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Kyiv Post – Ukraine
November 12, 2009

Russian General Warns of Problems in Nuclear Talks

MOSCOW, Nov 12 (Reuters) - Russia's top general said on Thursday that problems remained in concluding a nuclear arms treaty with the United States, Interfax news agency reported, weeks before the current START agreement expires.

Washington and Moscow both say efforts to agree cuts in their nuclear arsenals are a major step towards "resetting" relations after they cooled to post-Cold War lows in recent years.

"There are a number of problems related to verification, primarily inspections, and some figures, which are currently being discussed at negotiations," Interfax agency quoted armed forces chief of staff Nikolai Makarov as saying.

But Makarov qualified his comments, saying he remained optimistic that negotiators could reach a deal. "I think all the issues should be settled," he said.

The Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty runs out on Dec. 5 and negotiators have been working on a new detailed treaty to be signed by U.S. President Barack Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev.

Makarov also said a U.S. mission to the city of Votkinsk, where Russian missiles are manufactured, would have to wind up its activities by Dec. 5.

Traditionally, the Russian military strikes a more cautious note on talks with the United States than the foreign ministry, which has pointed to progress at talks being held in Geneva.

A spokesman for the U.S. diplomatic mission in Geneva said an agreement this year would better secure citizens of both countries and jumpstart global non-proliferation efforts.

"The U.S. and Russia have made strong progress in living up to their responsibilities as the two leading nuclear powers, and pursuing a new START agreement that will reduce stockpiles and delivery systems," he said.

"While there are still issues being worked out, President Obama looks forward to the opportunity to meet with President Medvedev in Singapore so that they can move toward our goal of a strong treaty by the end of this year," he added, referring to an expected meeting at this weekend's APEC summit.

Last July, the leaders set out the framework for the new Treaty, which they said should restrict deployed strategic warheads to between 1, 500 and 1, 675 while limiting the number of delivery platforms to between 500 and 1, 100. But two stumbling blocks remain, one linked to restrictions on Russia's mobile Topol-M missiles and the second to the number of missile delivery vehicles both sides can possess, Kommersant newspaper reported, quoting unnamed experts in the talks.

Moscow is rejecting Washington's attempt to restrict the Topol-M mobile ballistic missiles, as the United States does not have equivalent mobile land-based missiles, the paper reported.

It also said both sides remain divided on the number of delivery platforms that can be deployed, with the U.S. suggesting 1, 100 and Russia 500, the paper reports.

The separate Moscow Treaty, which limits both sides to no more than 2, 200 warheads, will not expire until 2012, but does not contain detailed guidelines, like the 1991 START Treaty on how to verify compliance with the weapons cuts.

<http://www.kyivpost.com/news/russia/detail/52660/>

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Times of India
12 November 2009

US-Russia Nuclear Talks Hit Snag: Report

MOSCOW: Talks between Moscow and Washington to replace a key nuclear disarmament treaty that expires next month have hit a snag over proposed restrictions on Russian missiles, a newspaper said on Thursday.

The dispute threatens to derail high-stakes talks on a successor to the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), which US President Barack Obama's administration hopes to replace before it expires on December 5.

The Kommersant daily, citing an unnamed expert familiar with the START talks, said Washington was seeking to retain a provision from the original treaty on US monitoring of Russia's arsenal of mobile ground-based missiles.

"They are offering to keep and even strengthen control over our mobile intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) such as the Topol," the expert was quoted as saying by Kommersant.

Russia is against the proposal since the United States currently does not have its own mobile ground-based ICBMs and it is therefore of "unilateral character," he said.

General Nikolai Makarov, chief of staff of the Russian armed forces, confirmed the talks had hit a snag but predicted the problems would be resolved by the two countries' negotiators.

"There is a number of problems, chief among them control over inspections and some numerical data," Makarov told reporters at the Kremlin ahead of President Dmitry Medvedev's annual address to the nation.

Makarov said US inspectors have regularly visited a Russian missile-production site under provisions in the current treaty while Russia had no such intrusive inspection rights of US missile production sites.

"We want the treaty to ensure both the security of the Russian Federation and of the United States on equal levels," Makarov said.

Kommersant said the talks had hit another sticking point over the maximum number of "carriers" capable of delivering nuclear warheads.

"In their package, the Americans stipulated a new ceiling for warhead carriers that we don't quite agree with," the expert told Kommersant, referring to proposals presented to Moscow last month by US National Security Adviser James Jones.

Besides ground-based ICBMs, the term "carriers" also encompasses submarine-launched missiles and heavy bombers.

US undersecretary of state for arms control and international security Ellen Tauscher was quoted as saying by ITAR-TASS news agency earlier this week that Washington was "disappointed" with Russia's answer to Jones' proposals.

But in a sign that both nations were still keen to reach a deal, Russian and US diplomats have already started looking for a venue where the two countries could sign the new agreement, Kommersant said.

Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov also predicted that any remaining problems would be ironed out in the next three weeks and voiced hope a new pact would be signed by December 5.

START, a landmark treaty seen as a cornerstone of Cold War-era strategic arms control, led to steep cuts in the US and Russian nuclear arsenals.

On Monday, the two countries resumed what they said would be the last round of their marathon talks in Geneva.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/europe/US-Russia-nuclear-talks-hit-snap-Report/articleshow/5223450.cms>

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency
13 November 2009

Medvedev, Obama to Discuss Arms Cuts, N.Korea, Iran Sunday

MOSCOW, November 13 (RIA Novosti) - Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and U.S. President Barack Obama will on Sunday discuss a new arms reduction deal and the Iranian and North Korean nuclear programs, a Russian presidential aide said on Friday.

Medvedev and Obama will meet on the sidelines of this year's gathering of APEC leaders, hosted by Singapore on November 14-15.

On a new arms reduction treaty, Sergei Prikhodko said "we are working to ensure that a treaty is signed... before the end of the year."

He said the issue of a U.S. missile defense would not be raised.

Moscow and Washington are negotiating a replacement for the current Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START I), the basis for Russian-U.S. strategic nuclear disarmament, which expires on December 5.

The chief of the General Staff said on Thursday ongoing arms cuts talks between Russia and the U.S. had seen differences on inspection and verification procedures. Makarov also said Washington was seeking to keep a point from the original treaty on the U.S. monitoring of Russia's mobile ground-based missiles.

An outline of the new pact was agreed during the presidents' bilateral summit in Moscow in July and includes cutting their countries' nuclear arsenals to 1,500-1,675 operational warheads and delivery vehicles to 500-1,000.

START I commits the parties to reducing their nuclear warheads to 6,000 and their delivery vehicles to 1,600 each. In 2002, a follow-up strategic arms reduction agreement was concluded in Moscow. The document, known as the Moscow Treaty, envisioned cuts to 1,700-2,200 warheads by December 2012.

Prikhodko said Moscow was "satisfied" with the ongoing dialogue with the U.S. administration, which he described as "open and pragmatic."

On Iran, he stressed the need to continue international efforts in the Iran Six framework.

On North Korea's nuclear issue, he said "there are no contradictions or disagreements with our partners about the need for continuing the negotiating process."

He said there was a possibility that the presidents might not get around to those issues due to time constraints.

The meeting between Medvedev and Obama is expected to last one and half hours.

