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Associated Press (AP)
News Hosted by Google
September 23, 2009

US Faces UN Pressure on Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty

By CHARLES J. HANLEY (AP)

UNITED NATIONS — This time around, U.S. Senate skeptics who killed the nuclear test-ban treaty a decade ago must take into account a new, \$1-billion verification network underpinning the pact, the treaty chief said Wednesday.

In 1999, "the system was a blueprint," Tibor Toth said of the high-tech web of stations on alert for nuclear bomb tests. Now "I could call it a `verification Manhattan Project," he said, referring to the all-out U.S. program that built the first bombs in the 1940s.

Toth, who heads the U.N.-affiliated Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization, spoke with The Associated Press on the eve of a conference of some 150 nations convened every other year to urge those that have not ratified the treaty, including the United States, to do so.

The two-day session will be held in parallel Thursday with a summit of the 15 U.N. Security Council members on the subject of nuclear nonproliferation, presided over by U.S. President Barack Obama.

After eight years in which the U.S. administration of President George W. Bush rejected it, Obama has pledged to push for Senate ratification of the treaty, known as the CTBT, which would ban all nuclear tests everywhere.

The pact, signed by the U.S. and other nations in 1996, requires ratification — that is, full government approval — by 44 nuclear-capable states before it can take effect. All but nine of those have ratified, along with the governing bodies of 115 other nations.

Besides the U.S., the holdouts among the 44 are China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iran, Israel, North Korea and Pakistan. Meanwhile, the U.S. and four other original nuclear powers — Russia, Britain, France and China — have observed testing moratoriums.

The treaty was defeated in 1999 in the Senate — then Republican-dominated, now with a Democratic majority — after opponents objected that the U.S. might need to test its weapons to ensure the reliability of its nuclear stockpile, and contended that the planned International Monitoring System might fail to detect secret tests by nuclear cheaters.

Since then, the CTBT agency has built up the network to more than three-quarters of its planned 320 stations, from the Arctic to the Antarctic, in all the world's oceans and on all continents. Each uses one of four technologies: seismic, sensing shock waves of an underground blast; hydroacoustic, listening for underwater explosions; infrasound, detecting the low-frequency sound of an atmospheric test; and radionuclide detection, sampling the air for a test's radioactive byproducts.

Experts of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences are studying the effectiveness of the system, along with the reliability of the U.S. nuclear stockpile without testing, and will report their findings this winter. Toth said he hoped this "nonpartisan" review will reassure enough Republicans to win the needed two-thirds ratification vote in the Senate.

It's "absolutely important" that senators are given "all the facts, all the information needed for such a judgment," the treaty chief said.

Indonesia has said it will ratify if the U.S. does, and analysts believe the Chinese would also follow suit. Most believe North Korea and Iran might be the final holdouts, and would be more deeply isolated internationally as a result.

http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5gFch-6h96s-Rk0OrGj_5gKgN7JKQD9AT6J300

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New York Times
September 24, 2009

Obama Makes Gains at U.N. on Iran and Proliferation

By HELENE COOPER

UNITED NATIONS — President Obama, in his first visit to the opening of the United Nations General Assembly, made progress Wednesday on two key issues, wringing a concession from Russia to consider tough new sanctions against Iran and securing support from Moscow and Beijing for a Security Council resolution to curb nuclear weapons.

The successes came as Mr. Obama told leaders that the United States intended to begin a new era of engagement with the world, in a sweeping address to the General Assembly in which he sought to clearly delineate differences between himself and the administration of President George W. Bush.

One of the fruits of those differences — although White House officials were loath to acknowledge any quid pro quo publicly — emerged during Mr. Obama's meeting on Wednesday afternoon with President Dmitri A. Medvedev of Russia, the first between the two since Mr. Obama decided to replace Mr. Bush's missile defense program in Eastern Europe with a version less threatening to Moscow.

With a beaming Mr. Obama standing next to him, Mr. Medvedev signaled for the first time that Russia would be amenable to longstanding American requests to toughen sanctions against Iran significantly if, as expected, nuclear talks scheduled for next month failed to make progress.

"I told His Excellency Mr. President that we believe we need to help Iran to take a right decision," Mr. Medvedev said, adding that "sanctions rarely lead to productive results, but in some cases, sanctions are inevitable."

White House officials could barely hide their glee. "I couldn't have said it any better myself," a delighted Michael McFaul, Mr. Obama's senior adviser for democracy and Russia, told reporters after the meeting. He insisted nonetheless that the administration had not tried to buy Russia's cooperation with its decision to scrap the missile shield in Europe in favor of a reconfigured system.

Privately, several administration officials did acknowledge that missile defense might have had something to do with Moscow's newfound verbal cooperation on the Iran sanctions issue.

Whether Mr. Medvedev's words translate into strong action once the issue moves back to the Security Council remains to be seen. American officials have been disappointed before by Moscow's distaste for tough sanctions, and Prime Minister Vladimir V. Putin seemed to cast doubt on the need for stronger sanctions just last week.

Convincing China to agree to toughen sanctions would be the Obama administration's next hurdle. A Chinese government spokesman reiterated Thursday China's long-standing opposition to increased sanctions against Iran, and as one of the Security Council's five permanent members, China has veto power over decisions by the body. But Beijing has made some exceptions to its general antipathy toward sanctions in the past, including agreeing to a package of financial and trade restrictions against North Korea in June.

Mr. Obama did have success with China on the issue of strengthening the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty in a Security Council session scheduled for Thursday. Russia has also agreed to support a resolution on the matter, officials said.

In an effort to lay the groundwork for toughening the treaty, the Obama administration circulated drafts of a resolution that "urges" countries to put conditions on their nuclear exports, so that international inspectors would be authorized to continue monitoring the use of some nuclear materials even if a country withdrew from the nonproliferation pact. That is a rare occurrence, but North Korea declared it was withdrawing in 2003, and inspectors were thrown out.

The Obama administration hailed the pending resolution as a significant step forward. But it would not be binding, and would become so only if the Security Council required countries to make their nuclear exports subject to such restrictions. Many countries balked at that requirement, an indication of how difficult it may prove to toughen the treaty itself when it is up for review next year.

Mr. Obama will preside over the Security Council meeting on Thursday, and is expected to call for a vote on the draft resolution. White House officials said they expected the measure to pass unanimously.

During his address to the General Assembly, Mr. Obama sought to present a kinder, gentler America willing to make nice with the world. He suggested that the United States would no longer follow the go-it-alone policies that many United Nations members complained isolated the Bush administration from the organization.

“We have re-engaged the United Nations,” Mr. Obama said, to cheers from world leaders and delegates in the cavernous hall. “We have paid our bills” — a direct reference to the former administration’s practice of withholding some payment due the world body while it pressed for changes there.

But even as Mr. Obama sought to signal a different tone, it was clear that old, entrenched issues would remain, including Iran’s nuclear ambitions and a Middle East peace process. And while much of his language was different and more conciliatory, the backbone of American policy on some issues remained similar to the Bush administration’s.

As Mr. Bush used to do before him, for instance, Mr. Obama singled out Iran and North Korea, which he said “threaten to take us down this dangerous slope.”

“I am committed to diplomacy that opens a path to greater prosperity and a more secure peace for both nations if they live up to their obligations,” Mr. Obama said.

But, he added, “if the governments of Iran and North Korea choose to ignore international standards; if they put the pursuit of nuclear weapons ahead of regional stability and the security and opportunity of their own people; if they are oblivious to the dangers of escalating nuclear arms races in both East Asia and the Middle East — then they must be held accountable.”

As he spoke, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran sat in the fifth row, showing no reaction.

But a glittering array of world leaders sat in the hall for Mr. Obama’s speech, which was often interrupted by applause and the flashes of cameras, including from some delegates.

Mr. Obama said he planned to work toward a comprehensive peace deal between Israel and its Arab neighbors. He indicated again that he was impatient with the slow pace of work on interim measures like a settlement freeze. He called on Israeli and Palestinian leaders to address the tough “final status” issues that had bedeviled peace negotiators since 1979.

“The goal is clear,” he said, “two states living side by side in peace and security.”

But the difficulty of achieving that goal was also on full display on Wednesday, one day after Mr. Obama held meetings with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel and the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, and admonished them to meet in person and negotiate a peace deal. The two Middle Eastern leaders and their spokesmen spent much of the day Wednesday explaining why that could not happen soon.

In an interview on NBC, Mr. Netanyahu called Israeli settlements “bedroom suburbs” of Jerusalem and suggested Israel would not withdraw from all the territory it occupied after the 1967 Middle East war. Meanwhile, the chief Palestinian negotiator, Saeb Erekat, told The Associated Press that the two sides will “continue dealing with the Americans until we reach the agreement that will enable us to relaunch the negotiations.”

