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New York Times
December 16, 2009

Iran Says It Tested Upgraded Missile

By MICHAEL SLACKMAN

CAIRO — Iran announced Wednesday that it had test-fired an improved version of its most advanced missile capable of reaching Israel and parts of Europe, in a move that appeared aimed to discourage a military attack on its nuclear sites and to defy Western pressure over its nuclear program.

The announcement provoked immediate rebukes from the White House and leaders in Europe, and appeared likely to intensify pressure from the United States and other Western powers to impose tougher economic sanctions on Iran.

A White House spokesman told Reuters that the test undermined Iran's claims that its nuclear program is peaceful, and said it would "increase the seriousness and resolve of the international community to hold Iran accountable" for its provocations.

The British prime minister, Gordon Brown, said the missile test "does make the case for us moving further on sanctions," according to the Associated Press.

Iranian television gave a brief report on Wednesday of a successful test of the two-stage, solid-fuel missile called a Sejil-2. Iran's defense minister, Ahmad Vahidi, said the new missile is faster, more accurate and harder to shoot down than earlier versions and that it increases "the country's technical and tactical powers," according to Iran's official news agency.

Iran was clearly sending a warning to the West and to Israel, regional experts said.

"It shows that Iran has the ability to stir unrest in the region and impact U.S. interests," said Mustafa el-Labbad, director of The East Center for Regional and Strategic Studies in Cairo. "It can reach the oil fields on the other side of the Gulf."

Iran's test aggravated already tense relations with the West following a breakdown in efforts to diplomatically resolve a dispute over its nuclear program. Iran backed off a deal that would have required it to ship most of its low-enriched uranium abroad, where it would be processed, turned into fuel for a medical reactor and returned.

But once the deal was announced in October, it quickly became a political liability inside Iran as political adversaries of the government attacked its terms. Since then, the Iranian government has tried to reshape the deal to something that could be sold at home, issuing terms which the West had already rejected.

At the same time, Iran's military has put on a show of force. Last month, the military staged five days of war games specifically aimed at discouraging an attack on its nuclear sites and officials warned they could hit Tel Aviv if they chose.

This latest missile test raises the stakes for negotiators, and for Iran's regional neighbors.

"This is the missile of greatest concern at this point," said Valerie Lincy, senior associate at the Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control from her office in Paris. "So the fact that they're testing it now is worrisome in of itself and worrisome if you put it in the context of what's going on with the nuclear program."

Though the range of this rocket is comparable to the liquid-fueled Shahab III, which Iran first obtained from North Korea, a solid-fuel rocket is easier to use on short notice, easier to hide from attack, and more accurate, experts said.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps, an ideologically driven military, political and economic powerhouse, controls both the missile program and the nuclear program. The West has accused Iran of trying to build nuclear weapons, which it has denied, insisting it is developing civilian nuclear technology. As that conflict has burned for years, the Guards have worked aggressively to enhance the missile program.

The decision to make this test comes against a backdrop of Iran's own internal political crisis sparked by the disputed presidential election in June. The Guards have taken control of internal security and have been uncompromising domestically or internationally. Internally, leaders of the Guards have called for arresting leaders of the reform movement and internationally they have rejected any compromise on the nuclear program.

Political analysts said that the Guards might benefit from heightened conflict with the west and even from tougher sanctions, allowing the force to protect its economic and political interests.

“Iran is rational,” said Mr. Labbad. “It likes to appear as though it’s crazy. But they know very well to what level they are escalating this to.”

Mona El Naggar contributed reporting.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/17/world/middleeast/17iran.html>

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New York Times
December 16, 2009

Nuclear Memo In Persian Puzzles Spy Agencies

By WILLIAM J. BROAD and DAVID E. SANGER

For many months now, American and European intelligence agencies have been trading theories about a spare, two-page document written in Persian that, if genuine, would strongly suggest that scientists in Iran were planning some of the final experiments needed to perfect an atom bomb.

But like so many pieces of evidence in the West’s confrontation with Tehran, the neatly written memorandum, laying out the next steps of a complex scientific process, raises as many questions as it answers.

Intelligence officials say they have yet to authenticate the document, which describes research Iran would need to conduct on an advanced technology to detonate a nuclear weapon, if it was to develop one. Even if the paper is genuine, they say, it is unclear if it provides new insights into the state of Iran’s weapons research.

Diplomats raised the possibility that the publication of the memo on The Times of London Web site late Sunday could be part of an effort to raise international alarm over Iran’s intentions or progress in developing nuclear weapons capacity.

The Iranians have said nothing about it, or any other materials that international nuclear inspectors confront them with that suggest they have pursued — and may still be pursuing — work on a bomb design. Their silence, punctuated only by periodic responses that the evidence consists of “fabrications” by the C.I.A. and others, explains why Mohamed ElBaradei, the just-departed head of the United Nations’ nuclear inspection agency, declared that his inquiries into Iran’s weapons program had reached a “dead end.”

The document describes a plan for measuring the output of a device called a neutron initiator, which has no use other than triggering a nuclear explosion. Intelligence agencies are treating it as if the very paper it was written on was itself radioactive.

Once burned when it accepted evidence about Iraq’s search for uranium that turned out to be a forgery, the C.I.A. has not declared whether it believes the document is real, according to intelligence officials from several countries. European spy agencies are similarly cautious.

“Some people think this is the smoking gun,” one senior European official said Tuesday, “and others say it will be very hard to prove if it’s authentic.”

Inside intelligence agencies, the document has attracted much attention because its subject matter is familiar to anyone who has delved into Iran’s atomic experiments: It describes a testing regime that would help Iran master the science of the initiator, a device to generate bursts of subatomic particles known as neutrons, which initiate and speed the chain reactions that lead to the detonation of a warhead.

When the document appeared in a public report on Sunday, it forced American officials to begin to talk about it. But they insisted that even if it turned out to be genuine, it would only reinforce their strong belief that Iran had worked on a weapon.

“This information’s been sloshing around for well over a year,” said one American official, who insisted on anonymity because he was discussing sensitive intelligence information. “It’s not new to the intelligence people. They’ve taken account of it. If, in fact, the document’s on the level, it shows the Iranians at some point were interested in testing an initiator. That’s not a warhead or the core of a bomb. It’s another reminder — as if one were needed — that the Iranians have a lot of explaining to do when it comes to things nuclear.”

Concern that Iran could be working on neutron initiators goes back at least six years. As early as 2003, the inspection agency, the International Atomic Energy Agency, found evidence in Iran that raised suspicions.

In the current case, the most sensational claim is that the undated document was drafted in 2007. Because American intelligence agencies have judged that Iran suspended its effort to build a nuclear warhead in 2003 — a conclusion

that neither the Europeans nor the Israelis agree with — the 2007 date, if true, would mean that the American assessment is wrong. And since the document describes a four-year research plan, the arms work, at least in theory, could be hitting its stride right now.

Not only intelligence agencies but also private nuclear experts see high risks in ringing alarm bells just yet.

The Institute for Science and International Security, a group in Washington that tracks nuclear proliferation, said in a report Monday that it “urges caution and further assessment” of the document, in particular to confirm its date. “The document does not mention nuclear weapons,” the report noted, “and we have seen no evidence of an Iranian decision to build them.”

The Times of London claimed that the document showed that Iran “is working on testing a key final component of a nuclear bomb.” It made public the document in its original Persian as well as an English translation, starting a groundswell of global news coverage and expert reaction.

“It’s very troubling — if real,” said Thomas B. Cochran, a senior scientist in the nuclear program of the Natural Resources Defense Council, a private group in Washington that tracks atomic arsenals.

Richard M. Barlow, an expert on nuclear proliferation and a former C.I.A. analyst, said he found the document seemingly genuine. “If it’s a forgery,” he said, “it’s very good.”