<http://en.rian.ru/russia/20091113/156822899.html>

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Bloomberg.com

November 10, 2009

U.S. Official Says IAEA Has Evidence Iran Sought Atomic Warhead

By Janine Zacharia

Nov. 10 (Bloomberg) -- A U.S. arms-control official said today there is "strong evidence" Iran sought to develop the means to put a nuclear weapon on a missile prior to 2003 and perhaps afterward.

Robert Einhorn, the State Department's special adviser for nonproliferation and arms control, said the United Nations' International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna will report on the issue next week.

The IAEA will "address Iran's continuing failure to cooperate with the IAEA's investigation of the possible military dimensions of its nuclear program, including strong evidence that it has done work on a missile warhead for delivering nuclear weapons," Einhorn said.

Einhorn spoke to a conference hosted by the Middle East Institute in Washington as the U.S. awaits a response from Tehran to a deal on enriched uranium.

Einhorn said he was referring to warhead work done prior to 2003, the year Iran halted its nuclear weapons program, according to a U.S. intelligence estimate made in 2007.

"That's not to say categorically that there's no such activities taking place since then," Einhorn added, leaving open the possibility that warhead design has continued.

Einhorn said "a number of governments," including the U.S., have provided the IAEA with "substantial information, some of it acquired on a laptop computer, regarding work done in the past on the design for what all experts seem to agree is a nuclear warhead."

Iran says its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes. The U.S. and European allies as well as Russia and China have been pushing Iran to prove that it is not seeking nuclear weapons.

<http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=amVUVY2wEtmU>

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Journal of Turkish Weekly – Ankara, Turkey
11 November 2009

Era of Nuclear Weapons is Over: Ahmadinejad

TEHRAN - Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad stated on Monday that the era of nuclear weapons is over and countries which are still stockpiling nuclear weapons are insane.

“We believe that those who stockpile nuclear weapons are insane... because atom bombs cannot be used and their era is over,” the Iranian President said at a press conference held in Istanbul on the sidelines of the 25th Session of the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation (COMCEC) of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

If nuclear weapons were of any use, the Zionist regime would have been able to defeat the defenseless and oppressed people of the Gaza Strip and southern Lebanon, he noted.

Ahmadinejad said governments that use their people’s tax money to build nuclear weapons instead of spending it on the people’s well-being must definitely change.

Commenting on Iran-Turkey relations, he said Tehran and Ankara enjoy amicable and brotherly ties.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran fully trusts Turkey, and we cooperate in various regional and international arenas,” he added.

Asked about Iran’s nuclear talks with the West, he said Iran will not negotiate over its nuclear rights in the talks.

The nuclear fuel talks between Iran, Russia, the United States, and France in Vienna concluded on October 21 without a final agreement, but International Atomic Energy Agency Director General Mohamed ElBaradei presented a proposal for the four countries to study.

Under the draft deal, a large consignment of Iran’s enriched uranium would be shipped out of the country for processing into fuel rods with a purity of 20 percent, which would be used by a research reactor in Tehran that manufactures medical radioisotopes.

On October 23, diplomats from Russia, France, and the United States submitted their formal approvals of the deal to process Iran’s nuclear fuel abroad.

But Iran has said it wants to hold further talks with the countries in order to make amendments to the deal before approving it.

Ahmadinejad said Iran is currently producing nuclear fuel for its nuclear power plants and is also expanding its uranium enrichment facilities because at least 5000 centrifuges are needed to produce nuclear fuel for one power plant.

Commenting on rumors that certain people shipped \$18.5 billion in gold and cash from Iran to Turkey in a container, he said transiting such a consignment of gold and cash would require at least 20 trucks and added that media outlets should carefully study the facts before issuing news reports.

<http://www.turkishweekly.net/news/92681/era-of-nuclear-weapons-is-over-ahmadinejad.html>

NOTE: Outreach Journal editor’s observation – Ahmadinejad never denied that \$18.5 billion in gold and cash were shipped from Iran to Turkey and he even knew what would be required, as a minimum, to ship such a consignment.

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Post Chronicle
11 November 2009

Cautious Uncertainty On Iran's Nukes?

By Staff

Iran's gas centrifuges for uranium enrichment are a concern despite Tehran's claims of the peaceful intent of its work, a U.S. congressional report stated.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said in an interview with state media recently that nuclear cooperation was an important issue. His comments come as Western nations continue to negotiate with Iran over its controversial nuclear program.

A recently published report by the U.S. Congressional Research Service says that although Iran claims its nuclear program is intended for peaceful purposes, its work on certain areas of uranium enrichment and centrifuge technology is a concern.

A National Intelligence Estimate made public in 2007 said Iran "halted its nuclear weapons program" in 2003. Nevertheless, the CRS report claims, Iran continues to pursue certain technologies that could produce highly enriched uranium for possible use as fissile material for a nuclear weapon.

Meanwhile, the CRS report points to non-government experts and former U.S. officials who believe Iran could obtain fissile material needed for a nuclear weapon from foreign sources.

The report says that although Iran claims it is pursuing a peaceful program under international law, there is enough speculation to warrant at least modest concern. The CRS says international monitors continue to examine evidence that Iran may have conducted activity related to weapons development.

"Whether Iran is pursuing a nuclear weapons program is, however, unknown," the report said. (c) UPI

http://www.postchronicle.com/news/breakingnews/article_212267384.shtml?ref=rss

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YAHOO News.com
November 11, 2009

EXCLUSIVE - Iranian Enrichment Has Not Grown, Diplomats Say

By Mark Heinrich, Reuters

Iran has effectively stopped expanding active uranium enrichment since September, diplomats said, while considering a big power offer to fuel a medical reactor if it turns over enriched material seen as an atomic bomb risk.

While Iran's stock of low-enriched uranium (LEU) has likely risen by 200-300 kg from 1,500 kg reported by U.N. monitors in August, the number of operating centrifuge machines at its Natanz enrichment plant has remained at about 4,600, they said.

Iran's potential enrichment capacity was much higher. It had installed at least 8,700 centrifuges in all by late September, diplomats said. A fresh figure was not yet available.

But it was unclear why almost half the centrifuges were not yet enriching, remaining idle or undergoing vacuum tests.

Diplomats and analysts said possible reasons ranged from technical glitches to politically motivated restraint, to avoid closing the door to diplomacy with world powers and provoking harsher international sanctions or even Israeli military action.

"The situation is now pretty much as it was in September," said a senior diplomat in Vienna, where the U.N. nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, is based. Officials at Iran's IAEA mission were unavailable for comment.

Precise figures will come next week in a new IAEA report on its inspections and investigations in Iran, whose record of atomic secrecy has raised suspicions it is illicitly pursuing nuclear weaponry and drawn U.N. sanctions.

The IAEA's last report showed Iran was enriching uranium with about 300 fewer centrifuges than the almost 5,000 operating earlier in the year, the first such scaleback in three years. The report did not give possible reasons but diplomats said at the time Iran may have taken down centrifuges for maintenance.

Iran says it will refine uranium only to low levels needed for electricity, not to the high purity suitable for atom bombs.

The size of Iran's LEU reserve is of great interest to world powers since an IAEA-brokered draft deal calls on Iran to send some 75 percent of it abroad to be turned into fuel for a Tehran research reactor that makes isotopes for cancer treatment.

