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Washington Post
August 24, 2009

New Unit to Question Key Terror Suspects

By Anne E. Kornblut
Washington Post Staff Writer

President Obama has approved the creation of an elite team of interrogators to question key terrorism suspects, part of a broader effort to revamp U.S. policy on detention and interrogation, senior administration officials said Sunday.

Obama signed off late last week on the unit, named the High-Value Detainee Interrogation Group, or HIG. Made up of experts from several intelligence and law enforcement agencies, the interrogation unit will be housed at the FBI but will be overseen by the National Security Council -- shifting the center of gravity away from the CIA and giving the White House direct oversight.

Seeking to signal a clean break from the Bush administration, Obama moved to overhaul interrogation and detention guidelines soon after taking office, including the creation of a task force on interrogation and transfer policies. The task force, whose findings will be made public Monday, recommended the new interrogation unit, along with other changes regarding the way prisoners are transferred overseas.

A separate task force on detainees, which will determine the fate of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and future regulations about the duration and location of detentions of suspected terrorists, has not concluded its work.

Under the new guidelines, interrogators must stay within the parameters of the Army Field Manual when questioning suspects. The task force concluded -- unanimously, officials said -- that "the Army Field Manual provides appropriate guidance on interrogation for military interrogators and that no additional or different guidance was necessary for other agencies," according to a three-page summary of the findings. The officials spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss intelligence matters freely.

Using the Army Field Manual means certain techniques in the gray zone between torture and legal questioning -- such as playing loud music or depriving prisoners of sleep -- will not be allowed. Which tactics are acceptable was an issue "looked at thoroughly," one senior official said. Obama had already banned certain severe measures that the Bush administration had permitted, such as waterboarding.

Still, the Obama task force advised that the group develop a "scientific research program for interrogation" to develop new techniques and study existing ones to see whether they work. In essence, the unit would determine a set of best practices on interrogation and share them with other agencies that question prisoners.

The administration is releasing the new guidelines on the day when what it sees as the worst practices of the Bush administration are being given another public airing. New details of prisoner treatment are expected to be included in a long-awaited CIA inspector general's report being unveiled Monday about the spy agency's interrogation program. The report could set off a fresh debate between members of the current administration and the previous one over whether such tactics are necessary to prod detainees into cooperation and, ultimately, keep the country safe.

Attorney General Eric H. Holder Jr. is also considering whether to appoint a criminal prosecutor to investigate past interrogation abuses. Obama and White House officials have stated their desire to look ahead on national security; White House press secretary Robert Gibbs said last week that the administration is eager to keep "going forward" and that "a hefty litigation looking backward is not what we believe is in the country's best interest."

But a steady drip of stories about past practices has focused attention on the Bush administration. According to recent reports, the CIA hired the private contracting firm Blackwater USA as part of a program to kill top al-Qaeda operatives.

In addition to the new interrogation unit, the Obama task force recommended that the State Department play a more active role in transferring detainees between countries. When the United States is moving a prisoner to another country, it "may rely on assurances" from the foreign government that the detainee will not be tortured. But the State

Department will now be involved in evaluating whether such assurances are sincere, the officials said, and the United States will also seek new ways of monitoring treatment of prisoners in foreign custody. Other recommendations involve prisoner transfers that are classified, the summary said.

Members of the new interrogation unit will have the authority to travel around the world to talk to suspects and will be trained to handle certain high-interest people, such as al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden. Linguists and cultural and interrogation specialists will be assigned to the group and will have "some division of responsibility" regarding types of detainees, a senior administration official said. Most of the group's members will work there full time, although they will have part-time support from the FBI.

Interrogators will not necessarily read detainees their rights before questioning, instead making that decision on a case-by-case basis, officials said. That could affect whether some material can be used in a U.S. court of law. The main purpose of the new unit, however, is to glean intelligence, especially about potential terrorist attacks, the officials said.

"It is not going to, certainly, be automatic in any regard that they are going to be Mirandized," one official said, referring to the practice of reading defendants their rights. "Nor will it be automatic that they are not Mirandized."

The director of the HIG is expected to come from the FBI, and the deputy will be selected from one of the intelligence agencies, such as the CIA. Although past CIA techniques have come under fire in the debate over torture, the agency will continue to play "a very important role," one official said.

The CIA had recommended to the presidential task force that the agency, the FBI and the Defense Department establish a joint interrogation training center so that all agencies understand the rules under which they operate.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/08/23/AR2009082302598.html?hpid=topnews>

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Navy Times
August 24, 2009

CO of Nuclear Weapons Facility Fired

By Andrew Tilghman - Staff writer

The commanding officer of the Navy's nuclear weapons facility in Washington was fired Friday for a loss of confidence in his ability to lead the unit, a Navy spokesman said.

Capt. Timothy Block was relieved as commander of Strategic Weapons Facility Pacific at Naval Base Kitsap, Wash. The weapons facility assembles and maintains one of the largest concentrations of nuclear weapons in the country, including nuclear-tipped Trident missiles.

Block was removed by Rear Adm. Stephen Johnson, director of Strategic Systems Programs. The admiral "lost confidence in Capt. Block's ability to continue to lead SWFPac in execution of its mission," said Cmdr. Cappy Surette, a Navy spokesman at the Pentagon.

Surette said the removal was not related to any underlying safety or security issues that would put the surrounding community at risk.

Block, who assumed command in July 2008, was temporarily replaced by Capt. Kevin Zumbar, who has been serving as the deputy director of Strategic Systems Programs, Surette said.

Block is the second commander of the weapons facility to be fired in recent years.

In December 2003, Capt. Keith Lyles was relieved of command at SWFPac.

At the time of Lyles' removal, the admiral in charge also cited a "lack of confidence" as a reason.

Subsequent reports revealed that Lyle's removal came shortly after a mishap involving damage to the nose cone of a Trident C-4 nuclear missile that was being unloaded from the guided-missile submarine Georgia.

The damage reportedly occurred after sailors left a ladder in one of the missile tubes. There was no release of radiation in that incident, Navy officials said.

http://www.navytimes.com/news/2009/08/navy_nuclear_cofired_082109w/

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The Australian
August 22, 2009

Saudis Set Stage for Mid-East Nuke Race

John Lyons, Middle East correspondent

THE scene has been set for a race between several Middle Eastern countries to develop a nuclear program after Saudi Arabia yesterday revealed its intention to push ahead with a nuclear industry.

Saudi Arabian Minister for Water and Electricity Abdullah al-Hosain revealed that the country was developing its first nuclear power plant.

The comment was made to local newspaper Al-Watan. Because newspapers in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia are under state control, the comment was seen as an official acknowledgement of what has been speculated about in the region for some time -- that Saudi Arabia was moving into the nuclear power industry.

The development came as Saudi Arabia's rival for supremacy in the region, Iran, surprised the international community by allowing inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency to visit one of its nuclear reactors. According to the Associated Press, the inspectors were permitted to visit the almost completed Arak heavy water reactor and given greater access to the Natanz uranium enrichment site.

Saudi Arabia's move raises the nuclear stakes in the Middle East. Israel has been pressing the US to place a clear deadline by which Iran must agree to allow international inspectors into all of its nuclear facilities.

Israeli media reported this week that Israel was accusing the UN of hiding evidence that Iran was pursuing plans to develop nuclear weapons.

The reports said that UN officials were suppressing the report for fear of alienating Iran.

The outgoing director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Mohammed ElBaradei, denied that any such information was being suppressed.

US President Barak Obama originally gave Iran until "the end of the year" to agree to allow inspectors into its nuclear facilities but on a recent visit to Israel, US Secretary of Defence Robert Gates said Iran had until next month. Israel is pushing for current sanctions against Iran to be toughened should this deadline not be met and is keeping "all options on the table" for unilateral action. This is seen as code for Israeli air strikes on Iran.

Three months ago Mr Obama sent CIA chief Leon Panetta to Israel when the US became concerned that Israel was planning a surprise strike on Iran.

Two years ago Israel made a surprise strike on a nuclear facility in Syria. Damascus did not respond.

But analysts in the Middle East believe Iran would be much more likely to respond, possibly through its ally Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Hezbollah has a large stockpile of missiles in southern Lebanon on the border with Israel which Iran could seek to activate.

One Israeli official told The Australian that in talks between Israel and the US Washington insisted it did not want any air strike on Iran while there were any American troops remaining in Iraq.

The Israeli official said the US officials had said they feared a "murderous" response by Iran's supporters in Iraq. Most US combat troops are already out of Iraq. US support and training soldiers are scheduled to leave within two years.

The Jerusalem Post reported yesterday that during the past two years Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen, Morocco, Libya, Jordan and Egypt had all indicated an interest in developing nuclear programs.

Israeli officials have said off the record that if these countries did not want the programs now for their military capabilities, they wanted the technology in place to keep other options open if Iran were to develop a nuclear bomb. The paper reported: "Israel has been careful not to take a public stand on civilian nuclear programs in neighbouring states, partly because, as one of the few countries in the world that has not signed the non-proliferation treaty, it is not keen on lobbying against nuclear know-how for peaceful needs going to countries that are willing to sign the treaty, since that would focus the limelight on Israel's own unique situation."