Claims and evidence of Iranian interest in neutron initiators go back two decades, to the earliest days of Iran’s suspected work on nuclear arms. In Vienna, international inspectors have filed many reports about how Iran began experiments in the late 1980s on generating neutrons with polonium-210 — a form of the metallic element that is highly radioactive.

The Iranians did the polonium experiments on the Tehran Research Reactor, the device at the center of the current political standoff over whether Iran will export most of its enriched uranium in exchange for fresh reactor fuel. The reactor can produce medical isotopes. Over the years, Iran has been less forthcoming about its potential military uses.

In multiple reports, beginning in 2004, the inspection agency warned that Iran’s polonium research on the Tehran reactor had potential relevance for making “a neutron initiator in some designs of nuclear weapons.”

So too, in February 2005, an Iranian opposition group known as the National Council of Resistance of Iran said it had obtained evidence that Iran’s polonium research was getting close to the point of producing a device that could “trigger a chain reaction for a nuclear bomb.”

This week, nuclear experts said the research outlined in the newly disclosed document implied that Iranian work on nuclear initiators might have advanced past the polonium model.

William J. Broad reported from New York, and David E. Sanger from Washington.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/16/world/middleeast/16nuke.html>

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Tehran Times – Iran

Wednesday, December 16, 2009

Tehran Dismisses Report On Nuclear Program As Psyops

Tehran Times Political Desk

TEHRAN – The Iranian Foreign Ministry has dismissed a report that claims Tehran is working on a key component of a nuclear bomb, calling it a psychological warfare scenario devised by the West.

“Some countries are angry that our people defend their nuclear rights,” Foreign Ministry spokesperson Ramin Mehmanparast told reporters at his weekly press briefing on Tuesday.

When the Western countries “want to pressure us, they devise such scenarios,” he added.

Mehmanparast made the remarks in response to a report published in the British newspaper The Times, which claimed on Monday it had obtained notes describing a four-year plan by Iran to test a neutron initiator, the component of a nuclear bomb which triggers an explosion.

“This claim has political aims, and it is psychological warfare” and it has not been verified by the International Atomic Energy Agency, AFP quoted the Foreign Ministry spokesman as saying.

----- 5+1 group meeting on Iran cancelled

Meanwhile, senior officials from three countries involved in the discussions on Iran's nuclear program said on Monday that a previously scheduled meeting on the issue has been cancelled at China's request.

One of the officials said China cited scheduling problems when asking for the cancellation, and the 5+1 group (China, the United States, Russia, Britain, France, and Germany), now plan to talk by conference call. That call was tentatively set for December 22, AFP reported.

The official said China seemed to have genuine problems over attending the meeting in Brussels or outside the Copenhagen climate summit and did not appear to be seeking to delay it. Still, the development was a setback in efforts to present a unified front on Iran.

China, a permanent member of the UN Security Council that has developed a close relationship with Iran, has persistently defied efforts to pressure Iran, saying the dispute with Tehran should be resolved diplomatically

http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=209994

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

China Key To Additional Sanctions Against Iran - Russian Expert

16 December 2009

Any Western sanctions against Iran could be rendered ineffective by China, a Russian analyst said on Wednesday.

In an interview with RIA Novosti, Vladimir Yevseyev, a senior research associate at the Russian Academy of Sciences World Economics and International Relations Institute, opined that the United States' latest move to deter Tehran from pursuing its nuclear program would be useless without China's involvement.

The U.S. House of Representatives on Tuesday approved a bill imposing sanctions on companies supplying gasoline to Iran.

"If China does not join in, that will be ineffective," Yevseyev said.

He added that if the United States and other Western countries completely pulled out of Iran's market, Beijing would easily make up for the difference.

"Even if the West stops gasoline supplies, I don't think that would be critical - everything depends on China, while China is now carefully weighing up and analyzing all options."

Iran, which is already under three sets of United Nations sanctions for refusing to halt uranium enrichment, recently announced plans to build 10 new uranium enrichment facilities. Tehran insists it needs nuclear technology to generate electricity, while Western powers suspect it of pursuing an atomic weapons program.

Asked whether further sanctions were possible, Yevseyev said they "could realistically be imposed in February."

"First, because Libya holds the rotating presidency of the UN until February 1, and second, because a deadline has been set for Iran - until the end of the year."

However, he stressed: "That is, unless China wields its veto power."

During a UN Security Council meeting last Thursday, the United States, Britain and France warned Iran that they were likely to push for new sanctions early next year if it refused to halt its nuclear program.

The five permanent members of the UN Security Council and Germany are working together to peacefully resolve international concerns over Iran's nuclear program. During their last meeting on November 20 in Brussels, political directors or deputy foreign ministers from the six powers urged Iran to agree to a UN-backed uranium enrichment scheme.

The IAEA in November censured Iran for withholding information on its nuclear program. The UN's nuclear watchdog also urged Iran to freeze construction of its newly revealed uranium enrichment facility near the city of Qom.

MOSCOW, December 16 (RIA Novosti)

<http://en.rian.ru/russia/20091216/157261848.html>

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London Times – U.K.
December 17, 2009

Fears Of Nuclear Arms Race As Nations Gear Up To Follow Iran

James Hider in Jerusalem, Tony Halpin in Moscow and Hugh Tomlinson in Dubai

The failure of the international community to reach a deal with Tehran is sparking fears of an atomic arms race in the volatile and oil-rich region.

While the West may be doing all it can to curb Iran's nuclear ambitions it is helping many countries in the Middle East to obtain civilian nuclear technology.

Ehud Barak, the Israeli Defence Minister, said that failure to enforce Iranian compliance with the International Atomic Energy Agency, the UN nuclear watchdog, could lead to a race for nuclear weapons. "Think of Egypt or Turkey or Saudi Arabia," he said. "They can hardly afford not being nuclear if Iran turns . . . nuclear."

The head of Israeli military intelligence said that Iran had shown how the line between civilian and nuclear intent could become dangerously blurred. "In its nuclear programme Iran is conducting a strategy that it designed for itself," said Major-General Amos Yadlin, whose country has an unacknowledged nuclear arsenal.

"This is not a matter of achieving the technology for an atomic bomb as quickly as possible but rather, it is a measured, sophisticated strategy that centres on advancing in a wide front toward setting up a nuclear infrastructure and reducing the distance to a bomb while paying the minimum price," he added.

Some states have been drawn into the nuclear fold unwillingly. King Abdullah of Jordan said in 2007 that the rules on nuclear proliferation had shifted and lamented that "while Jordan was saying, 'We would like to have a nuclear-free zone in the area,' after this summer, everybody's going for nuclear programmes."

He added: "What's expected from us should be a standard across the board. We want to make sure this is used for energy. What we don't want is an arms race to come out of this."

The international community is trying to balance legitimate energy needs with limiting access to rogue states such as Syria, whose suspected nuclear plant was bombed in 2007.

George Perkovich, an expert on nuclear proliferation at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington, said: "There's a real concern at the level of motivation." He noted that because of the cost of the technology and low entry level for Middle Eastern countries, it could be years before any could rival Iran.

A rush for technology in the unstable region, however, could damage the Non-Proliferation Treaty. "In places where there's demand, all hell would break loose," Mr Perkovich said.

Today the US and the United Arab Emirates will exchange diplomatic notes on a billion-dollar nuclear co-operation deal, the first between the US and a Middle East nation.

A French consortium made a final bid this week to sell at least two reactors to Abu Dhabi, although it faces competition from a low offer from a South Korean company. Washington and Paris have commercial and military ties with Abu Dhabi and have been lobbying for the estimated \$40 billion (£25 billion) contract. A final decision is expected soon. The first reactor in the UAE will open in 2017. South Korea will provide Jordan with its first plant by 2014.

The nuclear plans of Saudi Arabia, backed by the previous US Administration, are less advanced than the UAE but the US and France appear to be the main contenders. Riyadh signed an agreement with Washington in May last year, and a deal with Paris is close. There are fears that Saudi Arabia, which funded much of Pakistan's nuclear research, may demand access to the technology.

