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Washington Post
5 December 2009

Iran Says Needs 20 Nuclear Sites: Report

By Ramin Mostafavi

TEHRAN (Reuters) - Iran said on Saturday it needed 20 uranium enrichment plants to provide fuel for its nuclear power plants, an announcement likely to heighten tension with six major powers over the Islamic state's nuclear ambitions.

"To provide fuel for our nuclear power plants, we need to have 20 uranium enrichment plants," the official IRNA news agency quoted Ali Akbar Salehi, head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, as saying.

In a defiant response to last week's International Atomic Energy Agency vote rebuking Iran for building a second enrichment plant in secret, Tehran said on Sunday it would build 10 more sites like its Natanz underground one monitored by the

IAEA.

Iran has one nuclear power plant, under construction by Russia. Analysts say Iran will need many years if not decades for such a major expansion of its enrichment capability.

The IAEA resolution urged Iran to stop all activities related to enrichment, allow unfettered IAEA inspections and guarantee it is not hiding more sites.

Western powers have warned Iran it is rapidly approaching an end-of-year deadline to accept a U.N.-drafted nuclear fuel deal which calls on Tehran to send 75 percent of its low-enriched uranium (LEU) from Natanz to Russia and France to be turned into fuel for a Tehran medical research reactor.

The proposal to farm out most of Iran's LEU reserves is aimed at minimizing the risk of the country refining the material to the 80-90 percent grade suitable for a bomb.

Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said the fuel exchange proposal was still on the table, state radio reported on Saturday.

"We have three options ... we produce fuel, or exchange it (inside Iran) or buy it from another country," Mottaki said.

"NO PLANS" TO WITHDRAW FROM NPT

Iran says its enriched uranium is only for electricity generation. But the country's record of nuclear secrecy and lack of power plants to use the low-enriched uranium has convinced the West that Iran is hiding a program to develop nuclear weapons capacity.

Iran added to the West's concerns on Friday by saying it will provide the IAEA with the bare minimum of information about its plan to build new sites.

Iran's parliament said on Thursday the Islamic state will review its co-operation level with countries that voted against its nuclear activities at the IAEA.

The measure passed by a 25-3 margin with six abstentions, smoothed by rare backing from Russia and China, which have blocked global attempts to isolate Iran in the past.

Mottaki downplayed the threat.

"They still have time to correct their mistake and return to the right path," Mottaki said without elaborating.

Iran dismissed on Saturday France's Total from investing in development of the country's phase 11 of the South Pars gas field, state television reported. It was unclear whether that move was related to the threat of retaliation, however.

Salehi accused the West of maneuvering to force Iran to leave the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), saying "Iran has no plans to pull out of the NPT."

(Writing by Parisa Hafezi, Editing by Sonya Hepinstall)

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/12/05/AR2009120501070.html>

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Ha'aretz Daily – Israel
5 December 2009

NATO: 'Iran Poses Threat To The Whole World'

By Amos Harel

Senior NATO officials last week called Iran's nuclear and missile programs "a potential threat to the peace and security of the entire world." The comments came in conversations with journalists during the meeting in Brussels last week of foreign ministers of North Atlantic Treaty Organization member states.

Iran's nuclear program is not at the top of NATO's agenda. Most of the deliberations, as well as the press briefings, were focused on Afghanistan. Central to the discussion was the recent announcement by U.S. President Barack Obama of the decision to dispatch more American troops to that country.

The international community's efforts to pressure Iran into ceasing its nuclear ambitions is spearheaded by the United States, in cooperation with other permanent members of the UN Security Council and Germany. In closed talks, and in particular in response to questions raised by journalists from Persian Gulf states, where Iran is perceived as a direct threat, senior NATO officials acknowledged the gravity of the situation.

One official said that if the Iranian nuclear issue is not resolved, "It may develop into a threat to the peace and security of the entire world, not only in a specific region [like the Persian Gulf or Israel]." When asked whether NATO would defend states in the event of an Iranian assault he said that the alliance is committed to providing support to all its members, but said, "However, we have other interests. In case of need, we shall take action as we see fit."

In general the impression from a visit to NATO headquarters is that the organization's diplomats are gradually coming around to the viewpoint and parameters of Washington regarding the potential threat posed by Iran.

Three months ago, an official NATO spokesman was quoted by Germany's dpa news agency as saying that missiles pose an increasing threat to Europe, partly due to Iran's missile program.

<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1132931.html>

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New York Times
6 December 2009

Iran Will Not Quit Treaty, Its Nuclear Chief Asserts

By NAZILA FATHI

TORONTO — Urging moderation after a week of harsh rhetoric over Iran's nuclear program, the head of the country's nuclear agency emphasized Saturday that Iran would not seek to pull out of the international Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, Iran's state-run Press TV reported.

The comments by Ali Akbar Salehi, the head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, came just a day after the government ratcheted up tensions with the West by saying that it would keep the details of 10 planned uranium enrichment sites secret until six months before they would become operational.

The announcement on Nov. 29 that Iran would seek to build the new sites was taken as defiance of a resolution by the United Nations' nuclear agency pushing Iran to halt all uranium enrichment activity immediately. Several hard-line members of the Iranian Parliament went even further, demanding that Iran pull out of the nonproliferation treaty and stop complying with international inspections under the agreement.

On Saturday, Mr. Salehi sought to assure that Iran had no interest in pulling out of the treaty, and he implied that any other suggestion was an attempt by Western countries to force Iran into a corner. "I think the West is trying to force us out of the N.P.T.," he was quoted as saying on the Press TV Web site.

The speaker of Iran's Parliament, Ali Larijani, also urged moderation on Saturday, saying that the government should not be "pushed into hasty reactions," the ISNA news agency quoted him as saying. "You should demand that authorities use all possible ways to serve national interests," he said.

Mr. Larijani characterized the United Nations nuclear agency's resolution as a "light move" that had then brought an "initial reaction" by Iran.

Nuclear analysts viewed Iran's assertion that it would go ahead with 10 new enrichment facilities as not immediately achievable, as its main enrichment site at Natanz is still not fully operational after years of work.

Still, the claim was seen in part as an attempt by the Iranian government to bolster its insistence that its nuclear program is geared toward generating electricity rather than creating nuclear weapons. That is because the Natanz site by itself is inadequate to fuel a nuclear reactor, but could still produce enough nuclear material for bombs, Western experts say.

Mr. Salehi seemed to be addressing some of that skepticism on Saturday. He said that the government might end up needing as many as 20 enrichment facilities down the road to meet its electricity demand.

"We are in need of 20,000 megawatts," he said, adding that that would require roughly 20 times the amount of enriched uranium that the Natanz facility can now produce, roughly 30 tons per year.

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/06/world/middleeast/06iran.html?_r=2

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Boston Globe
6 December 2009

Obama Security Adviser: Picture Not Good On Iran

WASHINGTON --President Barack Obama's national security adviser says the door remains open for Iran to work with other countries on its nuclear program. But James Jones also says the "picture is not a good one."

Jones says the clock is ticking toward the end of the year. That's when Obama has said it would be clear whether Iran was ready to work with the United States, other U.N. Security Council members and Germany to assure the world it was not trying to build a nuclear weapon.

So far, Iran has rejected calls to enter negotiations, and Obama is believed preparing to seek harsher international penalties against Iran. Jones said "the door remains open" for Iran to change course.

Iran says its nuclear program is peaceful and it has a right to enrich uranium to produce fuel for nuclear reactors to generate electricity.