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/24/world/24prexy.html?hpw>

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Global Security Newswire
Sept. 24, 2009

Gates Hints at Call for New Warhead Designs in Nuclear Posture Review

A congressionally mandated review of U.S. nuclear strategy is likely to recommend developing "safer and more reliable" warhead designs as part of a broader effort to modernize and maintain the nation's nuclear deterrent, Defense Secretary Robert Gates said in remarks published last week by the Defense Department (see *GSN*, Sept. 18).

"The Nuclear Posture Review is well under way, and I would say we're beginning to see what some of the likely conclusions are," Gates said at an Air Force Association event.

"I would say that it is clear, at least to me, that it is important for us to continue to make investments, and I think larger investments, in modernizing our nuclear infrastructure, the labs and so on, the expertise in those places, to have the resources for life-extension programs, and in one or two cases probably new designs that will be safer and more reliable."

Gates had been a supporter of the Bush administration's Reliable Replacement Warhead program, which was intended to produce new warhead designs aimed at providing increased safety and reliability for the nuclear arsenal. Congress provided no funding for the program in the last two budgets and Vice President Joseph Biden earlier this year sought to shut down one discussion of resuming a warhead replacement effort (see *GSN*, Aug. 18).

Gates said there is no intention to produce nuclear weapons with new capabilities.

"That's a red herring," he said. "This is about modernizing and keeping safe a capability that everyone acknowledges we will have to have for some considerable period into the future before achieving some of the objectives of significant arms reduction and eventually no nuclear weapons at all. All recognize that is a considerable distance in the future, and we have an obligation to keep this capability safe" (U.S. Defense Department release, Sept. 16).

A top Obama administration arms control official, though, recently provided assurance that Washington would not seek to revive the controversial effort to design and build a next-generation nuclear warhead, the *Albuquerque Journal* reported.

"There are a lot of people that still hope for the return of RRW and they are going to be sadly disappointed," Ellen Tauscher, undersecretary of state for arms control and international security, told *Foreign Policy* magazine.

One analyst read the apparently conflicting statements as a sign that the administration is still formulating its position on nuclear arsenal modernization.

"They have not yet decided what they're going to say," said Steven Young, a nuclear weapons expert at the Union of Concerned Scientists.

Meanwhile, statements by Gates and other officials appeared to suggest that the administration would advance plans for two new nuclear-weapon material processing sites in New Mexico and Tennessee, Young told the *Journal* (see *GSN*, Aug. 28; John Fleck, *Albuquerque Journal*, Sept. 23).

http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20090924_1967.php

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Agence France-Presse (AFP)

News Hosted by Google

September 23, 2009

China Urges 'Credible Steps' To Stop Nuclear Proliferation

UNITED NATIONS — Chinese President Hu Jintao on Wednesday called for "credible steps" to combat nuclear weapons proliferation and push for nuclear disarmament.

In a first speech by a Chinese president to the 192-member United Nations General Assembly, Hu made no direct mention of Iran and North Korea, two countries with which Beijing has close ties but that have been subjected to UN sanctions over their nuclear programs.

"We call on the international community to take credible steps to push forward the nuclear disarmament process, eradicate the risks of nuclear weapons proliferation and promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy and related international cooperation," he said.

The Chinese leader spoke a day before US President Barack Obama was to chair a special summit at the UN Security Council hoping to reinvigorate the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which will be the subject of a key review conference next year.

The summit coincides with stepped-up efforts by major powers to clip Iran and North Korea's nuclear ambitions just as the United States and Russia have pledged to cut their own nuclear arsenals.

Hu also stressed that world prosperity and a more just and equitable international economic order were contingent on "the development and equal participation of developing countries."

"Greater effort should be made to increase the representation and voice of developing countries in reforming the international financial system," Hu said.

He was to travel to Pittsburgh to attend a two-day summit of 20 leaders of developing and emerging economies hosted by Obama starting Thursday.

<http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5hH8KcubHxREm8V8wYSAWNtIKi-1g>

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Washington Post
September 24, 2009

Security Council Adopts Nuclear Weapons Resolution

By Glenn Kessler and Mary Beth Sheridan
Washington Post Staff Writers

UNITED NATIONS, Sept. 24 -- The U.N. Security Council unanimously adopted a U.S.-drafted resolution Thursday morning that affirms many of the steps President Obama plans to pursue as part of his vision for an eventual "world without nuclear weapons."

In a first for a U.S. president, Obama presided over the 15-member meeting, joined by such leaders as Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, Chinese President Hu Jintao and British Prime Minister Gordon Brown. The meeting marked only the fifth head-of-state summit in U.N. history, and Obama's presence was intended to signal the importance of the issue for the administration.

Addressing the leaders, Obama said nuclear weapons pose a "fundamental threat" to the world. "Just one nuclear weapon exploded in a city . . . could kill hundreds of thousands of people," he said.

While the resolution passed on a 15-0 vote, the United States failed to get approval from China and Russia to cite Iran and North Korea by name. In a diplomatic fudge, the text therefore refers only to Security Council resolutions concerning the countries. Obama mentioned the two countries by name in his speech, saying he was not trying to single out any country but that "international law is not an empty promise."

North Korea tested a second nuclear weapon this year, and Iran has resisted greater international oversight for its nuclear program. Iran says its nuclear activities are for peaceful purposes, but the United States and other major powers fear they are a cover for a weapons program.

Obama is pressing for a new worldwide treaty to halt production of weapons-grade uranium and plutonium and strengthen the global Non-Proliferation Treaty, which has limited the spread of nuclear weapons for decades but now is in danger of fraying.

The morning session of the Security Council, whose rotating chair is held this month by the United States, comes amid a two-day U.N. conference that will strongly push for a worldwide ban on nuclear tests, officials said.

For the first time in a decade, a U.S. delegation will attend the biennial U.N. session on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, which has been ratified by 181 countries but lacks the support of nine critical governments, including several declared and undeclared nuclear powers. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, who is leading the delegation, is expected to commit the U.S. government to trying to ratify the treaty, which was defeated in the U.S. Senate in 1999.

Obama's agenda marks a sharp departure from the policies of his predecessor, George W. Bush, who was generally skeptical of the reliability and value of arms-control treaties. Obama has said the new approach is necessary because rogue states and terrorists are trying to acquire nuclear bombs, and the spread of nuclear technology could set off arms races in volatile regions such as the Middle East.

Jeffrey G. Lewis, a nonproliferation expert at the New America Foundation, said the U.N. resolution would represent significant international support for Obama's nonproliferation agenda, which was first outlined in a speech in Prague in April.

"It's great for the president to go and give the speech. It's a heck of a lot more powerful if the other countries with nuclear weapons . . . say, 'Okay, it's also the direction we wish to go,'" Lewis said.

Countries belonging to the Non-Aligned Movement have objected to the resolution's insistence that nuclear violators be brought to the attention of the Security Council, diplomats said. Under current practice, countries that ignore their nonproliferation obligations are first referred to the International Atomic Energy Agency, which can then bring the matter before the council. White House officials said the language would give the Security Council more authority to enforce compliance with the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Critics say the Obama administration is placing too much hope in treaties that may not win sufficient ratifications for years and may not be fully verifiable.

"They are overselling this, overselling how likely it is to come into force, and how likely it is to be beneficial if it did," said Henry Sokolski, executive director of the Nonproliferation Policy Education Center.

Gaining Senate ratification of the Test Ban Treaty will be critical to Obama's agenda, and diplomats including Ellen O. Tauscher, the undersecretary of state for arms control and international security, will use the U.N. conference to develop a diplomatic strategy to get other holdouts to soften their opposition, officials said.

"Other countries have said, if we ratify, they'll ratify," said a senior administration official, speaking on condition of anonymity. Such promises could make it easier to convince skeptics in the U.S. Senate that voting for the treaty is worthwhile, officials said.

Indonesia has pledged to ratify the treaty if the United States does so, and China could quickly follow suit, according to analysts. Other holdouts include Egypt, Israel, India, Pakistan, Iran and North Korea.

North Korea conducted a nuclear test this year and is considered unlikely to approve the pact anytime soon. Iran has signed the treaty but has not ratified it.

Supporters of the treaty say that by ratifying it, the United States could help isolate and increase pressure on countries that don't do so.

"We are not going to be able to credibly call on other states to take on additional nonproliferation responsibilities if we don't fulfill what other states consider U.S. disarmament commitments," said Darryl Kimball, director of the Arms Control Association.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/09/24/AR2009092401721.html>

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London Guardian
24 September 2009

UN Security Council Passes Resolution on Nuclear Disarmament

Julian Borger in New York

Barack Obama today hailed a UN security council resolution on disarmament and non-proliferation as a milestone along the way to "a world without nuclear weapons".

Obama, the first US president to preside over a security council session, said the next twelve months would be "absolutely critical" in ensuring whether the resolution would succeed in reversing the spread of nuclear weapons and setting the world along the path of multilateral disarmament.

