."

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090630/ap_on_re_eu/eu_netherlands_iraq_war_crimes

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Wall Street Journal
OPINION
July 1, 2009

How to Stop North Korea's Weapons Proliferation

By Gordon G. Chang

At this moment the Kang Nam, a North Korean tramp freighter, is on the high seas tailed by a team of American destroyers and submarines and watched by reconnaissance satellites and aircraft. The vessel had cleared the Taiwan Strait at the end of last week as it headed south. Yesterday, it was reported to have turned back north toward the Chinese coast. On board, its cargo could contain plutonium pellets, missile parts or semi-ripe melons. In any event, Washington wants to know what is in the rusty ship's hold.

Why the interest in this particular vessel? The Kang Nam is a "repeat offender" and known to carry "proliferation materials." As an unnamed American official told Fox News this month, "This ship is presumed to be carrying something illicit given its past history." United Nations Security Council Resolution 1874, unanimously passed on June 12, broadened the concept of illicit cargoes as far as North Korea is concerned. It prohibits Pyongyang from selling arms, even handguns. The Kang Nam's U-turn is a sure sign that it is carrying contraband and is now seeking a safe port.

The Security Council, while banning Pyongyang's export of weapons, has not given U.N. member states the means of enforcing the new restrictions. Resolution 1874 calls upon countries to inspect North Korean cargoes on the high seas -- but only "with the consent of the flag State," in this case North Korea. Should Pyongyang refuse -- as it most certainly would -- a member state can, within the terms of the resolution, direct a vessel to "an appropriate and convenient port" for inspection by local officials. Should Pyongyang refuse to divert the ship, the resolution contemplates the filing of a report to a U.N. committee.

It looks as if Washington will file such a report soon. Last week, the U.S. promised China it would abide by the restraints imposed by Resolution 1874. This means, in all probability, that the U.S. will be reduced to watching the Kang Nam unload illegal cargo items at some port.

Yet Washington does not have to adopt such a feeble approach. The North Koreans have, inadvertently, given the U.S. a way to escape from the restrictions of the new Security Council measure. On May 27, the Korean People's Army issued a statement declaring that it "will not be bound" by the armistice that ended fighting in the Korean War. This was at least the third time Pyongyang has disavowed the interim agreement that halted hostilities in 1953. Previous renunciations were announced in 2003 and 2006.

The U.N. Command, a signatory to the armistice, shrugged off Pyongyang's belligerent statement. "The armistice remains in force and is binding on all signatories, including North Korea," it said immediately after the renunciation, referring to the document's termination provisions. That may be the politically correct thing to say, but an armistice as a legal matter cannot remain in existence after one of its parties, a sovereign state, announces its end. Today, whether we like it or not, there is no armistice.

Furthermore, there has never been a peace treaty formally ending the Korean War. This means the U.S., a combatant in the conflict, as leader of the U.N. Command, is free to use force against Pyongyang. On legal grounds, the U.S. Navy therefore has every right to seize the Kang Nam, treat the crew as prisoners of war, and confiscate its cargo, even if the ship is carrying nothing more dangerous than melons. Because the Navy has the right to torpedo the vessel, which proudly flies the flag of another combatant in the war, it of course has the right to board her.

But does America have the will to do so? "Rules must be binding. Violations must be punished. Words must mean something," President Barack Obama said in the first week of April, reacting to North Korea's test of a long-range missile. Unfortunately, the president's words have apparently meant little because Kim Jong Il's belligerent state has, since that time, detonated a nuclear device, handed out harsh sentences to two American reporters, and announced the resumption of plutonium production. North Korea has threatened nuclear war several times in recent days and this month sent one of its patrol boats into South Korean waters. American envoys, in response, have issued stern warnings, participated in meetings in the region, and engaged in high-level diplomacy in the corridors of the U.N. None of these measures, however, has led to the enforcement of rules or the punishment of the North Korean regime.