But diplomats say Iran has backpedalled from the basics of the deal. Iranian officials have said Tehran prefers to buy reactor fuel from foreign suppliers rather than part with its LEU, or at most swap small amounts of LEU for the reactor material on Iranian soil. They have called for more talks.

The United States and France, the other parties to the deal along with Russia, have vowed not to renegotiate the main conditions. They say Iran's proposals would leave intact enough LEU for conversion into nuclear explosive.

Iran has amassed enough LEU for 1-2 bombs, analysts say.

The IAEA is consulting on possible compromises to save the deal, including Iran placing its LEU under escrow in a friendly third country, like Turkey pending delivery of reactor fuel. Iran and Turkey discussed the idea in talks this week.

The impasse over fine print in the fuel deal has prevented follow-up talks on a broader solution to Iran's contested nuclear programme, with sanctions relief and trade benefits on offer to Tehran if it curbs enrichment as a whole.

IAEA TO REPORT ON SECOND ENRICHMENT SITE

The IAEA will also report next week on its initial visit to a second, hidden enrichment site that Iran revealed in September after, Western diplomats said, discovering that U.S., British and French spy services had detected it.

IAEA Director-General Mohamed ElBaradei said in New York media interviews last week that his inspectors found "nothing to be worried about" in what he called a "hole in a mountain" without nuclear equipment or material.

Tehran has referred to the bunkered site near Qom as a fallback for its professed civilian enrichment programme in case the much larger Natanz complex were bombed by a foe like Israel.

But Western diplomats and nuclear experts say the Qom site's planned capacity -- 3,000 centrifuges -- makes little sense as a standalone civilian enrichment centre since it would be too small to fuel a nuclear power station around the clock but ideal to yield fissile material for one or two bombs per year.

Diplomats said it was too early for next week's report to draw conclusions as the IAEA would need time to compare plant documentation to be provided by Iran against their impressions of its layout and intelligence provided by Western powers.

"I'd be surprised if any (sinister) evidence was found there. Rather, the most important issue to be resolved is why this site exists at all, what is its chronology, is it plausible for (civilian) purposes?" said a senior Vienna diplomat.

Iran has said the plant under construction will not start operating before the end of next year.

<http://in.news.yahoo.com/137/20091111/760/twl-exclusive-iranian-enrichment-has-not.html>

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Los Angeles Times
November 12, 2009

Iran's Ahmadinejad Calls For Nuclear Cooperation

By Borzou Daragahi
Reporting from Beirut

Iran's president on Wednesday called for international cooperation on nuclear technology in a prime-time television appearance filled with conciliatory language toward the world community, in stark contrast with the dismissive tone of other senior Iranian officials toward a United Nations-backed proposal.

Although President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad did not directly mention a U.S.-endorsed International Atomic Energy Agency plan in which Iran would trade the bulk of its enriched uranium for fuel to operate a Tehran medical reactor, he said Iran was confident and powerful enough to begin working with other countries and the U.N.'s nuclear watchdog agency to expand the country's nuclear program.

"Today, Iran's nuclear conditions are stabilized and we've entered the phase of nuclear interaction and cooperation, and today an important issue is international nuclear cooperation in construction of nuclear power plants, reactors

and even Iran's contribution to a world fuel bank," he said. "We have the necessary technology and material . . . but there is always quid pro quo, cooperation and investment."

The Obama administration, its European allies and international arms control authorities await a definitive response from Iran on whether it would send about 70% of its enriched uranium supply to Russia and France to be further refined and turned into rods for the medical reactor. The deal would temporarily allay international concerns that Iran could make a sprint toward developing a nuclear weapon, and possibly would set the stage for a broader compromise.

Ahmadinejad, who seeks to bolster his international credibility and domestic popularity in the wake of his disputed reelection in June and the ensuing civic unrest, does not have the final say on the nuclear issue. But he, his allies and appointees have significant influence over the powerful Supreme National Security Council, which is headed by supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Ahmadinejad's speech and tone Wednesday suggested that a deal is still possible. Powerful Iranian officials and even Ahmadinejad's reformist adversaries have derided the fuel swap idea as being against national interests in what appears to be an internal debate over whether to accept, reject or attempt to modify the proposal.

Senior officials and leaders of Russia, Qatar and Turkey, all countries that maintain strong relations with Iran as well as the West, have met with Iranian counterparts in possible attempts to coax Tehran into cooperating.

Ahmadinejad said it was time for Iran to lock in its nuclear gains.

"Freezing our nuclear program is no longer on the table," he said. "We have reached a point to cooperate with nuclear powers through the International Atomic Energy Agency," the U.N.'s watchdog.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-iran-ahmadinejad12-2009nov12,0,2523781.story>

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Boston Globe
November 13, 2009

Diplomats Scrutinize Iran Nuclear Plant

By George Jahn, Associated Press

VIENNA - Iran's recently revealed uranium enrichment hall is a highly fortified underground space that appears too small to house a civilian nuclear program, but large enough to serve for military activities, diplomats told the Associated Press yesterday.

Iran began building the facility near the holy city of Qom seven years ago, and after bouts of fitful construction could finish the project in a year, the diplomats said. Both the construction timeline and the size of the facility - inspected last month by the International Atomic Energy Agency - are significant in helping shed light on Tehran's true nuclear intentions.

Iran says it wants to enrich only to make atomic fuel for energy production, but the West fears it could retool its program to churn out fissile warhead material. One of the diplomats - a senior official from a European nation - said yesterday that the enrichment hall is too small to house the tens of thousands of centrifuges needed for peaceful industrial nuclear enrichment, but is the right size to contain the few thousand advanced machines that could generate the amount of weapons-grade uranium needed to make nuclear warheads.

The pauses in construction may reflect Tehran's determination to keep its activities secret as far back as 2002, when Iran's clandestine nuclear program was revealed.

Citing satellite imagery, the diplomats said Iran started building the plant in 2002, paused for two years in 2004 - the same year it suspended enrichment on an international demand - and resumed construction in 2006, when enrichment was also restarted. Since then, Iran has defied three sets of UN Security Council sanctions aimed at forcing it to again freeze uranium enrichment.

All of the diplomats have access to information compiled by the IAEA, and demanded anonymity in exchange for discussing confidential matters with the AP.

Iran informed the IAEA only in September that it was building the facility near Qom, leading US, British, and French leaders to denounce Tehran for keeping its existence secret. IAEA inspectors visited the plant last month.

Iran says it fulfilled its legal obligations when it revealed the plant's construction, though IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei has said Tehran was "outside the law" and should have informed his agency when the decision to construct was made.

Western officials suspicious of Tehran's nuclear program believe the Islamic Republic decided to inform the IAEA only after it became convinced that the plant's existence had been noted by foreign intelligence services.

The Qom facility is the second known Iranian plant designed for enrichment. The first facility, at Natanz, revealed by Iranian dissidents in 2002, has since grown to house about 9,000 centrifuges and has churned enough low-enriched uranium for one or two warheads.

Low-enriched material is suitable for what Iran says will be a nationwide nuclear power grid. But that stockpile can be enriched further to weapons grade warhead material.

After years of expansion, the Natanz program, which relies on antiquated centrifuges based on black market imports, appears to be running into problems associated with increasing the number of operating centrifuges.

The senior diplomat said Iran was using only about 5,000 of the centrifuges set up at Natanz, which were turning out about 80 kilograms - less than 200 pounds - of low-enriched uranium a month. That, he said, amounted to roughly the same output using the same number of machines as in September, when the IAEA last reported on Iran to its 35 board member nations.