Jones appeared on CNN's "State of the Union."

http://www.boston.com/news/nation/washington/articles/2009/12/06/obama_security_adviser_picture_not_good_on_iran/

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Tehran Times – Iran
7 December 2009

West Lying About Iran's Nuclear Program: Leader Tehran Times Political Desk

TEHRAN - Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei says the West is lying about Iran's nuclear energy program.

In an address at a ceremony commemorating the holiday of Id al-Ghadir in Tehran on Sunday, he advised the United States, Britain, and certain European countries to halt their deceitful plots.

The Zionists are trying to negatively influence global public opinion about Iran, but the entire truth will eventually become clear to the world and the enemies will be humiliated more than ever before, Ayatollah Khamenei stated.

The Iranian nation is trying to develop nuclear technology because the country needs it, he added.

Ayatollah Khamenei also said the enemy will make use of every divisive remark or action.

When the domineering powers fail to defeat a nation through threats, military attacks, and sanctions, they attempt to find a way to create division and dissension among the people, he observed.

"The Zionists, the Americans, and other arrogant powers are afraid that the Iranian nation will become an example... and that is why they have been using every trick and plot in order to isolate Iran," but they have not been able to do so, and God willing, they will fail in the future, too, he stated

http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=209284

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Xinhua News – China

8 December 2009

Spokesman: Iran To Exchange Nuclear Fuel If Trust Established

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast said Tuesday Iran would accept a nuclear fuel exchange deal if conditions are built to earn Iran's trust in the Western countries.

"If they (the West) can create conditions that can gain our trust, we will be ready to exchange the fuel," Mehmanparast told reporters in his weekly press conference.

"We never said we will not do this (fuel exchange)," he said, adding that the problem was Iran has no trust in the West because their attitude and behavior in the past.

"They have lost trust and have never kept their promises," he added, "we can not listen to them easily."

Mehmanparast also dismissed the West's threat to raise more sanctions against Iran. "Sanctions are nothing new for Iran," he said.

"Every time they took sanctions against us, we were even closer to self-sufficiency and independence. Therefore, if they want to continue this path, it will have no result except that we become more serious about our plans," he added.

UN nuclear watchdog IAEA has presented a draft agreement which calls for shipping most of Iran's existing low-grade enriched uranium to Russia and France by the end of the year, where it would be processed into fuel rods with a purity of 20 percent.

The higher-level enriched uranium would be transported back to Iran to be used in a research reactor in Tehran for the manufacture of medical radioisotopes.

Iran rejected the deal, demanding a simultaneous exchange between low and higher level enriched uranium inside the country.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-12/08/content_12612360.htm

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Khaleej Times – U.A.E.

8 December 2009

Saudi Hands Missing Iran Nuclear Scientist To US

Agence France-Presse (AFP)

An Iranian nuclear scientist who went missing in Saudi Arabia has landed up in a US jail, Mehr news agency said Tuesday quoting a senior official, as Teheran urged Western powers to show they can be trusted.

Foreign ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast told Mehr that the scientist, Shahram Amiri, was handed over to US officials by Saudi Arabia and is one of 11 Iranians being held in US jails.

'Iran's nuclear scientist who had gone to hajj in Saudi Arabia, was handed over by Riyadh to Washington,' Mehmanparast said.

His statement was the first acknowledgement by Teheran that Amiri was a nuclear scientist.

Iranian officials have previously said Amiri went missing in Saudi Arabia soon after he landed there as a pilgrim earlier this year.

Iranian media have also previously reported that US Central Intelligence Agency of being involved in his disappearance.

Amiri left for Saudi Arabia on May 31 and on his arrival was 'questioned by Saudi agents at the airport for a longer time than other pilgrims,' Iran's hardline Javan newspaper said in October.

‘Three days later when he left his hotel in Medina, he never returned,’ the report said, adding that Amiri was a researcher at Teheran’s Malek-Ashtar University of Technology.

The newspaper quoted his wife as saying he was ‘only a researcher and did not hold any government post.’

Several regional Arabic newspapers had speculated that Amiri was a nuclear scientist and he was involved in building Iran’s second uranium enrichment plant near the Shia holy city of Qom.

Teheran had until now evaded the question of Amiri’s occupation although it has in the past accused Washington of having a hand in his disappearance.

Mehmanparast, meanwhile, told a media conference earlier Tuesday that Iran has no faith in world powers when it comes to resolving a dispute over a nuclear fuel deal.

‘We never said we will not do this (nuclear fuel deal),’ Mehmanparast said when asked if Iran was still weighing up whether to subscribe to the deal brokered by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

World powers had backed the IAEA proposal under which Iran would send most of its low-enriched uranium (LEU) to Russia and France for conversion into nuclear fuel for a research reactor in Teheran.

But Iran rejected the proposal last month, insisting it wanted to hand over its LEU at the same time it receives the 20 percent enriched uranium, and that the handover must take place simultaneously inside Iran.

‘The question is the attitude of some Western countries in the past. They have lost trust and have never kept their promises,’ Mehmanparast said.

‘We can’t listen to them easily. If they can provide conditions that can gain our trust, we are ready to exchange the fuel.’

Western powers suspect Teheran is pursuing nuclear technology to make atomic weapons. Iran denies the charge, saying its ambitions are to gain peaceful nuclear power.

Mehmanparast also implicitly rejected Turkey’s desire to mediate between it and world powers, a possibility raised by US President Barack Obama on Monday during talks with Ankara’s visiting premier Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Mehmanparast said solving the controversy over Teheran’s nuclear drive does not need additional parties.

‘Turkey wants to play a role in solving the nuclear issue between the countries who have the technology and the countries who are seeking it,’ he said.

‘But we don’t think that our views are non-transparent and they needed to be interpreted by others. All our nuclear work is under the supervision of the agency and we have informed it of our future plans.

Mehmanparast also dismissed Western threats to impose a fourth set of UN sanctions on Teheran if it does not come clean on its nuclear programme.

‘Sanctions are nothing new for Iran,’ he said.

‘If there is another round of sanctions we will be more serious’ in pursuing nuclear technology.

http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle09.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2009/December/middleeast_December146.xml§ion=middleeast

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New York Times
5 December 2009

U.S. And Russia Miss Treaty Deadline

By Clifford J. Levy

MOSCOW — The United States and Russia missed their deadline on Friday to adopt a new arms control treaty, though they pledged that they would generally abide by the old one while they continued negotiating.

The two sides were stepping up talks in Geneva in hopes of shortly concluding the new agreement, which would cut the world’s two largest nuclear arsenals by up to a third. The cold war-era pact, the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty of 1991, known as Start, expires early Saturday.

Neither side blamed the other for the delay, which was apparently caused in part by an abundance of highly technical matters that need to be addressed. Negotiators have been focusing this week on issues related to monitoring and verification.

In a joint statement, the White House and the Kremlin declared their “commitment, as a matter of principle, to continue to work together in the spirit of the Start treaty following its expiration, as well as our firm intention to ensure that a new treaty on strategic arms enters into force at the earliest possible date.”

On Friday, President Obama discussed progress on the treaty with Russia’s president, Dmitri A. Medvedev, and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton met with the Russian foreign minister, Sergey V. Lavrov, in Brussels.

While both sides said they would essentially honor the old treaty after the deadline, one major change was clear: an American monitoring post in Russia that kept track of Russian missile production was closed on Friday.