<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,25963207-15084,00.html>

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Washington Post
August 24, 2009

The Tehran File

SEPTEMBER WILL be a crucial month for the Obama administration's efforts to rein in Iran's nuclear program. President Obama has said that Iran must respond to his offer of direct talks or risk tougher economic sanctions.

Having crushed protests against President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's probably fraudulent reelection, the Tehran regime has allowed inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency to visit a nearly completed heavy water reactor, and has granted greater access to a uranium enrichment site. But these are token gestures, aimed at giving China and Russia reasons to resist possible American and European pressure for sanctions, as well as a sop to the IAEA itself, which has little to show for its indulgent approach to Iran under Director General Mohamed ElBaradei.

Indeed, Mr. ElBaradei faces his own moment of truth next month. The IAEA's 35-nation board of governors will convene in Vienna for four days starting Sept. 7 and again Sept. 22. Mr. ElBaradei will be closely questioned about a document in his possession that, according to recent media accounts, summarizes everything his agency knows about Iran. The picture -- which reportedly includes development of nuclear warheads and missiles to deliver them -- is not benign. Mr. ElBaradei has had this information since September 2008 but has resisted calls by the United States and its allies to circulate the report among the IAEA board.

This is consistent with Mr. ElBaradei's overall performance for the past 12 years, during which he went beyond his technical role to denounce "crazies" in the Bush administration who, he said, were hell-bent on bombing Iran. Meanwhile, Mr. ElBaradei has shown extraordinary patience in the face of Iranian stonewalling. Just two months ago, he conceded that his "gut feeling" is that Iran wants nuclear weapons capability. But, he said, this was the regime's understandable way "to get that recognition to power and prestige and . . . an insurance policy against what they heard in the past about regime change, axis of evil." No "crazies" here!

Of course, the Obama administration has pointedly renounced the Bush administration's approach. So, if a new, more diplomacy-friendly U.S. president wants greater disclosure of the IAEA's Iran dossier, you'd think Mr. ElBaradei, whose term expires Nov. 30, would oblige. Mr. ElBaradei's good faith will be tested one last time at the upcoming IAEA meetings, and if he wants to leave any sort of legacy, he will tell the board -- and the world -- everything his agency knows.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/08/23/AR2009082302459_pf.html

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Reuters
August 24, 2009

Iran says Cooperating with IAEA, West Skeptical

By Reza Derakhshi

TEHRAN (Reuters) - Iran will continue to cooperate with the U.N. nuclear watchdog, the Foreign Ministry said on Monday, apparently confirming Tehran had given inspectors access to a reactor under construction after barring visits for a year.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Hassan Qashqavi also called on the West to seek "interaction" rather than impose more sanctions on the Islamic Republic, state Press TV reported. Tehran has repeatedly shrugged off the impact of such punitive measures.

"Nothing can prevent us in pursuing our legal nuclear rights," he told a news conference.

U.S. President Barack Obama has given Iran until September to take up a six-power offer of talks on trade benefits if it shelves sensitive nuclear enrichment, or face harsher sanctions.

The International Atomic Energy Agency is due to release a report on Iran's disputed nuclear program this week. Last week diplomats accredited to the Vienna-based agency said Iran had allowed the IAEA to inspect the Arak heavy water reactor site.

The U.N. agency had urged Iran to grant access so that it could verify that the site under construction was for peaceful uses only. The diplomats also said Iran had recently allowed an upgrade of monitoring at the Natanz uranium enrichment plant.

The changes were greeted with skepticism by the West, which suspects Iran is trying to build nuclear bombs. Tehran says its nuclear work is to generate electricity. Uranium enrichment can have both civilian and military uses.

Asked about the reported Arak visit and whether there had been a change in relations with the IAEA, Qashqavi said:

"All our nuclear activities have been within the framework of the agency and the NPT (nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty) ... (IAEA Director General Mohamed) ElBaradei has always confirmed Iran's cooperation with the agency.

"This trend will be continued in the future. What has been mentioned recently was in the same framework," he added, appearing to refer to the reported Arak visit.

"INTERFERING REMARKS"

The United States, Britain, France and Germany are expected to urge Russia and China in talks on September 2 to consider a fourth round of U.N. sanctions on Iran and the latest IAEA report will help form the basis for the discussions.

In Washington on Friday, a State Department spokesman said Iran's latest moves at the IAEA fell short of what was required.

Several diplomats from the six world powers said they were skeptical about Iran's latest move.

To avoid further sanctions, Tehran must stop enrichment, come clean about its past nuclear activities and sit down at the negotiating table, the diplomats said. Iran has repeatedly ruled out halting or freezing its nuclear program.

Western hopes that Iran would negotiate a cap on its nuclear work faded when it quelled unrest over alleged fraud in a June election which returned President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to power.

But the new head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, Ali Akbar Salehi, is seen by analysts as a mild-mannered politician in favor of resolving the nuclear row through talks.

Qashqavi, the Foreign Ministry spokesman, said the Western punitive measures could not stop Iran's nuclear activities.

He also accused German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who last week said Western powers would have to respond with further sanctions against Iran if there was no progress on nuclear talks, of making "interfering remarks" about Iran.

(Additional reporting by Hashem Kalantari; Writing by Fredrik Dahl; Editing by Jon Hemming)

<http://www.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUSLK11768820090824?sp=true>

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International Business Times

25 August 2009

No Iran Atom Expansion Since May

By Sylvia Westall and Mark Heinrich

VIENNA - Iran has not expanded the number of centrifuges enriching uranium at its Natanz nuclear site since the end of May after increasing capacity steadily over the previous three years, diplomats said.

The reason for the slowdown was unclear. The International Atomic Energy Agency is due to issue a report later this week that will influence big-power talks due to consider harsher sanctions on Iran over its disputed nuclear campaign.

Since May, Iran has been wracked by unrest over alleged election fraud that has split the conservative political establishment, a relative moderate has become head of its nuclear authority, and Western powers have said they will pursue harsh sanctions against Iran if it does not accept negotiations on its nuclear activity by the end of September.

"There has been no increase in the number of centrifuges enriching uranium since the end of May," a senior Vienna diplomat familiar with the issue said, speaking on condition of anonymity because of political sensitivities.

Some diplomats and analysts said the slowed enrichment growth was more likely a technical than political issue. They noted Iranian officials had renewed defiant refusals to curb the program despite the threat of harsher sanctions.

They also said Iran could swiftly resume expansion since, in addition to just under 5,000 centrifuges refining uranium as reported by U.N. inspectors on May 31, it had already installed many more in preparation for entering the production chain.

The senior diplomat said the number of Iranian centrifuges -- cylindrical machines that whirl at supersonic speed in linked networks -- now enriching uranium was slightly lower because some had been taken down for repair and maintenance.

But the number that have been installed, though not yet brought on stream, has risen from around 2,100 in May, diplomats said. These could be added to production lines within a few weeks, if desired, according to nuclear analysts.

"Once they're installed, it only takes a few weeks to test-run them under vacuum before they're ready to enrich," said David Albright, head of Washington's Institute for Science and International Security which tracks nuclear proliferation.

STALEMATE

The Islamic Republic is at odds with major powers which suspect it is secretly pursuing nuclear weapons capability.

It denies this, saying it is refining uranium only for electricity so it can export more oil, though it has no nuclear power plants to use the low-enriched material it is stockpiling.

Some analysts say Iran now has enough low-enriched uranium to convert into the high-enriched version (HEU) needed for a nuclear bomb if it wants. But there is disagreement over how soon Tehran could "weaponize" the enrichment process.

U.S. national intelligence chief Dennis Blair has said Iran is unlikely to be able to produce HEU before 2013, but Israel fears the timeline could prove shorter.

Iran may be slowing enrichment growth believing its uranium fuel stockpile is "perilously close to crossing an Israeli red line," said Mark Fitzpatrick, senior non-proliferation fellow at London's International Institute for Strategic Studies.

Israel has hinted at the idea of military action to pre-empt a nuclear Iran.

"In the meantime," Fitzpatrick said, "what's most important for Iran is to increase the number of installed centrifuges, in case it ever enters negotiations that require a freeze on their number. Adding to the numbers now creates additional 'facts on the ground' that it will later argue can never be rolled back."

An IAEA spokesman declined to comment on Iran's centrifuge activity. There was no immediate comment from Iranian officials.

BIG POWER TALKS

The United States, Britain, France and Germany are expected to urge Russia and China in talks on September 2 to weigh a fourth round of U.N. sanctions possibly targeting Iran's lifeblood oil sector. The new IAEA report will underpin those discussions.

The report is also expected to elaborate on new Iranian cooperation with international demands for nuclear transparency.

But it was unclear whether these steps amounted to one-off gestures, designed to soften the IAEA report and the case for more painful sanctions, or a longer-term policy switch hinting at openness to a nuclear deal with big powers.