The facility near Qom appears designed to shelter fewer but more modern models configured to churn out more enriched material faster.

International hopes that Iran was ready for at least a partial concession on enrichment were raised after Tehran signaled in early October that it was ready to send most of its enriched Natanz stockpile abroad to be turned into metal fuel for its small research reactor.

Since then, Iranian officials have overwhelmingly - if unofficially - rejected exporting most of their enriched uranium.

http://www.boston.com/news/world/europe/articles/2009/11/13/diplomats_scrutinize_iran_nuclear_plant/

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Khaleej Times – U.A.E.

13 November 2009

Iran Armed Forces Chief Backs Nuclear Deal

Agence France-Presse (AFP)

TEHRAN - Iranian armed forces chief of staff General Hassan Firouzabadi said on Friday he backed proposals for Tehran to ship out most of its stocks of low-enriched uranium in return for fuel for a reactor designed to produce medical isotopes.

"We won't suffer from an exchange of fuel," the Mehr news agency quoted the general as saying.

"On the contrary, in obtaining fuel enriched to 20 percent purity for the Tehran reactor, a million of our citizens will benefit from the medical treatment it can enable and we will prove at the same time the bona fides of our peaceful nuclear activities."

The general said he had no particular issue with the amount of low-enriched uranium that Iran shipped out — 1,200 kilos (more than 2,640 pounds) under the current proposals drawn up by the UN nuclear watchdog and approved by the major powers.

"The quantity of uranium enriched to 3.5 percent that will be shipped out in order to obtain the fuel is not so large as to cause damage," he said.

Under the plan put forward by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on October 21, Iran would ship out the low-enriched uranium, equivalent to more than 70 percent of its estimated stocks, and Russia would further enrich it before France turned it into fuel for the Tehran reactor.

The proposals are designed to assuage fears that Iran could otherwise divert some of the stocks and enrich them further to the much higher levels of purity required to make an atomic bomb, an ambition Iranian officials strongly deny.

Other Iranian officials have criticised the IAEA proposals, expressing concern that Tehran would be handing over most of its stocks before getting anything in return and that its arch-foe Washington might welch on the deal.

Iranian media say counterproposals are being circulated under which Tehran would ship out only 800 kilogrammes of low-enriched uranium and do so not in one go but in two instalments.

http://www.khaleejtimes.com/darticlen.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2009/November/middleeast_November406.xml§ion=middleeast

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency
12 November 2009

Russian Nuclear Sub Starts Sea Trials After Overhaul

ST. PETERSBURG, November 12 (RIA Novosti) - A Russian Delta-IV class Karelia nuclear submarine has started sea trials following lengthy modernization at the Zvezdochka shipyard in northern Russia, the company said.

The overhaul, which started in 2004, included noise reduction, improved enemy ship and submarine tracking capabilities, and enhanced survivability. The submarine has been equipped with 16 Sineva RSM-54 missiles.

K-18 Karelia could join Russia's Northern Fleet by the end of this year, the shipyard said in a statement on Wednesday.

Similar overhaul has been done to four other Delta-IV class submarines - the K-51 Verkhoturys, the K-84 Yekaterinburg, the K-114 Tula, and the K-117 Bryansk.

The Russian Navy has seven Delta-IV class submarines in service. They are all deployed in the Northern Fleet.

"The Delta-IV class submarines are the core of the naval component of the Russian nuclear triad at present. After the modernization, the subs will be able to remain in service for another 10 years," Zvezdochka said.

http://en.rian.ru/military_news/20091112/156800516.html

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Forbes.com
12 November 2009

Russia To Deploy Over 30 Nuclear Missiles In 2010

Reuters

MOSCOW, Nov 12 (Reuters) - Russia will supply its armed forces with more than 30 ballistic nuclear missiles and three nuclear submarines next year, President Dmitry Medvedev said on Thursday.

'Next year we need to supply ... more than 30 land- and sea-based ballistic missiles, five Iskander missile systems, some 300 modern armoured vehicles, 30 helicopters, 28 planes, three nuclear submarines, one corvette warship and 11 (space) satellites,' he said in an annual state of the nation address.

<http://www.forbes.com/feeds/afx/2009/11/12/afx7114467.html>

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Washington Post
November 11, 2009

China Proves To Be An Aggressive Foe In Cyberspace

By Ellen Nakashima and John Pomfret

One day in late summer 2008, FBI and Secret Service agents flew to Chicago to inform Barack Obama's campaign team that its computer system had been hacked. "You've got a problem. Somebody's trying to get inside your systems," an FBI agent told the team, according to a source familiar with the incident.

The McCain campaign was hit with a similar attack.

The trail in both cases led to computers in China, said several sources inside and outside government with knowledge of the incidents. In the McCain case, Chinese officials later approached staff members about information that had appeared only in restricted e-mails, according to a person close to the campaign.

American presidential campaigns are not the only targets. China is significantly boosting its capabilities in cyberspace as a way to gather intelligence and, in the event of war, hit the U.S. government in a weak spot, U.S. officials and experts say. Outgunned and outspent in terms of traditional military hardware, China apparently hopes that by concentrating on holes in the U.S. security architecture -- its communications and spy satellites and its vast computer networks -- it will collect intelligence that could help it counter the imbalance.

President Obama, who is scheduled to visit China next week, has vowed to improve ties with the Asian giant, especially its military. But according to current and former U.S. officials, China's aggressive hacking has sowed doubts about its intentions.

"This is the way they plan to thwart U.S. supremacy in any potential conflict we get into with them," said Robert K. Knake, a Council on Foreign Relations fellow. "They believe they can deter us through cyber warfare."

Chinese officials deny that and dismiss American concern as a Cold War relic.

"Allegations that China is behind, or 'likely behind,' cyberattacks or cyber espionage against the United States are more frequent and more sensational," said Wang Baodong, the spokesman at the Chinese Embassy in Washington. "Such accusations are unwarranted, irresponsible and misleading and are intentionally fabricated to fan up China threat sensations."

With 360 million people online in China, Wang added, "China is more than ever integrated with and reliant on the Internet. As the U.S. serves as the hub of the international information highway, attacking the U.S. in cyberspace equals attacking one's own cyberspace assets. . . . What's the logic?"

Nonetheless, U.S. officials and experts of all political persuasions in the Pentagon, on Capitol Hill, in private industry and in think tanks are convinced that China is behind many of the most egregious attacks. A senior Air Force official estimated that, as of two years ago, China has stolen at least 10 to 20 terabytes of data from U.S. government networks -- the larger figure equal, by some estimates, to one-fifth of the Library of Congress's digital holdings.

Nuclear weapons labs, defense contractors, the State Department and other sensitive federal government agencies have fallen prey. What experts do not know is exactly what has been stolen or how badly U.S. systems have been exposed. "Given the intrusions into defense industry networks, multibillion-dollar weapons systems . . . may have already been compromised," said James Mulvenon, a China expert with Defense Group Inc.

Experts point to the late 1990s as the start of this undeclared war. Since then, cyber intrusions have run the gamut, including stealing files on political dissidents from the offices of Rep. Frank R. Wolf (R-Va.) in 2006, disrupting the e-mail network of the defense secretary's office in 2007 and staging a spyware attack on electronic devices used by then-Commerce Secretary Carlos M. Gutierrez and his delegation on a December 2007 trip to Beijing.