The post, in the city of Votkinsk, 600 miles east of Moscow, was authorized under the old treaty, and Russia had blocked any effort to keep it under the new one or to provide for a temporary extension. The Russian military had long objected to the presence of American observers based in the heart of Russia.

Under the old treaty, the United States and Russia also had the right to use periodic inspection teams in the other country to guarantee that the treaty was being followed. In October, the Obama administration expressed concern that if the deadline for a new pact passed and official authority for inspections lapsed, the United States would be unable to monitor the Russian nuclear stockpile.

According to the understanding that was announced Friday by the two countries, they might conceivably be able to send ad hoc inspection teams in this interim period. But both countries seem to be hoping that it will not come to that — that a new treaty will be signed and ratified in time for an official inspection program to occur.

Over all, the outlines of the new treaty are already apparent. At a summit meeting in Moscow in July, Mr. Obama and Mr. Medvedev narrowed the range for a cap on warheads to between 1,500 and 1,675, down from about 2,200, which each side has now.

The two countries are also expected to lower the ceiling on delivery vehicles — intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarine-based missiles and strategic bombers — to below 800, from 1,600.

In Washington on Friday, Robert Gibbs, the White House spokesman, said that after the deadline, the United States and Russia “will simply maintain where the agreement has been for the last 15 or 20 years” until a new treaty is approved.

A senior American official, who was not authorized to speak to the news media and spoke on the condition of anonymity, said negotiators in Geneva “are focusing on getting final issues solved” and expressed optimism that a new treaty would be completed in the coming days.

In a statement, the Russian Foreign Ministry also offered a positive take.

“The future treaty should become another milestone in disarmament and nonproliferation,” the ministry said, “marking the transition to a higher level of interaction between Russia and the United States and reaffirming the common goals of the two countries in the promotion of mutual and global security.”

Peter Baker contributed reporting from Washington.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/05/world/europe/05arms.html>

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Los Angeles Times

5 December 2009

Russia, U.S. Agree To Maintain Expiring Nuclear Arms Pact

The Kremlin and the Obama administration say they will continue the provisions of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty of 1991, which ends today, while they try to negotiate a new deal.

By Paul Richter

Reporting from Washington: The Obama administration and the Kremlin agreed Friday to continue the provisions of their keystone nuclear arms control treaty after its expiration today while they try to negotiate a follow-on agreement.

The two governments issued a statement saying that, because of their desire for stability, "we express our commitment, as a matter of principle, to continue to work together in the spirit of the START treaty following its expiration." The governments cited a "firm intention" to approve a new treaty at the earliest possible date.

President Obama's national security advisor, retired Marine Gen. James L. Jones Jr., had raised hopes for a deal on the pact, telling Fox News this week that the president might be able to sign a new treaty when he is in Europe next week to receive the Nobel Peace Prize.

U.S. and Russian negotiators, meeting in Geneva, have completed almost all of the text for the new treaty, Jones said.

Robert Gibbs, the White House press secretary, said the two sides "continue to make progress." However, ratification of any new deal by the Senate and the Russian Duma is likely to take months.

The Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, or START, was put in place in 1991, five months before the collapse of the Soviet Union, and has been the central pillar of the nuclear relationship between Russia and the United States.

The Obama administration has been eager to craft a new deal to help improve its relationship with Russia and to open the way for several other arms control and nonproliferation deals it hopes to conclude.

Obama administration officials view arms control as a potential bright spot in a foreign policy record burdened by Afghanistan and Pakistan, Iran, North Korea and the Mideast.

Though U.S. officials once said they hoped to conclude the new treaty before START expired, it has been clear for months that prospects were not good.

One arms control analyst, Stephen Young of the Union of Concerned Scientists, said the missed deadline was "disappointing but far from a tragedy."

But he predicted that Obama's agenda would be hurt if the new deal is not negotiated by May, when world powers are to meet to consider changes to a broader arms control pact, the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. If Russia and the United States haven't agreed to a new two-way deal by then, other nations "will be far less likely to support the ambitious agenda" that Obama has laid out, Young said.

The treaty is expected to cut the upper limit of warheads for each country by one third, to 1,500 to 1,675 warheads.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nation-and-world/la-fg-nuclear-treaty5-2009dec05,0,296810.story>

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

8 December 2009

Russia To Keep Silo-Based Ballistic Missiles In Future

Russia's Strategic Missile Forces (SMF) will keep both silo-based and mobile ballistic missile systems in service until at least 2020, the SMF commander said on Tuesday.

"To successfully accomplish the set tasks, the SMF will continue to have silo-based missile systems, which can provide an immediate response [to threats] and mobile systems featuring high survivability," Col. Gen. Andrei Shvaichenko said.

The general said the development of the SMF will stress the introduction of advanced missile systems although the existing systems will be kept operational until their extended service life expires.

"By the end of 2016, the missile systems with extended service life will constitute no more than 20% of the total, while the share of new missile systems will be about 80%," Shvaichenko said.

At present, six types of silo-based and mobile ICBM systems are on combat duty with the SMF, including the heavy Voyevoda (SS-18 Satan), capable of carrying 10 warheads, and the Topol-M (Stalin) systems.

According to open sources, the total arsenal of Russia's SMF comprises 538 ICBMs, including 306 SS-25 Topol (Sickle) missiles and 56 SS-27 Topol-M missiles.

Silo-based missiles constitute 45% of Russia's total ballistic missile arsenal. They carry about 85% of nuclear warheads deployed by the SMF.

The SMF commander said the number of missile systems and warheads in service in the future would depend on a new strategic arms reductions agreement between Russia and the U.S.

The new document to replace the START-I treaty, which expired on December 5, could significantly reduce the number of nuclear weapons possessed by both sides.

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.

The draft treaty is expected to be ready by the end of 2009.

MOSCOW, December 8 (RIA Novosti)

http://en.rian.ru/military_news/20091208/157155105.html

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Barents Observer – Norway

8 December 2009

Testing Of Nuclear Submarine In Arctic Waters

The strategic nuclear Delta-IV class submarine K-18 “Kareliya” has returned from its second sea trial in the White Sea following modernization to improve its tactical and technical performance.

This was the second successful round of a total of three planned sea trials, Zvezdochka Shipyard’s press service reports, according to ARMS-TASS. The submarine is planned to be returned to the Northern Fleet before the end of the year.

The submarine has been at the Zvezdochka shipyard in Severodvinsk, Arkhangelsk Oblast, since October 2004. The modernization has prolonged the submarine’s lifetime with approximately ten years and improved its tactical and technical performance considerably.

According to Wikipedia, “Kareliya” is one of seven Delta-IV class nuclear submarines built from 1985 to 1992. All are still in service in the Russian navy today. Five submarines have already gone through modernization at the Zvezdochka shipyard.

After the modernization the submarine’s main weapon system is the Sineva ballistic missile. According to Wikipedia, it can carry ten 100kT warheads. In a test launch on 11 October 2008, an R-29RMU travelled 11,547 kilometers downrange.

<http://www.barentsobserver.com/testing-of-nuclear-submarine-in-arctic-waters.4662861-116321.html>

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Yonhap News – South Korea

5 December 2009

N. Korea, U.S. Must Engage In 'Direct Action' To End Hostilities: Chosun Sinbo

North Korea and the United States must engage in direct bilateral action to end hostilities, a pro-Pyongyang newspaper published in Japan said Saturday.

The article, carried by the Chosun Sinbo and picked up in Seoul, said in order to guarantee peace on the Korean Peninsula the two main belligerent countries (of the Korean War) and those that have direct interest in Pyongyang's nuclear program should meet to resolve differences.

