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Bloomberg.com

July 31, 2009

Pentagon, Eyeing Iran, Wants to Rush 30,000-Pound Bomb Program

By Tony Capaccio, Bloomberg News

The U.S. Defense Department wants to accelerate by three years the deployment of a 30,000-pound bunker-buster bomb, a request that reflects growing unease over nuclear threats from Iran and North Korea.

Comptroller Robert Hale, in a formal request to the four congressional defense committees earlier this month, asked permission to shift about \$68 million in the Pentagon's budget to this program to ensure the first four bombs could be mounted on stealthy B-2 bombers by July 2010.

Hale, in his July 8 request, said there was "an urgent operational need for the capability to strike hard and deeply buried targets in high-threat environments," and top commanders of U.S. forces in Asia and the Middle East "recently identified the need to expedite" the bomb program.

The bomb would be the U.S. military's largest and six times bigger than the 5,000-pound bunker buster that the Air Force now uses to attack deeply buried nuclear, biological or chemical sites.

Accelerating the program "is intended to, at the very least, give the president the option of conducting a strike to knock out Iran's main uranium enrichment capabilities," said Ken Katzman, Middle East military expert for the non-partisan Congressional Research Service.

Iran given deadline

President Barack Obama said Iran must respond by late September to an invitation for unconditional talks with the West on ending what's believed to be a nuclear weapons program. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates said this week in Israel that the offer is not open-ended, and his counterpart, Ehud Barak, warned that Israel is considering all measures if diplomatic efforts fail.

Chicago-based Boeing Co. is developing the bomb which was successfully demonstrated in March 2007.

The B-2, developed by Los Angeles, California-based Northrop Grumman Corp., has a skin capable of evading radar and is the only U.S. bomber capable of penetrating air defenses such as those believed in use by North Korea

and Iran. The B-2 bombed targets in the early days of NATO's Kosovo air campaign and in the Afghanistan and Iraq wars.

Little authoritative information has been published about the capability of the so-called "Massive Ordnance Penetrator." A December 2007 story by the Air Force News Service said it has a hardened-steel casing that is designed to reach targets up to 200 feet underground before exploding.

Essential weapon

Anthony Cordesman, a senior military analyst at the Center For Strategic and International Studies in Washington, said the U.S. "must have a non-nuclear capability to kill such targets if the U.S. is to have a convincing military option against Iran's proliferation and hardened or underground facilities in other potentially hostile states."

Still, even though the U.S. wants "this capability, especially for weapons of mass destruction targets, as soon as possible, that doesn't mean we'll use them -- but the planners are supposed to create capability and also send messages to potential adversaries," said Michael O'Hanlon, a national defense analyst with the nonpartisan Brookings Institution.

Iran has at least two suspected subterranean nuclear facilities and other command-and-control sites not connected to the nuclear program, said Cordesman.

The new 20.5-foot-long bomb carries more than 5,300 pounds of explosives and is guided by Global Positioning Satellites, according to a description on the Web site of the Pentagon's Defense Threat Reduction Agency.

Air Force spokeswoman Lieutenant Colonel Karen Platt said Boeing could be put on contract within 72 hours to build the first bombs if Congress approves the shift of funds by mid- August.

Under the accelerated program, the B-2 "would be capable of carrying the bomb by July 2010," she said in an e-mail.

<http://bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601109&sid=aMiOmByND.2A>

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Times of London
August 3, 2009

Iran is ready to Build an N-bomb - It is just waiting for the Ayatollah's Order

JAMES HIDER, RICHARD BEESTON IN TEL AVIV AND MICHAEL EVANS, DEFENCE EDITOR

Iran has perfected the technology to create and detonate a nuclear warhead and is merely awaiting the word from its Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, to produce its first bomb, Western intelligence sources have told *The Times*.

The sources said that Iran completed a research programme to create weaponised uranium in the summer of 2003 and that it could feasibly make a bomb within a year of an order from its Supreme Leader.

A US National Intelligence Estimate two years ago concluded that Iran had ended its nuclear arms research programme in 2003 because of the threat from the American invasion of Iraq. But intelligence sources have told *The Times* that Tehran had halted the research because it had achieved its aim — to find a way of detonating a warhead that could be launched on its long-range Shehab-3 missiles.

They said that, should Ayatollah Khamenei approve the building of a nuclear device, it would take six months to enrich enough uranium and another six months to assemble the warhead. The Iranian Defence Ministry has been running a covert nuclear research department for years, employing hundreds of scientists, researchers and metallurgists in a multibillion-dollar programme to develop nuclear technology alongside the civilian nuclear programme.

"The main thing (in 2003) was the lack of fissile material, so it was best to slow it down," the sources said. "We think that the leader himself decided back then (to halt the programme), after the good results."

Iran's scientists have been trying to master a method of detonating a bomb known as the "multipoint initiation system" — wrapping highly enriched uranium in high explosives and then detonating it. The sources said that the

Iranian Defence Ministry had used a secret internal agency called Amad (“Supply” in Farsi), led by Mohsin Fakhri Zadeh, a physics professor and senior member of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Council.

The system operates by creating a series of explosive grooves on a metal hemisphere covering the uranium, which links explosives-filled holes opening onto a layer of high explosives enveloping the uranium. By detonating the explosives at either pole at the same time, the method ensures simultaneous impact around the sphere to achieve critical density.

“If the Supreme Leader takes the decision (to build a bomb), we assess they have to enrich low-enriched uranium to highly-enriched uranium at the Natanz plant, which could take six months, depending on how many centrifuges are operating. We don’t know if the decision was made yet,” said the intelligence sources, adding that Iran could have created smaller, secret facilities, other than those at the heavily guarded bunker at Natanz to develop materials for a first bomb. Inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency only keep tabs on fissile material produced at monitored sites and not the number of centrifuges that Iran has built.

Washington has given Iran until next month to open talks on resolving the nuclear crisis, although hopes of any constructive engagement have dimmed since the regime’s crackdown on pro-reformist protesters after June’s disputed presidential elections.

Ehud Barak, Israel’s Defence Minister, last week reiterated that a military strike against Iran’s nuclear facilities was still an option, should the talks fail. Israeli officials estimate that a raid on Natanz and a nuclear facility at Arak, in central Iran, would set Iran’s nuclear programme back by two to three years.

An Israeli official said that Iran had poured billions of dollars over three decades into a two-pronged “master plan” to build a nuclear bomb. He said that Iran had enriched 1,010kg of uranium to 3.9 per cent, which would be sufficient for 30kg of highly enriched uranium at 95 per cent. About 30kg is needed to build one bomb.

British intelligence services are familiar with the secret information about Iran’s experiments, sources at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office said. Although British agencies did not have their own “independent evidence” that Iran had successfully tested the explosive component of a nuclear warhead, they said there was no reason to doubt the assessment.

If Iran’s leader does decide to build a bomb, he will have two choices, intelligence sources said. One would be to take the high-risk approach of kicking out the international inspectors and making a sprint to complete Iran’s first bomb, as the country weathered international sanctions or possible air strikes in the ensuing crisis. The other would be to covertly develop the materials needed for an arsenal in secret desert facilities.

Last week, during a series of high-level US visits to Israel, officials outlined Washington’s plans to step up sanctions on Iran, should Tehran fail to agree on talks. Robert Gates, the Defence Secretary, and General James Jones, the National Security Adviser, said that Iran had until the end of next month, when the UN General Assembly is to meet, to make a positive move towards engagement.

If Tehran fails to respond, Washington aims to build a tough international coalition to impose harsh sanctions focusing on petroleum products — an area where Iran is particularly vulnerable because it sends almost all of its crude abroad for refinement.

Experts believe that the unrest of the summer will make Iran particularly vulnerable to sanctions. They would also hit the Revolutionary Guards Council, which finances its operations by running a huge conglomerate of international companies, rather than drawing directly from state coffers.

http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/middle_east/article6736785.ece

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Global Security Newswire
August 3, 2009

Iran Can Build Nuclear Warhead, Intelligence Sources Believe

Western intelligence sources believe Iran has achieved the technical capacity to construct and set off a nuclear warhead within one year of an order by its supreme religious leader, the London *Times* reported today (see *GSN*, July 31).

The U.S. intelligence community concluded in 2007 that Iran had suspended a clandestine nuclear weapons program four years earlier; the *Times'* sources contended, however, that Tehran shuttered the project after successfully finishing research on production of weaponized uranium and learning to incorporate the material in a nuclear warhead for its Shahab 3 missile.

“The main thing (in 2003) was the lack of fissile material, so it was best to slow it down,” the sources told the *Times*. “We think that the leader himself decided back then (to halt the program), after the good results.”

If Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei opted to build a nuclear weapon, “we assess they have to enrich low-enriched uranium to highly enriched uranium at the Natanz plant, which could take six months, depending on how many centrifuges are operating. We don’t know if the decision was made yet,” the sources said, noting that Iran might also be enriching uranium at smaller, clandestine sites.

Iran would need about six additional months to build a warhead capable of detonating the nuclear material, they said.

Iran has sought to perfect a nuclear-weapon detonation technique referred to as a “multipoint initiation system,” according to the sources. Put simply, the procedure would involve the detonation of high explosives surrounding weapon-grade uranium.

The United Kingdom has not obtained “independent evidence” that Iran had successfully tested the detonation mechanism of a nuclear warhead, but the government was aware of the sources’ claims and had no information that casts uncertainty on their assertions, according to officials at the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

The United States and other Western powers have expressed concern that Iran’s uranium enrichment program could produce nuclear-weapon material, but Tehran has maintained that the effort would only produce nuclear power plant fuel. According to the *Times'* sources, the Iranian Defense Ministry has spent years secretly operating a multibillion dollar nuclear research effort involving hundreds of scientists, metallurgists and other specialists (*London Times*, Aug. 3).

The Obama administration yesterday refused to verify reports that U.S. national security adviser Gen. James Jones discussed potential new sanctions against Iran in talks with Israeli leaders last week, the *New York Times* reported. President Barack Obama has encouraged Iran to join multilateral talks aimed at ending its disputed nuclear work, but Tehran has so far rejected Obama’s overtures as well as various offers of nuclear cooperation benefits.