Wolf said that the offices of 17 House members have been targeted. "Not a week doesn't go by when there's not a Chinese attack on our government," he said.

One day last spring, Capitol Hill security officials removed two computers from a congressional office that deals with foreign affairs. "There's a bug in your computer," one agent told an astonished staffer. "From China."

Director of National Intelligence Dennis C. Blair said in February that Russia and China were able to "to target and disrupt elements of the U.S. information infrastructure" and that China was "very aggressive" in cyberspace.

Another problem is China's ability to leave behind malicious sleeper code that can one day be activated to alter or destroy information. In April, then-National Counterintelligence Executive Joel F. Brenner reported that the Chinese had penetrated "certain of our electricity grids" with malicious code and that "our networks are being mapped"

One challenge in countering the threat, experts say, is that the Chinese often contract out such work to experts in industry and academia and possibly even to freelance hackers, allowing officials to argue that while an attack might have originated from an Internet service provider in China, no one could prove it came from the government.

The Chinese People's Liberation Army has publicly embraced such outsourcing. In 2002, the PLA created information warfare units, comprising operators and analysts from the commercial sector and academia, according to a new report by defense contractor Northrop Grumman for the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, a congressionally chartered body.

A year later, China's Academy of Military Sciences published an account of a trial project in the Guangzhou Military Region to establish information-warfare militia units using local telecommunications companies as a source of talent, funding and technology. Subsequently, the academy directed the PLA to make creation of such units a priority.

"Information warfare is not just a theology," said Ming Zhou, a China specialist with VeriSign iDefense, a security intelligence firm. "They can integrate it into nation-state interests."

Some U.S. cyber policy experts such as James A. Lewis, a senior fellow with the Center for Strategic and International Studies, acknowledge that the problem cannot be solved without international engagement. At the same time, Lewis said, "I'm not going to get upset about China spying on us, because we spy on them."

"The only thing I'm going to get upset about," he said, "is if we don't do better than them."

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/11/10/AR2009111017588.html>

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Yonhap News – South Korea
13 November 2009

Obama Warns N. Korea of Continued Sanctions Unless It Denuclearizes

By Hwang Doo-hyong

WASHINGTON, Nov. 12 (Yonhap) -- U.S. President Barack Obama warned Thursday North Korea will face continued international sanctions unless it returns to the six-party talks and takes irreversible steps toward its denuclearization.

Obama made his remarks in an exclusive written interview with Yonhap News Agency just hours before he left Washington for an eight-day trip that brings him to South Korea, Japan, China and Singapore.

"This is the choice that North Korea faces," Obama said. "North Korea has the opportunity to move towards acceptance by the international community if it will comply with its international obligations and live up to its own commitments. By taking irreversible steps towards the complete elimination of its nuclear program, North Korea will be following the peaceful path towards security and respect."

Obama's remarks follow a rare inter-Korean skirmish Tuesday, which crippled a North Korean patrol ship that intruded South Korean waters and ignored warning shots, prompting media speculation that North Korea is trying to attract U.S. attention ahead of Obama's visit to Seoul next week.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton Wednesday said the naval clash will not affect U.S. plans to send Stephen Bosworth, special representative for North Korea policy, to Pyongyang "in the near future" as part of the six-party process.

The State Department said Tuesday the U.S. point man on North Korea will visit Pyongyang "sometime between now and the end of the year" to discuss resumption of the six-party talks, deadlocked over U.N. sanctions on North Korea for its nuclear and missile tests.

Obama said his administration is ready to have a bilateral dialogue with North Korea within the six-party framework.

"We believe the six-party talks are the best framework for reaching peaceful resolution and that the September 2005 Joint Statement clearly lays out the goals we must achieve," he said. "We are open to a bilateral meeting as part of the six-party process if that will lead to an expeditious resumption of the denuclearization negotiations."

The 2005 deal calls for the North's nuclear dismantlement in return for hefty economic aid, diplomatic recognition and establishment of a permanent peace regime on the Korean Peninsula to replace the fragile armistice that ended the 1950-53 Korean War.

The U.S. president, however, warned that the North will continue facing international sanctions unless it abandons its nuclear ambitions.

"North Korea's attempt to acquire weapons of mass destruction and the means to deliver them is destabilizing and represents a threat to peace and security," he said. "This is why the United Nations Security Council adopted strong measures under Resolution 1874 and why the U.N. members states are enforcing the provisions of those resolutions."

The U.S. sees the North's recent conciliatory overtures as the result of international financial sanctions and an overall arms embargo effectively cutting off revenues from arms sales, the only source of hard currency for the impoverished communist state.

Philip Crowley, State Department spokesman, said Monday, "We have to believe that North Korea has felt, you know, some of that pressure. So you've seen a shift in their strategy, the so-called charm offensive that they have engaged in for the past couple of months."

Jeffrey Bader, senior director for East Asian affairs at the National Security Council, last week dismissed the North's gestures as traditional brinkmanship, saying, "Once the cycle of provocations was completed, North Korea sat back to wait for a newer package of concessions from the U.S."

Bader called on the North to show "genuine signs" of its intent to denuclearize, saying, "If we see that, there is no problem with bilateral contacts either in Pyongyang or elsewhere. We are not interested in talks for talks' sake. We are not interested in endorsing North Korea's dream of validation of a self-claimed nuclear power."

Obama said the North's denuclearization will bring the impoverished communist state peace and prosperity.

"Pursuit of nuclear weapons and missile delivery systems makes North Korea and the region less secure, whereas negotiations in the six-party process to achieve the peaceful denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula can bring security and prosperity to North Korea and the region," he said.

Obama said that North Korea will be a top issue at the summit meeting with South Korean President Lee Myung-bak in Seoul next week.

"North Korea's nuclear and missile capabilities are a grave concern, not only to the Republic of Korea and the United States, but to the international community," he said. "This is an issue that President Lee and I have discussed in depth and we will hold consultations on this and other subjects in Seoul later this month."

Obama also said he will seek a comprehensive resolution of North Korea's nuclear and missile programs, putting an end to the controversy over the so-called grand bargain approach Lee recently proposed for the denuclearization of North Korea through a comprehensive deal rather than a piecemeal approach.

"President Lee and I are in full agreement on the need to achieve a comprehensive resolution of the nuclear, missile, and proliferation problems, and cooperation between our two governments is extremely close," he said.

The grand bargain envisions a package deal in which members of the six-nation talks provide Pyongyang with security guarantees, massive economic aid and other incentives in return for a complete deal that does not necessitate further negotiations.

A senior White House official last week said Lee and Obama do not differ on the grand bargain.

"The old approach of trying in small increments is to give a little bit to North Korea and hope that will lead to some kind of progress," he said. "That approach has had a serious flaw. Instead, what is necessary is for there to be a more comprehensive resolution of the North Korean nuclear problem."

"My understanding of the grand bargain concept is that there should be a definitive, comprehensive set of measures on economic assistance and other political areas that would move North Korea out of the darkness into the community of Northeast Asia, and that is an approach we completely agree with," he said.

The idea comes as a result of loopholes in the two six-party deals signed by the Koreans, the U.S., China, Japan and Russia in previous years that outlined phased denuclearization for the North.