North Korea's words, in contrast, have meant something. It has, as noted, ended the armistice. Of course, no one is arguing that the nations participating in the U.N. Command resume a full-scale land war in Asia. Yet recognizing

the end of the temporary truce would allow the U.S. to use more effective measures to stop the North Korean proliferation of missile and nuclear technologies. The Bush administration sometimes got around to warning Kim Jong Il about selling dangerous technologies but never did anything about it.

Instead, President George W. Bush outsourced the problem to the U.N. In October 2006, in response to the North's first nuclear detonation, the Security Council passed a resolution aimed at halting North Korean proliferation. Unfortunately, Beijing refused to implement the new rules, calling the measures unacceptable, even after voting in favor of them. Since then, more evidence has come to light of North Korea's transfer of nuclear weapons technologies to Iran and Syria.

The lesson of the last few years is that the U.N. is not capable of stopping North Korean proliferation. No nation can stop it except the U.S. Of course, ending North Korea's sales of dangerous technologies to hostile regimes will anger Pyongyang. This month, for instance, the North said that interception of the Kang Nam would constitute an "act of war."

Yet, as much as the international community would like to avoid a confrontation, the world cannot let Kim Jong Il continue to proliferate weapons. Moreover, it is unlikely that he will carry through on his blustery threats. The North Koreans did not in fact start a war when, at America's request, Spain's special forces intercepted an unflagged North Korean freighter carrying Scud missiles bound for Yemen in December 2002. Even though the Spanish risked lives to board the vessel, Washington soon asked Madrid to release it. At the time, the Bush administration explained there was no legal justification to seize the missiles.

Now, the Obama administration has no such excuse. There is definitely a legal justification to seize the Kang Nam. North Korea, after all, has resumed the Korean War.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124640610149276731.html>

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Japan Times

OPINION

July 1, 2009

Tough to Thwart North Korean Arms Exports

By MICHAEL RICHARDSON

The cargo ship Kang Nam 1 has long been on a watch-list of North Korean vessels suspected of illicit trading. But it recently emerged from the shadows at the center of a cat-and-mouse game in Asian waters, tracked by U.S. warships, maritime reconnaissance planes and satellites under a United Nations resolution that bans Pyongyang from exporting arms of any kind and using the profits to sustain its military.

Since leaving the North Korean port of Nampo on June 17, the freighter has become a test case of how the U.N. Security Council resolution, passed unanimously after North Korea's nuclear explosive test on May 25, will be implemented. In turn, this may indicate how major powers will deal with Iran if it continues its suspected pursuit of nuclear weapons.

The resolution tightens sanctions on North Korea imposed after its first underground nuclear test in October 2006. They barred the movement of weapons of mass destruction, ballistic missiles and related items to or from the North. The latest resolution extends the arms embargo and calls on U.N. member states to deny financial services or support for any prohibited North Korean activity.

But the resolution is full of loopholes and ambiguities. It "calls on," but does not require or mandate, U.N. members to inspect all cargo going to or from North Korea that passes through their territory, including seaports and airports, if they have "information that provides reasonable grounds to believe" the cargo contains banned items.

How reliable is intelligence on secretive and tightly controlled North Korea? In the case of the Kang Nam 1, it would be probably be in the form of U.S. satellite photographs of cargo being loaded onto the freighter. But what does that tell if the cargo is boxed or wrapped?

According to South Korean and Japanese press reports, the Kang Nam 1 is heading for Myanmar and might be carrying anything from a small arms shipment to missile components.

The ship could have enough fuel to reach its destination. But many North Korean vessels are old, with limited range. This explains why some reports have said the Kang Nam 1 might call at Singapore to refuel.

In 2004, the military government in Myanmar reportedly tried but failed to buy Scud missile parts from North Korea. Since then, ties between the two have become closer and Pyongyang is believed to have supplied large amounts of arms and other assistance to Myanmar.

The Kang Nam 1 has been spotted making a number of visits to a port near Yangon. When it docked there in May 2007, the government issued a statement saying that the freighter had been allowed to enter port for repairs and take on supplies after being caught in a storm at sea. The statement said authorities had inspected the vessel and found no "suspicious cargo or military equipment" on board.