Jones’ trip was aimed at persuading Israel to curb its military threats against Iranian nuclear facilities while Washington pursues new economic penalties against Tehran, administration officials said.

U.S. officials have secretly met with Western allies to discuss whether to pursue a ban on Iranian imports of gasoline and other refined petroleum products if Tehran fails to join negotiations on its nuclear program before the U.N. General Assembly convenes next month, European diplomats said.

Experts continued to debate whether such a penalty would undermine or strengthen the Iranian government’s hold on power following the nation’s disputed re-election of conservative President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

“Draconian sanctions did not make sense in 2005 and 2006. But given the new weakness and vulnerability of the Ahmadinejad government, much tougher sanctions make sense now, with one caveat,” said former Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns, a leading Iran strategist under former President George W. Bush.

Sanctions legislation now in Congress should maximize Obama’s diplomatic leverage by enabling him to enact or drop the petroleum sanctions, Burns said.

“The Iranians are not terribly good at capitulation,” added Suzanne Maloney, an Iran analyst with the Brookings Institution. “This is a regime that tends to believe the best defense is a good offense” (David Sanger, *New York Times*, Aug. 3).

Iran’s supreme leader officially certified Ahmadinejad’s re-election today, Reuters reported.

“The official ceremony was held and supreme leader (Ayatollah Ali Khamenei) approved Mr. Ahmadinejad’s presidency,” Iranian state television reported.

Ahmadinejad’s is expected to take the oath of office at a ceremony with his nation’s parliament on Wednesday (Parisa Hafezi, Reuters, Aug. 3).

http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20090803_9856.php

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Sydney Morning Herald
August 1, 2009

Revealed: Burma's Nuclear Bombshell

By Hamish McDonald, Asia-Pacific Editor

BURMA's isolated military junta is building a secret nuclear reactor and plutonium extraction facilities with North Korean help, with the aim of acquiring its first nuclear bomb in five years, according to evidence from key defectors revealed in an exclusive Herald report today.

The secret complex, much of it in caves tunnelled into a mountain at Naung Laing in northern Burma, runs parallel to a civilian reactor being built at another site by Russia that both the Russians and Burmese say will be put under international safeguards.

Two defectors were extensively interviewed separately over the past two years in Thailand by the Australian National University strategic expert Desmond Ball and a Thai-based Irish-Australian journalist, Phil Thornton, who has followed Burma for years.

One was an officer with a secret nuclear battalion in the Burmese army who was sent to Moscow for two years' training; the other was a former executive of the leading regime business partner, Htoo Trading, who handled nuclear contracts with Russia and North Korea.

Their detailed testimony brings into sharp focus the hints emerging recently from other defector accounts and sightings of North Korean delegations that the Burmese junta, under growing pressure to democratise, is seeking a deterrent to any foreign "regime change".

Their story will ring alarm bells across Asia. "The evidence is preliminary and needs to be verified, but this is something that would completely change the regional security status quo," said Thitinan Pongsudhirak, the head of Thailand's Institute of Security and International Studies, yesterday.

"It would move Myanmar [Burma] from not just being a pariah state, but a rogue state – that is, one that jeopardises the security and wellbeing of its immediate neighbours."

Washington is increasingly concerned that Burma is the main nuclear proliferation threat from North Korea, after Israel destroyed in September 2007 a reactor the North Koreans were apparently building in Syria.

Professor Ball said another Moscow-trained Burmese army defector was picked up by US intelligence agencies early last year. Some weeks later, Burma protested to Thailand about overflights by unmanned surveillance drones that were apparently launched across Thai territory by US agencies. These would have yielded low-level photographs and air samples, in addition to satellite imagery.

At a meeting with Asian leaders, including some from Burma and North Korea, in Thailand last week, the US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, and other foreign ministers won promises from the Burmese they would adhere to United Nations sanctions on North Korean nuclear and missile exports.

China and other Asian nations had recently helped persuade Rangoon to turn back a North Korean freighter, the Nam Kam 1, that was being shadowed by US warships on its way to Burma with an unknown cargo. A month ago, Japanese police arrested a North Korean and two Japanese for allegedly trying to export illegally to Burma a magnetic measuring device that could be used to develop missiles.

Professor Ball, who has studied the Burmese military for several years, said the evidence from two well-placed sources demanded closer study: "All we can say is these two guys never met up with each other, never knew of each other's existence, and yet they both tell the same story basically.

"If it was just the Russian reactor, under full International Atomic Energy Agency supervision, which the Russians keep insisting is their policy and the Burmese may have agreed to with that reactor, then the likelihood of them being able to do something with it in terms of producing fissionable fuel and designing a bomb would be zero.

"I'd be more worried about a meltdown like Chernobyl . . . It's the North Korean element which adds the danger to it."

North Korea's interest could be a combination of securing a supply of uranium from Burma's proven reserves, earning hard currency, and keeping its plutonium extraction skills alive in case it agrees to fully dismantle its own Yongbyon nuclear complex. "Do they want another source of fissionable plutonium 239 to supplement what they get from their Yongbyon reactor?" Professor Ball said.

<http://www.smh.com.au/world/revealed-burmax2019s-nuclear-bombshell-20090731-e4fw.html>

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London Daily Telegraph
3 August 2009

Burma Obtains North Korean Help with Suspicious Nuclear Programme

By Thomas Bell, South East Asia Correspondent

The two defectors, known as Moe Joe, an army officer trained in Russia to be a member of a Burmese "nuclear battalion", and Tin Min, an accountant who claimed to have knowledge of nuclear infrastructure projects and shipments of material from North Korea.

The claims are unconfirmed but are being taken seriously by Burma specialists after a series of recent revelations of military ties between the two pariah states.

Russia agreed to help Burma build a civilian nuclear reactor several years ago and the researchers say there is no reason to fear that that project could be turned to military use. But according to Desmond Ball, a military expert at the Australian National University, and Phil Thornton, a journalist, who interviewed the defectors over a two year period, the North Korean role points to a far more sinister project.

Both defectors said there is a secret underground complex at Naung Laing in northern Burma. Tin Min, the accountant, said he arranged payments for a tunnel there so broad that two trucks can pass inside it.

The accountant, who died last year, claimed he worked for Tay Za, a notorious tycoon closely linked to the Burmese junta. Tay Za, he said, handled many of the shipments of North Korean nuclear technology into Rangoon harbour.

He also claimed to have knowledge of the junta's strategy. "They're aware they cannot compete with Thailand with conventional weapons," he said. "They want to play power like North Korea."

Last month a North Korean ship allegedly carrying military items to Burma was shadowed by US warships and turned back. A North Korean and two Japanese men were arrested in Japan last month for allegedly plotting to sell a magnetic measuring device to Burma that could be used in missile production.

Moe Joe, the defecting military officer, said he was sent to Moscow in 2003 as part of an effort to train a 1000 strong "nuclear battalion". He claimed there is a secret base in the Setkhaya Mountains near the Naung Laing complex where a weapon is being developed.

According to Professor Ball and Mr Thornton: "In the event that the testimonies of the defectors are proved, the alleged 'secret' reactor could be capable of being operational and producing a bomb a year, every year, after 2014." The reports match existing suspicions about North Korean proliferation activities. Since Israel destroyed a suspected North Korean reactor in Syria in 2007 Burma has emerged as the leading destination for suspected North Korean activity.

Earlier this year photographs emerged of extensive North Korean secret tunnelling activity in the country.

At a regional security conference in Thailand last month the US secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, said: "We know that there are also growing concerns about military co-operation between North Korea and Burma, which we take very seriously. We worry about the transfer of nuclear technology and other dangerous weapons."

Professor Ball said another Moscow-trained Burmese army defector was picked up by US intelligence agencies early last year. He also reports that Burma has protested to Thailand about overflights of unmanned US surveillance aircraft launched from Thailand.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/burmayanmar/5965354/Burma-obtains-North-Korean-help-with-suspicious-nuclear-programme.html>

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RIA Novosti
31 July 2009

Russian Military Plans to Resume Bulava Missile Tests in August

KHABAROVSK, July 31 (RIA Novosti) - The Russian Defense Ministry said on Friday it would not abandon the development of the troubled Bulava ballistic missile, and that tests could resume in August.

The missile, which is being developed by the Moscow-based Institute of Thermal Technology (MITT), has suffered six failures in 11 tests. The general director of the institute resigned last week over the failures, which are believed to represent a severe setback in the development of Russia's nuclear deterrent.

"Everything depends on the conclusions reached by an investigation commission," Deputy Defense Minister Vladimir Popovkin said, adding that the probe could be finalized as early as next week.

The Bulava (SS-NX-30) submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) carries up to 10 MIRV warheads and has an estimated range of over 8,000 kilometers (5,000 miles). The three-stage solid-propellant ballistic missile is designed for deployment on new Borey class nuclear-powered strategic submarines.

The Russian military expects the Bulava, along with Topol-M land-based ballistic missiles, to become the core of Russia's nuclear triad.

Popovkin said more work has to be done to correct flaws in the Bulava's development, but that there was no alternative to the missile for a number of reasons.

"We have no choice - we already have one [Borey class] submarine, and have laid down more, so to start a new R&D project would be unrealistic," the official said.

Russia's newest Borey class strategic nuclear submarine, the Yury Dolgoruky, has completed the first round of sea trials in early July.

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

"A submarine costs about 60 billion rubles [about \$2 bln], and the development of a new missile would cost up to 30 billion rubles [\$1 bln] - these are serious expenses."

"But the most important thing is the years [spent on development], because we urgently need to change our sea-based strategic delivery vehicles," Popovkin said.

The future development of the Bulava has been questioned by some lawmakers and defense industry officials, who have suggested that all efforts should be focused on the existing Sineva SLBM.

The RSM-54 Sineva (NATO designation SS-N-23 Skiff) is a third-generation liquid-propellant submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) that entered service with the Russian Navy in July 2007. It can carry four or 10 nuclear warheads, depending on the modification, and has a maximum range of over 11,500 kilometers (about 7,100 miles).

Russia carried out successful test launches of two Sineva missiles from two Delta IV class nuclear-powered submarines in service with the Northern Fleet, located under an ice floe near the North Pole, on July 13-14.