This month, Iran agreed to IAEA demands for upgraded monitoring at Natanz. It also restored access to a heavy water reactor under construction after blocking visits for a year.

There have been some mixed signals from Tehran since unrest broke out over alleged fraud in its June presidential election.

Ali Akbar Salehi, Iran's new atomic agency chief, said last month Tehran and the West should revive efforts to build mutual trust and end a six-year standoff. But he did not suggest Iran was ready to halt enrichment or freeze it at current levels.

Iran's IAEA ambassador, Ali Asghar Soltanieh, was reported as saying on August 18 that Tehran was ready for talks with the West on its nuclear ambitions. He later denied the comments.

(Editing by Ralph Boulton)

http://www.ibtimes.com/articles/20090825/no-iran-atom-expansion-since-may_all.htm

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RIA Novosti
24 August 2009

Russia to Invest \$143 mln in Engines for New Angara Rocket

NIZHNY NOVGOROD, August 24 (RIA Novosti) - Russia will invest about 4.5 billion rubles (\$143 mln) by 2015 in the production of engines for a family of Angara carrier rockets, the Perm Territory's government said on Monday.

The RD-191 is a high-performance single-combustion chamber rocket engine, which recently passed a series of benchmark tests at the Proton-PM company in the Perm Territory in the Urals, and will be soon certified for test flights.

Russia's Federal Space Agency Roscosmos and the Perm Territory signed an investment agreement last week during the MAKS-2009 air show near Moscow.

The environmentally-friendly Angara rocket, currently under development by the Khrunichev center, is designed to put heavy payloads into orbit. It is intended mainly for launch from the Plesetsk space center to reduce Moscow's dependence on Kazakhstan's Baikonur, the main launch facility for the current generation of Russian rockets.

The new line of rockets will complement, and eventually replace, the existing line of Rockot and Proton launch vehicles. It will be available in a range of configurations capable of lifting between two and 24.5 metric tons into low-earth orbit.

The Angara family will be used for military and civilian purposes, specifically to put into orbit satellites as part of the Federal Space Program, as well as joint international space projects.

The Khrunichev center recently asked the government to allocate additional 10 billion rubles (about \$290 mln) over the next three years to finish the development of the Angara rocket.

<http://en.rian.ru/russia/20090824/155911606.html>

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Aviation Week

AEROSPACE DAILY AND DEFENSE REPORT

August 25, 2009

U.S. Researchers: Russian Military 'Plagued'

By Michael Bruno

Several U.S. researchers in Washington painted a grim picture of the Russian military Aug. 24, saying the former Cold War adversary has embarked on a necessary reform campaign after decades of corruption and shrinking capacity.

Two researchers, Stephen Blank of the U.S. Army War College and Dale Herspring of Kansas State University, told a Hudson Institute audience that Russian media and military leaders are widely lamenting the state of Russia's military, recently brought to worldwide attention by its difficult – albeit ultimately successful – invasion of Georgia a year ago. “The Russians were not ready for that war,” Herspring said.

Indeed, the self-criticism started as soon as just weeks after the August 2008 war. Senior Russian military officials, both active and recently retired, loudly criticized early setbacks in Georgia which included problems in air defense suppression, intelligence analysis and warnings, air attack planning and speed of response, Aviation Week & Space Technology reported Sept. 1, 2008.

Russia's military is plagued by endemic corruption – perhaps around 40 percent of the annual budget is essentially stolen, the U.S. researchers said – and ineptitude. Moreover, technologically, Russia has suffered at least one lost decade. “Ten years were basically lost, 1990-2000,” Herspring said.

Indeed, Blank said, the idea that Russia is going to Israel to buy unmanned aerial vehicles is a scandal in Russia. In March, Russian Army Gen. Nikolay Makarov, head of General Staff of the Armed Forces, said the defense ministry must acquire at least an initial batch of UAVs from abroad, since local industry is not yet ready for the job (Aerospace DAILY, April 8).

“Don’t expect major weapons modifications for several years,” Herspring said. The Russian military will be first focused on internal reform. Nevertheless, the latest Russian defense guidance reflects a “growing sense of anxiety,” according to Blank, refocusing on asserting a “sphere of influence” around the Eurasian giant, while still eyeing the United States above terrorism, major weapons proliferation or even China. Energy disputes will lead to armed conflicts around Russia, especially the Arctic, Middle East and Central Asia, predicted Blank and Joshua Spero of Fitchburg State University. “The Russian military still sees NATO as a threat,” Spero said. Moscow will come to rely on its air, naval, electronic and even nuclear capabilities in the face of NATO and other challengers, according to Blank.

[http://www.aviationweek.com/aw/generic/story_generic.jsp?channel=aerospacedaily&id=news/RUSS082509.xml&headline=U.S.%20Researchers:%20Russian%20Military%20Plagued'](http://www.aviationweek.com/aw/generic/story_generic.jsp?channel=aerospacedaily&id=news/RUSS082509.xml&headline=U.S.%20Researchers:%20Russian%20Military%20Plagued)

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London Sunday Times
August 23, 2009

China Outraged as Japan’s Sabre Rattler Calls for Nuclear Arms

MICHAEL SHERIDAN IN TOKYO

A TROUBLING insight into ultra-conservative thinking at the top of Japan’s armed forces has emerged after the dismissal of Toshio Tamogami, the chief of the air staff.

He has become a hero to right-wing groups since being sacked last year for writing an article that said imperial Japan was not an aggressor in the second world war. His popularity has caused outrage in China and it could provide an early diplomatic headache for the opposition Democratic Party of Japan if, as expected, it wins the general election on August 30.

A book outlining his philosophy has sold 100,000 copies since March and 20,000 copies of a second book calling for Japan to develop an atomic bomb were printed earlier this month. Tamogami, 61, is giving 20 speeches a month on conspiracy theories and anti-western themes of Japanese victimhood.

Among his claims is that Japan’s war with the United States was engineered by Jewish communist spies. He also affirms that the greater east Asia war was a campaign of racial liberation from white rule, which is seen “positively” by many countries.

Tamogami was received by an ecstatic audience in Hiroshima on August 6 when he gave a speech demanding nuclear weapons, despite the mayor requesting that he not do so, on the anniversary of the city’s atomic bombing.

“Japan should arm itself with nuclear weapons so that a third atomic bomb is not dropped on us,” he told the meeting. The veteran has been taken up by the Yukio Mishima study group, which venerates a novelist who killed himself by hara-kiri in a despairing gesture over Japan’s post-war pacifist psychology. Mishima and his followers took a general hostage and tried to incite a coup in 1971, resorting to self-sacrifice when the soldiers mocked them. Tamogami has also been welcomed by the Nippon Kaigi, a mainstream conservative group which campaigns for changing the clause in the country’s constitution renouncing war. The group is said to be closely associated with Taro Aso, the prime minister, and his predecessor Shinzo Abe.

However, its enthusiasm for the Yasukuni shrine, a Shinto memorial to the souls of Japan’s war dead, including those of war criminals, has cost it support among the business community. Japanese firms have huge investments in China, where Tamogami has caused revulsion and anger.

“He publicly distorts history,” said Wang Tao, an analyst writing for the Xinhua state news agency. “Who knows how many Toshio Tamogamis are hiding inside the Japanese government?”

A study of some of Tamogami’s assertions and those of his supporters shows selective and misleading readings of history. One is his claim that Harry Dexter White, a spy for the Soviet Comintern, and Henry Morgenthau, a fellow Jew in high office, were behind a US note delivered to Japan shortly before Pearl Harbor in 1941.

The so-called Hull Note, named after Cordell Hull, the secretary of state who handed it over, has been referred to by revisionists as an ultimatum that left Japan no choice but to wage war. But no evidence exists that either Morgenthau or White drew up the note, whose text was discussed at the highest levels and finalised by Hull himself.

It is a similar case with Tamogami's claim that British intelligence reported to London that Soviet agents had assassinated a Chinese warlord whose killing prepared the way for war between China and Japan in 1931.

According to Antony Best of the London School of Economics, the intelligence report was superseded by a secret inquiry by the British embassy in Tokyo, which found that Japanese extremists were to blame. Extravagant ideas about the influences of communists and Jews on the fatal decisions that led to the ruin of imperial Japan have become commonplace in ultra-patriotic circles and publications.

"Tamogami and his supporters are giving new life to old conspiracy theories," said Professor Ikuhiko Hata, a leading historian of Japan at war. The prevalence of such ideas is cause for concern, not only to neighbours such as China and Korea, which were invaded, but also to the country's partners.

If the opposition wins this month's election, it has promised to maintain Japan's pledge never to develop or acquire nuclear weapons.

The words of the former air force chief have given pause for thought to experts who believe Japan has the plutonium, the technology and the brainpower to acquire the bomb quickly if it ever changes its mind.

Additional reporting: Shota Ushio

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article6806417.ece>

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Washington Post

August 25, 2009

North Korea Invites U.S. Envoy for Nuclear Talks: Reports

By Jon Herskovitz

Reuters

SEOUL (Reuters) - North Korea has invited the U.S. envoy overseeing ties with the prickly state to visit for nuclear talks next month, South Korean media said on Tuesday, as the United States pushes sanctions against Pyongyang.