It also said the focus of Stephen Bosworth's planned visit next week must be centered on "peace" since this is a subject that cannot be ignored.

The report, in addition, hinted that Pyongyang is ready to engage in meaningful dialogue with the visiting U.S. official on what policy initiatives can be taken.

Bosworth, Washington's special representative for North Korea policy, is scheduled to visit the communist country next week. He is expected to push Pyongyang to return to the stalled six-party talks.

The talks -- comprised of the two Koreas, the United States, Japan, Russia and China -- have made little headway in their aim to end North Korea's nuclear ambitions. The country has detonated two nuclear devices since 2006 despite condemnation from the international community.

The paper, representing the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan, added that trying to get other countries to join in talks to resolve outstanding issues is counter-productive.

"If multilateral discussions are held there is a risk of no headway being made, so for the sake of establish peace on the Korean Peninsula such a goal can best be served through one-on-one talks," it said.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2009/12/05/99/0401000000AEN20091205002300320F.HTML>

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New York Times
6 December 2009

Envoy May Take Disarmament Plan To Pyongyang

SEOUL/TOKYO (Reuters) - The United States, Japan and South Korea are working on a road map for ending North Korea's nuclear arms plans that could be on the agenda for a U.S. envoy's visit to Pyongyang this week, Japan's Asahi newspaper reported.

Stephen Bosworth, the first envoy sent by U.S. President Barack Obama to the North, is expected to arrive in Pyongyang on Tuesday for a three-day stay where he will likely meet top North Korean officials but not leader Kim Jong-il.

Analysts expect the visit to result in a pledge from impoverished Pyongyang that it will return to disarmament-for-aid talks but few expect any breakthroughs in a sputtering six-way nuclear deal aimed at ending the state's atomic ambitions.

The course set for the next several years in the road map includes the removal of North Korea's nuclear facilities, the disposal of its nuclear weapons and material, and the verification of its nuclear program, the newspaper said, citing unnamed sources.

Any visit of a U.S. envoy to the reclusive North is trumpeted by the state's propaganda machine as a victory for leader Kim, whose military-first rule and nuclear arsenal forced the United States to come to Pyongyang with concessions.

But analysts said President Barack Obama's administration may have the upper hand due to the state of the North's broken economy. Fresh U.N. sanctions, imposed as a result of the North's nuclear test in May, and U.S. Treasury action that has targeted its finances have further hurt Pyongyang.

"The real problem with denuclearization is both parties are just testing the waters to see who will act first," said Chon Hyun-joon, an expert on the North at the South's Korea Institute for National Unification.

Prior to his visit, Bosworth consulted with South Korean officials in Seoul. After he returns from Pyongyang, he is slated to brief the other parties in the nuclear negotiations -- China, Japan, Russia and South Korea -- before heading to Washington.

MONEY TROUBLES AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Adding to the uncertainty is a North Korean currency revaluation that reports said has been met with anger from merchants whose cash holdings have mostly disappeared, and citizens facing inflated prices for essentials.

Traders in Dandong, a Chinese border city that is the main gateway for goods in and out of North Korea, have reported that the flow has slowed to a trickle, the Economic Information Daily, a newspaper issued by China's Xinhua news agency, reported.

In normal times, about 200 trucks carrying goods cross the Yalu River bridge there every day. In recent days, the number has fallen to a few dozen, it said.

The paper said traders mostly settle accounts in Chinese yuan, dollars or euros. Analysts said the uncertainty over the North Korean won and the loss of capital among merchants has made settlements more difficult, which has put the brakes on imports.

The paper quoted one Chinese trader as saying the price of rice, maize and other foods in North Korea has risen sharply.

North Korea faces another challenge on Monday when its officials will be grilled about the state's heavily criticized human rights record at a U.N. meeting in Geneva.

The review is shaping up to be a rare moment when the North tries to balance a desire to appear as a normal member of the global community while supporting its cult of personality leadership that has made it an international pariah and regional security threat.

(Additional reporting by Jack Kim and Christine Kim in Seoul and Chris Buckley in Beijing; Editing by Jonathan Thatcher and Jeremy Laurence)

<http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2009/12/06/us/politics/politics-us-korea-north.html>

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Yonhap News – South Korea
7 December 2009

N. Korea Not Yet Developed Nuke Delivery System: Expert
By Hwang Doo-hyong

North Korea's detonation of two nuclear devices in recent years does not guarantee its status as a nuclear weapons state due to lack of an adequate delivery system, a U.S. expert said Sunday.

"Two experimental nuclear test explosions don't make a nuclear arsenal," said Hans Kristensen, director of the Nuclear Information Project at the Federation of American Scientists, in a statement on the Website of the FAS.

Kristensen added, "We are not aware of credible information on how North Korea has weaponized its nuclear weapons capability, much less where those weapons are stored. We also take note that a recent U.S. Air Force intelligence report did not list any of North Korea's ballistic missiles as nuclear-capable."

He was rebuffing the report by North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency late last month that the FAS has confirmed North Korea as a nuclear weapons state, citing a report by the non-profit organization -- founded by the scientists who had worked on the Manhattan Project to develop the first atomic bombs -- with the aim of providing policy recommendations.

"[A nuclear arsenal] requires deliverable nuclear weapons, which we haven't seen any signs of yet. Perhaps the next statement could explain what capability North Korea actually has to deliver nuclear weapons."

The FAS report issued on Nov. 25 listed North Korea as among nine nuclear weapons state, along with the U.S., Russia, China, Britain, France, Israel, Pakistan and India.

International efforts towards North Korea's nuclear dismantlement hit a snag recently as Pyongyang has boycotted the six-nation nuclear talks, citing international sanctions for its nuclear blast and missile tests earlier this year.

Stephen Bosworth, U.S. special representative for North Korea policy, arrived in Seoul Sunday on his way to Pyongyang two days later to revive the multilateral nuclear talks, which also involves South Korea, China, Japan and Russia.

In early October when he met with Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao in Pyongyang, North Korean leader Kim Jong-il expressed his willingness to return to the six-party talks pending the outcome of bilateral discussions with the U.S.

U.S. officials have said they will not get into the substance of the nuclear talks in the upcoming bilateral session, despite the North's assertion that that should be the venue for resolving the standoff over its nuclear weapons programs.

North Korea conducted its second nuclear test in May after one in 2006 and U.S. and South Korean intelligence authorities believe North Korea has several nuclear weapons.

The World Nuclear Stockpile Report written by Hans Kristensen of the FAS and Robert Norris of the Natural Resources Defense Council in September, said North Korea appears to have 10 nuclear weapons, although it added, "There is no publicly available evidence that North Korea has operationalized its nuclear weapons capability."

The North Korean warheads are part of 23,375 nuclear weapons being held by nine nuclear weapons states, according to the report.

Russia tops the list with 13,000, followed by the U.S. with 9,400.

France came in third with 300 nuclear warheads, China fourth with 240 and Britain fifth with 185. Israel has 80 nuclear weapons, Pakistan between 70 to 90 and India 60 to 80.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2009/12/07/13/0301000000AEN20091207000100315F.HTML>

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Xinhua News – China

8 December 2009

China Expects U.S.-DPRK Dialogue To Restart Stalled Korean Nuclear Talks

A Chinese Foreign Ministry official said Tuesday the government hoped dialogue between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) will revive the stalled Korean nuclear talks.