He said he had no illusions about the difficulties ahead, but he added "there will also be days like today" when the world came together for the common goal of disarmament and countering proliferation.

Today's resolution calls for the nuclear weapons states to ratify a ban on nuclear testing - something the US senate has yet to do - and negotiate a new treaty to stop the production of fissile material. It also calls for on them to join the disarmament process being led by the US and Russia, who account for more than 90% of the world's nuclear weapons between them.

The document also endorses a string of measures intended to strengthen the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), ahead of a major review conference next May.

Those measures focus on attempts to raising the costs of exiting the treaty, so that states cannot import nuclear technology as NPT signatories, build up a civil nuclear programme legally, and then walk out of the treaty and divert their programme to building weapons, all without breaking international law.

The resolution urges exporting countries to make sales of nuclear technology conditional on the customer nation agreeing to intrusive UN inspections, and requiring the return of the technology in the event of withdrawal from the NPT.

The relevant clauses are all non-binding representing the difficulty of finding consensus among the council members. France, in particular, had objected to strong language calling directly for the abolition of nuclear weapons. Mexico wanted more of the resolution to require action from the weapons states with less onus on the non-weapons states.

However, it will be presented by Obama as the first significant step towards the repair of the NPT, and to the distant goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/sep/24/nuclear-weapons-un-security-council>

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New York Times
September 22, 2009

Details Emerge Of Cold War Nuclear Threat By Cuba

By William J. Broad

In the early 1980s, according to newly released documents, Fidel Castro was suggesting a Soviet nuclear strike against the United States, until Moscow dissuaded him by patiently explaining how the radioactive cloud resulting from such a strike would also devastate Cuba.

The cold war was then in one of its chilliest phases. President Ronald Reagan had begun a trillion-dollar arms buildup, called the Soviet Union “an evil empire” and ordered scores of atomic detonations under the Nevada desert as a means of developing new arms. Some Reagan aides talked of fighting and winning a nuclear war.

Dozens of books warned that Reagan’s policies threatened to end most life on earth. In June 1982, a million protesters gathered in Central Park.

Barack Obama, then an undergraduate at Columbia University, worried about the nuclear threat and later wrote as a student and a journalist about ways to avoid global annihilation.

The future president didn’t know half the danger.

The National Security Archive, a private research group at George Washington University, recently made public documents that reveal the nuclear threat in new detail. The two-volume study, “Soviet Intentions 1965-1985,” was prepared in 1995 by a Pentagon contractor and based on extensive interviewing of former top Soviet military officials.

It took the security archive two years to get the Pentagon to release the study. Censors excised a few sections on nuclear tests and weapon effects, and the archive recently posted the redacted study on its Web site.

The Pentagon study attributes the Cuba revelation to Andrian A. Danilevich, a Soviet general staff officer from 1964 to ’90 and director of the staff officers who wrote the Soviet Union’s final reference guide on strategic and nuclear planning.

In the early 1980s, the study quotes him as saying that Mr. Castro “pressed hard for a tougher Soviet line against the U.S. up to and including possible nuclear strikes.”

The general staff, General Danilevich continued, “had to actively disabuse him of this view by spelling out the ecological consequences for Cuba of a Soviet strike against the U.S.”

That information, the general concluded, “changed Castro’s positions considerably.”

Moscow’s effort to enlighten Mr. Castro to the innate messiness of nuclear warfare is among a number of disclosures in the Pentagon study. Other findings in the study include how the Soviets strove for nuclear superiority but “understood the devastating consequences of nuclear war” and believed that the use of nuclear weapons had to be avoided “at all costs.”

The study includes a sharp critique of American analyses of Soviet intentions, saying the Pentagon tended to err “on the side of overestimating Soviet aggressiveness.”

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/22/science/22nuke.html>

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RIA Novosti
23 September 2009

Russia Concludes Third Stage of Nerpa Sub Trials in Far East

KHABAROVSK, September 23 (RIA Novosti) - Russia's Nerpa nuclear attack submarine, damaged in a fatal accident during tests in November last year, successfully completed the third stage of sea trials, the governor of the Khabarovsk Territory said on Wednesday.

"The submarine is in a good state of readiness and there is confidence that it will be commissioned on time," Vyacheslav Shport said.

The vessel resumed sea trials on July 10 in the Sea of Japan following extensive repairs.

On November 8, 2008, while the Nerpa was undergoing sea trials, its onboard 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, onboard 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/russia/20090923/156223910.html>

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RIA Novosti
24 September 2009

Russia, U.S. Could Prepare Arms Reduction Deal in Time - Medvedev

NEW YORK, September 24 (RIA Novosti) - A new Russian-U.S. strategic arms reduction treaty is likely to be ready before the current pact expires, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said on Thursday after talks with his U.S. counterpart, Barack Obama.

Medvedev and Obama agreed in July in Moscow on the outline of a deal to replace the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START 1), which expires on December 5, including cutting their countries' nuclear arsenals to 1,500-1,675 operational warheads and delivery vehicles to 500-1,000.

"The work in this direction is going well," Medvedev said. "The good start we made gives us grounds to hope that our teams will cope with the task and we will receive the new document in time,"

The START 1 treaty obliges Russia and the U.S. to reduce nuclear warheads to 6,000 and their delivery vehicles to 1,600 each.

In 2002, a follow-up agreement on strategic offensive arms reduction was concluded in Moscow. The document, known as the Moscow Treaty, envisioned cuts to 1,700-2,200 warheads by December 2012.

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

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

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20090924/156232045.html>

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RIA Novosti
24 September 2009

Russia, U.S. to Slash Nuclear Delivery Vehicles – Medvedev

UNITED NATIONS, September 24 (RIA Novosti) - Russia and the United States are discussing the possibility of slashing the number of nuclear weapon delivery vehicles by over 67%, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said Thursday.

"We are ready to move further and cut the number of delivery vehicles for strategic offensive armaments by more than three times, and this issue is now being discussed at the negotiating table with our American partners," Medvedev told the UN Security Council Summit on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Nuclear Disarmament.

Medvedev said Wednesday after talks with his U.S. counterpart Barack Obama that a new Russian-U.S. strategic arms reduction treaty is likely to be ready in time. Today he reiterated: "We are doing everything possible to sign a relevant document by December."

Medvedev and Obama agreed in July in Moscow on the outline of a deal to replace the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START-1), which expires on December 5, including cutting their countries' nuclear arsenals to 1,500-1,675 operational warheads and delivery vehicles to 500-1,000.

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

According to a report published by the U.S. State Department in April, as of January 1 Russia had 3,909 nuclear warheads and 814 delivery vehicles, including ground-based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM), submarine launched ballistic missiles (SLBM) and strategic bombers. The same report said the United States had 5,576 warheads and 1,198 delivery vehicles.

Medvedev also said Russia was ready to work jointly with the United States on "missile proliferation challenges." "We hope all other interested countries will also join this work," he said.

Medvedev outlined a number of priorities. "First, it's necessary to continue improving and strengthening the global regime of nonproliferation and disarmament. International mechanisms, first of all, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, remain a support here," he said.

Medvedev also said the International Atomic Energy Agency's safeguards system should be developed, and said the leading countries should sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

The Russian leader urged new nonproliferation mechanisms to be used more actively, including Resolution 1540 on nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), adopted on the proposal of Russia and the U.S.

Medvedev said countries should implement civilian nuclear programs while strictly abiding by nonproliferation agreements.

Obama, who chairs the UN Security Council summit, called on the world again to unite to prevent proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The UN Security Council secretary general welcomed the steps of Russia and the U.S. on the road to nuclear disarmament, urging other countries to follow suit.

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20090924/156243233.html>

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Times of London
September 23, 2009

Britain's Nuclear Overture: We Will Cut Trident Fleet

By Francis Elliott and Michael Evans

Gordon Brown is preparing to surrender one of Britain's four Trident submarines to help to cut nuclear arsenals around the world. The number and power of Britain's 160 warheads could also be reduced.

The Prime Minister will insist that scaling back the Trident fleet when the current programme is replaced has nothing to do with the economy but is instead part of efforts led by President Obama to slash nuclear stockpiles and force countries such as Iran to abandon efforts to build atomic weapons.

It means that the future of Britain's independent nuclear deterrent is in doubt whoever wins the next election.

Liam Fox, the Shadow Defence Secretary, suggested recently that Britain scale back the Trident fleet from four vessels to three. This would raise questions about the effectiveness of the deterrent, given that one submarine is in base at all times.

Mr Brown will signal tomorrow that he is ready to negotiate at a meeting of the UN Security Council on nuclear non-proliferation. It follows President Obama's decision to ditch the US missile defence shield in Eastern Europe. That move, and Russia's delighted response, has bolstered hopes that a new non-proliferation treaty could be agreed next spring.