In line with international law, the recent U.N. Security Council resolution only permits inspections of merchant ships on the high seas with the consent of the nation whose flag the ship is flying.

In the case of the Kang Nam 1, this would mean getting approval from the North Korean government. It would certainly refuse. Pyongyang has declared repeatedly that it would regard forcible boarding as an act of war.

Without North Korean consent, the U.N. resolution "decides" that the flag state should direct the vessel to "an appropriate and convenient port" for the required inspection. The resolution does not authorize use or the threat of force.

The United States would be in a stronger position if it could invoke the terms of the Proliferation Security Initiative, a voluntary arrangement among countries since 2003 to curb trafficking in weapons of mass destruction, their delivery systems and related materials to and from states and non-state actors of proliferation concern.

Under the PSI, the U.S. has negotiated reciprocal ship boarding agreements with nine nations that together register a majority of the world's commercial shipping. Washington could also request the 95 countries that support the PSI to make inspections of suspect cargo entering their sea and airports. In the Asia-Pacific region, PSI supporters include Australia, Brunei, Cambodia, New Zealand, Japan, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea and Sri Lanka.

However, a number of countries where suspect North Korean ships or planes could transit while carrying prohibited cargo have not endorsed the PSI, either because of concerns it could breach freedom of navigation or because they do not want to offend North Korea or be aligned with a coalition led by the U.S. and its allies. These countries include China, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Thailand and Vietnam.

Still, despite the flaws in international antiproliferation efforts, the latest report on North Korea's nuclear and missile programs concludes that pressure from the U.N. and the PSI have dissuaded some potential buyers from doing missile deals and that Pyongyang's sales have almost certainly declined over the last decade.

The report, issued by the International Crisis Group on June 18, says that North Korea has responded by sending more of its exports of missile systems and components on planes instead of ships, and by offering increased technology transfers and licensing deals, which are harder to detect. Since the 1980s, Pyongyang has sold missile systems to Iran, Pakistan, Egypt, Libya, Syria and Yemen.

A country does not have to be a PSI member to cooperate on a case-by-case basis. Last August, the U.S. reportedly worked with India to deny overflight rights to a North Korean jet, which Washington believed was moving missile components from Iran to Myanmar.

In handling North Korea, China is the key player. It has more leverage over its nominal ally than any other country. As the North's trade with Japan, South Korea and Western nations has fallen, it has become more dependent on China.

China's share of North Korea's foreign trade rose to 73 percent in 2008, up from 33 percent in 2003. China also provides about half the aid received by the North, as well as vital energy supplies.

Beijing wants to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula without causing a North Korean crisis. The U.S. and other PSI supporters know that if they exceed the authority of the U.N. Security Council, they risk losing Beijing's support in this critical balancing act.

<http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/eo20090701mr.html>

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New York Post
July 1, 2009

Learning To Love Missile Defense

By Peter Brookes

The Obama administration is reacting to the anticipated launch of another North Korean long-range ballistic missile, expected to fly over the Pacific toward Hawaii sometime soon, by putting missile defense on alert. That's a *big* change from last time.

Back in April, in advance of North Korea's *last* missile test, the administration pretty much pooh-poohed the threat posed by the Taepo Dong launch, characterizing Pyongyang's saber-rattling as bluster.

Indeed, from all outward indications, Team Obama did just about nothing but bloviate to defend US territory and interests from the missile that, by almost all accounts, has the potential to reach the western United States.

The Pentagon even declined to put the Pacific missile-defense system (based at Fort Greely, Alaska, and Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif.) on operational alert -- precautions the Bush administration took during North Korea's 2006 Taepo Dong test.

But the April shot saw the Taepo Dong fly further than ever before -- some 2,500 miles. That relative success apparently surprised and embarrassed the White House enough that it's taking a drastically different approach this time by deploying just about all of the bells and whistles in our (still limited) missile-defense arsenal.

It's a layered defense: An at-sea X-band radar will cue shooters with sensor data to engage the incoming missile. Ground-based interceptors from Greely and Vandenberg will intercept the missile in mid-flight. And if those countermissiles don't score, Navy Aegis-class destroyers at sea off Hawaii and land-based THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense) systems on Hawaii will destroy the target.