The results of the tests confirmed that the Sineva would stay in service with the Russian Navy until at least 2015.

http://en.rian.ru/military_news/20090731/155688253.html

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Pravda
31 July 2009

Obama Lied About USA's Missile Defense System Plans?

Pravda.Ru

The politics of the US administration in the field of the ballistic missile defense will not be changed much, Brad Roberts, an official with the US Defense Department said. The Pentagon does not exclude alternative locations for the deployment of the missile defense system in Europe, but the United States will not take account of Russia's concerns at this point.

"I don't see much likelihood of significant departure from the continuity of policy of the last 20 years of the United States," Brad Roberts, the deputy assistant defense secretary for nuclear and missile defense policy said in an interview with Global Security Newswire.

The official did not specify, how the new missile defense policies of the United States are going to affect the plans to deploy a radar station and interceptor missiles in Eastern Europe. Mr. Roberts only said that the discussion was underway.

In the meantime, another official representing the US Defense Department stated that the US was considering options for European missile defense other than current plans for a system based in Poland and the Czech Republic.

"The site in Poland and the radar in the Czech Republic are among the options that are being considered, together with other options that might be able to perform the mission as well," Assistant Secretary of Defense Alexander Vershbow told lawmakers in the House of Representatives, The Associated Press reports.

Vershbow said the missile defense review will look at a range of options, but will not take Russia's objection into account.

"We are reviewing these internally; we are not engaged in a discussion with the Russians about alternative options at this point. Our conclusions will be based exclusively on the threat from Iran, the effectiveness of the systems and the cost," The AP quoted Vershbow as saying.

The US Missile Defense Agency has recently conducted a successful test of a sea-based component of its missile defense shield. An interceptor missile successfully destroyed the test target fired from Hawaii on Thursday night. It became the 19th successful test of the Aegis sea-based missile defense system.

However, the United States has been trying to dispel Russia's apprehensions regarding the US missile defense system in Europe. A group of American military experts is visiting Moscow to negotiate the establishment of the early prevention center which would analyze the ballistic missile threat, The Washington Post wrote.

It seems that the new US administration does not even intend to do at least something to justify Russia's hopes. US Defense Secretary Robert Gates said in the beginning of June that the Pentagon had plans to deploy missile defense system elements on Russia's territory. Russia's Foreign Affairs Ministry responded that Moscow did not consider an opportunity to host the system on the territory of the Russian Federation.

Patrick O'Reilly, the director of the U.S. Missile Defense Agency said that the deployment of the US missile defense system components in the Czech Republic could be finished within four and a half years, and in Poland – in five years.

http://english.pravda.ru/world/americas/31-07-2009/108554-missile_defense-0

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RIA Novosti
3 August 2009

Russian President Appoints New Missile Forces Commander

MOSCOW, August 3 (RIA Novosti) - Col. Gen. Nikolai Solovtsov, commander of the Strategic Missile Forces, has been replaced by his deputy, Lt. Gen. Andrei Shvaichenko, the Kremlin press service said on Monday.

Solovtsov had reached the mandatory retirement age and has been discharged from military service.

Shvaichenko was appointed first deputy SMF commander and SMF chief of staff in 2001.

Solovtsov became SMF commander in 2001.

In December 2008 he turned 60, which is the mandatory retirement age for military commanders with the rank of colonel general.

<http://en.rian.ru/russia/20090803/155714220.html>

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RIA Novosti
03 August 2009

Yury Dolgoruky Sub to Undergo 5-6 Tests before Commissioning

MOSCOW, August 3 (RIA Novosti) - Russia's newest Borey class strategic nuclear submarine, the Yury Dolgoruky, will undergo up to six more sea trials before being commissioned with the Russian Navy, the Sev mash plant said on Monday.

The submarine, which is expected to be armed with the new Bulava sea-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM), successfully completed its first round of sea trials in the White Sea on July 10.

"According to our estimates, the submarine still needs at least five or six sea trials before commissioning," said Anastasia Nikitinskaya, a spokesperson for Sev mash plant.

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

The construction cost of the submarine totaled 23 billion rubles (about \$713 mln), including 9 billion rubles (\$280 mln) for research and development.

Two other Borey class nuclear submarines, the Alexander Nevsky and the Vladimir Monomakh, are currently under construction at the Sev mash plant and are expected to be completed in 2009 and 2011. Russia is planning to build eight of these submarines by 2015.

According to Navy officials, fourth-generation Borey class nuclear-powered submarines will form the core of Russia's fleet of modern strategic submarines, and will be deployed with Russia's Northern and Pacific fleets.

However, the commissioning of the submarine could be delayed by setbacks in the development of the troubled Bulava missile, which has suffered six failures in 11 tests.

The future development of the Bulava has been questioned by some lawmakers and defense industry officials, who have suggested that all efforts should be focused on the existing Sineva SLBM.

But the Russian military has insisted that there is no alternative to the Bulava and pledged to continue testing the missile until it is ready to be put in service with the Navy.

http://en.rian.ru/military_news/20090803/155710767.html

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RIA Novosti
03 August 2009

Russian Missile Chief Fired Amid Speculation

MOSCOW, August 3 (RIA Novosti) - Col. Gen. Nikolai Solovtsov, commander of the Strategic Missile Forces, has been replaced by his deputy, Lt. Gen. Andrei Shvaichenko, amid media speculation over failed missile launches.

Solovtsov is reported to have been discharged from military service on reaching the mandatory retirement age of 60. His replacement Shvaichenko, 56, was first appointed deputy SMF commander and SMF chief of staff in 2001.

Solovtsov became SMF commander in 2001. In December 2008 he turned 60, the retirement age for military commanders at the rank of colonel general.

Some Western media sources, however, have linked his dismissal to a series of embarrassing failed test-launches of the troubled Bulava ballistic missile, as well as disagreements over Russia's controversial military reforms.

However, Russian military experts expressed skepticism.

Pavel Felgengauer, a military commentator, said there was nothing unusual about Solovtsov's dismissal on reaching the age of retirement, adding that the Bulava was part of the country's naval component and had nothing to do with the SMF.

Viktor Baranets, another Russian military commentator, also said he doubted whether his discharge had anything to do with the Bulava, but suggested that Solovtsov could have caused a potential "difficult" situation for the Kremlin as it negotiates a new strategic arms deal with the United States.

At their summit last month Dmitry Medvedev and President Barack Obama called for a reduction in the number of nuclear warheads to 1,500-1,675 within seven years.

But Solovtsov was on record as saying that it would be unacceptable to go below 1,500 warheads.

Baranets said Russia "did not yield an inch" during Obama's Moscow visit and that Solovtsov "was on the team of people who upheld the position of our SMF."

He said the Kremlin may have been worried by Solovtsov's inflexibility and so replaced him with a man who "is blindly loyal to the Kremlin."

<http://en.rian.ru/russia/20090803/155715537.html>

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Russia Today
04 August, 2009

Russian Nuclear Leftovers Total 3,906 Warheads

The Defense Ministry has revealed that Russian armed forces have 3,906 nuclear warheads and 811 delivery systems at the moment.

The numbers were voiced by the deputy head of the National Center for Nuclear Threat Reduction, a structure in the Defense Ministry responsible for the reduction of strategic arms in accordance with international treaties.

Colonel Sergey Ryzhkov told Krasnaya Zvezda newspaper that since July 31, 1991, when the START agreement was signed by the US and the then Soviet Union, the Russian nuclear stockpile dropped more than twofold from 8,757 warheads. The number of missiles capable of nuclear warhead delivery was reduced almost threefold from 2,288 in 1991 to 811 today.

The American military had 10,563 warheads and 2,246 missiles in 1991, and now they have 5,573 warheads and 1,195 missiles, the colonel added.

Since the 1991 START agreement, Russian military specialists have made 464 inspections of US nuclear sites, while Americans have made 559 inspections on Russian territory. Ryzhkov said both sides worked in accordance with the spirit of START and the progress they made in nuclear reduction helped build stability in the world and brought a sense of predictability in bilateral relations.

Earlier on July 6, Dmitry Medvedev and Barack Obama signed a protocol on the principles of further nuclear weapons reduction as a basis of a new treaty to replace START when it expires later this year. The goal is for both sides to have 500 to 1100 strategic delivery systems and 1500 to 1675 warheads in seven years after the new treaty is ratified.

http://www.russiatoday.com/Top_News/2009-08-04/russian-nuclear-leftovers-total.html

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Global Security Newswire
August 4, 2009

Russian Missile Chief Ousted in Wake of Bulava Setback

Russia yesterday discharged its top missile official, two weeks after its troubled Bulava ballistic missile program sustained another setback, Agence France-Presse reported (see *GSN*, Aug. 3).

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev relieved Col. Gen. Nikolai Solovtsov of his post as chief of the strategic missile forces, replacing him with Lt. Gen. Andrei Shvaichenko, a deputy at the division.

"With this decree, Nikolai Solovtsov is freed from his duties as a head of his duties as head of the missile forces and discharged from military service," according to a statement from the Kremlin.

A source told Interfax that Solovtsov had requested that he be released from the military, citing his age, which had exceeded the customary retirement threshold age of 60 for Russian military personnel. Solovtsov turned 60 several months ago, but the government extended his service for another year.

Solovtsov is the second high-profile Russian missile official to step down following a failed test of the sea-based, long-range Bulava missile, which is designed to carry nuclear warheads; Yuri Solomonov resigned late last month as head of the organization leading the missile design effort.

The test, which saw the Bulava explode above the White Sea 30 seconds into flight on July 16, was the missile's sixth failure in 11 attempts (Agence France-Presse/Google News, Aug. 3).

Some Russian analysts reject any suggestions of a causal link between the failed test and Solovtsov's discharge, RIA Novosti reported.

Newspaper pundit Pavel Felgenghauer said it was perfectly plausible that Solovtsov retired because of his age after leading the strategic missile forces for eight years. The Bulava fell within the dominion of the Russian navy, Felgenghauer noted, not the strategic missile forces.