Mr Brown has come under pressure to scrap Trident from those who claim that Britain can no longer afford its replacement, which will cost between £15 billion and £20 billion. Instead, he has opted to trim the platform. In doing so he would blur a potential dividing line with the Conservatives.

Officials travelling with the Prime Minister to New York insisted that there was no question of surrendering Britain's independent nuclear deterrent. They claimed that current advice from military chiefs was that a continuous at-sea deterrent could still be maintained with just three boats. Mr Brown is to insist that his offer is not related to the search by all parties for spending cuts. Aides say that neither the cost of building nor the cost of maintaining a slimmed-down fleet would be reduced by a quarter.

His decision will disappoint Cabinet colleagues who had hoped that he might be willing to move to a cheaper air or land-based deterrent system.

The final decision on the size of Britain's next nuclear fleet will be taken after a recommendation by the relevant Cabinet sub-committee, expected before the end of the year. The replacement for Trident is not due to come into service until 2025, but key design decisions are required over the next two to four years.

Although insignificant compared with US and Russian nuclear stockpiles, Mr Brown will argue that his offer would heap pressure on Iran to engage in a new treaty.

The prospect of a "grand bargain" that offers states access to nuclear material for civil power in return for proof that no military programmes exist will feature strongly at the UN tomorrow.

Industry sources told *The Times* that scrapping one of the four Trident nuclear submarines would not save a significant amount of money. "If you build three instead of four it doesn't mean it will be cheaper, although overall there will be some savings," one source said.

Key to the decision on cutting the fleet to three is the design of the new submarines. To prove that they will be as operationally effective as keeping four, the Ministry of Defence has had to show that the new boats could run for longer periods and have less need for refits and maintenance.

It is estimated that replacing Trident with four submarines and extending the life of the existing Trident D5 ballistic missiles with an upgraded warhead would cost between £15 billion and £20 billion: up to £14 billion for the boats, plus £2 billion to £3 billion for refurbishing the warheads and £2 billion to £3 billion for infrastructure over the life of the submarines.

The comparable cost for the first Trident system, with the four Vanguard Class boats, was £14.5 billion.

The offer to go for three submarines will have a knock-on effect on the number of missiles and warheads purchased. The 2006 White Paper included a pledge to cut the number of operationally available warheads by 20 per cent. This left a stock of nuclear warheads of fewer than 160.

BAE Systems is due to build the Vanguard replacement. It has more than 5,000 workers at Barrow-in-Furness in Cumbria devoted to sub-marine development and construction. It is currently building the Astute Class of nuclear-powered submarines.

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/politics/article6845247.ece>

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London Guardian
September 23, 2009

Gordon Brown Considers Cut in Nuclear Warheads as Part of 'Global Bargain'

By Richard Norton-Taylor

The government is considering cutting the number of warheads in its nuclear arsenal, a much more significant move than the plan to reduce the number of new Trident submarines, officials said today.

As Gordon Brown suggested that the existing four boat Trident-missile carrying fleet could be replaced by just three, there is widespread speculation in Whitehall that the government will offer to cut the number of nuclear warheads before the nonproliferation treaty (NPT) review conference in May next year. A decision could be taken shortly before a general election expected at that time.

Brown told the UN in New York today that he was prepared to consider the move as part of a multilateral "global bargain" to reduce the risk from nuclear weapons. He told the BBC earlier that there were no proposals concerning warheads "at the moment".

However, officials in several departments say cuts in nuclear warheads are being actively considered. Britain has about 160 "operationally available" nuclear warheads, plus an unknown number in a stockpile.

Brown's announcement in New York provoked fury among some in the Ministry of Defence who had been unaware that he was to make it. The navy was said to be particularly concerned about the potential consequences of reducing the number of future Trident submarines.

Lee Willett, head of military capabilities at the Royal United Services Institute thinktank, said the government appeared to want to "provide a buffer against growing domestic calls to abandon the deterrent completely".

He described a decision to reduce the number of submarines, foreshadowed in the government's 2006 white paper, as "incredibly risky". John Hutton, the former defence secretary, whose constituency is Barrow and Furness where the submarines are built, said the fleet should not be reduced unless round-the-clock patrols could be maintained.

He said: "You have got to have cover all the time, every single day of the year, and we have not found a way of doing that with less than four boats and no other navy has either." He warned of what he called "potential gaps in our ability to deploy continuous at-sea deterrents and we become vulnerable to blackmail, or at worst nuclear aggression".

Officials travelling with Brown said maintaining the UK's nuclear missiles was "non-negotiable". But they argued that the submarine reduction proposed by the prime minister would send an "important political signal" in the run up to May's NPT review conference.

However, critics and independent analysts said Brown's proposal yesterday had little to do with disarmament. John Sauven, executive director of Greenpeace, said: "Cutting the number of nuclear submarines from four to three is a welcome gesture, but is only a gesture. The fact remains that three submarines are enough to maintain the constant alert needed to launch nuclear weapons."

He added: "This doesn't get us beyond the cold war thinking of the last century. If Gordon Brown wants to make a new bold initiative he should follow the advice of most military commentators and scrap Trident."

The shadow defence secretary, Liam Fox, said: "There is nothing new in what the prime minister is saying ... we have already said that we would consider reducing the number of submarines to three if we can maintain continuous at-sea patrols and the UK's credible nuclear deterrent with this number."

Liberal Democrats urged Brown to scrap plans to replace Trident. The foreign affairs spokesman, Edward Davey, said: "Once again, Gordon Brown is tinkering around the edges rather than taking the radical action we need to see. It is no longer possible to justify replacing one obsolete expensive cold war nuclear system with another."

The former Liberal Democrat leader Lord Ashdown said he welcomed the start of a debate about the future of the nuclear deterrent. "I don't believe that salami-slicing this decision in the way that he has done for political or cost-cutting reasons is a sensible way of going about it. I think a strategic defence review ... is a better way."

Trident will be excluded from the green paper on defence, which the government plans to publish early next year, according to defence officials. However, a fierce debate is going on behind the scenes in Whitehall, with some defence chiefs arguing that the proposed new Trident system is irrelevant to Britain's needs.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2009/sep/23/gordon-brown-un-nuclear-warheads>

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New York Times
September 24, 2009

Brown to Offer to Cut British Nuclear Subs

By JOHN F. BURNS

LONDON — Prime Minister Gordon Brown will use a speech at the United Nations Security Council on Thursday to offer the possibility of Britain's reducing its fleet of ballistic nuclear missile submarines as part of a new global pact on nuclear weapons, aides to Mr. Brown said on Wednesday.

The British proposal envisions cutting back on a \$33 billion, 20-year program to replace the Royal Navy's Trident missile fleet, which has constituted Britain's nuclear deterrent force since the mid-1990s. Instead of replacing all four Vanguard-class submarines in the fleet, the Downing Street aides said, Mr. Brown will suggest that Britain build only three.

If effected, the reduction would be Britain's first move in decades to reduce its nuclear force. But Downing Street aides were quick to say the cut was not part of a plan to revert to the 1980s Labour policy of unilaterally dismantling Britain's nuclear force, a policy that contributed to the party's political decline. The scrapping of that policy in the 1990s was an important step toward returning the party to power in 1997.

In a speech on Wednesday afternoon to the General Assembly of the United Nations, Mr. Brown offered a preview of his proposal, calling on the world's leaders to "accept that we are at a moment of danger." He described the plan as a "grand global bargain" between nuclear and nonnuclear states.

"If we are serious about the ambition of a nuclear-free world," Mr. Brown said, "we will need statesmanship, not brinkmanship."

Earlier, in a BBC interview in New York on Wednesday, Mr. Brown cast his proposal as a step toward increasing Britain's influence in a new round of international negotiations on nuclear weapons. President Obama gave his own push to that effort in a speech on Wednesday, telling the General Assembly that the United States would move ahead with a broad effort to curb nuclear weapons, including a "nuclear posture review" aimed at achieving deep cuts in the American nuclear arsenal.

Downing Street aides said Mr. Brown's proposal would depend, among other things, on progress in persuading other nations that have nuclear weapons or are seeking to acquire them to accept cuts and constraints of their own. One focus is Iran, which has so far resisted international pressure to abandon elements of a nuclear program that Western intelligence experts believe to be aimed at producing weapons.

In the BBC interview, Mr. Brown said that nuclear weapons powers, including Britain, "have to make some contribution to the reduction of nuclear weapons" as part of the process of revising and extending the 1970 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, which will culminate in a review conference next year that is seen as central to efforts to curb nuclear arsenals.

His aides said a watershed for the British proposal would come before the end of this year, when a powerful national security council, including the heads of the country's armed forces, makes its own assessment of the proposal. Crucial to that decision, the aides said, will be a judgment on whether a fleet of only three submarines will be enough to ensure that Britain can maintain one submarine on deep-sea patrol at all times, as it has for the past 40 years.