It's the right thing to do, but what changed? Pretty clearly, the Obama crew got mugged by reality.

Their charm offensive toward North Korea isn't working. Pyongyang has been as belligerent as ever, lobbing more threats, epithets and missiles in our direction than at any time in recent history.

In fact, the Kim Jong Il regime is ratcheting up tensions in an almost unprecedented manner -- while it's clearly getting closer to having a nuclear-capable missile that can "reach out and touch us" in a very bad way.

Moreover, insiders say that field commanders seem to have convinced Defense Secretary Bob Gates that they weren't comfortable with doing nothing to defend their areas of responsibility this time around. In fact, the Obamanistas may just have come to realize that, despite their deep-seated dislike for missile defense, it's the best tool they've got for protecting American troops, territory and interests against these North Korean missiles.

Indeed, whether or not the administration will acknowledge it, missile defense has proven an effective system based on dozens of successful tests. Sure, the technology is still evolving, but it's already shown it can "hit a bullet with a bullet" in space: Now we're even able to hit a particular *spot* on that "bullet."

Deploying missile defense in the face of continuing Korean hectoring also helps the administration counter the perceptions (domestic and international) that it's weak on national security. Indeed, this allows the Pentagon to act militarily, but in a way that's relatively unlikely to provoke escalation by the other side.

It's certainly more subtle than stationing a carrier strike group off the Korean coast.

The good news is the Bush administration kept its promise to develop and deploy missile defense to protect us against an expanding nuke and missile threat. Otherwise, we'd now be completely vulnerable to North Korean missiles.

The bad news is the new team hit the brakes on developing the Pacific missile-defense system further, halted the development of a European system to protect us against the unfolding Iranian threat and cut the missile-defense budget by 15 percent.

Maybe North Korean menacing will *finally* convince the administration and Congress that being able to protect yourself with missile defense is really a good thing. It certainly beats the alternative -- "Duck and Cover."

http://www.nypost.com/seven/07012009/postopinion/opedcolumnists/learning_to_love_missile_defense_176944.htm

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RIA Novosti
ANALYSIS

1 July 2009

Russia must Avoid Nuke Cuts that could Harm Security - Analyst

MOSCOW, July 1 (RIA Novosti) - Russia must not cut the number of its nuclear warheads to a few hundred under a new strategic arms deal with the U.S., as it needs to maintain superiority over developing countries' nuclear arsenals, a Russian analyst said.

Sergei Karaganov, chairman of the Council for Russia's Foreign and Defense Policy, said on Wednesday that a "huge gap" between the size of the nuclear potentials of Russia and these countries, including North Korea and potentially Iran, must be maintained because nuclear weapons continue to be "the backbone of Russia's political, and to some extent economic, influence."

Russia and the U.S. have been involved in comprehensive talks over a new nuclear arms reduction deal to replace the START 1 treaty, which expires in December.

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

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

"We could go as low as 1,600, or even 1,500 warheads. This is acceptable, especially if we increase their effectiveness and reduce the response time," Karaganov told a RIA Novosti news conference.

"We are also ready to reduce the number of delivery vehicles by several times," he added.

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

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

<http://en.rian.ru/russia/20090701/155402767.html>

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Associated Press (AP)

ANALYSIS

News Hosted by Google

1 July 2009

Analysis: Hopes Fading for Iran Nuke Talks

By GEORGE JAHN

VIENNA (AP) — The fallout from Iran's disputed presidential vote is dimming what were already modest prospects for meaningful negotiations with Tehran over its nuclear program.

President Barack Obama's offer of direct U.S.-Iranian talks on nuclear and other issues still stands — but Tehran seems uninterested. Negotiations were stalemated even before Iran's crackdown on citizens demonstrating against what they say was a skewed election in favor of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

The last meeting on the nuclear issue was a year ago. It ended within hours, with Iran spurning an offer by six world powers — Washington and the other permanent U.N. Security Council members plus Germany.