"We back the U.S.-DPRK engagement and dialogue. We expect the dialogue to help restart the six-party talks," spokeswoman Jiang Yu told the regular briefing on Tuesday.

Jiang's comments coincided with U.S. President Barack Obama's special envoy to the DPRK Stephen Bosworth's arrival in Pyongyang on Tuesday.

The first visit to the DPRK by a representative of the Obama administration, Bosworth's three-day trip is widely expected to concentrate on persuading the DPRK back to the six-party nuclear talks.

The U.S. has repeatedly stressed that it is not interested in engaging in any nuclear dialogue beside the six-party talks that involve China, the DPRK, the United States, the Republic of Korea (ROK), Russia and Japan.

"We hope the dialogue between Bosworth and DPRK officials will help increase mutual understanding and address their own concerns," Jiang said.

Jiang said Bosworth would also travel to Beijing later this week.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-12/08/content_12612349.htm

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Yonhap News – South Korea

8 December 2009

U.S. Envoy In N. Korea For Crucial Talks On Denuclearization

By Lee Chi-dong

The top U.S. envoy on North Korea flew into Pyongyang Tuesday, the communist nation's official media said, a high-stakes journey that follows up on Obama's campaign pledge to engage America's adversaries.

"Stephen Bosworth, U.S. special representative for North Korea policy, and his party arrived here by air on Tuesday," the Korean Central News Agency and the Korean Central Broadcasting Station reported in their respective one-sentence dispatches.

The broadcaster, monitored by Yonhap News Agency in Seoul, cut off music abruptly to announce Bosworth's arrival. But no details were given on who greeted the delegation, which could provide a clue to the North's stance on his trip.

Earlier in the day, the inter-agency team led by Bosworth left the Osan Air Base south of Seoul on a U.S. military plane. The delegation also includes Sung Kim, special envoy on the dormant six-party nuclear talks, three other government officials, a notetaker and a translator, according to diplomatic sources here.

No media have been allowed to accompany the delegation, and foreign news agencies like China's Xinhua and Russia's Itar-Tass that have offices in the North have limited access to information there.

That leaves the outside world dependent on Pyongyang's state-run news outlets to get information on Bosworth's activity in the reclusive communist nation until his scheduled return to Seoul on Thursday. U.S. officials have not ruled out the possibility that he will extend his trip.

The veteran diplomat's mission in what would be the first formal dialogue between the two sides since Obama took office in January is straightforward: probe the North's willingness to rejoin six-party nuclear talks and confirm its commitment to the Sept. 19, 2005 Joint Statement agreed upon at the Beijing-based forum. The document calls for the North to abandon its nuclear program in exchange for political and economic incentives.

The prospects for his trip's success are less clear. The U.S. has stressed that Bosworth will not offer any new inducements for North Korea to lure it back to the multilateral negotiations. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said on various occasions that Washington is prepared to provide a comprehensive package of incentives, including security guarantees, only if the North dismantles its nuclear program "verifiably and irreversibly."

Clinton said Monday in Washington that, "We obviously hope that Ambassador Bosworth's visit is successful in persuading the North Koreans to return to the six-party talks and work toward the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and a new set of relationships with us and our partners," the chief U.S. diplomat told reporters.

Bosworth's dialogue partner remains unconfirmed. He is widely expected to sit down with Vice Foreign Minister Kang Sok-ju, who is known as Pyongyang's main diplomatic policymaker. Kang negotiated the 1994 Agreed Framework with the U.S. to freeze the North's nuclear facilities in return for a shipment of heavy oil and two light-water reactors.

Bosworth and Kang met in Pyongyang in 1996 for the implementation of the deal, which was scrapped in 2002 when then Assistant U.S. Secretary of State James Kelly visited the North and was told about its uranium enrichment ambitions.

It is also unclear whether Bosworth will meet Kim Jong-il, the North's leader, who rarely receives foreign guests. Media have speculated Bosworth may be carrying a letter from Obama for Kim.

When he first toured Asia in March after being appointed as U.S. special representative for North Korea, Bosworth reportedly carried such a letter reaffirming the U.S. position on improving bilateral relations. Bosworth had wanted to visit Pyongyang but the North did not invite him -- apparently preoccupied with preparations for its long-range rocket launch.

"The situation has changed as North Korea conducted a nuclear test in May," a South Korean foreign ministry official said.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2009/12/08/40/0401000000AEN20091208008000315F.HTML>

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Newsweek

4 December 2009

Singh's Shrewd Move

A shift on India's nuclear policy.

By David P. Fidler and Sumit Ganguly

It was a bombshell by any measure. Since it was signed 40 years ago, Indian leaders have been firmly against joining the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), an agreement that prohibits nonnuclear states from acquiring such weapons, commits nuclear-weapons states to disarmament, and regulates the peaceful use of nuclear energy to prevent the weaponization of nuclear technology. But in a move that will have significant implications for India as a rising power, and for global diplomacy, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh reversed course publicly on Nov. 29, saying that India is willing to join the NPT as a nuclear-weapons state.

Whether India follows through remains an open question, but pursuing NPT status would confer enormous benefits to the country. It would enhance its image as a responsible great power without forcing it to sacrifice its nuclear deterrent. It would send a message to Iran about its suspected proliferation activities without India having to challenge Iran directly about its nuclear intentions. It would enhance the stature of the treaty itself by throwing India's growing political weight as a responsible nuclear power behind the NPT at a moment when the treaty is under attack in light of North Korean and Iranian violations of it. By signing on, India can claim it is contributing even more to the fight against nuclear proliferation than it has in the past—and blunt criticism that the 2008 nuclear accord Singh's government signed with the U.S. undermines nonproliferation efforts by allowing India to obtain civilian nuclear technology without being part of the NPT. India's NPT strategy would also wrong-foot Pakistan, which used India's NPT stance to justify its own acquisition of nuclear weapons, and would put greater scrutiny on Islamabad and its poor nonproliferation record.

India's pursuit of NPT status would also force NPT members to engage in far-reaching strategic calculations of their own, concerning how to respond to India and its increasing geopolitical significance. To admit India as a nuclear-weapons state, NPT members would have to amend the treaty—specifically, the provision that defines nuclear-weapons states as those that manufactured and exploded a nuclear weapon before Jan. 1, 1967. That means the member countries will have to decide how to balance their commitment to the NPT with their need to avoid ostracizing India as a strategic actor in world affairs. Two of the most important NPT members, the U.S. and China, will need to make particularly difficult strategic choices. Washington must decide if it is willing to oppose the NPT amendment, even if doing so would mean risking its improved relations with New Delhi, and harming its efforts to further strengthen ties at a time that U.S. interests in South Asia and concerns about China are deepening. Beijing, for that matter, must decide if it is willing to oppose Indian membership and risk being perceived as acting selfishly rather than in the interests of nonproliferation.

India may have other motivations in changing its policy. Singh's move may help India deflect arguments that it should also accept the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), an agreement that would ban all testing of nuclear weapons, which proponents of a nuclear-free world consider critical. By changing India's NPT stance, Singh has heightened its policy importance and moves the CTBT to the diplomatic background. In doing so, he has made it easier for New Delhi to resist entreaties to join the CTBT, while it negotiates accession and implements its NPT obligations, thus preserving its ability to test weapons to maintain its nuclear deterrent. Indian accession to the NPT might actually create obstacles to the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons by complicating efforts to achieve a comprehensive ban on all nuclear testing.