Reclusive North Korea, which has made a series of rare conciliatory gestures this month, also agreed to hold talks with South Korea from Wednesday on resuming reunions of families separated by the 1950-1953 Korean War.

Pyongyang stopped the reunions almost two years ago in anger at the hard-line policies of the South's conservative government, which halted unconditional aid handouts and linked its largess to the North ending its nuclear arms ambitions.

Analysts say the North may be softening its tone with Washington and Seoul in an attempt to ease pressure on its coffers, depleted by U.N. sanctions for its nuclear test in May and facing the threat of a poor harvest.

U.S. envoy Stephen Bosworth would lead a delegation first traveling to South Korea, China and Japan to discuss stalled six-way disarmament-for-aid talks with the North before heading to Pyongyang, the JoongAng Ilbo newspaper said, citing a senior diplomatic source in Washington.

It would mark the first official nuclear talks between North Korea and the Obama administration.

A U.S. official declined to say whether the United States had received an invitation from the North and said there are no specific plans for Bosworth to visit the region.

"We are focusing right now on consulting with other countries, but there is not any specific scheduled travel yet," said the official, who spoke on condition he not be named.

U.S. LIKELY TO AGREE TO MEETING

Analysts said Washington had little choice but to send Bosworth to Pyongyang if only to test whether the North may be ready to resume talks on ending its nuclear programs.

Jack Pritchard, a former U.S. negotiator with Pyongyang and now president of the Korea Economic Institute, said he did not believe the North was ready to resume denuclearization talks, but he still expected Bosworth to travel to Pyongyang.

"I don't think that we can afford to say 'no' to the North Koreans when the demand is simply to allow Bosworth to go," he said.

Mitchell Reiss, a former U.S. official who has dealt with the North, said a visit might be necessary to win support from other nations for implementing tighter sanctions on the North.

"All stick and no carrot isn't going to work," Reiss said. China, Russia and South Korea have all told Washington they want U.S. officials to meet with the North Koreans, he said.

"If the price of sanctions is a meeting, then by all means Ambassador Bosworth should go to Pyongyang," he added.

South Korea's Yonhap news agency quoted a diplomatic source in Washington as saying the North extended the invitation when former President Bill Clinton visited Pyongyang this month to win the release of two jailed U.S. journalists.

U.S. officials have said they are willing to hold direct talks with North Korea but only as part of six-country disarmament negotiations involving the two Koreas, China, Japan, Russia and the United States.

Officials from the two biggest U.S. military allies in the region, Japan and South Korea, have said they would go along with direct U.S.-North Korean talks as long as Washington coordinates and consults with them.

The six-party talks, hosted by the North's biggest benefactor China, broke down at the end of last year with Pyongyang saying the format was dead.

REACHING OUT TO SEOUL

Philip Goldberg, the U.S. coordinator for U.N. sanctions on North Korea, has been in Asia to seek support for measures aimed at stamping out the North's arms trade, which analysts say brings in hundreds of millions of dollars a year.

In one conciliatory gesture, Pyongyang has re-opened one of the few hotlines between the Koreas after cutting the communication link about a year ago.

North Korea had all but severed ties with the South after President Lee Myung-bak took office in February 2008 and ended the steady flow of unconditional aid.

Lee had his first chance to directly tell North Korean officials of his policy on Sunday when he met a delegation that had flown to Seoul to mourn the death of former President Kim Dae-jung, who was buried the same day.

Under Lee's proposals, the South would pour investment into the North to rebuild its decayed infrastructure and lift the population out of abject poverty in return for Pyongyang giving up efforts to build a nuclear arsenal.

But few believe the North will give up dreams of having its own atomic weapons. Experts said Pyongyang's moves were a switch in tactics rather than a change of heart.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/08/25/AR2009082501016.html>

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New York Times

August 26, 2009

South Korea Launches Satellite

By CHOE SANG-HUN

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea launched a rocket into space from its own territory for the first time on Tuesday, but the mission failed to put a satellite into its intended orbit, a South Korean official said.

The launching of the rocket, which was built with the help of Russia, came one week after an initial attempt was called off because of a technical malfunction and four months after North Korea was widely denounced by the international community for launching a rocket of its own. The North had said it was putting a satellite aloft, but United States aerospace and military officials said they believed the North was actually testing long-range ballistic missile technology.

Office buildings in central Seoul echoed with cheers as the rocket, Korea Space Launch Vehicle-1, or Naro-1, blasted off from South Korea's space center on the central south coast.

The failure to push the satellite into its intended orbit was announced by Ahn Myong-man, the minister of education, science and technology, at a news conference. Mr. Ahn gave no further details. But South Korean news outlets, citing unidentified sources, said the satellite broke away from the rocket about 22 miles farther from the Earth than had been intended.

North Korea has said it will “closely watch” whether the United States and its allies criticize the South’s rocket launching. There was no immediate reaction from North Korea on Tuesday.

With all its neighbors — China, Japan and North Korea — pursuing space programs, South Korea has been eager to have its own. But when the United States refused to help, for fear of encouraging a potential arms race in the region, South Korea turned to Russia.

South Korea says that unlike North Korea, it has been pursuing its space program transparently, within the boundaries of its international commitments, not to develop and proliferate long-range missile technology.

The Naro-1 was built jointly with Russia’s Khrunichev space production center at a cost of \$400 million. After the rocket launching was delayed several times because of technical glitches, a debate flared in the South Korean news media over the wisdom of spending so much to develop a home-grown launching system. Until now, all South Korean satellites have been launched aboard foreign rockets from overseas sites.

“North Korea will surely try to use the South Korean launch to justify its own,” said Jeung Young-tae, an analyst at the government-financed Korea Institute for National Unification. “But in the end, its attempt will be dismissed as propaganda because there are clear differences between the two.”

Although the rocket technology can be converted into missiles, legal constraints and pressure from the United States will keep South Korea from adapting its space program for military use, he said.

The South Korean rocket was carrying a domestically built satellite designed to monitor the atmosphere and the ocean.

The launching came on the same day that South Korea and North Korea agreed to hold talks this week about arranging reunions of families separated by the Korean War more than 55 years ago. The discussions between Red Cross officials from both countries would be their first joint meeting in two years.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/26/world/asia/26rocket.html?hp>

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Washington Post
August 22, 2009

Despite Promises to Bolster Defenses, India Remains Vulnerable

By Emily Wax

Washington Post Foreign Service

MUMBAI -- After nine months of political grandstanding and a high-profile trial of the lone, surviving gunman from last year's terrorist assault on this city, India's security gaps remain so wide that counterterrorism experts and high-ranking police officials fear the country is still vulnerable to a similar attack.

India's police and armed forces have yet to receive the promised boost in manpower and modernized equipment needed to stave off another strike, security experts say. Of particular concern are the persistent lapses in monitoring India's coast, which should have been the first line of defense when the attackers sailed here from the Pakistani port city of Karachi and then killed more than 170 people.

With extremist violence growing in Afghanistan and Pakistan, India's ability to prevent attacks through intelligence gathering and defensive measures has become more urgent than ever, say security experts and diplomats. The Obama administration sees India as an ally in containing the spread of Islamist militancy in South Asia, and the issue is one of the central sources of tension in India's relations with its neighbor, Pakistan.

The November attack exposed India's inability to protect its financial capital from 10 young, well-trained gunmen who brought the city to a standstill for three days by taking hundreds of hostages in two luxury hotels and a Jewish center. The outrage many Indians felt then has since shifted from the government's security failures to the surviving gunman, Ajmal Amir Kasab. Kasab is on trial, and the 21-year-old could be sentenced to death by hanging.

"The real issue is whether the attack could happen again. And yes, of course it could," said Ajai Sahni, executive director of the Institute for Conflict Management. "There's been no substantial changes in security since the attacks, just more speeches. The gaps are huge. Our national bird is the peacock. But it should be the ostrich, because we are burying our heads in the sand."

One of the biggest gaps is technological, security experts say. The gunmen who came ashore were equipped with assault rifles, Global Positioning System navigators, BlackBerry phones loaded with switchable SIM cards, Google Earth maps and VoIP applications to pinpoint their targets and talk to their Pakistani handlers under the radar of conventional surveillance. By contrast, the first police officers they encountered were armed with World War II-era bolt-action rifles. According to a confidential police report, most police officers had fewer than five rounds of ammunition and few of them had access to working cellphones.

Still, some terrorism experts say the real key to stopping similar attacks is ramping up security along the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean coast. Unlike its heavily guarded land borders, India's coastal waters are sparsely monitored, with fewer than 100 boats and 45 aircraft for about 4,700 miles of shoreline.

"Do the math. It's frightening," said Uday Bhaskar, director of the National Maritime Foundation, a New Delhi-based think tank. "With terrorists using technology, the whole ballgame has changed on sea and land. India is way behind."