Saudi Arabia's main rival is Egypt, whose President, Hosni Mubarak, signed a ten-year strategic co-operation pact with Russia in June. It included a \$1.8 billion tender to build the first Egyptian nuclear power plant.

This year Russia, which developed Iran's Bushehr civilian reactor, struck a ten-year nuclear co-operation pact with Jordan and Vladimir Putin, the Prime Minister, offered co-operation on technology to the UAE in April.

The state-run company Atomstroyexport plans to build Morocco's first plant and Algeria has signed a nuclear pact with Russia.

Sergei Shmatko, the Russian Energy Minister, said that the Arab world was a key area for nuclear contracts. "We have made a decision to work extensively in this direction and we can achieve good results on this market," he said.

Moscow has also considered plans for Turkey, which is shifting its diplomatic focus towards the Middle East and Central Asia.

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article6959779.ece>

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Ha'aretz Daily – Israel
December 17, 2009

Obama Told China: I Can't Stop Israel Strike On Iran Indefinitely

By Barak Ravid and Natasha Mozgovaya, Haaretz Correspondents

U.S. President Barack Obama has warned his Chinese counterpart that the United States would not be able to keep Israel from attacking Iranian nuclear installations for much longer, senior officials in Jerusalem told Haaretz.

They said Obama warned President Hu Jintao during the American's visit to Beijing a month ago as part of the U.S. attempt to convince the Chinese to support strict sanctions on Tehran if it does not accept Western proposals for its nuclear program.

The Israeli officials, who asked to remain anonymous due to the sensitivity of the matter, said the United States had informed Israel on Obama's meetings in Beijing on Iran. They said Obama made it clear to Hu that at some point the United States would no longer be able to prevent Israel from acting as it saw fit in response to the perceived Iranian threat.

After the Beijing summit, the U.S. administration thought the Chinese had understood the message; Beijing agreed to join the condemnation of Iran by the International Atomic Energy Agency only a week after Obama's visit. But in the past two weeks the Chinese have maintained their hard stance regarding the West's wishes to impose sanctions on the Islamic Republic.

The Israeli officials say the Americans now understand that the Chinese agreed to join the condemnation announcement only because Obama made a personal request to Hu, not as part of a policy change.

The Chinese have even refused a Saudi-American initiative designed to end Chinese dependence on Iranian oil, which would allow China to agree to the sanctions, said the Israeli officials.

Saudi Arabia, which is also very worried about the Iranian nuclear program and keen to advance international steps against Iran, offered to supply the Chinese the same quantity of oil the Iranians now provide, and at much cheaper prices. But China rejected the deal.

Since Obama's visit, the Chinese have refused to join any measures to impose sanctions. The Israeli officials say the Chinese have been giving unclear answers and have not been responding to the claims by Western nations. Beijing has been making do with statements such as "the time has not yet arrived for sanctions."

China's actions are particularly problematic because China will take over the presidency of the UN Security Council in January. Western diplomats say China would have no choice but to join in sanctions if Russia agrees to support them, but China could delay discussions and postpone any decision until February, when France becomes council president.

The Israeli officials say Russian President Dmitry Medvedev is showing a greater willingness for sanctions on Iran, despite hesitations by Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.

<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1135730.html>

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Boston Globe

Iran Making New Model Centrifuges For Nuke Program

By Ali Akbar Dareini, Associated Press Writer
December 18, 2009

TEHRAN, Iran --Iran's nuclear chief said Friday the country has started making more efficient centrifuge models that it plans to put in use by early 2011 -- a statement that underscores Tehran's defiance and adds to international concerns over its nuclear ambitions.

The official, Vice President Ali Akbar Salehi, said Iranian scientists are still testing the more advanced models before they will become operational at the country's enrichment facilities.

Tehran has been saying since April that it is building more advanced centrifuges capable of enriching uranium with higher efficiency and precision, but Salehi's remarks were the first indication of a timeline when the new models could become operational.

The new centrifuge models will be able to enrich uranium much faster than the old ones -- which would add to growing concerns in the West because they would allow Tehran to accelerate the pace of its program. That would mean Iran could amass more material in a shorter space of time that could be turned into the fissile core of missiles, should Tehran choose to do so.

Iran's uranium enrichment is a major concern to the international community, worried that the program masks efforts to make a nuclear weapon. Tehran insists its enrichment work is peaceful and only meant to generate electricity, not make an atomic bomb.

Iran has threatened to expand its enrichment program tenfold, even while rejecting a plan brokered by the U.N. nuclear watchdog agency to supply fuel for Iran's research reactor if Tehran exports most of its enriched stockpile. The U.N. plan would leave Iran -- at least temporarily -- without enough uranium to produce a bomb.

Centrifuges are machines used to enrich uranium -- a technology that can produce fuel for power plants or materials for a nuclear weapon. Uranium enriched to low level is used to produce fuel but further enrichment makes it suitable for use in building nuclear arms.

"We are currently producing new generation of centrifuges named IR3 and IR4," Salehi told the semiofficial Fars news agency. "We hope to use them by early 2011 after resolving problems and defects."

He did not elaborate on the technical details or the difference between various centrifuge types.

However, Salehi added: "We are not in a rush to enter the industrial-scale production stage."

The new centrifuges would likely replace the decades-old P-1 centrifuges, once acquired on the black market and in use at Iran's main uranium enrichment facility in Natanz, central Iran.

Iran has said the new centrifuges would also be installed at Iran's recently revealed secret uranium enrichment facility. The plant is still under construction at Fordo, near the holy city of Qom.

Salehi said that more than 6,000 centrifuges are currently enriching uranium -- 2,000 more than the figure mentioned in a November report by the U.N. watchdog, the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency.

The IAEA has reported that it is watching Iran's efforts to improve its centrifuges.

Iran says it will install more than 50,000 centrifuges at Natanz, but currently they have installed fewer than 9,000, so there could easily be room for more advanced models in the future, a Vienna nuclear expert said. The expert spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue.

Iranian officials have claimed that most parts for the new centrifuges are made domestically and others have been imported -- a sign that Iran was able to get around U.N. sanctions imposed on the country for its refusal to suspend uranium enrichment.

Iran's defiance has not wavered amid recent signals of possible more U.N. sanctions over its enrichment. Salehi said Friday such new sanctions won't stop Iran from developing its nuclear program.

"We don't welcome new (U.N. Security Council) resolutions," he told ISNA, another semiofficial news agency. "But resolutions won't stop us in any field, including the nuclear."

Associated Press writers George Jahn and Veronika Oleksyn in Vienna contributed to this report.

http://www.boston.com/news/world/middleeast/articles/2009/12/18/iran_making_new_model_centrifuges_for_nuke_program/

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

Russia Says Destroyed 9 ICBMs In 2009 Under START 1 Arms Pact

16 December 2009

Russia has destroyed nine intercontinental ballistic missiles this year under a Russian-U.S. strategic arms reduction treaty (START 1), the Strategic Missile Forces (SMF) chief said on Wednesday.

"In accordance with the START 1 treaty, the Strategic Missile Forces destroyed nine ICBMs in 2009, including seven RS-18 and two RS-20 ICBMs," Lt. Gen. Andrei Shvaichenko said.

The new document to replace the START 1 treaty, which expired on December 5, could significantly reduce the number of nuclear weapons on both sides.

The outline of the new pact was agreed on during a U.S.-Russia summit in Moscow in July and includes cutting nuclear arsenals to 1,500-1,675 operational warheads and delivery vehicles to 500-1,000. A new treaty is expected to be drafted by the end of 2009.

The commander also said the U.S. had conducted 15 on-site inspections of SMF facilities this year.

He said the SMF would carry out 13 ICBM test launches next year.

The commander said the SMF were currently armed with six types of fourth- and fifth-generation missile systems, four of them silo-based and two road-mobile.