ViKtor Baranets, another pundit, indicated the dismissal more likely was related to Solovtsov's differences with the Kremlin over its strategic arms reduction negotiations with the United States. Solovtsov was skeptical of reducing Russia's deployed nuclear arsenal past 1,500 warheads, which looks to be the low end of the next arms-reduction treaty between the two nations. Baranets speculated that Moscow might favor an official who was less stringently opposed to further arms reduction and more "blindly loyal to the Kremlin" (RIA Novosti, Aug. 3).

http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20090804_1075.php

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RIA Novosti
04 August 2009

Russian Missile Chief's Dismissal 'not Politically Motivated'

MOSCOW, August 4 (RIA Novosti) - The recent dismissal of Col. Gen. Nikolai Solovtsov as commander of Russia's Strategic Missile Forces (SMF) was not politically motivated, a former SMF chief of staff said on Tuesday.

Solovtsov, who turned 60 in December 2008, was discharged on Monday from military service upon reaching the mandatory retirement age.

However, some media outlets have linked his dismissal to a series of embarrassing failed test-launches of the Bulava ballistic missile, as well as disagreements over talks on a new strategic arms reduction treaty with the United States.

"All these links are mere speculations. It was his personal decision. He wrote a resignation request on July 15 and left on vacation," said Col. Gen. Viktor Yesin (Ret.), who served as chief of staff of the Russian Strategic Missile Forces in 1991-93.

Yesin, who until recently worked as an adviser to the SMF commander, said Solovtsov himself proposed the candidacy of his deputy, Col. Gen. Andrei Shvaichenko, as his replacement. Shvaichenko, 56, has served as deputy SMF commander and SMF chief of staff since 2001.

According to Yesin, Solovtsov's insistence that Russia must not go below 1,500 warheads in a new strategic arms reduction deal with the United States fully reflected the Kremlin's standpoint on the issue.

At their summit last month, presidents Dmitry Medvedev and Barack Obama called for a reduction in the number of nuclear warheads to 1,500-1,675 within seven years.

The analyst also said he doubted that Solovtsov could replace Yuri Solomonov as head of the Moscow-based Institute of Thermal Technology (MITT), the developer of the troubled Bulava sea-launched ballistic missile.

The missile has suffered six failures in 11 tests, and Solomonov resigned in July over what is believed to be a serious setback in the development of Russia's nuclear deterrent.

"It is unlikely that Solovtsov would agree to head the MTT because it is a very stressful job with a lot of pressure," Yesin said.

The Russian Federal Space Agency (Roscosmos) earlier said the new MTT head will be chosen by a special commission from a list of suitable candidacies in September.

http://en.rian.ru/military_news/20090804/155723757.html

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Washington Post
August 4, 2009

Nuclear Weapon's Refurbishing Woes Draw Congressional Attention to Treaty

By Walter Pincus

Concern over the U.S. strategic nuclear stockpile, illustrated by problems with a classified material called "Fogbank," has triggered quiet maneuverings on Capitol Hill related to negotiations to extend the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty.

That treaty expires at year's end.

"Fogbank" plays a key part in the W-76, the nuclear warhead on the Navy's Trident II sub-launched intercontinental ballistic missile and the country's most numerous and important strategic nuclear weapons. Initially deployed in 1978, about 3,000 were produced with a planned 30-year life. In 2000, planning began for refurbishing about 2,000 W-76 warheads under the ongoing life-extension program being used to upgrade existing U.S. nuclear systems.

Initial delivery of the reconditioned W-76 warheads was to begin in 2007 and take nine years. But according to a March 2009 Government Accountability Report, the program ran into a problem -- "Fogbank." It turned out that there initially was no replacement for this key element of the W-76, and the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) "had lost knowledge of how to manufacture the material because it had kept few records of the process when the material was made in the 1980s and almost all staff with expertise on production had retired or left the agency," according to the GAO.

In 2000, NNSA considered a cheaper material but dropped that idea because, in part, the Los Alamos National Laboratory's "computer models and simulations were not sophisticated enough to provide conclusive evidence that the alternate material would function exactly the same as Fogbank," the GAO said.

Then followed a series of apparent blunders. Though remanufacturing Fogbank was recognized as a high-risk program, a determination was made to build a new Fogbank production facility while, at the same time, using an existing pilot plant to test the manufacturing process. There were safety issues with the new facility, the pilot plant was minimally utilized, and when production began a year behind schedule, the Fogbank produced was unusable. In 2007, NNSA decided to reverse itself, and with a \$23 million initiative, try to produce an alternative material while pushing ahead with making new Fogbank.

The current plan is to get the alternative product certified by the end of this year and use it if additional problems develop as the Fogbank facility goes into full-scale production.

The Fogbank experience showed all the weaknesses in the U.S. nuclear program that critics have harped on for years -- potential failures within refurbishing systems, lack of a trained nuclear workforce and lack of modernized facilities.

With that background in mind, on July 23, a bipartisan group of six senior senators wrote President Obama. The group, which included John F. Kerry (D-Mass.) and Carl M. Levin (D-Mich.) -- chairmen of the Foreign Relations and Armed Services committees, respectively -- and Richard G. Lugar (Ind.) and John McCain (Ariz.) -- the two ranking Republicans -- said that when the new START treaty is submitted for ratification, it should be accompanied by a 10-year funding estimate to support enhancement of the U.S. nuclear stockpile. They also want it to include cost figures, beginning with the fiscal 2011 budget, that show how much will be available to modernize the aging

nuclear weapons manufacturing complex and to maintain a competent workforce able to create new weapons, if necessary.

Finally, they want numbers to prove that the administration is prepared to maintain the nuclear weapon delivery systems -- strategic submarines, sub- and land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles, and long-range bombers, all of which need replacements.

Triggering the letter were competing amendments passed in the House and Senate versions of the fiscal 2010 Defense Authorization Bill. The House language, written by Rep. Michael R. Turner (R-Ohio), would prohibit use of funds to reduce strategic nuclear weapons under a new treaty with Russia -- unless the president certified there were sufficient verification measures and that neither U.S. missile defense systems nor conventional offensive weapons were under limits. It would also have to be determined that the U.S. nuclear weapons programs were adequately funded.

The Senate amendment, originated by Sen. Jon Kyl (R-Ariz.) but modified by colleagues, is much less harsh. It calls for Obama to provide a report to Congress that includes the information contained in the July 23 letter.

In a floor statement last Wednesday, Kerry said, "I would encourage the administration to see that requirement not as a burden, but as an opportunity." He applauded Senate colleagues for not adopting the House approach, which he described as "trying to bar U.S. compliance with a treaty before the treaty has even been negotiated."

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/08/03/AR2009080302776.html?hpid=sec-nation>

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RIA Novosti
31 July 2009

Russia's Nerpa Nuclear Sub Starts Sea Trials in Far East

VLADIVOSTOK, July 31 (RIA Novosti) - Russia's Nerpa nuclear attack submarine, damaged in a fatal accident during tests in November last year, started on Friday the second stage of new sea trials, a source involved in the tests said.

The vessel resumed sea trials on July 10 in the Sea of Japan following extensive repairs. The first stage of new sea trials was successfully completed on Monday.

"The submarine left dock at the Vostok repair facility in the town of Bolshoy Kamen in the Primorye Territory and headed for the Sea of Japan," the source said.

Some special equipment to check the vessel's performance has been installed on board the submarine and the new trials will last for at least two weeks, according to the Amur shipyard officials.

On November 8, 2008, while the Nerpa was undergoing sea trials in the Sea of Japan, its on-board fire suppression system activated, releasing a deadly gas into the sleeping quarters. Three crewmembers and 17 shipyard workers were killed. There were 208 people, 81 of them submariners, on board the vessel at the time.

Following the repairs, which cost an estimated 1.9 billion rubles (\$60 million), the submarine was cleared for final sea trials before being commissioned with the Russian Navy, and will be leased to the Indian Navy by the end of 2009 under the name INS Chakra.

India reportedly paid \$650 million for a 10-year lease of the 12,000-ton K-152 Nerpa, an Akula II class nuclear-powered attack submarine.

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

http://en.rian.ru/military_news/20090731/155684564.html

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Press Trust of India
5 August 2009

India can build Nuclear Aircraft Carrier, Warships

Mumbai, Aug 5 (PTI) After the launch of the country's first indigenously built nuclear submarine, India has the "technical expertise and capability" to build nuclear-powered aircraft carrier and warships, Atomic Energy Commission Chairman Anil Kakodkar has said.

"We have the technical expertise and capability to build nuclear-powered aircraft carriers and warships of global standards," Kakodkar said on the sidelines of a function here last night.

"When the government asks us to build such ships, we will do it... we are confident that we can build even supply propelling energy for aircraft carriers," he said.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, while launching the nuclear-powered submarine 'INS Arihant' last month, had said that government would be sanctioning development of more such submarines.

http://www.ptinews.com/news/213591_India-can-build-nuclear-aircraft-carrier--warships

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Times of London

August 4, 2009

Police Foil 'Suicide Plot' to Storm Australian Army Base

ANNE BARROWCLOUGH IN SYDNEY

A group of Islamic extremists who were detained today planned a suicide attack on an Australian army base with the aim of killing as many soldiers as possible, a court was told.

One man has been charged with planning a terrorist act and police have been granted extra time to question another three men arrested this morning in a series of counter-terrorism raids across Melbourne.

About 400 police officers and members of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation swooped on 19 properties, detaining several men, all Australian citizens of Somali and Lebanese background, in the pre-dawn raids.

A fifth man, in custody on other matters, was also being questioned and police have not ruled out more arrests.

Police allege the group was at an advanced stage of preparing to storm army barracks in Sydney and Melbourne in retaliation for Australia's military involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Kevin Rudd, the Australian Prime Minister, said the discovery of the plot would not force him to pull troops out of Afghanistan.

He admitted the Afghan operation, which claimed its eleventh Australian life last month, was unpopular but said that it was necessary to cut off militant training opportunities.

"If we're to deal with the threat of terrorism at its various levels we must be dealing with where terrorists are trained," Mr Rudd said.

Members of the hardline group had been observed carrying out surveillance of Holsworthy Barracks in Sydney and of military bases in Victoria. Electronic surveillance also picked up discussions about how to obtain weapons to carry out what would have been the worst terror attack on Australian soil.