The expense of acquiring better technology is only part of the problem, he said. Finding enough tech-savvy police officers and intelligence agents is a big hurdle in India, especially now that most potential recruits -- including those with degrees in engineering or information technology -- are snapped up by the country's lucrative outsourcing industry.

Since the Mumbai attacks, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has vowed to overhaul the country's intelligence and police forces and upgrade their weapons and training. On Monday, he told the country's chief ministers at an internal security meeting in New Delhi, the capital, that cross-border terrorism was still a "pervasive threat." He said he had received "credible information" about militant groups in neighboring Pakistan planning more attacks on Indian soil.

"We need to be prepared for encountering more sophisticated technologies and enhanced capabilities. We also need to guard our sea frontier as vigilantly as our land border," Singh said.

India's defense spending is expected to surge by 25 percent this year, to \$29 billion, with some of that earmarked for weapons upgrades. India is creating a federal investigations unit similar to the FBI as well as four regional hubs for the country's top commando unit, the National Security Guard. The New Delhi-based NSG was criticized for its slow response to the Mumbai attacks: It took the commandos at least eight hours to find a flight to Mumbai, and two hours in heavy traffic to get from Mumbai's airport to the besieged hotels. It is working closely with a 10-member team from the FBI, which is investigating the attacks. Six Americans were killed during the siege.

At the security meeting, Home Minister P. Chidambaram told the governors of India's 28 states that they have grown lax on security since the November attacks and should begin filling the 150,000 vacancies in police departments nationwide. "There are inadequate training facilities for intelligence gathering and intelligence analysis," Chidambaram said, according to a transcript of the meeting.

His office did not respond to repeated requests by fax and telephone for an interview.

Vikram Sood, a retired chief of India's intelligence service, said in an interview that street-level intelligence across India has grown so weak that most police have little knowledge of goings on in the country's increasingly transient and teeming urban centers. The police did not even know that a Jewish center was in the Nariman House, one of the sites taken over by the gunmen, Sood said.

"The beat constable system has completely eroded in India," said Sood, who is now vice president of the Center for International Relations at the Observer Research Foundation, an independent think tank. "India is one of the most under-policed countries in the world. We really need on-the-ground intelligence."

He also said more interagency cooperation is needed.

"Mumbai was a defining moment when for 60 hours we were watching this unfold and nobody seemed to know who was in charge," he said. If there was information that a similar attack was imminent, "there still won't be enough boats or manpower to stop it."

The lack of quality policing is only getting worse as India's economy and public transportation systems grow, said Meenakshi Ganguly, a researcher at Human Rights Watch, which released a recent report detailing India's police

deficiencies. India has roughly one police officer for every 1,000 people, less than half the U.S. average. Many are underpaid, overworked and under-trained, according to Ganguly and other watchdog groups that monitor India's police.

"The truth is everyone was caught unaware," said B.N. Raut, a director and the second in command of Mumbai's 56,000-strong paid civilian auxiliary forces. "At least now we are talking about these things. Maybe in memory of those who died we should be doing more than just talking."

Inside the city's main train station, which was attacked by Kasab and an accomplice, security remains lax. Most visitors pass through metal detectors amid a crush of bodies, and backpacks and purses are rarely checked.

"It's pretty useless. We have new security guards at the entrance, but you see them doing crosswords," said Manoj Khan, a manager at a coffee shop that was attacked.

He said he was unable to eat for days after the attacks. "And then," he said, "everything returned to normal."

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/08/21/AR2009082103716.html>

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Gulf Times –Qatar
24 August 2009

First Batch of Locally-Built Russian Tanks Rolls Out

New Delhi: India yesterday unveiled a first batch of 10 tanks built locally under licence from Russia and said it planned to manufacture 100 such units every year.

India has already acquired nearly 700 T-90 tanks as part of a 2001 deal with Russia that also included local production of more units through a technology transfer pact.

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) said each of the Indian-built tanks named Bhishma would cost up to Rs150mn (\$3mn).

"The tank has advanced protection system to protect crew and equipment from chemical, biological and radioactive nuclear attack," a DRDO statement said after the rollout from the Heavy Vehicles Factory (HVF) at Avadi in Chennai.

Minister of State for Defence Pallam Raju hailed the deliveries as an "important milestone," the Press Trust of India reported.

"The overall objective is to ensure self-sufficiency in defence preparedness to the maximum possible extent," Raju added.

Russia, which supplies 70% of India's military hardware, has also helped its long-time ally to locally build a nuclear-powered submarine which was put on sea trials last month. – AFP

http://www.gulf-times.com/site/topics/article.asp?cu_no=2&item_no=310828&version=1&template_id=40&parent_id=22

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Thaindian News
August 24, 2009

Brazil to Build Five Submarines with France Help

Sao Paulo, Aug 24 (EFE) Brazil will build five submarines in collaboration with France to protect its vast off shore oil reserves in the Amazon region, a media report said Sunday.

The Folha de Sao Paulo newspaper said President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has already approved the submarine project prepared by the defence ministry.

Brazil will also build a nuclear submarine as part of the project, it said.

The ministry also plans to set up of a joint general staff comprising personnel from the army, navy and the air force to protect the region. The proposal, which is already cleared by the president, will now be submitted to the Congress.

The government has invested nearly \$30 billion to boost its defence industry.

http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/business/brazil-to-build-five-submarines-with-france-help_100236921.html

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Long War Journal (longwarjournal.org)

August 21, 2009

Senior Al Qaeda Leader Leaves Pakistan, Directs Iraq Operations From Syria

By Bill Roggio

A senior al Qaeda leader and ideologue who was based in Pakistan's tribal areas has taken control of al Qaeda in Iraq's organization in Syria and is operating from the capital.

Sheikh Issa al Masri is thought to have entered Syria in June 2009 and has been consolidating control of the remnants of al Qaeda in Iraq to refocus its efforts to destabilize the Iraqi government.

Sheikh Issa was detained by Pakistanis security forces in January 2009, according to the *Asia Times*. It is unclear if he escaped or was released from Pakistani custody, US military and intelligence officials told *The Long War Journal*.

After leaving Pakistani custody, Sheikh Issa traveled to Iran prior to entering Syria, according to a report in *Corriere della Sera*, an Italian newspaper. Al Qaeda has an extensive network inside Iran which receives support from the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, according to the US Treasury Department, which has sanctioned several members of al Qaeda's organization in Iran.

Sheikh Issa is believed to be based in Damascus and is protected by the Mukhabarat, Syria's secret intelligence service. From Damascus, Sheikh Issa has been instrumental in reorganizing al Qaeda in Iraq's network and is thought to be behind some of the most deadly attacks in Iraq, including Wednesday's coordinated bombings in Baghdad that killed more than 90 Iraqis and wounded more than 1,200.

Sheikh Issa has been aided by Abu Khalaf, a senior al Qaeda operative who has been instrumental in reviving al Qaeda in Iraq's network in eastern Syria and directing terror operations in Iraq, a US intelligence official told *The Long War Journal*.

Abu Khalaf, whose real name is Sa'ad Uwayyid 'Ubayd Mu'jil al Shammari, took control of al Qaeda's facilitation network after his predecessor Abu Ghadiya and his senior staff were killed during a US raid inside Syria in October 2008. Khalaf is in charge of recruiting foreign fighters, fund operations, and move the fighters across the border to conduct attacks in Iraq. The US Treasury designated Khalaf as a global terrorist in May 2009.

US military and intelligence officials fear that al Qaeda in Iraq may be seeking a revival through its safe havens in Syria, just as al Qaeda and the Taliban regrouped in Pakistan after the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. The Taliban and al Qaeda sheltered in Pakistan's tribal areas and patiently rebuild their networks before relaunching the Afghan insurgency in earnest in 2006.

Background of Sheikh Issa al Masri

Sheikh Issa, whose real name is Abu Amro Abdul Hakeem, is an Egyptian national who has been instrumental in radicalizing the Taliban in Pakistan's tribal areas. He was the spiritual adviser to Egyptian Islamic Jihad, Ayman al Zawahiri's organization that merged with al Qaeda

Sheikh Issa is also the leader of al Jihad fi Waziristan, an al Qaeda branch in North Waziristan. He has radicalized thousands of Taliban fighters and several influential commanders by indoctrinating them with the Wahabbi version of Islam.

While based out of Mir Ali in North Waziristan, Sheikh Issa maintained close ties to Jalaluddin and Siraj Haqqani. Sheikh Issa is known to be a charismatic figure in jihadi circles. Siraj and influential Taliban leaders Sadiq Noor and Abdul Khaliq Haqqani fell under Sheikh Issa's sway and converted to Wahabbism.

Sheikh Issa was also influential in recruiting the traditional Punjab and Kashmiri jihadi groups into the Taliban and al Qaeda. Former members of Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed, Lashkar-i-Jhangvi, and the Harkat-ul-

Mujahideen have flocked to join the Taliban and al Qaeda's cause. Groups such as the Fedayeen-e-Islam, a Punjabi terror outfit allied with Baitullah Mehsud, and the Ghazi Force sprung up throughout the tribal areas.