One important political hurdle appeared to have been crossed when the opposition Conservatives endorsed the Brown proposal, virtually assuring it would not become a contentious issue in the next general election, which must be held by June 2010. For months, opinion polls in Britain have pointed to the strong possibility that the Brown government will be defeated by David Cameron's Conservatives.

Liam Fox, the Conservatives' shadow defense minister, said in another BBC interview that Mr. Brown's proposal seemed "reasonable and sensible," as long as experts determined that a three-submarine force would be enough to

keep one vessel at sea at all times. The Trident submarine fleet, based at Faslane in Scotland, near Glasgow, commonly has three of the four vessels in or near home port, undergoing maintenance or sea trials, at any time. The vessels carry a total of 160 nuclear warheads, making Britain the world's fifth largest nuclear power, after the United States, Russia, China and France.

Mr. Fox also noted a factor that Downing Street aides played down in flagging Mr. Brown's proposal: the possibility of Britain's achieving significant defense savings. The need has been accentuated by two separate developments. One is the economic pump-priming undertaken by the Brown government to ease the current recession, which has plunged the country into the heaviest levels of debt since World War II. The other is a defense review that has concluded that Britain must devote more resources to the war in Afghanistan.

But many in Britain's defense establishment doubt that the Brown proposal for a one-vessel cutback will be either operationally practicable or a significant source of savings. Some experts said on Wednesday that cutting one vessel might save as little as \$4 billion, perhaps less, and that is not counting the possible social costs of cutting the 5,000-member work force that would build the submarines at the Barrow-in-Furness yards in northern England, with the first submarine scheduled to enter service in 2024 and the fourth two years later.

John Hutton, a senior Labour Party figure who quit as defense minister this summer, sounded his own note of caution, saying that the submarine deterrent worked like an insurance policy, and that previous reviews had shown that four submarines were the minimum needed to keep one permanently at sea. If cutting the force to three vessels meant that Britain would be protected "for only three-quarters of the day," he said, it would be tantamount to having no deterrent at all.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/24/world/europe/24submarines.html>

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Yahoo News
Associated Press (AP)
September 25, 2009

Japan Launches Probe of Secret Pacts with US

By TOMOKO A. HOSAKA (AP)

TOKYO — Japan's new government launched an investigation Friday into whether previous administrations entered secret security pacts with Washington, including one said to endorse U.S. nuclear-armed ships despite a policy of barring such weapons.

The Democratic Party of Japan, which unseated the long-ruling Liberal Democrats in parliamentary elections last month, has vowed to improve transparency in government as well as review military ties with the U.S.

Japan's previous governments have always denied secret deals, but some bureaucrats have recently said that long-standing speculation that they existed is correct, prompting new Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada to launch an inquiry.

"We will reveal everything we find," Okada told reporters in New York, according to Kyodo news agency.

Four alleged pacts are subject to the investigation, including one between the two allies in 1960 giving tacit approval of port calls by U.S. military aircraft and warships carrying nuclear weapons.

Nuclear arms are a sensitive topic for Japan, the world's only country to have suffered nuclear attacks. Tokyo since 1967 has maintained principles of not possessing, producing or allowing nuclear weapons into the country.

Okada has assigned a 15-member team to sift through more than 3,200 files at the Foreign Ministry, as well as 400 files stored at the Japanese Embassy in Washington. The team will report their findings in late November, the ministry said.

They will also look into an alleged secret deal in 1960 regarding the use of U.S. military bases if there is war on the Korean peninsula. The other two pacts are related to the entry of nuclear weapons onto the southern island of Okinawa in times of emergency and the cost burdens associated with the 1972 handover of Okinawa back to Japan from U.S. control.

Okada has said that if the secret pacts are confirmed, he does not intend to punish Foreign Ministry officials who may have been involved in any cover-up.

But any new revelations are likely to spark new debate about Japan's relationship with the United States, which the Democrats hope to modify. Okada supports more equal relations between Tokyo and Washington, and has said he wants to review the status of the nearly 50,000 U.S. troops deployed across Japan under a post-World War II bilateral security pact.

Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama's government also wants to end Japan's naval refueling mission in the Indian Ocean in support of the U.S.-led coalition forces in Afghanistan.

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090925/ap_on_re_as/as_japan_us_secret_pacts

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Yonhap News – South Korea
25 September 2009

Seoul Links Denuclearization to N. Korean Human Rights

By Tony Chang

SEOUL, Sept. 25 (Yonhap) -- The North Korean people's human rights won't be improved unless the communist country completely abandons its nuclear weapons program, a senior Seoul official said Friday.

Hong Yang-ho, vice unification minister, said North Korea's citizens will be enriched and happier only after the North returns to the six-party denuclearization talks, entirely dismantles its nuclear weapons program and forms new relations with international society.

"North Korea's human rights situation cannot be fundamentally improved unless the country shakes off the shackles of chronic economic difficulties stemming from international isolation from the nuclear problem," Hong said at a North Korean human rights conference held in Seoul.

"One of the various approaches to improving the North's human rights conditions is complete settlement of the North Korean nuclear problem."

Pyongyang has boycotted the six-party talks, claiming the forum was used to infringe on its sovereign right to develop nuclear and space technology. The talks involve the two Koreas, the U.S., China, Japan and Russia.

"We don't intend to start a dispute with North Korea by taking issue with its human rights issues. As a member of international community, we just want to see North Korean people become happier," said Hong.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2009/09/25/54/0401000000AEN20090925005800315F.HTML>

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Wall Street Journal
SEPTEMBER 24, 2009

U.S. al Qaeda Cell Suspected

By CAM SIMPSON and EVAN PEREZ

WASHINGTON -- The terror probe that burst into the spotlight in New York last week may have led authorities to the first active al Qaeda cell uncovered inside the U.S. since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, according to officials familiar with the matter.

Current and former U.S. officials say the allegations in the case embody their worst fears -- that a legal U.S. resident could quietly leave the country, receive explosives training from al Qaeda in a lawless region of Pakistan, then return to U.S. soil.

Thus far, a 24-year-old Afghan immigrant and two others have been charged only with lying to federal agents in a terrorism investigation. Assessing the conclusions reached by federal authorities, who say they don't know what the group was planning, is difficult. A fuller accounting won't be possible until the men go to trial and possibly not even then.

Hundreds of terrorism-related prosecutions, many for far more serious charges than lying to investigators, have been filed by U.S. authorities since the 9/11 attacks. On numerous occasions, U.S. officials have made startling allegations about terrorism suspects, only to later significantly dial back their rhetoric.

Najibullah Zazi, of Aurora, Colo., is scheduled to appear in federal court in Denver Thursday. His lawyer has rejected allegations that the 24-year-old airport-shuttle driver, a former longtime resident of Flushing, N.Y., was involved with al Qaeda.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation alleges that Mr. Zazi last week admitted receiving explosives training during 2008 from al Qaeda in the tribal areas of Pakistan before returning to the U.S. The FBI said it found an image on Mr. Zazi's laptop computer containing nine pages of handwritten notes on bomb-making and handling, and that the case is connected to a plot to detonate bombs inside the U.S. The scope of the plot and potential targets are unclear.

Prosecutors are expected to ask a judge to hold Mr. Zazi without bond. His father, 53-year-old Mohammed Zazi, also of Aurora, is expected to be released on several conditions, including electronic monitoring. A third man charged with lying to authorities, onetime New York Police Department informant Ahmad Wais Afzali, 37, of Flushing, is scheduled to appear before a federal judge in Brooklyn.

U.S. officials caution that there is much they don't know about Mr. Zazi and the other suspects. They also say the current case contains allegations that are highly unusual since 9/11. It appears to be only the second time a U.S. citizen or permanent resident is alleged to have traveled overseas after 9/11 to train with al Qaeda, then come back to live in the U.S. Also, many previous cases were built around paid government informants, which wasn't the case here, officials said.

In connection with the Zazi case, federal investigators are combing records on the purchases of chemicals, particularly hydrogen peroxide, that could be used to make bombs. Peroxide-based explosives were used in a deadly attack on London's subway and bus system in July 2005, and al Qaeda's interest in such explosives has been a top concern for the FBI, according to intelligence assessments made public.

Two U.S. officials said key allegations in the case are more reminiscent of the London and other European plots than any other case seen to date in the U.S. "This appears to be different than any of the previous cases because it looks very similar to what we've seen recently in Europe," one of the officials said.

Current and former officials say Mr. Zazi's profile is also a factor leading them toward their conclusion of an al Qaeda link.

"The best chance for success [al Qaeda leaders] have is to get somebody who is not a visitor, so they come in as a permanent resident or citizen, who knows the culture and how to move around, who doesn't have a record, so as not to get picked up in a database," said a former senior U.S. official. Mr. Zazi is a legal permanent resident of the U.S.

That is similar to a profile FBI Director Robert Mueller called his top-tier concern when he testified before the Senate in September 2007 following the release of a special National Intelligence Estimate on the threat of terrorism inside the U.S.