"The men's intention was to get into the army barracks and kill as many as they could," Tony Negus, acting Commissioner of the Australian Federal Police, said. "They were planning to carry out a suicide terror attack. . . a sustained attack on military personnel until they themselves were killed."

Andrew Scipione, Commissioner of New South Wales Police, said that a terrorist attack on Sydney's Holsworthy Barracks was "likely imminent" when police carried out the raids.

Melbourne Magistrates' Court heard how, during a seven-month-long investigation dubbed Operation Neath, police had gathered "voluminous" amounts of telephone intercept recording material, including text messages, about the planned attack.

Nick Robinson, prosecuting, told the court that the men, named as Nayaf El Sayed, Saney Aweys, Yacqub Khayre and Abdirahman Ahmed, planned to arm themselves and enter the Holsworthy base to try to kill as many soldiers as possible.

"To become self-proclaimed martyrs?" Peter Reardon, the magistrate, asked.

"Yes," Mr Robinson replied.

Text messages uncovered by investigators were read out to the court, including one sent from another suspect on March 24 that read: "Can you give me the address of the Australian A and the name of the train station."

Mr Robinson said another text message had been sent from a pay phone on March 27 giving directions to the Holsworthy base from the train station.

He said that CCTV footage showed that the suspect had "attended" the Holsworthy base on March 28. The man then allegedly sent a text message which read: "I strolled around... it is easy to enter."

Police believe the cell is linked to the Somali-based terror organisation al-Shabaab, a militant group affiliated to al-Qaeda. Members of the group recently travelled to Somalia to undergo training with the organisation, according to *The Australian* newspaper.

Operation Neath was launched after police intercepted a phone call between an Australian-Lebanese man they had been monitoring, and a Somali living in Melbourne, in which the Lebanese asked for help to travel to Somalia to fight with al-Shabaab, *The Australian* reported.

The Lebanese man's calls had been monitored after he came to the attention of the authorities for espousing extremist views at his local mosque in Melbourne. Over the following months the police became increasingly concerned as the group discussed ways in which they could obtain weaponry and planned to seek a religious ruling supporting an attack on Holsworthy barracks.

Australian security services have been concerned for some time about the growing threat of extremist attacks on home soil.

Last year the federal Attorney-General, Robert McClelland, warned that a terrorist threat was just as likely "to emanate from disgruntled and alienated Australian youth as from an overseas organisation".

The most recent report by the Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) also outlined the threat from "a small but potentially dangerous minority of Australians who hold extremist views and are prepared to act in support of their beliefs".

However, while police have suspected for some years that there were links between a minority of the country's 16,000-strong Somali community and militants in their homeland the links had never been proven. A police investigation into extremist activities within the community in 2007 failed to establish any wrongdoing.

A terror analyst criticised the Australian government today for being complacent in its attitude to the terror threat at home.

Dr Anthony Bergin, director of research at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, told *The Times*: "This plot underlines the need for a comprehensive counter-radicalisation strategy in Australia."

Despite security forces acknowledging that a growing number of alienated young Australian Muslims were being drawn to the extremist cause, he said, the government had developed no strategy that would give it an insight into how serious the problem might be.

"We simply don't know what is going on in those at-risk groups in Muslim neighbourhoods," said Dr Bergin. "We really lack a body of knowledge that would give us a good indication of what is going on at the local level."

Dr Bergin pointed out that a speech by Mr McClelland two weeks ago underlining the need for the government to focus on the risk from home grown extremists was the first speech by a minister devoted to the subject since the attacks on the US on September 11, 2001.

"This plot will provide a wake-up call that we can't be complacent about these issues," he said.

Australia has not suffered a peacetime attack on home soil since a bombing outside a Sydney hotel during a Commonwealth meeting in 1978 that killed three people. But 95 Australians have been killed in bomb attacks in Indonesia since 2002.

Operation Neath is the second largest terror investigation in Australia. In February, Abdul Nacer Benbrika, a fanatical cleric who planned to wage jihad by launching "terrible acts of violence", was sentenced to at least 12 years in jail after becoming the first person in Australia to be convicted of leading a terrorist organisation.

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/article6738218.ece>

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The Australian
August 04, 2009

Police Swoop on Melbourne Homes after Somali Islamists' Terror Plot Exposed

EXCLUSIVE: Cameron Stewart, Lauren Wilson

A PLOT by Islamic extremists in Melbourne to launch a suicide attack on an Australian Army base has been uncovered by national security agencies.

Four men - all Australian citizens - were arrested this morning as federal and state police, armed with search warrants, swooped on members of the suspected terror cell this morning in the second-largest counter-terrorism operation in the nation's history.

Those arrested included a 26-year-old Carlton man, a 25-year-old Preston man, a 25-year-old Glenroy man and a man, 22, from Meadow Heights

About 400 police raided homes in the northern Melbourne suburbs of Glenroy, Meadow Heights, Roxburgh Park, Broadmeadows, Westmeadows, Preston and Epping. They also raided homes at Carlton in inner Melbourne and Colac in southwestern Victoria.

"Police believe members of a Melbourne-based group have been undertaking planning to carry out a terrorist attack in Australia and allegedly involved in hostilities in Somalia," a joint police statement said.

The men are expected to be charged with a range of terrorism-related offences.

Authorities believe the group is at an advanced stage of preparing to storm an Australian Army base, using automatic weapons, as punishment for Australia's military involvement in Muslim countries. It is understood the men plan to kill as many soldiers as possible before they are themselves killed.

Members of the group have been observed carrying out surveillance of Holsworthy Barracks in western Sydney and other suspicious activity around defence bases in Victoria.

Electronic surveillance on the suspects is believed to have picked up discussions about ways to obtain weapons to carry out what would be the worst terror attack on Australian soil.

The cell has been inspired by the Somalia-based terrorist movement al-Shabaab, with two Melbourne men, both Somalis, having travelled to Somalia in recent months to obtain training with the extremist organisation, which is aligned with al-Qa'ida.

One of those men has already returned to Melbourne. The other is still in Somalia.

Al-Shabaab, which is using suicide bombers and jihadist fighters to try to overthrow the Somali government, seeks to impose a pure, hardline form of Islam, and sees the West as its enemy. It has been declared a terrorist organisation by the US and it has close links with al-Qa'ida leaders, including Fazul Abdullah Mohammed, an architect of the 1998 attacks on the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in which 223 people died.

The investigation of the group, dubbed Operation Neath, involves about 150 members of the Australian Federal Police, Victoria Police and ASIO. It was launched in late January.

Search warrants for at least 19 properties across Melbourne have been prepared to allow authorities to obtain more evidence against the group, which is believed to number about 18, with a smaller, hardcore element.

The suspects include Australians of Somali and Lebanese decent, most of whom are labourers employed in Melbourne's construction industry, or taxi drivers.

It is understood that several members of the group also wanted to travel to Somalia to fight with al-Shabaab, but when travel became difficult, they turned their attention to carrying out a terrorist attack in Australia.

Al-Shabaab is currently searching for jihadist recruits around the world, including in Australia. Authorities fear that Australian Muslims who travel to Somalia to fight for al-Shabaab could return to Australia as sleeper agents for future attacks in this country.

In the US, more than 20 Somali American men have disappeared from their Midwest homes in recent months to fight alongside al-Shabaab troops in Somalia.

The FBI's investigation into the radicalisation of Somali refugees in the US, via al-Shabaab, was described by The New York Times last month as "the most significant domestic terror investigation since September 11".

The AFP is understood to have recently presented its evidence against the Melbourne cell to the Office of the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions, which advised that the evidence was sufficient to support charges being laid under national terrorism laws.

A previous AFP investigation _ Operation Rochester, in 2007 _ into extremist activities within small pockets of the nation's 16,000-strong Muslim Somali community petered out after it was established there was no evidence of wrongdoing.

Only a small number of Australia's Somali community adopt the hardline Wahabist view of Islam, but authorities fear radicalism among this minority is being fanned by recent events in Somalia.

Intelligence analysts warn that Somalia has become the new breeding for international Islamic terrorists, as extremists seek revenge for the events of December 2006, when US-backed forces from Christian Ethiopia toppled the hardline government known as the Islamic Courts Union.

The US and Australia defended the Ethiopian invasion as a front in the global war on terror, but it awakened the nationalism of many Somalis in Australia, as well as Muslims of other ethnic backgrounds, who viewed it as a Christian crusade into a Muslim land.

<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,25879554-601,00.html>

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The Australian
August 04, C009

Phone Call Sparked Operation Neath

INSIDE STORY: Cameron Stewart

IT was a single phone call that sparked the second-largest terror investigation in Australian history, known as Operation Neath.

In January, at the height of Melbourne's parched summer, an Australian-Lebanese man in his 30s telephoned a Somalian in the city's western suburbs and made a disturbing request.

He wanted assistance for himself and some of his friends to travel to the war-torn African state of Somalia.

The men wanted to become Islamic warriors with al-Shabaab, an extremist group in that country with close links to al-Qa'ida, and which is listed as a terrorist organisation by the US. The fledgling Somalian terror group, barely three years old, had become the new face of Islamic resistance in Africa and was actively recruiting foreign fighters to help it overthrow the US-backed government in Somalia.

Investigators were monitoring the Lebanese man's calls after he came to their attention late last year for espousing extremist views at his local mosque in Melbourne's northern suburbs.

What unfolded over the next few months would confirm the worst fears of the nation's counter-terrorism chiefs and provide a grim reminder that Australians remain vulnerable to the threat posed by a handful of Islamic extremists, living in our suburbs, who are seduced by the dark side.

Australia's security agencies had suspected for several years there were illegal links between small pockets of the nation's 16,000-strong Somali community and the extremists in their war-torn homeland.

But the AFP and ASIO had never been able to prove the links, and an AFP investigation called Operation Rochester in 2007 petered out after no illegal connections were identified.

Now the authorities had found what they were looking for. And they would find much more than they bargained for. Authorities learned that the Somali man who had been contacted by their Lebanese suspect was the “facilitator”, or point man, for Australian jihadists seeking to travel to the failed state and join the al-Shabaab resistance there.

Working from Melbourne's western suburbs, this travel agent for would-be jihadists had close connections with al-Shabaab members in Somalia and was able to arrange funding and logistics for Melbourne recruits.