"The Sept. 19, 2007 agreement is nothing more than a declaration on North Korea's nuclear dismantlement that lacks a road map for its implementation," a senior South Korean official said recently. "The Feb. 13, 2005, agreement, which is about North Korea's nuclear reactor and reprocessing facilities at Yongbyon, does not address North Korea's existing nuclear arsenal."

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2009/11/13/26/0301000000AEN20091113000200315F.HTML?template=3576>

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Straits Times – Singapore
November 13, 2009
OBAMA IN ASIA

Call For Nuclear-free World

TOKYO - THE leaders of the United States and Japan - the only country to have used atomic bombs, and the only country ever hit with them - jointly called for a world free of nuclear weapons on Friday.

US President Barack Obama, kicking off an Asia tour in Tokyo, and Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama issued a 'Joint Statement toward a World without Nuclear Weapons'.

'Recognising the challenge to achieve total elimination of nuclear weapons, the government of the United States and the government of Japan plan to work actively to create conditions for achieving this objective,' it said.

In their statement, the leaders also called on North Korea and Iran 'to uphold and adhere to their respective international obligations'. 'As demonstrated by its recent missile launches and nuclear test, North Korea's pursuit of nuclear weapons remains a major threat to peace and stability in North-east Asia and the entire international community,' they said.

The two countries urged Iran to come clean on its suspected nuclear programme, saying in the statement that Tehran 'has the responsibility to restore international confidence'.

Japan said it welcomed US plans to pursue ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the statement said. The two countries 'plan to cooperate to achieve the early entry into force of the CTBT'. 'They are also determined to pursue the immediate start of talks on, and early conclusion of, a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty,' a proposed pact to ban production of uranium and plutonium to weapons level. -- AFP

http://www.straitstimes.com/BreakingNews/Asia/Story/STIStory_454085.html

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Washington Post
November 13, 2009

A Nuclear Power's Act Of Proliferation

By R. Jeffrey Smith and Joby Warrick

In 1982, a Pakistani military C-130 left the western Chinese city of Urumqi with a highly unusual cargo: enough weapons-grade uranium for two atomic bombs, according to accounts written by the father of Pakistan's nuclear weapons program, Abdul Qadeer Khan, and provided to The Washington Post.

The uranium transfer in five stainless-steel boxes was part of a broad-ranging, secret nuclear deal approved years earlier by Mao Zedong and Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto that culminated in an exceptional, deliberate act of proliferation by a nuclear power, according to the accounts by Khan, who is under house arrest in Pakistan.

U.S. officials say they have known about the transfer for decades and once privately confronted the Chinese -- who denied it -- but have never raised the issue in public or sought to impose direct sanctions on China for it. President Obama, who said in April that "the world must stand together to prevent the spread of these weapons," plans to discuss nuclear proliferation issues while visiting Beijing on Tuesday.

According to Khan, the uranium cargo came with a blueprint for a simple weapon that China had already tested, supplying a virtual do-it-yourself kit that significantly speeded Pakistan's bomb effort. The transfer also started a

chain of proliferation: U.S. officials worry that Khan later shared related Chinese design information with Iran; in 2003, Libya confirmed obtaining it from Khan's clandestine network.

China's refusal to acknowledge the transfer and the unwillingness of the United States to confront the Chinese publicly demonstrate how difficult it is to counter nuclear proliferation. Although U.S. officials say China is now much more attuned to proliferation dangers, it has demonstrated less enthusiasm than the United States for imposing sanctions on Iran over its nuclear efforts, a position Obama wants to discuss.

Although Chinese officials have for a quarter-century denied helping any nation attain a nuclear capability, current and former U.S. officials say Khan's accounts confirm the U.S. intelligence community's long-held conclusion that China provided such assistance.

"Upon my personal request, the Chinese Minister . . . had gifted us 50 kg [kilograms] of weapon-grade enriched uranium, enough for two weapons," Khan wrote in a previously undisclosed 11-page narrative of the Pakistani bomb program that he prepared after his January 2004 detention for unauthorized nuclear commerce.

"The Chinese gave us drawings of the nuclear weapon, gave us kg50 enriched uranium," he said in a separate account sent to his wife several months earlier.

China's Foreign Ministry last week declined to address Khan's specific assertions, but it said that as a member of the global Non-Proliferation Treaty since 1992, "China strictly adheres to the international duty of prevention of proliferation it shoulders and strongly opposes . . . proliferation of nuclear weapons in any forms."

Asked why the U.S. government has never publicly confronted China over the uranium transfer, State Department spokesman Philip J. Crowley said, "The United States has worked diligently and made progress with China over the past 25 years. As to what was or wasn't done during the Reagan administration, I can't say."

Khan's exploits have been described in multiple books and public reports since British and U.S. intelligence services unmasked the deeds in 2003. But his own narratives -- not yet seen by U.S. officials -- provide fresh details about China's aid to Pakistan and its reciprocal export to China of sensitive uranium-enrichment technology.

A spokesman for the Pakistani Embassy in Washington declined to comment for this article. Pakistan has never allowed the U.S. government to question Khan or other top Pakistani officials directly, prompting Congress to demand in legislation approved in September that future aid be withheld until Obama certifies that Pakistan has provided "relevant information from or direct access to Pakistani nationals" involved in past nuclear commerce.

Insider vs. government

The Post obtained Khan's detailed accounts from Simon Henderson, a former journalist at the Financial Times who is now a senior fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and who has maintained correspondence with Khan. In a first-person account about his contacts with Khan in the Sept. 20 edition of the London Sunday Times, Henderson disclosed several excerpts from one of the documents.

Henderson said he agreed to The Post's request for a copy of that letter and other documents and narratives written by Khan because he believes an accurate understanding of Pakistan's nuclear history is relevant for U.S. policymaking. The Post independently confirmed the authenticity of the material; it also corroborated much of the content through interviews in Pakistan and other countries.

Although Khan disputes various assertions by book authors, the narratives are particularly at odds with Pakistan's official statements that he exported nuclear secrets as a rogue agent and implicated only former government officials who are no longer living. Instead, he repeatedly states that top politicians and military officers were immersed in the country's foreign nuclear dealings.

Khan has complained to friends that his movements and contacts are being unjustly controlled by the government, whose bidding he did -- providing a potential motive for his disclosures.

Overall, the narratives portray his deeds as a form of sustained, high-tech international horse-trading, in which Khan and a series of top generals successfully leveraged his access to Europe's best centrifuge technology in the 1980s to obtain financial assistance or technical advice from foreign governments that wanted to advance their own efforts.

"The speed of our work and our achievements surprised our worst enemies and adversaries and the West stood helplessly by to see a Third World nation, unable even to produce bicycle chains or sewing needles, mastering the most advanced nuclear technology in the shortest possible span of time," Khan boasts in the 11-page narrative he wrote for Pakistani intelligence officials about his dealings with foreigners while head of a key nuclear research laboratory.

Exchanges with Beijing

According to one of the documents, a five-page summary by Khan of his government's dealmaking with China, the terms of the nuclear exchange were set in a mid-1976 conversation between Mao and Bhutto. Two years earlier, neighboring India had tested its first nuclear bomb, provoking Khan -- a metallurgist working at a Dutch centrifuge manufacturer -- to offer his services to Bhutto.