For India, expressing interest in joining the treaty as a nuclear-weapons state is a shrewd move. It realigns critical aspects of global nuclear diplomacy around Indian ideas, interests, and influence in ways New Delhi's hostility to the NPT never achieved. No matter what happens now, India's shift on the treaty promises to bring benefits to the country and present difficult challenges to friends and rivals alike.

Fidler and Ganguly are the director and director of research, respectively, of the Center on American and Global Security at Indiana University, Bloomington.

<http://www.newsweek.com/id/225533>

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Press Trust of India
8 December 2009

Three Held With Uranium In Navi Mumbai

In a seizure that can have serious security implications, police has recovered an unspecified amount of uranium after taking into custody three persons in Navi Mumbai.

The three were held in Panvel and surrounding areas, Commissioner of Police, Navi Mumbai, Gulabrao Pol told PTI today.

Declining to divulge details like the time and date when the three were taken into custody, police said the "suspicious looking material" was sent to Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) for analysis.

The analysis done by Mrinal Roy, Regional Director, Central Region (Exploration and Research), confirmed the material as depleted uranium, he added.

The officer, however, refused to divulge further details citing the sensitive nature of the seizure, saying "the matter concerns national security and nothing more can be disclosed at the moment. I can only say that further investigation is on.

http://www.ptinews.com/news/413033_Three-held-with-uranium-in-Navi-Mumbai

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Nuclear Street
7 December 2009

NNSA And Romanian Border Police Cooperate To Thwart Nuclear Smuggling

NNSA's Second Line of Defense Program (SLD) is providing the Romanian Border Police with two vans

By April Murelio

The U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) and the Border Police of Romania commissioned mobile radiation detection equipment for use in Romania at a ceremony held in Bucharest.

Under a 2008 Implementing Agreement between DOE and the Ministry of Interior and Administrative Reform of Romania, NNSA's Second Line of Defense Program (SLD) is providing the Romanian Border Police with two vans equipped with radiation detection equipment, along with related handheld detection and isotope identification equipment. SLD also provides training on the use of this equipment. The Romanian Border Police will use the equipment at international points of entry as well as at other locations throughout the country.

"In the hands of our well trained and experienced Romanian Border Police partners, this equipment will assist in preventing and deterring the illicit trafficking of nuclear material and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We plan to continue our cooperation with the Romanian Border Police to include installation of stationary equipment at key ports of entry," said Ken Baker, NNSA Principal Assistant Deputy Administrator for Defense Nuclear Nonproliferation.

The vans with mobile radiation detection equipment are capable of detecting gamma-rays and neutron sources, including highly enriched uranium and plutonium. This new equipment will enable Romanian Border Police to detect, deter and prevent the transfer of nuclear and other radioactive material at Romania's borders, as well as at other points in Romania where radiation detection is needed.

NNSA's Second Line of Defense Program works with foreign governments worldwide to install specialized radiation detection equipment and train officials to detect smuggled nuclear and other radioactive materials. Similar equipment has been installed at over 200 sites around the world.

More information on NNSA's Second Line of Defense program is available online.

Established by Congress in 2000, NNSA is a semi-autonomous agency within the U.S. Department of Energy responsible for enhancing national security through the military application of nuclear science in the nation's national security enterprise. NNSA maintains and enhances the safety, security, reliability, and performance of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile without nuclear testing; reduces the global danger from weapons of mass destruction; provides the U.S. Navy with safe and effective nuclear propulsion; and responds to nuclear and radiological emergencies in the U.S. and abroad.

http://nuclearstreet.com/blogs/nuclear_power_news/archive/2009/12/07/nnsa-and-the-border-police-of-romania-cooperate-to-thwart-nuclear-smuggling-12074.aspx

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Washington Post
6 December 2009

Who Loses The Iran Game

By David Ignatius

How will the confrontation over Iran's nuclear program evolve during the next year? If a simulation game played at Harvard last week is any guide, the situation won't look pretty: Iran will be closer to having the bomb, and America will fail to obtain tough U.N. sanctions; diplomatic relations with Russia, China and Europe will be strained; and Israel will be threatening unilateral military action.

My scorecard had Team Iran as the winner and Team America as the loser. The U.S. team -- unable to stop the Iranian nuclear program and unwilling to go to war -- concluded the game by embracing a strategy of containment and deterrence. The Iranian team wound up with Russia and China as its diplomatic protectors. And the Israeli team ended in a sharp break with Washington.

Mind you, this was just an exercise. But it revealed some important real-life dynamics -- and the inability of any diplomatic strategy, so far, to stop the Iranian nuclear push.

The simulation was organized by Graham Allison, the head of the Belfer Center at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. It was animated by the key players: Nicholas Burns, former undersecretary of state, as President Obama; and Dore Gold, Israel's former ambassador to the United Nations, as Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu. They agreed to let me use their names in this summary.

The gamers framed their strategies realistically: Obama's America wants to avoid war, which means restraining Israel; Iran wants to continue its nuclear program, even as it dickers over a deal to enrich uranium outside its borders, such as the one floated in Geneva in October; Israel doesn't trust America to stop Iran and is looking for help from the Gulf Arab countries and Europe.

The Obama team was confounded by congressional demands for unilateral U.S. sanctions against companies involved in Iran's energy sector. This shot at Iran ended up backfiring, since some of the key companies were from Russia and China -- the very nations whose support the United States needs for strong U.N. sanctions. The Russians and Chinese were so offended that they began negotiating with Tehran behind America's back.

"We started out thinking we were playing a weak hand, but by the end, everyone was negotiating for us," said the leader of the Iranian team, Columbia University professor Gary Sick. By the December 2010 hypothetical endpoint, Iran had doubled its supply of low-enriched uranium and was pushing ahead with weaponization.

The trickiest problem for our imaginary Obama was his relationship with the fictive Netanyahu. As Burns and Gold played these roles, they had two sharp exchanges in which America asked for assurances that Israel wouldn't attack Iran without U.S. permission. The Israeli prime minister, as played by Gold, refused to make that pledge, insisting that Israel alone must decide how to protect its security. Whereupon Burns's president warned that if Israel did strike, contrary to U.S. interests, Washington might publicly denounce the attack -- producing an open break as in the 1956 Suez crisis.

The two key players agreed later that the simulation highlighted real tensions that the two countries need to understand better. "The most difficult problem we have is how to restrain Israel," said Burns. "My own view is that we need to play for a long-term solution, avoid a third war in the Greater Middle East and wear down the Iranians over time."

Gold said the game clarified for him a worrying difference of opinion between U.S. and Israeli leaders: "The U.S. is moving away from preventing a nuclear Iran to containing a nuclear Iran -- with deterrence based on the Cold War experience. That became clear in the simulation. Israel, in contrast, still believes a nuclear Iran must be prevented."

The game showed that diplomacy will become much harder next year. As Burns explains: "The U.S. probably will get no help from Russia and China, Iran will be divided and immobile, Europe will be weak, and the U.S. may have to restrain Israel."

What worried me most about this game is what worries me in real life: There is a "fog of diplomacy," comparable to Clausewitz's famous fog of war. Players aren't always clear on what's really happening; they misread or ignore signals sent by others; they take actions that have unintended and sometimes devastating consequences.