Authorities believe he had in recent months arranged for two Somali Australians to be smuggled into Somalia, via Kenya, to train with al-Shabaab.

One of those Australian men remains in Somalia, where he is presumed to be training or fighting with al-Shabaab. The other Somali man has recently returned to Melbourne.

But the Lebanese man proved more problematic for the Somali facilitator in Melbourne. Visa and passport difficulties prevented him from making the trip to Somalia.

Frustrated by his inability to travel abroad to join al-Shabaab, the Lebanese man and the core hardline group discussed their options. Investigators listened in horror as the men were then overheard planning a terrorist attack in Australia.

From that moment, about three months ago, the top-secret investigation known as Operation Neath became the dominant focus of Australia's national security agencies.

Jointly run by the AFP, Victoria Police and ASIO, the investigation comprises about 150 police, intelligence agents and officials.

The group of suspects, involving Lebanese and Somali Australians, is believed to total about 18 men, with a core of hardliners. While they are deeply religious, there are no imams, or self-styled religious leaders, among them.

They are working-class men, consisting mostly of construction labourers and taxi drivers. None is believed to be tertiary educated, and they seem to have a limited understanding of the international affairs and events on which they justify their violent religious crusade.

The electronic evidence gathered by police against the group is chilling. Investigators listened as the men discussed a suicide attack on an Australian army base. The only reason offered for such an attack was the presence of Australian troops in Muslim countries, although Afghanistan and Iraq were not mentioned by name.

The plan was for the group to storm the entrance to an army base, firing automatic weapons. They would kill as many Australian soldiers as possible until they were themselves killed. None of them would surrender.

But hopes that this was nothing more than hairy-chested rhetoric were soon dashed when surveillance teams followed one of the suspects to Holsworthy Barracks in southwestern Sydney.

The historic military base is home to Australia's elite Parachute Battalion and Commando Regiment.

Investigators watched as the suspect quietly cased the scene, observing movements of people and traffic. Other suspicious behaviour near Victorian defence bases raised concerns of investigators that the group might also be conducting reconnaissance missions in that state.

In addition, the suspects were overheard discussing ways to obtain firearms, and swapping notes on which of their family and friends had firearm licences.

Gathering evidence against the group was a painstaking task, with the suspects often taking steps to evade surveillance by meeting in their local mosque or holding discussions in parks.

But several months ago there was a hitch in the group's plans. One of the group's core players, the Lebanese man who originally sparked the investigation, suddenly found himself in jail for alleged assault.

He had been involved in a confrontation with a nearby resident over a minor matter and was put behind bars, making it difficult for authorities to assess how close the group might be to carrying out the attack.

Investigators were also concerned about another member of the group, a Somali, who returned to Australia last month after receiving military training from al-Shabaab in Somalia.

Training with al-Shabaab usually involves a six-week course covering guerilla tactics and instruction on how to handle explosives. However, Somalia is a lawless, failed state that remains a blackhole for Western intelligence agencies.

Australian agencies do not know what sort of training the Australian might have received there, but they do know the man did not finish his full training course. It is unclear why he cut short his training and returned to Melbourne.

Authorities were concerned that this man, who holds an Australian passport, might have become further energised and radicalised while in Somalia, and may have returned to Melbourne to encourage the Melbourne cell to carry out the plan sooner rather than later.

These uncertainties placed authorities in a dilemma. Continuing to monitor the activities of the group would allow investigators the chance to gather new intelligence to maximise their chances of securing convictions against the men. But not acting quickly would risk the unthinkable prospect of the group actually carrying out the attack.

Faced with these decisions, the AFP is understood to have recently presented its evidence against the Melbourne cell to the Office of the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions, which advised that the evidence was sufficient to support charges being laid under national terrorism laws.

In recent weeks plans were drawn up for an extensive series of raids on properties across Melbourne. Sources said these raids were to take place as early as this morning after it was concluded, at a series of high-level meetings over the weekend, that immediate action was justified to prevent the possibility of innocent lives being lost.

<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,25879603-601,00.html>

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Washington Times
World Scene
August 4, 2009

Al Qaeda Renews Offer of Truce

CAIRO -- Osama bin Laden's deputy said in a video message released Monday that the al Qaeda leader's offers of a truce with the United States and Europe remained on the table, though he ridiculed President Obama as "the new face of the same old crimes."

In a video posted on an Islamic militant Web site, al Qaeda's No. 2 leader, Ayman al-Zawahri, scorned Mr. Obama over the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the U.S. approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Nonetheless, al-Zawahri said "fair" truces offered by bin Laden were still valid.

In 2004, bin Laden offered a truce to European countries that do not attack Muslims. Two years later, he offered the American people a "long-term truce" without specifying the conditions, though in that same audio recording he also warned that his fighters were preparing new attacks in the United States.

"These offers were dealt with impolitely but are still valid, and the offer is fair," al-Zawahri said. "But they (Americans) want a relationship with us based on suppression."

"Obama is like a wolf whose fangs tear your flesh and whose paws slit your face and then he calls on you to talk about peace," he said.

In the message released Monday by al Qaeda's media operation, Al-Sahab, al-Zawahri said Mr. Obama is seeking to mislead the Muslim world with calls for better ties, and was doing so because wrath from the Muslim world had inflicted catastrophes upon the United States.

"We are not idiots to accept meaningless flexible words. Obama is the new face with the same old crimes," he said.

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/aug/04/world-scene-15765875/>

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New York Times

August 2, 2009

U.S., Weighing Cyberwar's Risk, Halted '03 Iraq Plan

By John Markoff and Thom Shanker

It would have been the most far-reaching case of computer sabotage in history. In 2003, the Pentagon and American intelligence agencies made plans for a cyberattack to freeze billions of dollars in the bank accounts of Saddam Hussein and cripple his government's financial system before the United States invaded Iraq. He would have no money for war supplies. No money to pay troops.

"We knew we could pull it off — we had the tools," said one senior official who worked at the Pentagon when the highly classified plan was developed.

But the attack never got the green light. Bush administration officials worried that the effects would not be limited to Iraq but would instead create worldwide financial havoc, spreading across the Middle East to Europe and perhaps to the United States.

Fears of such collateral damage are at the heart of the debate as the Obama administration and its Pentagon leadership struggle to develop rules and tactics for carrying out attacks in cyberspace.

While the Bush administration seriously studied computer-network attacks, the Obama administration is the first to elevate cybersecurity — both defending American computer networks and attacking those of adversaries — to the level of a White House director, whose appointment is expected in coming weeks.

But senior White House officials remain so concerned about the risks of unintended harm to civilians and damage to civilian infrastructure in an attack on computer networks that they decline any official comment on the topic. And senior Defense Department officials and military officers directly involved in planning for the Pentagon's new "cybercommand" acknowledge that the risk of collateral damage is one of their chief concerns.

"We are deeply concerned about the second- and third-order effects of certain types of computer network operations, as well as about laws of war that require attacks be proportional to the threat," said one senior officer.

This officer, who like others spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the classified nature of the work, also acknowledged that these concerns had restrained the military from carrying out a number of proposed missions. "In some ways, we are self-deterred today because we really haven't answered that yet in the world of cyber," the officer said.

In interviews over recent weeks, a number of current and retired White House officials, Pentagon civilians and military officers disclosed details of classified missions — some only considered and some put into action — that illustrate why this issue is so difficult.

Although the digital attack on Iraq's financial system was not carried out, the American military and its partners in the intelligence agencies did receive approval to cripple Iraq's military and government communications systems in the early hours of the war in 2003. And that attack did produce collateral damage.

Besides blowing up cellphone towers and communications grids, the offensive included electronic jamming and digital attacks against Iraq's telephone networks. American officials also contacted international communications companies that provided satellite phone and cellphone coverage to Iraq to alert them to possible jamming and to ask their assistance in turning off certain channels.

Officials now acknowledge that the communications offensive temporarily disrupted telephone service in countries around Iraq that shared its cellphone and satellite telephone systems. That limited damage was deemed acceptable by the Bush administration.

Another such event took place in the late 1990s, according to a former military researcher. The American military attacked a Serbian telecommunications network and accidentally affected the Intelsat satellite communications system, whose service was hampered for several days.

These missions, which remain highly classified, are being scrutinized today as the Obama administration and the Pentagon move into new arenas of cyberoperations. Few details have been reported previously; mention of the proposal for a digital offensive against Iraq's financial and banking systems appeared with little notice on Newsmax.com, a news Web site, in 2003.

The government concerns evoke those at the dawn of the nuclear era, when questions of military effectiveness, legality and morality were raised about radiation spreading to civilians far beyond any zone of combat.

“If you don’t know the consequences of a counterstrike against innocent third parties, it makes it very difficult to authorize one,” said James Lewis, a cyberwarfare specialist at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

But some military strategists argue that these uncertainties have led to excess caution on the part of Pentagon planners.

“Policy makers are tremendously sensitive to collateral damage by virtual weapons, but not nearly sensitive enough to damage by kinetic” — conventional — “weapons,” said John Arquilla, an expert in military strategy at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, Calif. “The cyberwarriors are held back by extremely restrictive rules of engagement.”

Despite analogies that have been drawn between biological weapons and cyberweapons, Mr. Arquilla argues that “cyberweapons are disruptive and not destructive.”

That view is challenged by some legal and technical experts.

“It’s virtually certain that there will be unintended consequences,” said Herbert Lin, a senior scientist at the National Research Council and author of a recent report on offensive cyberwarfare. “If you don’t know what a computer you attack is doing, you could do something bad.”

Mark Seiden, a Silicon Valley computer security specialist who was a co-author of the National Research Council report, said, “The chances are very high that you will inevitably hit civilian targets — the worst-case scenario is taking out a hospital which is sharing a network with some other agency.”

And while such attacks are unlikely to leave smoking craters, electronic attacks on communications networks and data centers could have broader, life-threatening consequences where power grids and critical infrastructure like water treatment plants are increasingly controlled by computer networks.

Over the centuries, rules governing combat have been drawn together in customary practice as well as official legal documents, like the Geneva Conventions and the United Nations Charter. These laws govern when it is legitimate to go to war, and set rules for how any conflict may be waged.