At the Geneva talks, the six offered to refrain from new U.N. sanctions if Iran froze its uranium enrichment program. The tradeoff was designed to set the scene for in-depth talks the West hopes would end in Tehran agreeing to a long-term freeze of enrichment, which can make both nuclear fuel and nuclear warhead material.

Periodic contacts with Iranian officials by Javier Solana, the EU envoy acting as an intermediary for the six powers, have remained inconclusive since Obama took office. Iran's position remains the same — its program is for peaceful purposes and no compromise on enrichment, despite three sets of Security Council sanctions and the implicit threat of more.

Responding to the most recent formal offer in April from the U.S., Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia for a new round of nuclear talks, Iran said it was ready for constructive dialogue but reiterated that it won't freeze its program.

But the West has not sweetened its offer — although time is running out in the effort to blunt Iran's nuclear threat.

Since its clandestine enrichment efforts were revealed more than six years ago, Tehran has steadily increased activities at its cavernous underground facility at Natanz, a city about 300 miles (500 kilometers) south of Tehran.

The Washington-based Institute for Science and International Security recently estimated that — even without expanding its present program — Iran could accumulate enough material to produce weapons-grade uranium for two warheads by February 2010.

Yet Iran continues to expand its capabilities. And both Tehran and Washington are ratcheting up the tough talk in the wake of Iran's crackdown on opposition protests. The rising tensions further hurt the already feeble chances of nuclear compromise.

President Barack Obama said in March that he sought engagement with Iran "that is honest and grounded in mutual respect," raising expectations that there may be an opening for dialogue.

But the gloves came off last week, when Obama declared America and the entire world "appalled and outraged" by Iran's violent efforts to crush post-election dissent and warned that the way Tehran responds will shape its relationship with other countries, including the United States.

Ahmadinejad then vowed to make the U.S. regret its criticism of Iran's crackdown and said the "mask has been removed" from the Obama administration's efforts to improve relations.

So where does this leave Obama's promise to replace the fist of his White House predecessor and extend an open hand to Iran? What are the chances of meaningful talks to bridge Iran's insistence on expanding what it says is a peaceful nuclear program and Washington's demand that it freeze such activities because of concerns they could be used to make nuclear arms?

U.S. officials insist the door remains open, despite questions about the legitimacy of Ahmadinejad's re-election and his anti-American rhetoric.

"It's in the United States' national interest to make sure that we have employed all elements at our disposal, including diplomacy, to prevent Iran from achieving that nuclear capacity," said Susan Rice, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations.

And David Axelrod, Obama's top adviser, said Washington was "looking to ... sit down and talk to the Iranians."

Still he qualified his comments with a veiled threat of further U.N. sanctions should Iran remain defiant.

In remarks reminiscent of the Bush administration's "carrot and stick" approach, Axelrod said that any negotiations with Tehran will offer "two paths ... one brings them back into the community of nations, and the other has some very stark consequences."

Italian Premier Silvio Berlusconi was blunter, saying Group of Eight leaders meeting next week in Italy will discuss possible additional sanctions against Iran.

But permanent Security Council members Russia and China are unlikely to support such a move. They traditionally oppose harsh anti-Iran action, and Moscow has already said it considers the elections legitimate.

And even if the unexpected occurs — even if the postelection storm blows over and the two sides meet one on one — chances are slim that Iran is ready to rethink its nuclear stance.

After all, Iranian insistence that the nation's right to enrichment is not negotiable is what doomed previous nuclear talks with Tehran. And even Iranians critical of Ahmadinejad are proud of their nation's nuclear prowess — a view that undercuts the likelihood of the hardline president compromising on enrichment to mollify popular post-election unrest at home.

"If Ahmadinejad wanted to reach out domestically, he would do so on domestic issues, because there is no sign there is any disagreement on the nuclear issue," says John Bolton, the U.S. ambassador to the U.N. in the previous American administration.

<http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5g8IpEfl8--ERVH7djQQLJJ4jNLxOD995L6KG0>

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