The simulated world of December 2010 looks ragged and dangerous. If the real players truly mean to contain Iran and stop it from getting the bomb, they need to avoid the snares that were so evident in the Harvard game.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/12/04/AR2009120403074.html>

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Washington Post

6 December 2009

A Nuclear Watchdog's Parting Shots

A conversation with Mohamed ElBaradei

By Joby Warrick

Last week, Mohamed ElBaradei stepped down as the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, ending a 12-year tenure marked by confrontations with North Korea, Iran and Syria as well as public clashes with Washington. Three days into his retirement, the 67-year-old Egyptian lawyer and Nobel laureate talked with The Washington Post's intelligence reporter Joby Warrick to assess the prospects for a nuclear deal with Iran. He spoke publicly for the first time about the IAEA's landmark Nov. 27 resolution chastising Iran, and that country's defiant threat to expand its nuclear program.

Excerpts: Has diplomacy with Iran finally reached a dead end?

The resolution was an act of frustration, but there was no mention by anyone that this was the end of the fight for a diplomatic solution. The same people who sponsored the resolution continue to talk about the importance of reaching out to Iran. . . . What we saw from Iran after the resolution was like a tantrum. I hope the tantrum will subside and go away, and they will see their interest, which is clearly to engage on a basis of respect and goodwill. I also hope that the U.S. and its partners will see the need to be slightly more patient, and realize that we will have to go through this domestic hype by Iran and get back on the right track, which is engagement. I don't see any other way.

President Obama famously offered Iran an "outstretched hand." Do new developments suggest he was naïve?

You have to look at it in the context of 50 years of animosity and distrust. . . . We only started to deal seriously with Iran, in my view, with the coming of the new administration in the U.S., when Barack Obama said, "We are willing to move forward without preconditions on the basis of mutual respect." That sounds like platitudes, but respect is very much the key to the whole dialogue.

For those who are saying Obama is naïve, I don't see that any of them have come up with a better alternative. The policy that was in place for the previous six years failed. In my view the problem could have been resolved four to five years ago if the previous policy was more pragmatic and based on realism, not ideology.

You believe the previous administration is largely responsible for the setbacks with Iran and North Korea?

There has been mismanagement, in my view, by all sides. I'm not exonerating in any way Iran or North Korea. But diplomacy is the art of the possible. . . . For at least three years, the U.S. was against any dialogue with Iran. This was the ideology of the time -- "we don't talk to countries that are 'axis of evil.'" The animosity was described in biblical terms, and rhetoric makes a lot of difference. You cannot describe a country as part of an "axis of evil" and then turn around and expect them to have trust or behave in certain ways.

You have said you oppose sanctions as counterproductive. But what's the alternative?

People talk about smart sanctions and crippling sanctions. I've never seen smart sanctions, and crippling sanctions cripple everyone, including innocent civilians, and make the government more popular. . . . You can use pressure, but subtly. You can use back channels. What's important is the perception of how the country is being treated. It is a very important psychological factor.

Israel has talked about the end of the year as a deadline for Iran to give in to international demands, suggesting that a military strike might be on the table.

That would be absolutely the worst thing that could happen. There is no military solution. . . . If a country is bombed, you give them every reason -- with the support of everybody in the country and outside the country -- to go for nuclear weapons, and nobody can even blame them.

. . . We've seen in our last report that Iran is not accelerating its production of enriched uranium. Whatever the reason -- technical or political -- it is something we need to take into account. We don't see an imminent threat tomorrow.

In September, Iran acknowledged a secret uranium enrichment plant at Qom, the latest in a long list of hidden nuclear projects to be exposed. Can there be any doubt about Iran's intentions?

There is definitely concern about Iran's future intentions, but as I've always said, I can't read future intentions. . . . There have been allegations that Iran has done some studies on weaponization -- I emphasize these are alleged studies, not the manufacture of nuclear weapons -- but even your own national intelligence estimate concluded that they stopped this in 2003. . . . Is there a risk? There is always a risk. But the approach should be "Yes, we are concerned, but we are not panicked." And then you try to find a solution that is not based on panic.

After 12 years at the IAEA, are you more optimistic or pessimistic that the world can avoid a nuclear exchange or terrorist attack?

On one hand, I think we are facing more threats, because of the spread of nuclear technology and nuclear material, coupled with the rise in extremism. On the other hand, right now, and especially since Obama has come to power, there is definitely a change in the air, an environment where people are talking more and more that we need to get rid of nuclear weapons. Hopefully this will be followed by concrete steps. I'm waiting to see the new START [Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty] treaty. Hopefully the CTBT [Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty] will be coming into force. If these things start to come along, the nuclear wannabes -- the ones who still believe that acquiring nuclear weapons brings them insurance, or brings them power -- will have to rethink their strategy.

Do you worry that a nuclear Iran could trigger an arms race in the Middle East?

I'm not sure you can link it to Iran, per se. You have a region in which good governance is in short supply, and you also have poverty and inequality. With this combination you should not be surprised that there's an environment of insecurity, in which countries may be tempted to obtain dominance through acquiring nuclear weapons or at least capability. . . . We cannot continue to live under a Damocles sword of nuclear weapons, because it will lead to more proliferation, and sooner or later, someone will use a nuclear weapon, either by design or by computer error.

Under your leadership the IAEA has assumed a far more prominent role -- some would say a more political and controversial one as well.

You can't separate security from politics. We cannot be unaware of the political context in which we operate and the political ramifications of our work. Iraq is an obvious example -- how verification can make the difference between war and peace. . . . I find that it is part of my job to see how we can build a political solution that can build trust and build confidence. If people consider it politicization, so be it. But for the agency to take a myopic approach to its role, it would be a disservice to the world.

Why you think the United States got it so wrong on Iraq and WMD?

We operated from here on the basis of good faith. We were assigned to verify whether Iraq had nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction. It was not an easy task, dealing with a horrible dictator like Saddam Hussein, but we had to do our job in a fair and objective way. However, unfortunately in hindsight, we discovered that the decision to go war was not based on our work but was based on so-called regime change. The decision was taken in 2002, a year before we started our inspections.

How does regime change fit with international law? How do you justify that almost a million innocent civilians have died as the price of getting rid of a dictator? Who is accountable for this at the end of the day, after it was found that there were no weapons of mass destruction?

Obama will give his acceptance speech this week for the Nobel Prize. As a fellow Nobel laureate, what advice would you give him?

In my view he is a man who is changing the world. Since he took power he has sent a message that had been missing for many years, which is that we are one human family and that we have to coexist -- that we have to respect each other's race, creeds and religion. We are doomed to live together and we have to do everything we can to live together and bring the best out of our humanity.

I'm sure that his message is that "We can change." That was his slogan for the campaign. He applied that to the U.S., and I think he should apply it to the world.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/12/04/AR2009120402607.html>

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UPI Asia.com
7 December 2009

Pyongyang's Nuclear-Backed Grand Strategy

By Mitsuo Takai

Tokyo, Japan — As North Korea continues its nuclear adventure, there are growing voices within Japan's establishment about the imminent danger it poses. To avert the crisis, they believe, Japan should apply pressure on Pyongyang by introducing U.S. nuclear weapons into Japanese territory. In this way they hope to force North Korea to abandon its nuclear development program.

Their scenario is based on lessons from Cold-War Europe in the 1980s, where the U.S.-led NATO built up nuclear forces and obliged the Soviets to remove their SS-20 intermediate-range ballistic missiles from Eastern Europe.

However, the strategic environment in Cold-War Europe and the current one in East Asia, as well as the nature and intentions of the Soviets in those days and those of North Korea today, are so starkly different that the European example cannot be a good precedent.

In those days, as Western Europe confronted the threats of 405 SS-20s in Eastern Europe, the U.S. government set out on talks with the Soviets in 1980 on nuclear reduction.