Khan said he and two other Pakistani officials -- including then-Foreign Secretary Agha Shahi, since deceased -- worked out the details when they traveled to Beijing later that year for Mao's funeral. Over several days, Khan said, he briefed three top Chinese nuclear weapons officials -- Liu Wei, Li Jue and Jiang Shengjie -- on how the European-designed centrifuges could swiftly aid China's lagging uranium-enrichment program. China's Foreign Ministry did not respond to questions about the officials' roles.

"Chinese experts started coming regularly to learn the whole technology" from Pakistan, Khan states, staying in a guesthouse built for them at his centrifuge research center. Pakistani experts were dispatched to Hanzhong in central China, where they helped "put up a centrifuge plant," Khan said in an account he gave to his wife after coming under government pressure. "We sent 135 C-130 plane loads of machines, inverters, valves, flow meters, pressure gauges," he wrote. "Our teams stayed there for weeks to help and their teams stayed here for weeks at a time."

In return, China sent Pakistan 15 tons of uranium hexafluoride (UF₆), a feedstock for Pakistan's centrifuges that Khan's colleagues were having difficulty producing on their own. Khan said the gas enabled the laboratory to begin producing bomb-grade uranium in 1982. Chinese scientists helped the Pakistanis solve other nuclear weapons challenges, but as their competence rose, so did the fear of top Pakistani officials that Israel or India might preemptively strike key nuclear sites.

Mohammed Zia ul-Haq, the nation's military ruler, "was worried," Khan said, and so he and a Pakistani general who helped oversee the nation's nuclear laboratories were dispatched to Beijing with a request in mid-1982 to borrow enough bomb-grade uranium for a few weapons.

After winning Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping's approval, Khan, the general and two others flew aboard a Pakistani C-130 to Urumqi. Khan says they enjoyed barbecued lamb while waiting for the Chinese military to pack the small uranium bricks into lead-lined boxes, 10 single-kilogram ingots to a box, for the flight to Islamabad, Pakistan's capital.

According to Khan's account, however, Pakistan's nuclear scientists kept the Chinese material in storage until 1985, by which time the Pakistanis had made a few bombs with their own uranium. Khan said he got Zia's approval to ask the Chinese whether they wanted their high-enriched uranium back. After a few days, they responded "that the HEU loaned earlier was now to be considered as a gift . . . in gratitude" for Pakistani help, Khan said.

He said the laboratory promptly fabricated hemispheres for two weapons and added them to Pakistan's arsenal. Khan's view was that none of this violated the 1968 Non-Proliferation Treaty, because neither nation had signed it at the time and neither had sought to use its capability "against any country in particular." He also wrote that subsequent international protests reeked of hypocrisy because of foreign assistance to nuclear weapons programs in Britain, Israel and South Africa.

U.S. unaware of progress

The United States was suspicious of Pakistani-Chinese collaboration through this period. Officials knew that China treasured its relationship with Pakistan because both worried about India; they also knew that China viewed Western nuclear policies as discriminatory and that some Chinese politicians had favored the spread of nuclear arms as a path to stability.

But U.S. officials were ignorant about key elements of the cooperation as it unfolded, according to current and former officials and classified documents.

China is "not in favor of a Pakistani nuclear explosive program, and I don't think they are doing anything to help it," a top State Department official reported in a secret briefing in 1979, three years after the Bhutto-Mao deal was struck. A secret State Department report in 1983 said Washington was aware that Pakistan had requested China's help, but "we do not know what the present status of the cooperation is," according to a declassified copy.

Meanwhile, Chinese Premier Zhao Ziyang promised at a White House dinner in January 1984: "We do not engage in nuclear proliferation ourselves, nor do we help other countries develop nuclear weapons." A nearly identical statement was made by China in a major summary of its nonproliferation policies in 2003 and on many occasions in between.

Fred McGoldrick, a senior State Department nonproliferation official in the Reagan and Clinton administrations, recalls that the United States learned in the 1980s about the Chinese bomb-design and uranium transfers. "We did confront them, and they denied it," he said. Since then, the connection has been confirmed by particles on nuclear-related materials from Pakistan, many of which have characteristic Chinese bomb program "signatures," other officials say.

Hans M. Kristensen, director of the Nuclear Information Project at the Federation of American Scientists, said that except for the instance described by Khan, "we are not aware of cases where a nuclear weapon state has transferred HEU to a non-nuclear country for military use." McGoldrick also said he is aware of "nothing like it" in the history of nuclear weapons proliferation. But he said nothing has ever been said publicly because "this is diplomacy; you don't do that sort of thing . . . if you want them to change their behavior."

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/11/12/AR2009111211060.html>

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Times of India

13 NOVEMBER 2009

How China Gifted 50kg Uranium For Two Bombs To Pakistan

CHIDANAND RAJGHATTA, TNN

WASHINGTON: China's dirty little secret of nuclear proliferation to Pakistan, including virtually giving Islamabad two nuclear weapons on a platter while the US remained oblivious and smug, has exploded in Washington. Embarrassingly for President Barack Obama, the disclosures come on the eve of his much-anticipated visit to Beijing.

The broad story is known to every Tom, Dinesh, and Hamid in strategic circles — that sometime in the early 1980s, China provided Pakistan with nuclear know-how and materials to enable it to make the bomb, in part to weigh down India and in part out of gratitude to Islamabad for facilitating its opening to US. But astonishing details of the transaction, which China has blithely denied because it is in violation of its nuclear non-proliferation obligations, have been exposed courtesy A.Q.Khan, Pakistan's Dr Strangelove, to spite the military which incarcerated him.

In a letter that Khan sent to British journalist Simon Henderson, parts of which have already been made public with the latest dribble coming out ahead of Obama's visit to China next week, the Pakistani metallurgist reveals the following sequence of an episode the broad contours of which are well known despite Chinese-Pakistani subterfuge for nearly 30 years: In 1976, some four years after India tested its first nuclear device, Pakistan's then Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto approached China's supreme leader Chairman Mao in his quest for the nuclear bomb. By this time, Bhutto had already invited expat Pakistani scientists, including A.Q.Khan, to return home to help Islamabad make the bomb to ensure that the country was never again humiliated by India the way it happened in 1971.

Mao died soon after, but according to Khan, the matter was advanced in talks he and two other Pakistani officials, including then foreign secretary Agha Shahi, had with Chinese officials at Mao's funeral. It was not a one-sided transaction: the Pakistanis told the Chinese how European-designed centrifuges (whose designs Khan had stolen) could swiftly aid China's lagging uranium-enrichment program.

"Chinese experts started coming regularly to learn the whole technology" from Pakistan and Pakistani experts were dispatched to Hanzhong in central China, where they helped "put up a centrifuge plant," Khan said in an account he gave to his wife after Musharraf purged him under US pressure. That letter eventually found its way to the Henderson who shared it with the Washington Post, which advanced the story on Thursday. "We sent 135 C-130 plane loads of machines, inverters, valves, flow meters, pressure gauges," Khan wrote. "Our teams stayed there for weeks to help and their teams stayed here for weeks at a time."

Initially, it appears China sent Pakistan 15 tons of uranium hexafluoride (UF6), a feedstock for Pakistan's centrifuges that Khan's colleagues were having difficulty producing on their own. Evidently, Khan had made the centrifuges from the designs he stole but did not have enough raw material to run it. Khan said the gas enabled the laboratory to begin producing bomb-grade uranium in 1982. Chinese scientists also helped the Pakistanis solve other nuclear weapons challenges.