Silo-based missiles make up 45% of the SMF's total and 85% of its nuclear capability.

Shvaichenko said Russia planned to develop a new liquid-propellant ICBM to replace the Voyevoda (SS-18 Satan), capable of carrying 10 warheads, by 2016.

The general earlier said the development of the SMF prioritized the introduction of advanced missile systems although the existing systems would be kept operational until their extended service life expired.

VLASIKHA (Moscow Region), December 16 (RIA Novosti)

<http://en.rian.ru/russia/20091216/157256398.html>

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New York Times
December 16, 2009

Delay Is Expected On Treaty Talks

By BLOOMBERG NEWS

WASHINGTON (Bloomberg News) — The United States does not expect to conclude negotiations with Russia on a nuclear arms treaty in time for an accord to be signed later this week when President Obama is in Copenhagen, the White House press secretary, Robert Gibbs, said Tuesday.

"We certainly hope that we continue to make progress on the negotiations," Mr. Gibbs said at his daily briefing. "I don't know if it gets done this week."

The 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty expired Dec. 5, although both countries continue to abide by it. Mr. Obama and President Dmitri A. Medvedev of Russia have pledged to sign a new accord that would lead to a reduction in the nuclear arsenals of both sides. Mr. Obama leaves on Thursday for the climate conference in Copenhagen.

"We're not planning currently for a signing ceremony in Copenhagen, and we're not planning to visit any nearby countries on that trip," Mr. Gibbs said.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/16/us/politics/16treaty.html>

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Russia Today – Russian News Channel

ROAR: "New START Will Be More Favorable To Russia's Interests"

16 December 2009

Moscow and Washington will not sign a new START treaty this week as some problems are still to be negotiated.

Many expected Obama and Medvedev to sign the agreement this week. However, White House Spokesman Robert Gibbs said on December 15 that the US administration *"has no current plans to sign a landmark nuclear arms reduction pact with Russia in Copenhagen."*

The two countries have promised to sign the agreement by the end of the year. The previous Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START 1) expired on December 5. *"For the first time over the last 37 years, Moscow and Washington have remained without a judicial act limiting their nuclear potentials,"* Kommersant daily said.

"It seems that the White House has decided not to be in a hurry and not to mix climatic problems with disarmament issues," Rossiyskaya Gazeta daily said. *"Experts have agreed on most details, but some small touches still remain, and the presidents of Russia and the US should discuss them during their personal meeting,"* the paper said.

"It is the heads of state who will announce to the world about the end of the work on the document," it added. *"It is possible that the concrete date and the place of the signing of it will be agreed in Copenhagen,"* the paper noted.

Yevgeny Myasnikov, the leading researcher at the Center for Disarmament, Energy and Ecology Studies, believes that the pause after December 5 is not "frightening." It is important what conditions the new treaty will contain.

"However, the danger of joint notifications and inspections that worked until recently will now stop working," he told Rosbalt news agency. *"Suspensions will appear immediately, and it is not ruled out that they will turn into inadequate reaction of one of the sides,"* he said.

Some analysts believe that the issues of the control over mobile ground-based missile systems and the limitation of a number of delivery vehicles may become a stumbling block, the agency said.

But Aleksey Arbatov, head of the Center of International Security at the Institute of World Economy and International Relations, believes that the main problem is inspections of both sides.

"The US wants to continue inspections of the plant in Votkinsk where missiles Topol-M, Iskander and Bulava are produced, and Russia's position is that it is unnecessary to inspect the plant itself, and the places where ballistic missiles are based are enough," Arbatov told Rosbalt.

"It is not a tragedy if the new treaty is not signed by December 5," he added. *"But it will be a heavy blow if the new treaty is not signed by May next year,"* he said.

The 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference is due to take place in New York in May. *"All nuclear states are awaiting this treaty that has been promised to them,"* Arbatov said.

Aleksandr Konovalov, president of the Institute for Strategic Assessment and Analysis, believes that the timing of the new agreement is not so important, *"more important is to think over all the clauses of it."* The ideal outcome would be to prolong the old agreement, he noted. The Russian Foreign Ministry earlier said the prolongation could be one of the options.

At the same time, *"the Russian military are hampering the prolongation of the START 1 because this treaty bans the deployment of new ballistic ground-based missiles with a separating warhead,"* Konovalov told Gazeta daily. They want to replace some old missiles with new ones by the end of the year, he said.

Russia will still replace the old missiles "in any case," Konovalov said, stressing that Moscow *"needs this treaty because we will have a colossal disparity with Americans. And if the presidents ordered to work out the text, I think that in the end it will be written."*

"It is possible to live for two months without a treaty," Konovalov noted. *"The main thing is not to take decisions that contradict the essence of the agreement."*

"The new agreement is expected to be "more equitable to the interests of Russia than the previous one," Moskovsky Komsomolets daily said. Most analysts believe that the START 1 "was not favorable for Russia and reflected the weakness of the country in the 1990s," the paper noted. Moscow *"had to agree to unfavorable conditions proposed by the Americans,"* the daily added.

"Now the situation has changed, and many things in the START 1 are not acceptable for us, and first of all the draconian measures of control," the paper said. The new version of the agreement does not provide for the possibility of around-the-clock American inspections at a Russian plant in the Republic of Udmurtia, according to the paper's sources.

In addition, telemetric data on test launches of Russia's missiles will not be transferred to the American side, the paper said. This demand was "absurd," the paper said. *"We ourselves provided the US with exact details of a missile's flight," it said, adding that "Americans could use the data for their missile defense."*

The future agreement will not influence Russia's plans *"to modernize its nuclear potential,"* the paper said. *"It will not limit the deployment of a new RS-24 system with a separating warhead and will not derail plans on the creation of a new heavy missile,"* the paper said.

Despite *"a serious victory for Russia in the dialogue on strategic arms,"* Moscow had to make some compromises, taking into account *"a number of political factors,"* the paper said.

The US may retain the ability to increase the number of warheads on deployed delivery vehicles, the daily said, adding that it is not clear if this potential will be limited somehow, it added.

The new document may also leave 700-750 delivery vehicles for each side, the paper's sources added. These are "not good figures" for Russia, the paper said, because Moscow will have *"to increase rather than decrease the production of delivery vehicles"* taking into account the need to replace old ones.

In this sense, "it is possible that the new START treaty will become not a plan of disarmament for Russia, but the beginning of a new arms race," the daily said, wondering if the country's economy will endure it.

Sergey Borisov, RT

<http://rt.com/Politics/2009-12-16/roar-start-nuke-treaty.html>

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New York Times
December 17, 2009

Russia Calls For Simpler Checks On Nuclear Cuts

By REUTERS

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russia on Thursday called for simpler verification procedures for planned cuts in nuclear weapons being discussed with the United States, its former Cold War foe.

"It's high time to get rid of excessive suspiciousness," Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told reporters in Moscow.

Talks between the world's two largest nuclear powers to find a replacement for the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START-1) have stumbled in recent weeks, though both sides say they expect a deal to be reached in the near future.

Presidents Barack Obama and Dmitry Medvedev had said they wanted a new treaty by December 5, but that deadline passed and the old treaty was extended indefinitely while negotiators in Geneva try to agree a new deal.

"In the last couple of days we have noticed some slowing down in the position of U.S. negotiators in Geneva," Lavrov said.

"They explain this by the need to receive additional instructions. But our team is ready for work," said Lavrov.

Lavrov, whose ministry is leading the negotiations together with the U.S. State Department, added that a deal was unlikely to be signed this weekend on the sidelines of the Copenhagen climate summit which both Obama and Medvedev plan to attend.

A senior Obama administration official said in Washington late on Wednesday the arms negotiations were likely to extend into 2010.

Both sides say that finding a replacement to the START-1 treaty, the biggest agreement to cut nuclear weapons in history, would help "reset" relations after rows in recent years.