Mr. Mueller said his greatest concern was the desire by al Qaeda to train operatives in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border area, where Mr. Zazi allegedly received his training in explosives, and "insert such individuals in the United States."

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB125374801698835711.html>

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Wall Street Journal
SEPTEMBER 24, 2009

U.S. Charges Najibullah Zazi with Bomb Conspiracy

By CAM SIMPSON and EVAN PEREZ

Terror suspect Najibullah Zazi was indicted Thursday by a federal grand jury in New York on charges that he conspired to use weapons of mass destruction.

The 24-year-old airport-shuttle driver in Aurora, Colo., and former longtime resident of the New York City borough of Queens, faces a single count in the indictment after having already been charged with lying to authorities in a terrorism investigation.

Mr. Zazi, an immigrant from Afghanistan, is a legal permanent resident of the U.S. and was expected to appear in federal court in Denver later today on the original charge of making false statements to investigators.

The indictment alleges that between Aug. 1, 2008, until his arrest last weekend, Mr. Zazi conspired "together with others" in New York and elsewhere "to use one more weapons of mass destruction," a reference to the explosive devices. The indictment was unsealed after being returned Wednesday, according to court papers.

Case Documents

In a separate filing made Thursday in support of the government's motion to keep Mr. Zazi in jail pending trial, prosecutors alleged for the first time that other people flew with him from the U.S. to Pakistan for the 2008 training. They aren't identified, but authorities have said several other people are under surveillance as part of the probe.

The filing also alleges for the first time that Mr. Zazi "purchased components of improvised explosive devices" and traveled to New York on Sept. 10 "in furtherance of his criminal plans." Prosecutors allege Mr. Zazi is "both a danger to the community and a risk of flight."

The Federal Bureau of Investigation alleges that Mr. Zazi last week admitted receiving explosives training during 2008 from al Qaeda in the tribal areas of Pakistan before returning to the U.S. The FBI said it found an image on Mr. Zazi's laptop computer containing nine pages of handwritten notes on bomb-making and handling, and that the case is connected to a plot to detonate bombs inside the U.S. The scope of the plot and potential targets are unclear.

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http://online.wsj.com/article/SB125380337989037775.html?mod=googlenews_wsj

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New York Times
September 25, 2009

Terror Case Called One of Most Serious In Years

By David Johnston and Scott Shane

WASHINGTON — Since the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, senior government officials have announced dozens of terrorism cases that on closer examination seemed to diminish as legitimate threats. The accumulating evidence against a Denver airport shuttle driver suggests he may be different, with some investigators calling his case the most serious in years.

Documents filed in Brooklyn against the driver, Najibullah Zazi, contend he bought chemicals needed to build a bomb — hydrogen peroxide, acetone and hydrochloric acid — and in doing so, Mr. Zazi took a critical step made by few other terrorism suspects.

If government allegations are to be believed, Mr. Zazi, a legal immigrant from Afghanistan, had carefully prepared for a terrorist attack. He attended a Qaeda training camp in Pakistan, received training in explosives and stored in his laptop computer nine pages of instructions for making bombs from the same kind of chemicals he had bought.

While many important facts remain unknown, those allegations alone would distinguish Mr. Zazi from nearly all the other defendants in United States terrorism cases in recent years. More often than not the earlier suspects emerged as angry young men, inflamed by the rhetoric of Osama bin Laden or his associates. Some were serious in intent. More than a few seemed to be malcontents without the organization, technical skills and financing to be much of a threat. In some cases, the subjects appeared to be influenced by informants or undercover agents who pledged to provide the weapons or even do some of the planning.

In two cases unrelated to Mr. Zazi in which charges were announced on Thursday, in fact, the subjects dealt extensively with undercover agents.

The Zazi case “actually looks like the case the government kept claiming it had but never did,” said Karen J. Greenberg, executive director of the Center on Law and Security at New York University law school.

Her center has studied all the prosecutions of terrorism-related crimes since 2001, and she said many had turned out to be “fantasy terrorism cases” where the threat seemed modest or even nonexistent.

This time, she said, “the ingredients here are quite scary,” and the government’s statements have had none of the bombast and exaggeration that accompanied some previous arrest announcements.

Jarret Brachman, author of “Global Jihadism” and a consultant to the government about terrorism, said some details — like what individuals trained Mr. Zazi in Pakistan — remained to be learned. But he said the case was “shaping up to be one of the most serious terrorist bomb plots developed in the United States,” one resembling the London public transit attacks of July 2005.

“You don’t manufacture homemade TATP explosives unless you want to kill people and destroy infrastructure,” Dr. Brachman said, using the abbreviation for the combination of chemicals said to be involved in the Zazi plot.

In some earlier investigations, federal officials seized on what were widely viewed as marginal cases in an apparent effort to show results and justify aggressive steps being taken in the campaign against terrorism. As a result, people in and out of government have become dubious about assertions of the grave danger posed by any particular group of defendants.

In August, for example, William Webb, a federal magistrate in North Carolina, ordered Daniel P. Boyd, an antigovernment militant, and several other men detained on terrorism charges. But the judge expressed skepticism in court when prosecutors asserted that by talking about “going to the beach,” a defendant meant he intended to engage in violent acts overseas.

But even cases that appear insubstantial can be more complex. For example, on Thursday, Mr. Boyd and two other defendants were charged with additional crimes: conducting reconnaissance of the Marine Corps base at Quantico, Va., and obtaining armor-piercing ammunition with the intent to attack Americans, court documents say.

Even in Mr. Zazi’s case, veteran counterterrorism investigators who regard it as significant acknowledge that important facts remain unknown. Unclear are whether Mr. Zazi had selected a target or a date for a bombing or had recruited others to help.

Moreover, it is not understood fully whether he had built an operational bomb, officials briefed on the case said. Nor is it known why, after practicing with explosive recipes in Colorado, Mr. Zazi drove to New York without chemicals or equipment, the officials said.

Some of the earliest terrorist operatives arrested after the 2001 attacks had direct ties not just to Al Qaeda, but to Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, the chief organizer of Sept. 11.

But in recent years, foiled plots announced with fanfare in Washington have sometimes involved unsophisticated people who seemed hardly capable of organizing a major attack.

In some cases, the role of Al Qaeda has been played by an F.B.I. informant or undercover agent who seemed to provide much of the energy for the plotting.

For example, on Thursday prosecutors in Illinois charged a 29-year-old man with trying to kill federal employees by detonating a car bomb at the federal building in Springfield. He tried to carry out the attack while accompanied by an undercover officer of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, according to government legal papers. The vehicle was supplied by the F.B.I., which had placed a dummy device inside.

In yet another case disclosed on Thursday, F.B.I. agents in Texas arrested a 19-year-old illegal immigrant from Jordan and charged him with trying to bomb a 60-story office tower in Dallas. Again, F.B.I. undercover agents posing as members of a Qaeda sleeper cell met with the man for months and supplied a Ford Explorer containing inert material resembling a bomb.

In a 2006 case, a group of Haitian-born men in Miami who had spoken of trying to take down the Sears Tower in Chicago were supplied by an informant with cash, video cameras and boots. The first two attempts to try the men ended in mistrials, but five men were convicted in May in that case after a third trial.

F.B.I. officials have admitted that such cases are "aspirational" rather than operational. But they note that if the Sept. 11 hijackers — some of whom were unsophisticated recent arrivals to the United States — had been interrupted early on, they might have looked amateurish and the notion that they could turn jetliners into missiles far-fetched.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/25/us/25zazi.html>

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Washington Times
September 23, 2009

Fort Detrick Lab Touted As Safer Than Old Complex

By David Dishneau, Associated Press

FREDERICK, Md. -- A \$680 million laboratory building under construction at Fort Detrick will likely be safer than the decades-old complex it will replace, an Army biodefense official told a scientific review panel Tuesday.

But a citizens group critical of the expansion told the National Academy of Sciences panel that the military hasn't fully considered the possibility of a release of deadly germs by a disturbed or disgruntled worker.

Overshadowing the committee review of the new U.S. Army Medical Institute of Infectious Diseases is the specter of Bruce Ivins, an institute scientist whom the FBI identified last year as the lone perpetrator of the 2001 anthrax mailings.

Those mailings killed five people and sickened 17 others. Mr. Ivins died of an apparent suicide in July 2008.

Col. Roger Martin, the institute's deputy director, said the lab has undergone a "cultural change" in recent years focusing on security.

"Inherent in everything that we do on a daily basis at [the institute] is safety," Col. Martin said, adding that new technology incorporated into the building design "will likely enhance our safety position."

The safety review was requested by critics who say planners haven't adequately considered insider threats to military biolabs.

"It is very difficult to effectively mitigate risks that are not even acknowledged," said Beth Willis, a leader of Frederick Citizens for Bio-lab Safety, in prepared comments.