Sheikh Issa is believed to have provided religious justification to target former Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf as well as the successful assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. Sheikh Issa issued a fatwa, or religious edict, that called for the assassinations.

The US targeted Sheikh Issa in a covert Predator airstrike in North Waziristan just days after Bhutto was assassinated in late December 2007. He was wounded in the strike but is said to have recovered. He is also reported to have been temporarily paralyzed due to an illness but later recovered.

US intelligence believes Sheikh Issa's charisma and his popularity in jihadi circles are two of the reasons he was recruited to travel from Pakistan to Syria to lead a new push to revive al Qaeda in Iraq's operations inside Syria. Sheikh Issa can draw the resources and the fighters needed to revive al Qaeda in Iraq after the terror group suffered a series of crushing defeats during the combined US and Iraqi offensives in 2007 and 2008.

http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2009/08/senior_al_qaeda_lead_5.php

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Wall Street Journal
August 22, 2009

Lockerbie Fallout Puts Scotland on the Spot

By ALISTAIR MACDONALD

LONDON -- The government of Scotland found itself scrambling Friday to control political fallout from a decision to flex its independence by releasing a Libyan man convicted in the 1988 Lockerbie bombing.

Television footage of a crowd of welcoming Libyans waving Scottish flags has fanned anger about the release of Abdelbaset Ali Mohamed al-Megrahi, who has terminal prostate cancer. He was allowed to travel to Libya on Thursday despite demands from victims' family members and a host of U.S. officials that he spend his last days in prison. Both U.K. Foreign Secretary David Miliband and White House spokesman Robert Gibbs denounced the celebrations, with the latter calling them "outrageous and disgusting."

Saif Gadhafi, right, son of Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi, raises the hand of Abdelbaset Ali Mohamed al-Megrahi on Thursday

In an interview with BBC radio, Scottish First Minister Alex Salmond said he didn't think the decision to release Mr. al-Megrahi would tarnish Scotland's reputation or hurt its long-term relations with the U.S. "Our relationship with America is a strong and enduring one," he said. "It doesn't depend on always reaching agreement."

The Scottish Parliament has been called back from its summer recess to debate the matter, and on Monday Justice Minister Kenny MacAskill will appear before it in Edinburgh to explain why he made the decision to free Mr. al-Megrahi. Among the questions he is likely to face: why Mr. al-Megrahi was released when other seriously ill U.K. inmates -- such as Myra Hindley, a convicted child murderer with heart problems who requested early release several years ago -- died in prison.

Documents

On Thursday, Mr. MacAskill said the decision was completely his own and that he was guided by legal procedures that allow the release of prisoners if they are expected to die soon. He portrayed himself as following a Scottish tradition of "humanity."

A file photo taken on Dec. 22, 1988, shows the cockpit of the 747 Pan Am airliner that exploded and crashed over Lockerbie, Scotland, with 259 passengers on board.

Saif Gadhafi, a son of Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi, was quoted by Agence France-Presse in an interview seen on Libyan TV as saying Scotland released Mr. al-Megrahi because of trade considerations with the oil-rich nation. A spokesman for Britain's foreign office said "there is no deal, all decisions have been made exclusively by Scottish" authorities.

Scotland's predicament comes as Mr. Salmond, whose government enjoys limited sovereignty within the U.K., has been working to boost the country's international image and move closer to his party's ultimate aim of independence

from Britain. Under an agreement reached more than a decade ago, Scotland's government rules independently on a number of local issues, including justice.

But the move to exercise Scotland's power in this case, releasing on "compassionate grounds" the only person convicted in the U.K.'s worst terrorist act, may have tarnished Mr. Salmond's sovereignty efforts, as critics leap on his government's mistakes.

Television footage shows Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi greeting freed Lockerbie bomber Abdelbaset al-Megrahi. Video courtesy of Reuters.

They accused Mr. Salmond's ruling Scottish National Party of botching the process that saw Mr. al-Megrahi released after serving eight years of a 27-year sentence, saying the government had done a disservice to victims' families by dragging out the decision and forcing them to parse through leaks and rumors before it was made public.

Victims' relatives also criticized Mr. MacAskill as self-indulgent for a speech that went on for 25 minutes -- including a reference to the "higher power" that governs life and death -- before announcing the actual decision.

"The Scottish government and its legal system are a laughingstock around the world," said Paul McBride, one of Scotland's top defense lawyers.

Iain McMillan, director of CBI Scotland, which represents Scottish business, said there was a real risk that the country's businesses could suffer as a result of the al-Megrahi decision. Online discussion rooms and Scottish newspapers have received messages from U.S. citizens saying they won't be visiting, and a Web site called boycottscotland.com has been set up.

Scotland has long made a priority of relations with the U.S., its largest trading partner. American visitors, for example, account for more than a fifth of Scotland's tourist trade. This year, Scotland has been running an expensive advertising campaign in North America, beckoning people of Scottish origin to return a part of its "the year of the homecoming."

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB125087716365449725.html>

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Press Trust of India
August 23, 2009

LTTE Tried to Buy Nuclear Weapons: Media Reports

STAFF WRITER
T V Sriram

Colombo, Aug 23 (PTI) In a startling disclosure, the detained LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) chief Kumaran Pathmanathan has told investigators that the rebels had tried to acquire nuclear weapons and know-how to be used against the Sri Lankan army.

A media report has said that Pathmanathan who was recently arrested in South East Asian country has told interrogators that his organisation had tried to acquire nuclear weapons and technology from western countries. "LTTE had been the first terrorist outfit that had tried to obtain nuclear power. Had they been successful in obtaining nuclear power, it would have flowed into the hands of other terror organisations too", the Nation newspaper said quoting military analysts.

"KP has revealed that the arms purchased with the money collected were shipped to the LTTE. How he purchased anti-aircraft missiles from arms dealers in the USA has been disclosed", the newspaper said.

[http://www.ptinews.com/news/244281 LTTE-tried-to-buy-nuclear-weapons--Media-reports](http://www.ptinews.com/news/244281_LTTE-tried-to-buy-nuclear-weapons--Media-reports)

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Daily Telegraph
23 August 2009

Pakistani Taliban Appoints Fearsome Young Gun as New Leader

By Saeed Shah in Islamabad

The 28-year-old is dreaded even within the militant movement, and has a reputation for killing first and asking questions later.

A month ago he is said to have personally executed eight of his colleagues in a single day on flimsy claims of spying.

Hakimullah is thought to have been declared head of the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), following a meeting of the group's central council. The TTP is close to al-Qaeda, as well as the Afghan Taliban who they model themselves on.

But it is believed the extremist movement remains divided and in danger of crumbling following the assassination of his chief Baitullah Mehsud earlier this month.

Many Pakistani Taliban are thought to support the leadership rival claim of Waliur Rehman, who was a close aide of Baitullah.

Some suggested that the meeting where Hakimullah was apparently chosen never took place and it was simply a ploy to snatch control in the face of a leadership vacuum that has followed the death of Baitullah in a US missile strike inside Pakistan.

Reports had earlier suggested that Hakimullah himself had been killed in a shoot-out at a meeting earlier this month called to elect a successor to Baitullah. He later telephoned journalists to deny it, though some Pakistani intelligence agents continue to believe that Hakimullah is dead and he is being impersonated by a family member.

Hakimullah belonged to another violent Islamic militant group, Sipah-e-Sahaba, a sectarian outfit which is responsible for the deaths of hundreds of Pakistani's minority Shiite population, before joining the Taliban. He made his name by attacking convoys of Nato supplies going through Pakistan's famous Khyber Pass on their way to troops in Afghanistan.

Sporting a scraggly beard and the long hair, Hakimullah craves the limelight. In November last year, he invited local journalists to his base in Pakistan's tribal area, which borders Afghanistan, where he drove around in an American Humvee that his men had looted from a Nato convoy. He has called journalists to claim responsibility for extremist attacks inside Pakistan, including the assault on the visiting Sri Lankan cricket team earlier this year and the bombing of a luxury hotel used by Westerners in north western city of Peshawar.

Hakimullah has support from Taliban based in Orakzai and Bajaur parts of the tribal territory but the heart of the Pakistani Taliban movement lies in the Waziristan tribal area, where the warlike Mehsud and Wazir clans live.

Saifullah Mahsud [CORR], an analyst at the FATA Research Centre, an independent think tank in Islamabad, said the announcement may not be the end of the story.

"There's no way that the Mehsuds and the Wazirs are going to accept Hakimullah as chief. During his lifetime, Baitullah had given every indication that when he's no more, Waliur Rehman is the next guy," he said.

"Waliur Rehman is a cool, calm, calculated guy, a very good listener... That's why the Taliban liked Baitullah so much, he was a very cool, guy, a very calm guy."

It is thought that the dispute within the Pakistani Taliban could be mediated by their Afghan counterparts.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/pakistan/6077033/Pakistani-Taliban-appoints-fearsome-young-gun-as-new-leader.html>

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BBC News
25 August 2009

Taliban Confirm Commander's Death

It is the first time that the militant group has acknowledged his death.