Negotiations in Switzerland have been proceeding under unusually tight secrecy and neither side has given a clear explanation for the delay in finding a deal.

NUCLEAR CUTS

The START-1 treaty, signed in July 1991 by U.S. President George Bush senior and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, took nearly a decade to achieve but under the deal both Russia and the United States more than halved their nuclear arsenals.

Obama and Medvedev said at a Moscow summit in July they wanted a new treaty that would reduce operationally deployed nuclear warheads to 1,500-1,675, a cut of about a third from current levels.

They also agreed that strategic delivery systems -- the missiles, bombers and submarines that launch nuclear warheads -- should be limited to between 500 and 1,100 units.

Lavrov said he hoped the cuts in the new treaty would be as drastic as possible but added that verification procedures, which were extremely strict under START-1, should be made "less complicated and less costly."

"I believe that if Russian and U.S. negotiators concentrate on implementing these remaining orders from the presidents, we will reach agreement within a pretty brief period," he said.

Precise figures on deployed nuclear weapons are secret, but the U.S.-based Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists estimated at the start of 2009 that the United States had about 2,200 operationally deployed nuclear warheads and Russia about 2,790.

(Additional reporting by Conor Sweeney; writing by Guy Faulconbridge; editing by Andrew Roche)

<http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2009/12/17/world/international-uk-russia-usa-treaty.html>

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New York Times
December 18, 2009

Nearing New Arms Pact, U.S. And Russia Look Beyond It

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By Peter Baker

WASHINGTON — Eight months, three presidential meetings, countless Geneva negotiating sessions and one missed deadline later, the United States and Russia appear close to agreement on a new arms control treaty that will reduce their strategic nuclear arsenals by at least one quarter.

But even if the two sides manage to bring home a deal in coming days as they hope, that will be the easy part. After President Obama and President Dmitri A. Medvedev of Russia sign the new pact, they plan to send negotiators back to the table next year to pursue a far more ambitious agreement tackling whole categories of nuclear weapons never before subject to international limits.

The talks envisioned for 2010 would continue to advance Mr. Obama's disarmament agenda and attempt what no president has managed since the dark days of the cold war. In addition to further reducing deployed strategic warheads, the negotiations would try to empty at least some vaults now storing warheads in reserve. And the two sides would take aim at thousands of tactical nuclear bombs most vulnerable to theft or proliferation, some still located in Europe 20 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The effort is part of a broader initiative by Mr. Obama to start down the road toward eventual elimination of all nuclear weapons and to transform the American military for a new era. A nuclear posture review due next month will propose an overhaul of the nation's strategic doctrine and force consideration of the question of how many weapons the United States really needs without a superpower rival, including whether to eliminate one leg of the traditional "triad" of submarines, missiles and bombers.

The first step is the completion of the treaty now on the table. Mr. Obama left Washington on Thursday night to fly to Copenhagen, where he will meet with Mr. Medvedev on the sidelines of a global climate change conference. There, they hope to cut through the remaining obstacles to the agreement to replace the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty of 1991, known as Start, which expired on Dec. 5.

The new version of Start would require each side to reduce deployed strategic nuclear warheads to roughly 1,600, down from 2,200, according to a senior American official. It would also force each side to reduce its strategic bombers and land- and sea-based missiles to below 800, down from the old limit of 1,600. Foreign Minister Sergey V. Lavrov of Russia said on Thursday that there had been "some slowing down" in negotiations by the other side, but American officials denied it and said there were just three remaining issues to resolve, mainly on verification.

If lingering differences can be addressed, the Obama administration hopes to build on the trust established over the past eight months and plunge right back into talks for a broader agreement. That broader treaty would reduce the number of deployed strategic warheads even further, perhaps to about 1,000 for each country, a level considered the lowest the two would go without bringing in China, Britain, France and other nuclear powers.

Beyond that, negotiators would tackle stored strategic weapons and tactical weapons, neither of which has been limited by treaty. The United States has about 3,000 strategic warheads in storage while Russia has about 1,000, according to the Center for Defense Information, a private advocacy group in Washington.

The lopsided balance is the opposite for tactical warheads, generally defined as those with ranges below 300 to 400 miles. Russia has 3,000 to 8,000 of them, according to the Center for Defense Information. The Federation of American Scientists estimates that about 2,000 of them are actually deployed, while the Arms Control Association says that perhaps just a few hundred are truly operational.

Estimates of American tactical nuclear weapons range from 500 to 1,200, with about 150 to 240 still deployed in Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey, half as many as about five years ago. The United States in recent years has withdrawn tactical nuclear weapons from bases in Britain, Germany and Greece.

“Today these weapons are militarily unnecessary, and they are a much bigger liability than asset because Russia and the United States have to maintain security over these warheads whether they are deployed or not deployed, and they’re harder to track because they’re smaller,” said Daryl G. Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association.

But the challenge of reaching an accord would eclipse the difficulties in drafting the current treaty, which was supposed to be completed by the time Start expired two weeks ago. “It would make this look like a walk in the park,” Mr. Kimball said.

The idea of withdrawing all tactical nuclear arms has generated debate in Europe. In October, Germany’s new foreign minister, Guido Westerwelle, called for “a country free of nuclear weapons,” meaning it was time for the United States to remove the remaining tactical weapons. But other NATO allies are leery of a complete pullback, seeing the presence of the weapons as a sign of America’s continued commitment to European security.

Similar debates have played out within both the American and Russian military establishments. “This is what both presidents say they want, but they’re both going to have to overcome the resistance of the conservative nuclear bureaucracies in their countries,” said Joseph Cirincione, president of the Ploughshares Fund, a group that advocates disarmament. “These are small but still powerful forces.”

Tactical nuclear weapons were developed during the cold war as generally lower-yield, shorter-range explosives that could be used on the battlefield. The United States and its NATO allies relied on them as a deterrent to any invasion of Western Europe by what were presumed to be superior Soviet and Warsaw Pact land forces. But since the demise of the Soviet Union, the thinking has flipped, and Russia today views tactical nuclear weapons as a bulwark against American conventional supremacy.

“The idea that they would give these things up lightly is a fool’s errand,” said Henry D. Sokolski, executive director of the Nonproliferation Policy Education Center in Washington. “They’re putting more emphasis, not less, on these systems. They’re relying on them more because they can’t catch up with us on conventional forces.”

Washington and Moscow emerged from the cold war determined to reduce tactical nuclear arms, and both sides announced unilateral cuts in 1991. As a result, 17,000 tactical nuclear weapons were withdrawn from service, but no treaty ever imposed legally binding limits.

Nikolai N. Sokov, a former Soviet arms control negotiator now with the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies at the Monterey Institute of International Studies in California, called it “the longest deadlock on the entire arms control agenda.”

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/18/world/18arms.html>

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Washington Post
December 16, 2009

Obama Wrote A Personal Letter To North Korea's Kim Jong Il

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By Glenn Kessler

President Obama has written a personal letter to North Korean leader Kim Jong Il that was delivered by the administration's special envoy for North Korea during a visit to Pyongyang last week.

The existence of the letter has been closely held, with the administration insisting to its partners in disarmament talks with North Korea that it not be publicly discussed. State Department and White House officials confirmed this week that envoy Stephen W. Bosworth delivered a letter from Obama for Kim, but they declined to describe its contents.

"We do not comment on private diplomatic correspondence," said White House National Security Council spokesman Mike Hammer.

Bosworth artfully evaded reporters' queries about the letter in Seoul last week, after he left North Korea. Asked whether he had brought a letter, he sidestepped the question, saying: "As for a message to the North Koreans from President Obama, in effect, I am the message." Reporters in Asia then reported that he had denied he had carried a letter.

It is relatively unusual for an American president to send the North Korean dictator a personal communication so early in his term. Both Bill Clinton and George W. Bush eventually sent letters to Kim, but only after extensive diplomatic efforts to restrain North Korea's nuclear ambitions. Efforts early in Bush's term to send a letter were stymied by an intense debate over whether to use an honorific such as "his excellency" to address Kim.