The review panel plans to hold closed sessions before issuing a report in March. The committee has no enforcement power but the congressionally chartered academy is an influential body.

Fort Detrick is an 800-acre Army installation surrounded by homes and businesses within city limits of Frederick, a community of 59,000.

The Army broke ground last month for the new building to replace facilities built in the 1950s and 1960s. It is expected to be operational in 2015.

The project's Environmental Impact Statement includes scenarios for accidental releases of viruses and bacteria. It concludes there is no risk to community health from building design factors.

It also found negligible risk to community health from any possible escape of an infected lab animal, natural disasters, fires or a plane crash. The planners acknowledged that terrorist attacks "may be credible, remotely possible threats."

The institute's primary mission is developing vaccines, drugs and diagnostic tools for soldiers.

Scientists in the new five-story, 800,000-square-foot building also will share information with neighboring labs run by Homeland Security, Agriculture, and Health and Human Services comprising a National Interagency Biodefense campus at Fort Detrick.

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/sep/23/fort-detrick-lab-touted-as-safer-than-old-complex/>

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Wall Street Journal

OPINION

SEPTEMBER 23, 2009

Why Democrats Fail at Arms Control

By STEPHEN RADEMAKER

In his address to the U.N. General Assembly yesterday, President Barack Obama once again stated his goal of "a world without nuclear weapons." Today Mr. Obama will address a special session of the U.N. Security Council on nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament. He will reiterate his intention to sign a new treaty with Russia providing for significant nuclear reductions, as well as his aim of persuading the U.S. Senate to reconsider its 1999 rejection of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). Once those goals are met, he plans a second round of negotiated nuclear reductions with Russia.

But Mr. Obama's ambitious arms-control agenda is in trouble. To students of arms control, this comes as no surprise. Every Democratic president for the past 40 years has come into office committed to negotiating deep nuclear reductions with Russia. Each has left office without success.

The surprising fact is that the entire alphabet soup of U.S.-Russian strategic arms-control treaties was negotiated and signed by Republican presidents. Nixon gave us the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) and Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty, Reagan the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty, Bush 41 the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), and Bush 43 the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT).

By contrast, their Democratic counterparts have a much thinner record of accomplishment. President Jimmy Carter signed the SALT II treaty but withdrew it from Senate consideration after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan; the treaty never entered into force. President Bill Clinton labored for eight years but never signed a strategic arms-control treaty with Russia.

The principal reason that recent Democratic presidents have failed with Russia has been their excessive enthusiasm and ambition, which perversely encourages the Russians to overreach, dooming prospects for agreement. This was a problem for Messrs. Carter and Clinton. And it promises to be an even bigger problem for Mr. Obama, who comes to office with an arms-control agenda—the abolition of nuclear weapons—far more ambitious than any previous administration.

The most pressing arms-control problem facing the U.S. and Russia today is the need to make sure that some sort of arms-control verification regime is in place when the current one established under the START treaty expires on Dec. 5 of this year.

Early on, Sen. Richard Lugar (R., Ind.) admonished the administration to "resist calls to load the negotiations agenda with objectives that, while desirable, would slow down the talks and threaten the tight timetable" for avoiding a lapse in arms-control verification. Mr. Obama disregarded this advice, deciding instead to use the negotiation to replace START as a vehicle for making an early downpayment on his commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons.

This decision guaranteed that the negotiations would be much more complicated than if they focused only on replacing the START verification regime. Mr. Obama has compounded this basic problem with a series of tactical

decisions that, while accommodating Russian demands in the short term, will make it much harder to reach agreement in the long term.

In May, he agreed that the new treaty will limit not just deployed nuclear warheads but also warhead delivery systems. In July, he agreed that the new treaty will address missile defense and also "*strategic* conventional weapons." Each of these decisions introduced additional issues into the negotiation and opened avenues for Russia to demand additional concessions.

Most damaging of all, by making this new agreement a centerpiece of his foreign policy, Mr. Obama has led the Russians to conclude that he needs the agreement more than they do. Predictably, they have taken this as an invitation to raise the ante, heaping on still more preconditions to signing any agreement.

Today the administration finds itself in the unhappy position of negotiating against a firm deadline, with very ambitious objectives and a negotiating partner that does not share its political need to reach agreement. Come December, Russia can be expected to present Mr. Obama with two choices: Sign an agreement on terms disadvantageous to the U.S. (thereby risking defeat of the treaty in the Senate), or allow the START treaty to expire with nothing to replace it.

Any delay in this negotiation will, of course, delay the rest of Mr. Obama's arms-control agenda. Worse still for the president, the next item on that agenda—Senate reconsideration of the CTBT—also looks to be in serious trouble.

The bipartisan Strategic Posture Commission, chaired by former Defense Secretaries William Perry and James Schlesinger, may have dealt that treaty a fatal blow. The commission unanimously recommended that the administration negotiate a definition among the key signatories of what constitutes a prohibited nuclear-weapons test before seeking Senate reconsideration. So far there has been no indication that Mr. Obama is prepared to satisfy this requirement, which many will take as confirmation of the commission's suggestion that there is an underlying disagreement among the parties about what the treaty prohibits. Senate resistance to the CTBT certainly will increase if this issue cannot be resolved.

At today's meeting, Mr. Obama would be wise to avoid raising unrealistic expectations about what he can achieve in the area of arms control. And if he cannot reach agreement with Russia by the Dec. 5 expiration of START, perhaps he will listen more carefully the next time Sen. Lugar advises him on how to deal with Moscow in an arms-control negotiation.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970204518504574418890778615748.html>

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New York Times
OPINION
September 24, 2009
OP-ED CONTRIBUTORS

Nuclear-Free Seas

By THOMAS LEHRMAN and JUSTIN MUZINICH

TODAY President Obama is scheduled to preside over a United Nations Security Council meeting on nuclear nonproliferation. He should use the occasion to address a critical weakness in the effort to halt the spread of nuclear weapons: the international community's inability to stop and inspect a ship suspected of carrying nuclear materials without first getting permission from the country whose flag the ship is flying.

Despite a host of United Nations nonproliferation initiatives like this year's Resolution 1874, which calls on countries to allow such inspections, international law still prohibits interfering with another nation's ship in international waters without permission. Additionally, the resolution does not authorize the use of force if a country refuses to let its ship be inspected. Thus, if a North Korean ship is transporting nuclear weapons to Myanmar, little can be done to stop it in international waters without North Korea's permission.

This principle of "flag-state jurisdiction" has generally been accepted since the 17th century, when Hugo Grotius wrote "The Freedom of the Seas," arguing for Holland's right to use trade routes monopolized by the Spanish and Portuguese. It's codified in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. And it has meant that a number of ships suspected of carrying nuclear materials have not been stopped.

Flag-state jurisdiction should now be amended to allow exceptions to combat nuclear proliferation and terrorism. A precedent for this already exists: in the Law of the Sea, the principle does not apply to ships involved in piracy or the slave trade, which can be detained. The freedom of the seas has to be balanced against modern security needs.

Today, the Security Council should discuss how to go about changing the law. But potential proliferators may not agree to a treaty allowing their ships to be boarded. Fortunately, there is another means of changing maritime law: state action.

While there is no precise analogy in domestic law, a new maritime law can come into being simply through general international consensus. For example, in 1945 President Harry Truman declared that the United States would have exclusive use of its continental shelf. Other states accepted this and made similar declarations, and this principle became an accepted part of maritime law.

A comparable approach should be taken if proliferators block United Nations efforts to amend flag-state jurisdiction. When the threat is great enough, the United States or one of its allies should notify the Security Council and board a ship that it has reason to believe is transporting nuclear materials to dangerous recipients, without the permission of the flag-state.

The danger, to be taken very seriously, is that the offended country will respond aggressively. To minimize this risk, the first interdiction must be one whose moral logic is so strongly compelling to the international community that there is near universal support. Additionally, a system of liability should be established. If a ship is wrongly stopped, the owner should be compensated justly for the trouble.

While there can be no guarantee of how the flag-state will respond, if the ship is chosen wisely and there is a promise of compensation, both the offense taken by the flag-state and its motivation to respond with violence will be reduced. If the ship resists, force may be necessary to ensure nuclear weapons don't fall into the wrong hands.

There are already exceptions to flag-state jurisdiction. The United Nations meeting today should spur thinking about how nations can work together to devise a similar exception to prevent nuclear proliferation and terrorism. Wise diplomacy must allow for this before it's too late.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/24/opinion/24muzinich.html?ref=opinion>

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Xinhua News - China

OPINION

24 September 2009

Pride and Prejudice of U.S. Intelligence

BEIJING, Sept. 24 -- The 2009 National Intelligence Strategy of the United States, released by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence on Sept 15, directly lists Iran, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), China and Russia as the nation-states with the ability to challenge U.S. interests in traditional and emerging ways.