By then, Gen.Zia-ul Haq had taken over the reigns in Islamabad and had hanged Bhutto. Rumors of a pre-emptive strike by India and Israel on Pakistan's nuclear program rattled Zia, who sent Khan and an unnamed Pakistani general to Beijing with a request in mid-1982 to borrow enough bomb-grade uranium for a few weapons.

After winning Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping's approval, Khan, the general and two others flew aboard a US made Pakistani C-130 to Urumqi. Khan says they enjoyed barbecued lamb while waiting for the Chinese military to pack the small uranium bricks into lead-lined boxes, 10 single-kilogram ingots to a box for a total of 50 kilograms of highly enriched uranium (HEU), for the flight back to Islamabad. "The Chinese gave us drawings of the nuclear weapon, gave us kg50 enriched uranium," Khan wrote in letter to his wife Henny which was meant to be an expose to get even with the military, which locked him up on proliferation charges even though Khan says they were part of the transactions approved by all governments that came to power in Islamabad, civilian or military.

By Khan's account, Pakistan did not initially use the Chinese fissile material and kept it in storage till 1985 because they had made a "few bombs" with their own material. The Pakistanis then asked Beijing if it wanted its nuclear material back. After a few days, Khan says the Chinese wrote back "that the HEU loaned earlier was now to be considered as a gift... in gratitude" for Pakistani help. The Pakistanis promptly used the Chinese material to fabricate hemispheres for two weapons and added them to Pakistan's arsenal.

Khan sees this act of stealing, begging and borrowing to make the bomb as a supreme accomplishment by Pakistan. "The speed of our work and our achievements surprised our worst enemies and adversaries and the West stood helplessly by to see a Third World nation, unable even to produce bicycle chains or sewing needles, mastering the most advanced nuclear technology in the shortest possible span of time," he boasts in a separate 11-page narrative that the Post said he wrote for Pakistani intelligence officials.

Through all the skullduggery, it appears that Beijing continued to lie baldly even as Washington lived in blissful ignorance through occasional lurking suspicion. Time and again, Chinese officials lied about adhering to the international duty of prevention the proliferation of nuclear weapons. US officials too hummed and hawed about the transactions because at the height of the Islamabad-Beijing exchanges, Washington was dependent on Pakistan to rout Soviet Union from Afghanistan and it was also warming up to Beijing, where the senior George Bush had served as the US envoy before returning to Washington DC as the CIA Director and then becoming vice-president under Ronald Reagan.

But the big question now is what Barack Obama will do about a transaction the Washington Post called "an exceptional, deliberate act of proliferation by a nuclear power." The US President, who won a Nobel Peace Prize for his activism on several fronts, including his intent to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, arrives in Beijing on Tuesday on a swing through East Asia that will take him to Japan and South Korea, two other US allies also concerned about China. Unless Obama takes note of the disclosures and acts on them, he will be seen to joining a long list of US Presidents, including Reagan, Bush, Clinton, whose concern about proliferation were largely cosmetic and selective, resulting in a free pass to China and Pakistan.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/pakistan/How-China-gifted-50kg-uranium-for-two-bombs-to-Pakistan/articleshow/5226165.cms>

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Times of India

13 NOVEMBER 2009, PRESS TRUST OF INDIA (PTI)

Pak Rejects Report of Getting Weapons-Grade Uranium From China

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Friday dismissed a media report about Beijing providing it with weapons-grade uranium and a blueprint for an atomic bomb and described it as an effort to divert attention from support being extended by "some states" to India's nuclear programme.

Foreign office spokesman Abdul Basit described the allegations made in an article in the Washington Post newspaper as "baseless".

"Pakistan strongly rejects the assertions in the article that is evidently timed to malign Pakistan and China," he said.

"This is yet another attempt to divert attention from the overt and covert support being extended by some states to the Indian nuclear programme since its inception and intensified more recently in stark contradiction to their self-avowed commitment to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty," he said.

Pakistan and China have "comprehensive and all-dimensional cooperation", which includes civilian nuclear cooperation for peaceful purposes, Basit said.

"This has always been above board. Pakistan and China have always respected their respective international obligations and non-proliferation norms," he said.

Citing an account provided by disgraced nuclear scientist A Q Khan, the Washington Post reported on Friday that China provided Pakistan enough weapons-grade uranium for two atomic bombs and the blueprint for a simple nuclear weapon in 1982.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/pakistan/Pak-rejects-report-of-getting-weapons-grade-uranium-from-China/articleshow/5227511.cms>

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The Nation – Pakistan

OPINION

November 12, 2009

Can America Defend Its Nuclear Arsenal?

By ZAHIR KAZMI

US intelligence agencies knew months before the November 05 Fort Hood shooting that suspect Army Major Nidal Malik Hasan tried to contact people with Al-Qaeda links, ABC News reported November 09, citing two US officials. However, it was unclear if the US Army had been informed.

Having read the above news, I wonder if Seymour Hersh is thinking to use his acid soaked pen to write another article about the insecurity of American nukes since members of the American military of Muslim faith are allegedly in touch, or were trying to get in touch, with Al-Qaeda. Here's a unique glimpse of what he may write.

As the Fort Hood story unravels, the gravity of the situation that America faces is coming to the fore. US intelligence agencies looked the other way once Major Hasan was trying to reach out to the people with Al-Qaeda connections. This oversight may have been a 'wait-see-sting operation' tactic. Whatever the case, it is alarming to conclude that there are Al-Qaeda sympathisers in the American military and strategic organisations who can steal some nukes for Al-Qaeda and other non-state actors. Though the American military claims that their nuclear weapons are under multi-layered controls, but the threat from within brings the effectiveness of the entire safety and security system into doubt which can unravel while America has its crosshairs locked on to counter such a threat from the Middle East or Asia.

Hence, once it comes to the insecurity of nukes, Pakistan and America sail the same boat and their dilemmas are analogous. It will be a good idea to test my hypothesis of sending US troops to beef up security of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal. Stretching it further, it will be ideal to explore the possibility to have a joint custodian programme for the nukes of both countries; with American and Pakistani troops managing each other's strategic installations security. According to my inside sources, in both military forces, this item is already on Mullen and Kayani's agenda.

The above Hersh's exclusive was made up to make a simple point: it's good to stretch the imagination, but one must not let it run wild. Pakistan, or for that matter America's, nukes can possibly fall into wrong hands provided the entire state structure collapses and there's complete anarchy. And such articles are meant to build gloomy scenarios. It's an easy guess who draws pleasure from such insinuations since it's not in the American administration's interest at least.

Pakistan is passing through a difficult phase and a minority is challenging the writ of the state, but painting a picture of the state nearing failure is nonsensical. We must appreciate that a democratic government has just started taking root and has successfully led the military to claim victory in Swat operations. Did Sri Lanka become a state bordering failure in its ebbs and falls while combating Tamil Tigers for last three decades? Countering insurgency takes time, sacrifice and patience; especially on the part of allies. That's what the Obama Administration is doing in its support to the government and people of Pakistan. US media can follow their lead in the larger American interest. However, if that point is driven home and taken the media will lose its edge and so will some journalists.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Opinions/Columns/12-Nov-2009/Can-America-defend-its-nuclear-arsenal>

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