The commanders, Hakimullah Mehsud and Waliur Rehman, said that he had died of injuries sustained in a US missile strike earlier this month.

Hakimullah has been named as successor to Baitullah Mehsud, who was Pakistan's most feared militant, accused of scores of suicide bombings and other attacks.

Hakimullah Mehsud, who is believed to be in his late 20s, said Baitullah Mehsud had been critically wounded by the missile strike but died only on Sunday.

Waliur Rehman said that Hakimullah Meshud had his support as leader, and denied reports of differences between the two men.

Earlier, government officials said the two factions led by Hakimullah Mehsud and Waliur Rehman had taken up arms against each other.

There were also claims that the newly appointed leader had been killed in a clash between the two sides.

The fate of Baitullah Mehsud has also been the subject of intense speculation.

Senior Pakistani government officials have previously said they had information that Baitullah Mehsud was killed when a missile struck his father-in-law's compound on 5 August.

A Taliban spokesman arrested last week also reportedly confirmed Baitullah Mehsud's death to Pakistani intelligence officials.

But the Taliban have repeatedly denied these claims, despite announcing the appointment of Hakimullah Mehsud as its new leader just days ago.

The BBC's Aleem Maqbool in Islamabad says that the Pakistani government will be pleased that the Taliban has confirmed the death of Baitullah Mehsud.

It has been unable to provide tangible evidence of his death because of the remote and hostile terrain of Taliban strongholds in South Waziristan.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8220762.stm

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Los Angeles Times

August 23, 2009

Clock Ticks Down On A Deadly Chemical Stockpile

By Bob Drogin

Reporting from Richmond, Ky.--Behind armed guards in bulletproof booths deep in the Kentucky woods, workers have begun pouring the foundations for a \$3-billion complex designed to destroy America's last stockpile of deadly chemical weapons.

The aging arsenal at the Blue Grass Army Depot contains 523 tons of liquid VX and sarin -- lethal nerve agents produced during the Cold War -- and mustard, a blister agent that caused horrific casualties in World War I.

The Obama administration has pushed to speed up the disposal operation after decades of delay, skyrocketing costs and daunting technical problems. The arms must be destroyed by April 2012 under international treaty and by December 2017 under federal law. But the Pentagon notified Congress in May that, even under what it called an accelerated schedule, it would not finish the job until 2021.

A senior administration aide downplayed the diplomatic fallout of missing the arms control deadline.

"No one accuses the United States of willfully seeking to violate the treaty for purposes of maintaining our chemical weapons arsenal," said Gary Samore, the White House coordinator for weapons of mass destruction. "Everyone understands this is a technical problem."

For now, more than 100,000 poison-filled munitions are stacked like bottles of wine in 44 dirt-covered concrete bunkers beside the construction site. Intruders are kept out by a double row of chain-link fences topped with cameras, coiled razor wire and signs warning, "Use of Deadly Force Authorized."

About a third of the World War II-era igloos are so dilapidated that green plastic sheeting was recently draped over them to keep the rain out. Some of the rockets, warheads, mortar rounds and artillery shells inside are just as old -- and are leaking as well.

On Monday, trace amounts of mustard vapor were detected inside a munitions bunker. That followed a sarin leak in another igloo in June, and separate sarin and mustard leaks in May.

"We do experience leakers from time to time at very, very low levels," said Lt. Col. David Musgrave, commander of the Blue Grass Chemical Activity, as the storage site is called. He said no toxic plumes have escaped the igloos or threatened the surrounding community.

Local emergency response officials, however, have stepped up precautions.

Madison County recently obtained federal funds to give 40,000 special radios to residents and businesses here in the lush, rolling hills of central Kentucky, home to horse farms and tobacco fields. The radios will sound an alarm if a major accident occurs.

"I'm happier now," said Kent Clark, the county judge-executive. "People have finally stood up and noticed that we live next to the country's deadliest stockpile."

Blue Grass is one of six Army installations where chemical weapons are stored. Four currently are incinerating their stockpiles. In the 1980s, Pentagon officials estimated a \$600-million price tag to eliminate the toxic arsenals. The estimated cost today: \$40 billion.

"We wound up having to build many more destruction facilities than originally planned," said Milton Leitenberg, a weapons expert at the University of Maryland. "The more time it takes, the more it costs."

Blue Grass is the last site to store lethal VX and sarin, and will be the last to destroy its weapons. The task is unusually difficult because, unlike other sites, all the chemicals here are loaded in highly explosive M55 rockets and corroding, fully armed munitions.

"It's like super-toxic hazardous waste at this point," said Jonathan Tucker, a nonproliferation specialist at the Monterey Institute of International Studies. "Getting rid of it is a very nasty process."

Concerns about safety at Blue Grass were highlighted last month when lawyers for Donald Van Winkle, a former chemical weapons monitor who claims he was forced out of his job at the facility after he uncovered unsafe conditions, obtained an Army investigative report through the Freedom of Information Act.

The inspector general's report confirmed Van Winkle's allegation that a key air-monitoring component was improperly installed in the VX igloos between September 2003 and August 2005. VX is the deadliest of all nerve agents.

An "accurate measurement of any VX agent vapor release would not have been possible," the 51-page report concluded. It found "no evidence" that VX had leaked or endangered the public before the error was corrected.

In December, a federal administrative law judge dismissed Van Winkle's whistle-blower lawsuit against the Army. The burly, 38-year-old Gulf War veteran remains bitter about his attempts to expose what he said were dangerous conditions.

"I tried to protect a place that's crucial to national security," Van Winkle said. "I thought they'd thank me."

Another self-described whistle-blower, Kim Schafermeyer, 59, alleged he was fired as a chemist in 2006 in retaliation for citing safety and pollution problems at Blue Grass. A judge dismissed his lawsuit last year on a technicality.

Schafermeyer contends that the aging munitions are decomposing faster than officials admit. "They are highly unstable," he said. "These things should be destroyed next week."

Documented problems at the facility have persisted.

In October 2007, the Kentucky Department for Environmental Protection cited Blue Grass for four violations of state regulations. Inspectors noted unsafe storage and disposal of hazardous material, inaccurate record keeping and inadequate training "to prevent releases of chemical warfare agents to the environment."

Partly as a result, the environmental crimes section at the U.S. Justice Department launched a criminal investigation. The grand jury inquiry concluded in April without any indictments or arrests, Blue Grass legal counsel B. Kevin Bennett said.

U.S. forces have not fired chemical munitions in combat since World War I, although during the Vietnam War, the Air Force sprayed Agent Orange and other herbicides to defoliate jungles and cropland. The postwar Vietnamese government said the defoliants caused thousands of deaths, disabilities and birth defects. Some U.S. soldiers also were affected, and the Veterans Affairs Department has listed numerous cancers and other illnesses as "presumptive" conditions of Agent Orange exposure.

In 1975, President Ford signed the Geneva Protocol, a treaty that prohibits first use of chemical weapons. But the Pentagon continued to produce deadly nerve agents in battlefield weapons as a deterrent -- or in case the Cold War turned hot.

By the mid-1980s, the Army had stockpiled 31,500 tons of liquid chemical agents in eight states and on Johnston Atoll, a remote Pacific island.

But political pressure was growing to get rid of the witch's brew. In 1986, President Reagan signed a law to eliminate chemical warfare material and production facilities. Officials pledged to complete the disarmament by 1994.

The program instead sparked bitter political battles across the country.

The Pentagon and the National Academy of Sciences insisted that incineration was the easiest, cheapest and safest solution. But local activists and environmental groups opposed moving the munitions or incinerating them at each site, arguing that neither option was safe.

The first incinerator began operating at Johnston Atoll in 1990. It completed the job and closed a decade later as debate continued to rage at other sites.

"We sued everyone we could," said Craig Williams, a Vietnam veteran who heads the Chemical Weapons Working Group, an anti-incineration organization based above a quilt shop in Berea, Ky., a town near Blue Grass.

The logjam broke after Sept. 11, 2001, when domestic security officials warned that the igloos made tempting targets for terrorists. Alabama, Arkansas, Oregon and Utah soon began incinerating their stockpiles.

On Wednesday, a federal judge in Washington tossed out a lawsuit from Williams' group that sought to close the four incinerators for allegedly pumping out hazardous emissions. The judge ruled that the Army had proved the incinerators were safe.

"On the whole, they [have] worked pretty well," said Paul Walker, head of Global Green USA, a nonproliferation group. "From time to time, they would burp out live agent and had toxic releases. But no one was injured."

Under pressure from incineration opponents, however, Congress ordered the Pentagon to seek other options. The result: machines in sealed chambers that disassemble the munitions, neutralize the toxic chemicals inside and decontaminate the waste.

"These facilities are expensive because they're essentially operated by robots," said Tucker of the Monterey Institute of International Studies.

Disposal operations using those techniques recently concluded in Indiana and Maryland, and the Pentagon says 60% of the U.S. arsenal is now destroyed.

The Obama administration has stepped up funding to push the process. Last month, the House approved \$547 million for the last two disposal facilities, at Blue Grass and the Pueblo Chemical Depot in Colorado. If the Senate agrees, it would be a sharp increase from previous years.