Two traditional military limits now are being applied to cyberwar: proportionality, which is a rule that, in layman’s terms, argues that if you slap me, I cannot blow up your house; and collateral damage, which requires militaries to limit civilian deaths and injuries.

“Cyberwar is problematic from the point of view of the laws of war,” said Jack L. Goldsmith, a professor at Harvard Law School. “The U.N. Charter basically says that a nation cannot use force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any other nation. But what kinds of cyberattacks count as force is a hard question, because force is not clearly defined.”

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/02/us/politics/02cyber.html>

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Wall Street Journal

AUGUST 4, 2009

Security Cyber Czar Steps Down

By SIOBHAN GORMAN

WASHINGTON -- The White House's acting cybersecurity czar announced her resignation Monday, in a setback to the Obama administration's efforts to better protect the computer networks critical to national security and the global economy.

The resignation of Melissa Hathaway, Barack Obama's choice to monitor the nation's online security, is a blow for the administration, which had made the position a priority. WSJ's Siobhan Gorman reports the search for her successor will be tough.

The resignation highlights the difficulty the White House has had following through on its cybersecurity effort. President Barack Obama first outlined his cybersecurity plans in a high-profile speech May 29, announcing his intention to create a top White House cybersecurity post -- a position he has yet to fill.

Melissa Hathaway, who completed the Obama administration's cybersecurity review in April, said in an interview that she was leaving for personal reasons. "It's time to pass the torch," she said, adding that she and her colleagues have provided an "initial down payment for what's needed to start to address cybersecurity."

In the past year, intelligence officials have grown increasingly concerned about Chinese and Russian cyberspies surveilling U.S. infrastructure and military networks.

People familiar with the matter said Ms. Hathaway has been "spinning her wheels" in the White House, where the president's economic advisers sought to marginalize her politically.

Cybersecurity is "a major priority for the president," White House spokesman Nicholas Shapiro said, adding that the administration is "pursuing a new comprehensive approach to securing America's digital infrastructure." In the search to fill the top cyber post, "the president is personally committed to finding the right person for this job, and a rigorous selection process is well under way," he said.

Ms. Hathaway had initially been considered a leading contender to fill the cyber post permanently. She lost favor with the president's economic team after she said it should consider options for regulating some private-sector entities to ensure they secure their networks, said cybersecurity specialists familiar with the discussions. Being a holdover from the Bush administration didn't help either, they said.

In February, the White House tapped Ms. Hathaway, a senior intelligence official who had launched President George W. Bush's cybersecurity initiative, to lead a 60-day cybersecurity policy review. Ms. Hathaway completed her review in April, but the White House spent another 60 days debating the wording of her report and how to structure the White House cyber post. National Economic Adviser Larry Summers argued forcefully that his team should have a say in the work of the new cyber official.

The result was a cybersecurity official who would report both to the National Security Council and the National Economic Council. Supporters said that arrangement would cement cybersecurity as a critical security and economic issue; detractors said it would require the new official to please too many masters and would accomplish little.

Cybersecurity experts inside and outside the government heralded Mr. Obama's May 29 speech, but since then, several people have turned down offers for the job.

"It's almost like the system has become paralyzed," said Tom Kellermann, a former World Bank cybersecurity official who served on a commission whose work influenced the White House's cyber planning.

In recent weeks, new front-runners have emerged, including a former Clinton assistant defense secretary, Franklin Kramer, and Howard Schmidt, a former top security officer at eBay Inc. who has served on several presidential cybersecurity panels. Mr. Kramer didn't respond to a request for comment, and Mr. Schmidt couldn't respond because he was traveling, a spokeswoman said.

Ms. Hathaway said she took her name out of the running two weeks ago. "I finished what they asked me to do," she said, noting she has set up and staffed the bulk of the cybersecurity office.

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124932480886002237.html?mod=googlenews_wsj

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RIA Novosti
OPINION & ANALYSIS
31 July 2009

Russian-U.S. New Nuclear Agreement: Too Many Emotions

MOSCOW. (Alexander Khranchikhin, head of the analytical department of the Institute of Political and Military Analysis, for RIA Novosti) - As of today, Russia has a much weaker negotiating position on cuts in strategic nuclear weapons than the United States.

Russia's strategic forces are rapidly decreasing because the delivery vehicles (ICBMs, SLBMs, submarine missile cruisers and strategic bombers) with an expired service life are being retired at a rate which exceeds the construction of new delivery vehicles by several times.

Worse, the majority of retired ICBMs (RS-18 and RS-20), and all SLBMs are MIRVed (multiple warhead vehicles), whereas all new ICBMs (Topol-M) have only single warhead capacity. By virtue of this, the total number of Russia's warheads is being reduced at an even faster rate than that of its delivery vehicles. Considering the number of warheads and vehicles stored in munitions depots, the United States has already doubled its superiority over Russia, and this gap continuous to increase. Russia continues building ICBMs, while the United States is not building any strategic delivery vehicles, but paradoxically, the U.S. advantage is growing at an accelerated rate.

Adoption of the RS-24 multiple-warhead missile will not give Russia any substantial advantage. Nor will the submarine-launched Bulava ballistic missile with its poor test record.

The U.S.' absolute advantage in high accuracy weapons (particularly submarine-launched cruise missiles) is making Russia's inferiority disastrous. Under the circumstances, Washington could afford not to agree to any negotiations and wait until "things straighten out by themselves." Apparently, Washington is initiating the negotiating process because President Barack Obama wants to assert a peacemaking image (as distinct from the bellicose George W. Bush), and because the United States wants to put the disarmament process under control and make it legally binding. An absolute superiority in precision conventional weapons allows the United States to safely sacrifice a considerable part of its strategic nuclear force.

The development of a nuclear missile defense system by the United States is an additional factor in the negotiating process. It does not take a rocket scientist to see a direct link between offensive (strategic nuclear forces) and defensive (missile defense) strategic armaments. Moscow is correct in linking the two, but its weak bargaining position prevents it from gaining much.

However, Moscow's irrational fixation on missile defense in Eastern Europe is perplexing. Based on its tactical and technical features, this system (which will appear no sooner than five years, if at all) does not present a serious threat even for Russia's weakened nuclear force. The United States has a far more sophisticated and dangerous Aegis-equipped missile defense system on its cruisers and destroyers, but for some reason Moscow has not voiced any concern about that.

The Bush administration had the same fixation on missile defense in Eastern Europe. As distinct from its predecessor, the Obama administration must realize that this system is useless militarily, extravagant (especially during the economic crisis), and politically volatile. Therefore, America can afford to give it up, presenting this as a major concession to Russia in exchange for help with Iran, or the issue of retrievable potential (the ability to mobilize stored warheads).

The problems of missile defense and retrievable potential are bound to complicate the signing of a new treaty on strategic nuclear forces. It is quite probable that it will not be concluded until December. START-1 expires in December, but this fact should not lead one to expect dramatic changes. Such apprehensions are unfounded. In fact, they are so irrational that it is even difficult to object to them.

Obviously, neither the United States nor Russia will start a no-holds-barred arms race the minute START-1 expires because neither has the ability or the desire to do so. As Washington's attitude to the ABM Treaty has shown, where there is a will there is a way, and even the operating agreements become of no consequence. To sum up, the expiration of START-1 and the lack of any new treaty to replace it will have no bearing on global security.

<http://en.rian.ru/analysis/20090731/155691961.html>

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Times of London
ANALYSIS
August 3, 2009

Nuclear Progress in Iran has Dire Consequences if Diplomacy Fails

RICHARD BEESTON: ANALYSIS

For the past two months the world has watched as political turmoil has deepened in Iran after the contested presidential election results that returned Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to a controversial second term.

Now those problems threaten to grip not just Iran but the wider Middle East and beyond.

We know from intelligence estimates that Iran is nearing the point when it can produce its first nuclear warhead and the means to deliver it. That moment is likely to come under the leadership of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the Supreme Leader, and Mr Ahmadinejad, who will be inaugurated this month for another four-year term.

These are men who have demonstrated that they intend to hold on to power by whatever means necessary. They are also responsible for accelerating the nuclear programme and taking a hardline position against the West, in spite of repeated peace overtures made by President Barack Obama this year.

Washington has given Tehran until September to respond to an offer of dialogue. The hope is that diplomacy can bring Iran back from the brink. The test will be whether it is prepared to abide by international safeguards. These would allow it to build a legitimate civilian nuclear programme, which it is doing with Russian help at Bushehr. But it would mean stricter supervision of its more suspect facilities at Natanz and Arak.

If Iran chooses not to engage with Washington and rejects a negotiated deal on its nuclear facilities then America, Britain and France will press for harsher United Nations sanctions against Tehran. These will take effect only if Russia and China, who hold the right of veto at the UN Security Council, drop objections to tighter economic measures.

At this point the future looks bleak. If diplomatic efforts fail and if Iran presses ahead with its ambitions, then the Middle East may be headed for the most serious conflict in decades. Israel's policy is that it prefers a diplomatic settlement but that "all options remain on the table". By that it means using force to destroy Iran's nuclear facilities, probably with air and missile strikes. Iran would be likely to respond and within days the region would threaten to become embroiled in a terrible war.

Many doubt that Israel would be prepared to take such a dangerous step, particularly since experts believe that Iran has the ability to rebuild the key uranium enrichment site within two to three years.

Who runs Iran in the coming months and years is not just a matter for Iranians.

This is now a global issue.

http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/middle_east/article6736641.ece

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New York Times

LETTER FROM SOUTH KOREA

August 4, 2009

Korean Crisis Is Different This Time

By CHOE SANG-HUN

SEOUL — The current crisis over North Korea's pursuit of nuclear weapons has unmistakable parallels with the events of spring 1994. Then, as now, North Korea was plunging ahead to make bomb-grade plutonium at its nuclear complex in Yongbyon.

Then as now, the United States was rallying international support for sanctions against the North. Tensions spiked as North Korea warned it would consider any sanctions an "act of war."

There is, however, one key difference. In 1994, the United States was prepared to attack the North Korean nuclear complex, says Kim Young-sam, who was South Korea's president at the time. That prospect prompted South Korea to reject any moves against the North.