The Obama administration has insisted that North Korea return to six-nation talks on its nuclear program, saying the United States will not lift sanctions or offer other benefits to persuade North Korea to simply begin talking again. Pyongyang has not committed to return to the negotiations, but its propaganda organ, the Korean Central News Agency, reported positively on Bosworth's visit, perhaps reflecting the impact of Obama's personal missive.

"Through working and frank discussion, the two sides deepened the mutual understanding, narrowed their differences and found not a few common points," the KCNA said.

A treaty that would recognize North Korea's sovereignty -- and normalize relations with the United States -- has long been an important objective of the government in Pyongyang. U.S. presidents often have dangled the prospect of a deal if North Korea gives up its nuclear weapons.

When Bush wrote Kim in December 2007, he said normalized relations were possible if North Korea submitted a declaration on its nuclear programs that was "complete and accurate."

Clinton wrote to Kim in October 1994 after a landmark deal under which North Korea would freeze its nuclear programs in exchange for energy aid. On its Web site, the KCNA still lists the receipt of the letter as one of the major events in a chronology of Kim's life.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/12/15/AR2009121504287.html>

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Yonhap News – South Korea

N. Korea Confirms Obama Sent Letter To Kim Jong-Il

18 December 2009

By Lee Chi-dong

SEOUL, Dec. 18 (Yonhap) -- North Korea confirmed Friday that its leader Kim Jong-il has received U.S. President Barack Obama's personal letter apparently reaffirming Washington's willingness to provide various political and economic incentives, including normalization of diplomatic ties, in exchange for Pyongyang's "irreversible denuclearization."

The letter was delivered by Obama's special envoy, Stephen Bosworth, to the North's First Vice Foreign Minister Kang Sok-ju during their meeting in Pyongyang last week, according to the (North) Korean Central News Agency (KCNA).

"Leader Kim Jong-il received a personal letter from Barack Obama, president of the United States of America," the KCNA said in its brief English-language report, without revealing its contents.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2009/12/18/0401000000AEN20091218008400315.HTML>

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Global Security Newswire

Report Calls For Moving To U.S. Nuclear “Dyad,” Dropping Triad’s Bomber Leg

Wednesday, Dec. 16, 2009

By Elaine M. Grossman

Global Security Newswire

WASHINGTON -- A new, independent report recommends that the United States gradually phase out B-2 and B-52 bomber aircraft from its nuclear deterrent (see *GSN*, Oct. 1).

The move would be the ultimate result of arms control and weapons-acquisition trends that undercut the value of a nuclear role for these aircraft, according to a trio of aerospace experts writing for the Air Force Association's Mitchell Institute for Airpower Studies.

Under such an approach, the nation's nuclear triad would become a "dyad" comprising just submarine- and ground-launched ballistic missiles. The bombers would retain their conventional combat responsibilities, where their long range and large payloads continue to offer great military benefit, the analysts said.

The finding is immediately proving controversial, though, with Air Force officials insisting the bombers continue to play a unique and critical role in nuclear deterrence.

Anticipated reductions in the size of the U.S. nuclear stockpile prompted the new assessment. The United States and Russia are negotiating an arms control accord to replace the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, which expired Dec. 5. The pact is expected to cap deployed warheads as low as 1,500, down from the 2,200 warheads that the 2002 Moscow Treaty allows each side to field by the end of 2012.

Using the numbers projected for the so-called "New START" pact, the aerospace experts analyzed different force mix options. They concluded that the bomber leg of today's triad is declining in efficacy relative to ballistic missiles and could be safely eliminated.

"The United States should gradually shift to a dyad of submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) and land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) as it shapes its nuclear force posture for the future," said Dana Johnson, Christopher Bowie and Robert Haffa in the 32-page report, "Triad, Dyad or Monad? Shaping the U.S. Nuclear Force for the Future."

In fact, according to the analysis, the nation is already moving in this direction.

Although the Defense Department is funding the modernization of its ICBM and SLBM fleets and plans eventually to replace its nuclear-armed submarines, it is retiring Air-Launched Cruise Missiles carried by 94 vintage B-52 aircraft and has not funded a replacement.

"That's a clear indication that the Air Force doesn't want to put resources toward a new nuclear bomber," one retired service officer told *Global Security Newswire* this week.

The B-2 remains a modern bomber but there are only 20 of them, affording these aircraft only a "niche role," according to the authors. Plans for a Next-Generation Long-Range Strike system -- a future strategic bomber -- remain on hold pending additional work to clarify military requirements for the new aircraft.

"Unless this path is altered, the United States will soon field a de facto nuclear dyad," according to the study.

The authors -- all with the Northrop Grumman Analysis Center -- concluded that the current nuclear triad would be preferable to moving to a two-legged posture, but the elimination of atomic-armed bombers would not be a huge loss. Northrop Grumman, the corporate think tank's parent company, is nearing the end of a 15-year Air Force contract to help manage and modernize the nation's ICBMs, according to its Web site.

The group looked at a variety of options for nuclear monads and dyads, and found that an ICBM-SLBM combination compared most favorably to today's posture, on the basis of preserving nuclear deterrence and maintaining international stability during a crisis.

"The triad remains the most attractive overall strategic force structure option," the report states. However, if arms control and weapons-acquisition considerations push the nation in the direction of a dyad, the bomber leg would be the least necessary to maintain, the analysts said.

"We are not at all advocating that the bomber be removed from the triad, but the writing on the wall and the budgets that exist and the plans that are in the making suggest that the bomber leg will occupy a narrower and narrower contribution to strategic nuclear deterrence," Haffa said at a briefing sponsored by the AFA Mitchell Institute last

Thursday. "So the term we coined was a 'de facto dyad.' We're nearly there today, and it looks from our judgment like we are headed in that direction."

Of the dyad options that the team examined, "the ICBM-SLBM combination offers the greatest similarity to the attributes of the current triad and appears to offer the most attractive alternative from a deterrence standpoint," the report reads. Alternative dyad options were bomber-ICBM and bomber-SLBM combinations.

The ICBM-SLBM dyad was capable of retaining 739 operationally deployed warheads on alert, "close to" the 829 warheads the analysts estimate are maintained on that launch-ready status today, the report states. The submarine-based fleet would continue to offer a highly survivable nuclear force, while the nation's 450 ICBMs represent a large number of warheads on alert, the authors said.

Though costs did not drive the analysis, a dyad approach would save significant dollars in the coming years compared to maintaining the triad, according to the report.

"The triad, the most attractive strategically, is also the most costly in both operating and investment costs," the analysts found, basing their data on fiscal 2010 dollars. They estimated that today's triad costs \$5.4 billion to maintain and operate annually, and would require \$240 billion between 2010 and 2050 to modernize.

By contrast, the ICBM-SLBM dyad option under a 1,500-warhead force would cost \$3.7 billion to maintain and operate each year, and \$151 billion to modernize by 2050.

"Because of the low cost of retaining the ICBMs, the most attractive dyad option (ICBMs and SLBMs) is roughly the same cost as the SLBM monad and would clearly be preferable," the analysts said.

The authors' five-point prescription for eventually phasing out the nuclear bomber role would be to:

- "Maintain the 450 ICBM force in light of the declining bomber leg;
- "Maintain the current ballistic missile submarine (designated SSBN) fleet and continue plans to develop the Ohio-class replacement" (see *GSN*, Nov. 7, 2008);
- "Maintain and modernize the B-2 force to retain the capability to conduct discrete and selective nuclear strikes," for a limited amount of time until a dyad is realized;
- "Phase out the B-52 from a nuclear role as ALCMs [Air-Launched Cruise Missiles] are retired from service [and];
- "Divert any planned investments dedicated to maintaining the B-52 in a nuclear role -- including research and development of a new ALCM -- into a new conventional bomber, which could be manned or unmanned."