Then, in order to enforce their diplomacy, U.S. forces deployed 108 Pershing IRBMs in West Germany as well as 464 Tomahawk ground-launched cruise missiles in five countries of Western Europe.

In 1987, seven years after the talks had started, the United States and the Soviet Union came to an agreement known as the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. It led to the elimination of all the nuclear and conventional ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges between 500 and 5,500 kilometers.

Those missiles included 846 U.S. Pershings and GLCMs, as well as 1,864 Soviet SS-20s, SS-4s, S-12s, SS-23s and AS-15s. In other words, in all 2,710 missiles were destroyed.

It is worth mentioning here that behind the INF Treaty were the ongoing negotiations for the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, or START. This was necessitated by the dreadful fact that the number of nuclear weapons retained by both sides exceeded as many as 20,000 by the mid-1970s as a result of a seemingly unrestricted nuclear armament competition.

Accordingly, both rivals had to reduce their strategic nuclear weapons, which were enormously costly to maintain. As a result, START was concluded by 1991.

While the INF talks were under way, the Warsaw Pact nations posed a grave security risk as they deployed their formidable conventional forces, poised to invade Western Europe. Besides, the Soviet leaders pushed their ground forces into Afghanistan, apparently aiming at Iran's oil, which was essential for the West.

Accordingly, U.S. leaders, in aiming to reduce East-West tensions, had to consider the entire strategic and military situation. Thus the U.S. government accepted decommissioning of the Pershings and GLCMs rather than a unilateral push for the Soviets' one-sided elimination of the SS-20s.

Given these historical facts, it is safe to say that those who now advocate the introduction of U.S. nuclear weapons into Japan as a way to pressure Pyongyang are taking a rather simplistic view. They assume that the Soviets during the INF talks were very apprehensive about the deployment of Pershings and GLCMs by the US side.

But as mentioned above, the strategic environment surrounding the United States and the Soviet Union was not that simple at all. For one thing, from the start of the talks they had to spend nearly ten years to eventually eliminate the entire arsenal of INFs. They were very concerned about degrading their relative combat powers by unilateral cuts in nuclear power.

Unlike the Soviets in those days, North Korea today could not alone resort to war against the United States, the military superpower of the world, even after its nuclear weapons are in operation.

As apparent in the process of the six-party talks, the Pyongyang regime has only one option for survival – that is, to exert sophisticated negotiation tactics under a shrewd diplomatic strategy. Their approach turns out to be a modern adaptation of the traditional theory of the art of war nurtured through the long history of the Orient.

North Korean leaders must be aware that they would be seen as enemies of humanity and face a disastrous fate from a devastating retaliatory onslaught if they ever committed a nuclear strike against Tokyo or Osaka in Japan.

But Pyongyang's diplomatic and psychological maneuvering, backed by its hypothetical nuclear ambitions, is producing unexpected effects, for Japanese popular sentiment and leaders' thoughts are not based solely on cool and rational discretion.

U.S. forces are poised to carry out nuclear attacks by utilizing ICBMs and strategic bombers launched from the U.S. mainland, as well as nuclear ballistic missile submarines docked along the Pacific coast. In other words, these strategic nuclear weapons have effectively replaced the INFs and tactical nuclear weapons.

Accordingly, contrary to widely accepted assertions, there is hardly a need to introduce nuclear arms into Japanese territory. Yet the U.S. presence with its strategic nuclear weapons has not dissuaded Pyongyang from pursuing its nuclear ambitions. Pyongyang may believe that a U.S. nuclear strike on the Korean Peninsula is nearly impossible due to the fear of environmental pollution from a great deal of fallout and other factors.

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(Mitsuo Takai is a retired colonel and former researcher in the military science faculty of the Staff College for Japan's Ground Self Defense Force. ©Copyright Mitsuo Takai.)

http://www.upiasia.com/Security/2009/12/04/pyongyangs_nuclear-backed_grand_strategy/4235/

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START I Treaty Ends: What Lies Ahead?

On December 5, 2009, the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START I), one of the key arms control treaties ended. This carefully developed agreement, which included a wide range of mutual monitoring measures, was signed before the collapse of the Soviet Union, but came into force only in December 1994.

According to the START I treaty, Moscow and Washington pledged to reduce their nuclear arsenals during seven years to 6,000 warheads. Part of the agreement was the Memorandum of Understanding, which defined the rules for counting warheads for every type of intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) and heavy (strategic) bomber.

In January 1993, the Russian Federation and the U.S. signed an additional treaty on the limitations of strategic nuclear forces (START II). This treaty was mostly based on the procedures and provisions agreed upon at the signing of START I, enacting only new quantitative limits (up to 3,000-3,500 warheads until January 1, 2003) and some new procedures.

The U.S. Congress ratified the START II treaty in January 1996, but in Russia the ratification process dragged on until April 2000. The formal reason for this was the lack of sufficient funds in Russia's federal budget. The real reasons stemmed from the worsening of Russian-U.S. relations given NATO's military intervention in the Balkans. Unfortunately, in June 2002, the U.S. withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (1972), which prevented START II from coming into force. Nevertheless, both sides fulfilled the START II provisions that corresponded to their national interests. Among other things, Russia stopped destroying its heavy missiles and refitting ICBMs with single warheads.

One month earlier in Moscow, the framework Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT) was signed. The only thing that the sides were able to agree on was the minimum levels of operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads (1700-2200). According to the treaty, reduction of the number of warheads must be concluded by the end of 2012.

The signatories determine the sequence of the process of nuclear disarmament and the content and structure of each nation's strategic nuclear forces independently of one another. All of this was no problem during the validity period of START I, but could be a problem now if a new treaty on a reduction of strategic nuclear forces (SNF) is not signed.

All of the above demonstrates that in the last 20 years, only one basic agreement was in effect - the START I treaty. All other nuclear disarmament agreements were fully or partially based on this agreement, which was the culmination of many years of difficult Russian-U.S. negotiations on reduction of strategic nuclear forces.

The negotiation process was practically rolled back in the mid-1990s and resumed only in 2009.

In July 2009, the presidents of Russia and the U.S. agreed to conclude a new legally binding agreement on replacing the still valid START I treaty. Negotiators determined the reduction levels for strategic delivery weapons (500-1100) and warheads installed on them (1500-1675). However, at the time, they were not able to agree on a considerable reduction in the number of delivery weapons, rules for counting warheads, or the use of conventionally-armed strategic delivery weapons. But mutual interest in the process of nuclear disarmament was expressed.

The subsequent negotiation process was rather bumpy. Nevertheless, according to some reports, both sides were able to reduce the ceiling for strategic delivery weapons (to 700) and group them with conventionally-armed strategic delivery weapons. In this case, the number of strategic delivery weapons with nuclear warheads is reduced to 600, which suggests a considerable convergence of negotiating positions. Russia responded by agreeing to count only the actual number of warheads installed on delivery weapons, which allows their eventual dismantling (removing the additional number of warheads). In addition, Moscow has agreed to limit the regions where strategic guided missile systems (Topol and Topol M) are based.

If this information is confirmed, then most of the difficult issues in reduction of strategic nuclear forces have been overcome. It would then be easier to agree on a system of mutual checks and inspections.

Such a document could be signed in December 2009 - in a European capital, for instance. Of course, it will not yet be a full-fledged agreement since there was no time to develop one, but it could be amended with corresponding protocols and memorandums in the near future.

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