How Seoul responded to Washington's handling of the crisis in 1994, as Mr. Kim described it in a recent interview, illuminates South Koreans' continuing quandary in the long-running nuclear standoff: They may loathe North Korea for having invaded the South in 1950, for starving its people, for building nuclear weapons. But, with the carnage of the Korean War still fresh in their collective memory, they also recoil whenever they sense the United States is pushing North Korea too hard, fearful this might provoke Pyongyang to lash out in a suicidal attack.

In 1994, Mr. Kim said, "the Americans were quite adamant about attacking Yongbyon. They had 33 warships positioned off the east coast."

He envisioned an apocalyptic scene in Seoul, just 65 kilometers, or 40 miles, from the border, within striking distance of North Korean artillery and rockets.

“I said absolutely no to the United States unilaterally bombing Yongbyon,” Mr. Kim said. “The North Korean artillery would have been rolling out within three minutes, and Seoul would have turned into a sea of fire.”

Mr. Kim can hardly be accused of spinelessness before an adversary. He had his two military-backed predecessors arrested on corruption and sedition charges, forever shutting the military out of South Korean politics. But his rush to shield North Korea from an American strike speaks volumes about the complicated mix of disdain and fear, kinship and even nationalistic pride South Koreans — even many politically conservative, anti-Communist South Koreans — feel about the North.

U.S. officials came to appreciate this mentality during the subsequent decade of liberal rule, from 1998 till 2008. As the government engaged North Korea, surveys showed that the South Korean public considered the United States a bigger threat to peace than North Korea. One liberal politician said that if the United States planned to attack Yongbyon, he would lead thousands of “peace-loving” South Koreans across the border to form a human shield around the nuclear complex.

Such emotionally charged friction between Seoul and Washington has subsided in recent years, as the governments of President Lee Myung-bak in Seoul and President Barack Obama in Washington conclude that they can prevail against the North only if they forge a united approach.

Still, the South Korean outlook — distrusting the North, but wary of U.S. intervention against the North — remains fundamentally unchanged.

In 1994, as the United States prepared to evacuate American civilians and beefed up forces here, the South Korean stock market plummeted. Citizens stockpiled instant noodles and candles.

This spring, when North Korea conducted a nuclear test and launched a long-range rocket, the local markets and the public hardly blinked, confident the United States would not take military action.

U.S. officials tend to view the North’s nuclear program within the global framework of combating proliferation. But to ordinary South Koreans, it is just a latest episode in the decades-old hostilities from the Korean War, which halted with a cease-fire in 1953 and has yet to end with a formal peace.

Opinions among South Koreans on how to resolve the nuclear crisis depend on how they see the North Korean government. Is it an evil regime bent on keeping its dictatorial grip on a starving people and building nuclear bombs to deter meddling from the outside? Or is it a cornered beast whose threats are a desperate cry for a way out?

Whichever side they take, ordinary South Koreans hardly see the nuclear crisis in global terms, but rather within the highly local context of how to end the war and possibly reunify the peninsula.

That partly explains why South Korean leaders over the years, both conservative and liberal, were eager for a meeting with their North Korean counterparts. Mr. Kim almost had one.

Like most South Koreans of his generation, Mr. Kim, 81, harbors a visceral mistrust of North Korea. His mother was murdered in 1960 by a North Korean agent who attacked his island village.

But when former President Jimmy Carter of the United States traveled to Pyongyang to help defuse the nuclear crisis in 1994 and returned with a proposal for an inter-Korean meeting, Mr. Kim readily accepted it. He saw a momentous opportunity as a politician. “Unifying the fatherland” is an idea drilled into the heads of schoolchildren on both sides of the border. Koreans’ greatest historical grievance is the peninsula’s division by the United States and Soviet Union at the end of World War II.

Mr. Kim was to meet the North Korean leader, Kim Il-sung, in Pyongyang on July 25, 1994. But two weeks beforehand, on July 8, the 82-year-old Kim Il-sung died of a heart attack.

“Fate played a trick on me,” Mr. Kim said with a tone of regret. “If I had met Kim Il-sung, I would have changed the nation’s history.”

The achievement that had eluded him — becoming the first South Korean leader to hold a summit meeting with North Korea — went to Mr. Kim’s rival and successor, Kim Dae-jung. In 2000, Kim Dae-jung flew to Pyongyang and met with Kim Jong-il, Kim Il-sung’s son and successor. That year, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Today, Kim Young-sam remains the outspoken conservative critic of North Korea, while Kim Dae-jung is still the tireless evangelist for engaging it.

“Over the years, both the Americans and we have conducted many negotiations with the North Koreans, but all of them failed,” Kim Young-sam said. “We can never trust the North Koreans.”

But during the interview at his Seoul residence, decorated with photos of Mr. Kim smiling and posing with American leaders, Mr. Kim said he was proud of having averted war by stopping his U.S. ally from attacking Yongbyon — even though he concedes that this may have emboldened Pyongyang.

“Looking back,” he said, “I think the North Koreans think they can say whatever they want because no matter what they do, the Americans will never attack them.”

Such is the South Korean dilemma.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/04/world/asia/04iht-letter.html?pagewanted=all>

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Wall Street Journal

August 4, 2009

Why Revive The Cold War?

By Douglas J. Feith and Abram N. Shulsky

The Cold War ended nearly 20 years ago. Isn't it time we abandoned policies specifically designed to deal with it? Arms-control talks are a case in point. Why should U.S. officials act as if only a Cold War-style treaty can save the United States and Russia from a destabilizing nuclear arms race?

Despite President Barack Obama's strange, pre-Moscow summit remark last month in a New York Times interview that the U.S. and Russia are continuing to “grow” their nuclear stockpiles, both countries have in fact reduced their stockpiles drastically since the Soviet Union disintegrated in 1991. Those reductions resulted from unilateral decisions, not from arms-control bargaining.

Thus, on Nov. 13, 2001, President George W. Bush announced that the U.S. would unilaterally reduce its “operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads to a level between 1,700 and 2,200 over the next decade.” This was far less than the 6,000 limit allowed under the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START). Russian President Vladimir Putin promptly said in December 2001 that Russia would similarly reduce its nuclear forces.

Thus, benefiting from the happy reality that the Cold War was over, each country felt free to cut its arsenal, whether or not the other committed itself to do so. The 2002 Moscow Treaty, which simply made legally binding the reduction pledges each president had already announced, was negotiated as a friendly gesture to Russia. U.S. officials did not see it as a strategic necessity, but Mr. Putin wanted formal acknowledgment that Russia retained nuclear-arms parity with the U.S., though it could no longer be seen as America's peer overall.

Now, with START set to expire in December, it is Mr. Obama who's intent on signing a new treaty. He says U.S.-Russian arms reductions will help stem nuclear proliferation.

Mr. Obama here is mixing up pretext and policy. When criticized for pursuing nuclear weapons, proliferators like North Korea and Iran make diplomatic talking points out of the size of the great powers' arsenals. They try to shift the focus away from themselves by complaining that the Americans and Russians aren't working hard enough to reach disarmament goals envisioned in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. But depriving proliferators of such talking points won't affect their incentives to acquire nuclear weapons—or the world's incentives to counter the dangers that the North Korean and Iranian nuclear programs pose to international peace.

Nor would cutting the U.S. and Russian arsenals by a few hundred weapons do anything significant to achieve Mr. Obama's goal of a world without nuclear weapons. The roadblock is the fact of U.S. dependence on nuclear deterrence. So long as the security of the U.S. and of our allies and friends requires such dependence, a non-nuclear world will remain out of reach. Inventing a way to dispense with nuclear deterrence will require a political or technological breakthrough of major magnitude. Retaining our dependence on nuclear weapons even at somewhat lower levels is an admission by the Obama administration that the proposed reductions don't actually bring us closer to a non-nuclear world.

With Mr. Obama openly eager for a START follow-on treaty, Russian leaders have chosen to play coy and become demanding. So what might the U.S. have to pay for it? The price is likely to be high, as suggested by the “Joint Understanding” the U.S. and Russian presidents announced last month in Moscow.

Point 5 of the Understanding specifies that the new treaty is to contain “a provision on the interrelationship of strategic offensive and strategic defensive arms.” Russia will use this language (which Bush administration officials repeatedly rejected) to try to derail U.S. plans for a Europe-based missile system designed to counter Iranian missile threats. If Russia succeeds here, the new treaty would increase the value to Iran of acquiring nuclear weapons. By making it easier for a nuclear-armed Iran to threaten all of Europe and eventually the U.S., the new treaty would promote rather than discourage nuclear proliferation.

Similarly, according to Point 6, the new treaty is to contain a provision on how non-nuclear, long-range strike weapons may affect strategic stability. Russia wants this to impede U.S. development of such weapons, probably by requiring that they be counted as if they had nuclear warheads. Hence the new treaty could shut down one of the more promising avenues for reducing U.S. dependence on nuclear arms for strategic strike.

All in all, the Obama administration’s nuclear weapons policies appear confused and self-defeating. Mr. Obama seems willing to pay for arms reductions that Russian officials have made clear will occur soon, due to aging or the planned modernization of systems, with or without a new treaty. Moreover, the Obama administration is opposing modernization measures designed to protect against the risk that the aging of U.S. weapons will compromise their safety or reliability.

There is an important connection between proliferation risks and modernization. But the Obama administration seems to have it backwards. If the U.S. fails to ensure the continuing safety and reliability of its arsenal, it could cause the collapse of the U.S. nuclear umbrella. Countries such as Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Australia and others might decide that their security requires them to acquire their own nuclear arsenals, rather than rely indefinitely on the U.S. The world could reach a tipping point, with cascading nuclear proliferation, as the bipartisan Congressional Strategic Posture Commission warned in its May 2009 report.

The Obama administration’s nuclear weapons policies—including its treaty talks with Russia—affect the way America’s friends and potential adversaries view the integrity of the U.S. deterrent. The wrong policies can endanger the U.S. directly. They can also cause other states to lose confidence in the American nuclear umbrella and to seek security in national nuclear capabilities.

If that happens, the dangers of a nuclear war somewhere in the world would go up substantially. It would not be the first time a U.S. government helped bring about the opposite of its intended result—but it might be one of the costliest mistakes ever.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970204313604574328430978849134.html>

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