This is the first report on national intelligence strategy since President Barack Obama took office. Though the document itself would not necessarily represent the stance of the Obama administration, it will act as guidance for the president to formulate his intelligence strategy.

Through the report, we can conclude that although the United States has undergone a historic presidential election and a series of world-shaking events after 9/11, its strategic objective and modes of conduct have not changed, but continue to be enhancement of its global hegemony and prevention of any new emerging power.

In the present world of interdependence, national security is linked with more intercommunity relations, reciprocity and integrity. One nation's security can only be guaranteed in an overall safety environment.

According to the report, the major objectives of the United States intelligence service are to combat violent extremism, counter weapons of mass destruction proliferation, enhance cyber-security and integrate counterintelligence. All the objectives above, however, cannot be fulfilled by the United States alone. Though its anti-terrorism efforts have been going on for eight years, major international terrorist groups are still a headache. The worrisome situation in Iraq shows no sign of letting up and about 72 percent of Afghan territory is still under the control of al-Qaida. The soil breeding terrorism has not been cleared by the U.S.-led military campaigns.

It is strange that the world's largest nuclear power, the United States, is said to have now become the country most vulnerable to a nuclear threat. Shortly after he headed to the White House, President Obama outlined his vision of a nuclear-free world, appealing for worldwide nuclear disarmament.

However, we did not see any positive signs of the United States changing its strategic mentality in the new report stuffed with outdated pride and prejudice. The document claims that a number of nation-states have the ability to challenge U.S. interests in traditional (e.g., military force) and emerging (e.g., cyber operations) areas. In fact, the United States is the only country, which included high-tech network into military operations and was the first to set up a cyber-war command. The true objective of the United States is to obtain the capability that can threaten other nations' cyber security and to seek hegemony in this new emerging field.

It is said in the report that the objects of counterintelligence include not only governments of sovereign states, but also non-state players, violent extremist groups, cyber intruders, and criminal organizations, which are increasingly undermining U.S. interests in myriad ways. After the collapse of its old opponent - the Soviet Union, the United States found no effective solution to deal with the new security situation, but continued to seek "enemies", which might result ultimately in treating every other party as its "enemy". Guided by this kind of mentality, it is no surprise that together with Russia, Iran and DPRK, China also was blacklisted as a complex global challenge to U.S. interests.

The report reflects a kind of typical Cold War and power politics mentality, which not only runs counter to modern international political reality and hinders goodwill for cooperation among countries in the current crisis-torn world, but is also out of line with the U.S. long-term national interests. People who always assume others to be enemies may end up in isolation. The United States would not like to see its self-fulfilling prophecy come true someday.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-09/24/content_12104563.htm

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New York Times
OPINION
September 25, 2009

Two First Steps On Nuclear Weapons

By Mikhail Gorbachev

Moscow--YESTERDAY, President Obama presided over the United Nations Security Council meeting that passed a resolution seeking to strengthen the international commitment to limiting the spread of nuclear weapons. A week ago, he announced that the United States will not deploy — at least, not in the foreseeable future — a missile defense site in Central Europe, including powerful radar in the Czech Republic and interceptor missiles in Poland.

Is there a link between the two events? I believe there is. Yet initial comments by many political figures and journalists have for the most part ignored this key relationship.

Instead, many are asserting that canceling the Eastern European missile defense was simply a concession to Russia, which must now reciprocate with a concession of its own. But President Dmitri Medvedev of Russia had already said last November that if the United States made changes to its missile defense plans, his nation would refrain from countermeasures like deploying its own missiles. Soon after President Obama's decision was announced, this position was reaffirmed.

Many of President Obama's critics in the United States insist that he "caved in" to Russian pressure, virtually leaving America's NATO allies to fend for themselves. There is nothing behind this argument other than the old stereotype of "bad Russia," a Russia that is always wrong.

Consider the merits of the case. Russia's leaders have been saying for some time that the fear of Iran developing effective long-range missiles in the near future was not grounded in fact. Now, after a thorough review by intelligence and defense officials, the United States government has come to the same conclusion, holding that Tehran is perhaps at least five years or even a decade away from such capacity.

The initial reaction by some politicians and commentators in Poland and the Czech Republic is no less odd. They seem to enjoy the role of a spoiler in relations between other countries and Russia. Voices of realism and caution are routinely rejected, and the opinion of their own citizens, who by and large have no use for radars and missiles, is brushed aside.

In Russia, President Obama's decision has been well received. It also met with support in Europe, with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany and Prime Minister Nicolas Sarkozy of France lauding it. The Polish prime minister, Donald Tusk, called it "a chance to strengthen European security." Indeed, if the president's decision is followed by further serious steps, it will provide an opportunity for us to strengthen global security as well as reach a new level of cooperation in ridding the world of nuclear danger.

At their meeting in Moscow in early July, Presidents Obama and Medvedev reaffirmed the relationship between strategic offensive weapons and missile defense. The two nations continue arms reduction talks and, judging by cautious diplomatic statements, they seem to be on course to complete them by Dec. 5, when the first Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty — which I signed with President George H. W. Bush in 1991 — is due to expire.

This week's United Nations meeting marks the next stage of progress. It is vital that other nations come away from the meeting believing that America and Russia are moving toward verifiable nuclear arms reductions, and that by the time the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty review conference is held at the United Nations next May, they will have made progress toward the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons.

Unless they show the world they are serious, the two major nuclear powers will be accused, again and again, of not keeping their word and told that if it is acceptable for 5 or 10 countries to have nuclear weapons as their "ultimate security guarantee," why should it not be the case for 20 or 30 others?

It is vital that the two presidents themselves monitor the negotiations closely, sometimes plunging into minute details. I know from experience how difficult it is to deal with such technical details on top of constant political pressures, but it is necessary to avoid misunderstandings that could undermine trust.

Some questions that will need to be clarified are evident now. The American secretary of defense, Robert Gates, has said that the SM-3 missiles that are to be used under the new missile-defense plan could later be perfected to intercept long-range intercontinental missiles. Yet he has also raised the possibility of cooperating with Russia on missile defense. To me, these two ideas seem incompatible. The sooner such issues are cleared up the better.

As I see it, there is only one way to move forward: Washington should agree to the Russian proposal for a joint assessment of missile threats. Let the experts from both countries have a frank discussion that would reveal which threats are real and must be dealt with, and which are imaginary. This would help to avoid misguided projects like the Polish-Czech missile shield, and could help move us from a state of mutual deterrence to a goal of minimum nuclear sufficiency for self-defense.

This is a big agenda. Realistically, it would take two or three years of intense negotiation. But Russia and the United States must set big tasks for themselves. What is needed is nothing less than a change in the strategic relationship between the two major nuclear powers — in their own interests and in the cause of world peace.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/25/opinion/25gorbachev.html>

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New York Times
EDITORIAL
September 25, 2009

The Subject was Nuclear Weapons

With President Obama chairing the session and 13 other leaders around the table, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution on Thursday intended to strengthen the fraying rules that are supposed to stop the spread of nuclear weapons.

It was a good-news moment. But also a reminder of the past limits of the Security Council's will and effectiveness. In defiance of its orders, North Korea has tested two weapons and Iran continues to churn out nuclear fuel.

The resolution commits all member states to a long list of worthy goals, including ratification of the test ban treaty and adoption of stronger national controls on nuclear exports. But some of the countries around the table will have to do a lot more to prove that they mean it.

The resolution commits all United Nations members to enforcing current sanctions on Iran and North Korea. But those measures were seriously watered down — for political and economic reasons — by Russia and China. Russia's president, Dmitri Medvedev, now says that he might be open to tougher measures on Iran if negotiations

fail to bear fruit. China continues to oppose tougher penalties that may be the only chance for constraining Tehran's nuclear ambitions.

The resolution set a practical target by urging states to secure all vulnerable nuclear materials within four years. The Security Council broke some new ground by warning that any member of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty that secretly develops a weapon and then withdraws from the treaty — North Korea's route — will still be held responsible for its violations.

We wish the Security Council had called for states to end rather than minimize the use of highly enriched uranium — a potential bomb fuel — in medical research. And the resolution only encourages, rather than requires, governments to consider whether a state seeking to buy nuclear technology has accepted intrusive United Nations monitoring.

Fortunately, there will be opportunities to fine-tune these goals. A conference on nuclear security is scheduled for next April, and two weeks later the United Nations will review the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, which has been weakened by Bush-era neglect and Iranian and North Korean violations.

We applaud Mr. Obama for highlighting the nuclear dangers out there and pressing the world to address them. He still has a tough sell at home. He is far from the votes he needs for the Senate to ratify the test ban treaty. Some 150 countries have ratified it. But the treaty cannot take effect until other major holdouts — including China, India, Pakistan and Israel — also ratify it.

Washington's failure gives them an all-too-convenient excuse. Mr. Obama will have to work hard to rally broader support.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/25/opinion/25fri2.html>

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