Under the defense appropriations bill passed last year, the Pentagon must complete destruction of the U.S. chemical weapons stockpile "in no circumstances later than" Dec. 31, 2017. But under the timetable sent to Congress in May, Blue Grass won't begin operations until 2018 and won't finish destroying the munitions for three years.

It thus is on track to violate a deadline set by the international Chemical Weapons Convention. Washington obtained a five-year extension on compliance with the convention, which initially required signatories to eliminate their stockpiles by 2007. The treaty, however, doesn't provide for a second deferral. U.S. diplomats recently visited The Hague, where the treaty organization is based, to explain the situation.

"We're going to take all sorts of whacks from other delegations, especially the Iranians," Walker said. "How can the U.S. expect other countries to honor the treaty if we're in violation?"

For now, crews are busy at an 18-acre site carved into the forest at Blue Grass. On a recent muggy afternoon, they operated front-end loaders and laid pipe. A red steel crane towered overhead. It will help erect a six-story building designed to contain the accidental detonation of poison-filled rockets or other munitions.

"No vapors would get out and there'd be no breaches to the wall," said Mark Seely, the project manager.

Nearby, row after row of chemical weapons igloos were visible in a grassy field, patrolled by armed guards in a white pickup truck.

"This facility is not [like building] a shopping mall," Seely said. "It's one of a kind."

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-chemical23-2009aug23.0.2941213.story>

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Wall Street Journal

OPINION

August 24, 2009

Why Should We Underwrite Russian Rearmament?

By Gabriel Schoenfeld

It was Clare Boothe Luce who came up with the aphorism "No good deed goes unpunished." This maxim accurately sums up U.S. efforts to help Russia dismantle its aging nuclear arsenal.

When the Soviet Union dissolved two decades ago, its component pieces were saddled with the formidable task of picking up the fragments of a huge nuclear-weapons stockpile. Fears arose across the world that nuclear warheads and/or radioactive material might get lost or stolen.

The American response was the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Program, co-sponsored by Sam Nunn, then a Democrat from Georgia, and Richard Lugar (R., Ind.) and enacted by Congress in 1991. A key aim was to help Russia and the other former Soviet states destroy existing stocks of weapons of mass destruction. For nearly two decades we've spent several hundred million dollars a year to help Russia with a variety of tasks, including dismantling its nuclear weapons.

At the time, this was a creative approach to a pressing international problem. In the throes of profound upheaval, Moscow lacked the resources to secure its own forces and fulfill this basic obligation to the world community. Helping was a prudent expenditure.

But that was then. What about now?

Nunn-Lugar continues to be hailed by Sen. Lugar, among others, as "an engine of nonproliferation cooperation" that on the basis of mutual interest can bring about "extraordinary outcomes." Across the political spectrum, the program has come to enjoy an almost sacrosanct status. Critical voices are seldom heard—yet the rationale for continuing the Russian leg of this program has vanished.

In the first place, Russia is no longer in upheaval. The regime is certainly not the democracy of our fervent hopes. Yet however we judge Russia's internal arrangements, there is little question that, unlike what we witnessed in the 1990s, this is a relatively stable political and social order.

Another factor is Russia's economic resurgence. Over the past decade, the country has enjoyed remarkable growth, with GDP (measured in U.S. dollars) nearly doubling. To be sure, it has been slammed by the global recession and especially by slack prices of its chief exports, oil and gas. But the carbon-fuel market has now bounced back, and the Russian economy promises to bounce back with it.

Finally, and most critically, is the direction of Russian military spending. It had dwindled in the 1990s but is now soaring. The Russian defense budget nearly quadrupled from 2001 through 2007. Over the past few years, it has increased annually by between 20% and 30%. Russia, President Dimitry Medvedev announced in March, is embarking on a "comprehensive rearmament."

These were not idle words. Russia has been constructing the new Topol-M, a modern intercontinental ballistic missile. It continues to move forward with the new sea-launched Bulava ballistic missile to be carried aboard the equally new and state-of-the-art Borey nuclear-powered submarine. It has resumed production of its Tupolev-160 supersonic strategic bomber. Although the total size of Russia's arsenal is not expected to grow—old systems are being retired as new ones arrive—the net effect will be a more effective strategic nuclear force.

Money is fungible. If the U.S. were not defraying the costs of safeguarding or dismantling Russia's deteriorating weapons of mass destruction, Moscow would be compelled to do so out of its own pocket. Russia has an interest even more compelling than ours in the safety and surety of its nuclear systems. Thanks to political stability and a measure of prosperity—enough, certainly, to commence "comprehensive rearmament"—Moscow is now in a position to take care of such problems on its own.

Of course, the Russians much prefer our assistance. And why wouldn't they smile at a program that in effect pays for a build-up of their military even as we build down ours?

On his Web site, Sen. Lugar has a "scorecard" of all the Russian weapons systems dismantled thanks to the program that bears his name. Conspicuously missing is a record of all the new weapons systems added to the Russian arsenal as we pick up the tab for taking their old ones apart.

Some of those new systems are pointed directly at us. Mrs. Luce has been proved right again: No good deed goes unpunished.

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Wall Street Journal

OPINION

August 25, 2009

Hillary's Right About The 'Defense Umbrella'

By Ilan Berman and Clifford D. May

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said recently in Thailand that if Iran acquires a nuclear weapon, the U.S. will offer allies in the Middle East a "defense umbrella" to prevent Iranian intimidation. That's a fine sentiment, but it raises the question: Are we capable of doing so?

The answer is more complicated than most people think.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and associated delivery systems since the collapse of the Soviet Union means that any "defense umbrella" will require the deployment of missile defense technologies capable of neutralizing a potential salvo of nuclear-tipped missiles—whether from Iran or another rogue such as North Korea.

Yet America's missile-defense efforts are being scaled back. Congress is contemplating a \$1.4 billion reduction to the Pentagon's budget for antimissile capabilities.

Advocates of missile defense are seriously concerned that this is just the beginning, and that the Obama administration seeks to kill the system with a thousand cuts. During the presidential campaign last year, Barack Obama promised to strip \$10 billion from the Pentagon's budget for missile defense. (Actually, the U.S. currently spends only \$9 billion in this area.)

The Bush administration began work on a linked network of individual missile-defense systems capable of intercepting ballistic missiles in all stages of flight. But it built only the capabilities necessary to counter simple rogue-state threats, such as a single missile launched from North Korea and aimed at the West Coast. The administration's efforts stopped short of a comprehensive architecture that would include antimissile systems on land, on the seas, and in space.

The Obama administration wants to scale back from Bush's modest beginnings. In addition to slashing the overall budget for missile defense, it has terminated promising projects such as the multiple-kill vehicle (MKV) program—in which multiple interceptors on a carrier vehicle (essentially a satellite) would improve our chances of hitting enemy missiles. Another project terminated is the airborne laser (ABL), an aircraft-based high energy laser that could be flown near potential enemy ballistic-missile hotspots.

Mr. Obama has also targeted the Bush administration's premier missile-defense venture, the deployment of ground-based interceptors and radars in Poland and the Czech Republic to defend against the growing ballistic missile threat from Iran. Instead, because of the Kremlin's objections, the Obama team is preparing to sacrifice this planned deployment as part of a "reset" of U.S. relations with Russia.

Space-based missile defense likewise has been met with a cold shoulder from the Obama administration. Opponents of missile defense charge that a space layer would somehow "militarize" space. This is dead wrong. A space-based missile defense capability would instead block and destroy weapons that enter the Earth's orbit on their way to their targets.

The most promising idea would be to develop a program for the deployment of space-based kinetic interceptors capable of targeting intercontinental ballistic missiles in their boost, midcourse and terminal phases of flight. In

other words, let's revive the useful idea of building a system that gives us multiple chances to knock out every enemy missile.

Sadly, in the current political atmosphere, missile defense has become an ideological football. Republicans and Democrats alike ought to be united in the effort to develop a serious system capable of protecting the American people, our armed forces and our allies abroad from ballistic missile attack. A half-hearted missile defense effort only encourages investments in missile technologies on the part of our adversaries, making them believe that with additional resources they will be capable of overwhelming American defenses.

U.S. missile-defense policy should be designed to elicit the opposite response. Our enemies and competitors should be forced to conclude that energy and funds spent developing nuclear weapons and the missiles to deliver them will be wasted because Americans have the know-how and hardware to prevent them from reaching their intended targets.

During the Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush administrations, the U.S. government made major investments in the types of technologies (space-based sensors, interceptors and propulsion) necessary to field a robust defense against foreign ballistic missile arsenals, irrespective of origin. The capability to make Iranian, North Korean and other foreign missiles useless has already been developed and field-tested. Only America has it, and we should deploy it.

Mrs. Clinton has the right idea. The U.S. should offer a comprehensive and impenetrable "defense umbrella" to protect itself and its allies. But first we need to match rhetoric with concrete action and get the job done.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970204884404574362771820985060.html>

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