Neither cost nor force-structure arguments for eliminating a nuclear role for U.S. bombers are being publicly embraced by the Air Force, at least not immediately.

The report authors wrongly base their recommendations "on warfighting capability, missing the point that nukes are political and nukes are a deterrent," asserted Billy Mullins, Air Force associate assistant chief of staff for strategic deterrence and nuclear integration.

"Bombers have a very unique place in their being able to signal [intent]," he told *GSN* in an interview last week. "They're very visible when you generate them. ... Not as much when you flush subs, and definitely you can't tell anything is going on in the [ICBM] missile fields."

Haffa also praised some of the features that a nuclear bomber offers. It is perhaps the most flexible leg of today's triad, allowing commanders to deploy different mixes of bombs and missiles and, if necessary, summon them back to base if an attack is called off.

"The ability to alert it, the ability to move it, [and] the ability to send signals all are positive," Haffa said.

Several Air Force officials in the audience last week took issue with the authors' treatment of bombers, alleging that the team overemphasized the benefits of missiles and gave short shrift to the aircraft's most valued features. One said the team's cost estimates were skewed in a way that biased the conclusions against bombers.

"Some of the assumptions -- a lot of the numbers and math -- were off significantly enough to color your outcomes," said an Air Force colonel.

An analytical tool the group used in the report "doesn't tend to capture" the relative importance of the various attributes of the different legs of the nuclear triad, artificially weighing each attribute equally, another colonel complained.

Haffa noted that while the nuclear force remains important, Washington is grappling with rogue nations and violent extremists in the post-Cold War era. Under this altered security environment, it is increasingly desirable to use conventional forces to signal military intent and reassure allies of security guarantees, he said. Bombers carrying conventionally armed, precision-guided weapons pose a daunting threat to an adversary, and even a conventional bomber visibly put on alert could offer significant deterrence value, Haffa said.

"I would argue that the role of the strategic conventional bomber could be very strong in extending conventional deterrence that's capable, that's credible, that's reliable, that reassures our adversary [of intent] and perhaps has much more possibility in terms of use, as we've demonstrated, than a nuclear bomber might bring," Haffa said.

Without top-level support from Defense Secretary Robert Gates, though, it is unclear whether Air Force Secretary Michael Donley or Chief of Staff Gen. Norton Schwartz might be expected to embrace such an argument.

Gates last year fired Donley's and Schwartz's predecessors -- then-Secretary Michael Wynne and Chief of Staff Gen. Michael Moseley -- citing a "lack of effective Air Force leadership oversight" and commitment when it came to nuclear weapons. The highly public ousters followed revelations about major incidents in which the service had lost tight control over nuclear weapons and components (see *GSN*, June 6, 2008).

Since then, the Air Force has altered its bomber aircraft training to improve security and readiness, among other measures. However, some critics charge that the Defense Department has overreacted in ushering in these Air Force changes, sapping resources and focus away from crucial conventional combat missions (see *GSN*, April 27).

Behind the scenes at the Pentagon, there might be substantial support for gradually shedding the bomber's nuclear role, according to some sources.

"The Air Force and DOD have seriously considered going conventional-only [on the] bombers," said the retired service officer, speaking on condition of not being named in discussing a politically sensitive matter. "I don't know that the Air Force is particularly an advocate for the nuclear bomber today."

That said, "I don't believe that the current leadership of the Air Force is willing to expose themselves to not aggressively pursuing nuclear forces," according to this source. "But clearly I think they look at the nuclear mission as being marginal."

Haffa said there are practical considerations that might force the matter in the coming months, as New START details become known and major Pentagon studies on future nuclear and conventional forces -- the Nuclear Posture Review and Quadrennial Defense Review -- are delivered to Congress.

Dual-use bombers that have both conventional and nuclear roles could prevent Washington from fully populating its shrinking atomic arsenal under anticipated arms control treaty provisions, he explained.

If a next-generation bomber is built for both nuclear and conventional missions -- as B-2 and B-52 crews are trained to perform today -- the United States might be forced to count these aircraft under atomic warhead limits, even if they are not always armed with such weapons, Haffa said.

Under the just-expired START accord, the nation has had to count hundreds of "phantom" weapons against warhead limits, but lower caps would make such a practice even less desirable, analysts say.

Meanwhile, moving toward a conventional-only designation for bombers might well enhance the aircraft's utility, Haffa argued.

"What is the future of the bomber?" Haffa said. "We suggest it might be to the best advantages of the nation and the Air Force to take [money] that might be [applied] to a strategic nuclear bomber -- which will, one, make a marginal contribution and, two, be captured by START numbers that are driving the U.S. nuclear force down -- take those dollars and put them in a new conventional bomber, which will fulfill the roles and missions as we looked at the future and that the bombers are fulfilling today."

http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20091216_4020.php

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency
OPINION & ANALYSIS

Russia's Strategic Missile Force To Mark 50th Anniversary Soon

16 December 2009

MOSCOW. (RIA Novosti military commentator Ilya Kramnik) - The Russian Strategic Missile Force which became an independent service of the Soviet Armed Forces on December 17, 1959 will soon mark its 50th anniversary.

The creation of the Strategic Missile Force was preceded by the lengthy work of developing Soviet long-range ballistic missiles that began right after World War II.

The R-1 (SS-1 Scunner) with a range of 270 km, developed by leading Soviet rocket engineer and designer Sergei Korolyov (1906-1966) on the basis of the German V-2 rocket became the first such missile. The R-1 was first launched in the autumn of 1948 and entered service in 1950.

Experience gained during R-1 missile tests and operations made it possible to launch production and to train military units to operate and maintain them.

The R-1 was followed by the R-2 (SS-2 Sibling) and the R-5 (SS-3 Shyster). The R-2 with a range of over 500 km was tested in 1949 and adopted in 1951, respectively. The R-5 which had a range of over 1,200 km was adopted in 1956.

At that time, the Soviet Union also moved to develop an intercontinental ballistic missile because the Kremlin realized that strategic bombers could not launch an effective counterstrike against the United States.

The R-7 (SS-6 Sapwood) became the first Soviet intercontinental ballistic missile, also developed by Korolyov, and was initially tested at the new Tyura-Tam range, now called the Baikonur Space Center, in 1957. The Baikonur Space Center is currently located in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Although the new ICBM R-7A was in service from 1960 until 1963, it remained the main Soviet/Russian launch vehicle for a long time.

The R-7 and its various related versions launched a considerable number of Soviet/Russian space satellites and all manned spacecraft starting with the trailblazing April 12, 1961 flight of Yuri Gagarin (1934-1968), the first man in space, into orbit. It is still used to launch Russian manned space missions.

Since the late 1950s, the Strategic Missile Force formed the mainstay of Soviet strategic nuclear forces, accounting for the bulk of the 10,000-plus nuclear warheads wielded by Moscow by early 1991.

The Strategic Missile Force was the hardest hit by strategic offensive arms cuts.

The planned decommissioning of Soviet-era ICBMs, namely, all R-36M2 (SS-18 Satan) missiles, most UR-100N UTTKh (SS-19 mod.2 Stiletto) and Topol (SS-25 Sickle) missiles is the main problem now facing the Strategic Missile Force.

Considering feasible missile-production volumes, by 2020 the Strategic Missile Force will have about 200 ICBMs manufactured in 1997-2020 with a total of 500 to 700 warheads.

Measures to extend the service life of the "youngest" Soviet-era missiles will make it possible to deploy 300 to 350 missiles with a total of 800-1,000 warheads.

Consequently, Russia's strategic nuclear forces will have 500 to 550 delivery vehicles and 1,500-1,600 warheads under a new strategic arms reduction treaty (START), now being prepared for signing.

The extended service life of Soviet-era missiles will enable Russia to hold out until its industry is able to manufacture the required number of delivery vehicles for replacing missiles in accordance with preset deadlines.

Technically speaking, this nuclear arsenal will allow Moscow to inflict guaranteed unacceptable damage on any theoretical enemy or anti-Russian coalition and will make it possible to breach any advanced missile-defense system in the next 15-20 years, while any global missile-defense system is currently lacking.

Russia insists on removing restrictions on land-mobile ICBM deployment and transportation areas as stipulated in the START-I Treaty, and on linking START cuts with limitations on the development of missile-defense systems because such measures would help preserve the Strategic Missile Force's potential even during a hypothetical first strike.

Any of these measures would seriously impair missile defenses in case of a hypothetical nuclear conflict.

They will also give Russia a freedom of maneuver at the strategic arms reduction talks, allowing to trade-off one position for the sake of another in the process of a diplomatic bargaining.

At the same time, such bargaining is facilitated by a reliable nuclear-missile arsenal developed by the three previous generations of Soviets and Russians. This arsenal which had guaranteed Soviet security during a global Cold War

continues to shield Russia when the break-up of old-time deterrence and cooperation systems is fraught with new conflicts aiming to redivide the world.

The opinions expressed in this article are the author's and do not necessarily represent those of RIA Novosti.

<http://en.rian.ru/analysis/20091216/157261431.html>

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Wall Street Journal

OPINION

December 16, 2009

U.S. Disarmament Is Dangerous for Asia

America's nuclear deterrent remains the cornerstone of regional stability.

By FRANKLIN C. MILLER AND ANDREW SHEARER

Talk of nuclear disarmament is making a serious comeback. Just in the past week, President Obama received a Nobel Peace Prize for his work on the issue, and now yet another blue-ribbon commission—this one co-chaired by former foreign ministers of Japan and Australia—has issued a high-profile report calling for disarmament. The goal, of course, is superficially appealing and may even be achievable some day. But the United States, Australia, Japan and America's other Asian allies would be well advised to think twice before embracing the report.

The paper released Tuesday in Tokyo by the International Commission on Nuclear Nonproliferation and Disarmament is representative of international antinuke theology. Some of the ideas are useful, such as strengthening the International Atomic Energy Agency as a proliferation watchdog and beefing up safeguards and verification mechanisms. Creating international nuclear fuel banks and shared management of enrichment, reprocessing and spent fuel storage facilities would make nonproliferation sense as well as supporting civil nuclear power in energy-thirsty Asia.

But other suggestions would be dangerous. Capping U.S. and Russian arsenals at 500 warheads is unrealistic given today's world. An unequivocal "no first use" declaration would weaken American deterrence. And the recommendation that the Proliferation Security Initiative, currently a coalition of the willing to interdict nuclear shipments, be folded into the United Nations is a surefire way to neuter a successful tool.

The basic problem is that such efforts ignore the fact that the world is an unfriendly place. And no part of it looks more Hobbesian than Asia, riven with unresolved Cold War tensions, rapid advances in military capabilities and growing competition among rising powers. Some of those governments maintain and deploy nuclear weapons. Others want nuclear weapons, break their treaty commitments not to acquire them and will want them whether the U.S. has nuclear weapons or not. Look no further than North Korea.

This is why a credible U.S. nuclear deterrent is so important. This is partly a matter of self interest: Washington must prevent a major power from attacking America or seeking to coerce it with a nuclear threat. But it also needs to be mindful of the effects of U.S. nuclear policies on its Asian allies who face real threats—North Korea among the most pressing. The U.S. nuclear arsenal protects allies including Australia, Japan and South Korea, with whom America has treaty commitments. Not only does the U.S. nuclear deterrent shape the behavior of rogue nations such as North Korea toward these allies; the U.S. umbrella also removes the need for countries like Japan to seek nuclear weapons of their own.

Maintaining an effective U.S. nuclear deterrent will become even more important in Asia as China works hard to close the conventional military gap. This should be one of the top priorities of the Obama administration's 2010 Nuclear Posture Review and should guide any response to Tuesday's high-profile report. Deterrence is about holding at risk what potentially hostile governments value. So the U.S. and its allies also must make every effort to understand the leadership of adversaries or potential enemies—a challenge particularly with respect to secretive authoritarian regimes.

The nuclear deterrent is not the only element of America's commitment to the region, of course. Forward-deployed U.S. forces—in South Korea, Okinawa and Guam—also contribute to security in Asia. So do combined exercises and missile defense systems. But the role of nuclear weapons is unique.

A credible U.S. nuclear deterrent means having an operational force, with capabilities for real operations and an operational plan. Washington also must retain forward-based systems in places where its allies view their presence as vital to their security—even if U.S. defense planners believe central strategic systems can do the job. Washington

needs to maintain at least parity in strategic forces with Russia and must never allow those levels to fall to a point where allies believe the Russian or Chinese short-range nuclear arsenals will affect U.S. decision-making in a crisis.

The sages who crafted Tuesday's report paid too little attention to all these realities in the name of a nuclear "peace in our time." In his Nobel Peace Prize speech, President Obama proclaimed—rightly—that the U.S. has helped underwrite global security for more than six decades. He acknowledged that global stability rested on more than international treaties and declarations. The critical contribution of U.S. nuclear deterrence was left unspoken.

Additional reductions in the U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals are possible and indeed desirable. But this disarmament game is dangerous. Potential enemies will be deterred, and allies assured, only if America is visibly confident in its nuclear posture. Asia's future stability and prosperity will depend far more on this than on airy dreams of disarmament.

Mr. Miller, a senior counselor at the Cohen Group, a Washington-based consultancy, worked at the Pentagon and National Security Council from 1979 to 2005. Mr. Shearer is director of studies and a senior research fellow at Australia's Lowy Institute for International Policy.

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Washington Times

OPINION/ANALYSIS

Thursday, December 17, 2009

COHEN: What To Expect From A Nuclear Iran

By William S. Cohen

With Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's announcement that his country intends to build 10 new uranium enrichment facilities, it should now be patently clear that the effort to dissuade Iran from developing nuclear weapons has failed.

For Tehran, the negotiations have been nothing more than one long stall -- a ruse to buy time, conduct more tests, and hasten the day Iran becomes a nuclear power.

The mullahs -- or the members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) who may be in charge -- intend to build the bomb. To date, no inducements from the West -- no offers of integration into international community, economic assistance or the lifting of modest sanctions -- have been able to deter them from their goal.

This leaves the United States and its international partners with three options:

First, persuade Russia and China to join in the imposition of more extensive, targeted sanctions against key financial and energy-related industries. It may be fanciful to think that the Iranian people, however courageous, could bring down the current regime that sits atop a million-man army and a brutally repressive and theocratic IRGC. But if the sanctions are sharp and biting enough, the possibility exists that Iranian leaders could change their conduct and even consider replacing certain colleagues whose words and deeds have produced such dire economic consequences. Admittedly, such a change of heart would not come easily, but a more moderate group of leaders might seize the opportunity to become a valued member of the international community rather than its pariah.

Second, set back the Iranian nuclear effort by military means - either by giving Israel our blessing to strike Iran's nuclear facilities or by joining Israel in such an attack. A military operation would be extremely high risk, requiring an extraordinary amount of intelligence and operational precision to be successful. The probability that such action would produce a devastating backlash by many Muslims across the ideological spectrum is high, with potential untold consequences to the global economy. A military strike is a dangerous option, but may prove unavoidable if diplomacy and other efforts fail.

Third, we learn to live with an Iranian bomb.

At this moment, we appear headed toward option three. So it is worth reflecting on what living with a nuclear Iran would mean for the United States, the Middle East and the world.

A nuclear Iran would be emboldened in its efforts to destabilize the Middle East and export its revolutionary ideology. Armed with nuclear weapons, Iranian leaders would enjoy a sense of invincibility. This could lead to bolder interference in Iraq and Afghanistan, greater mischief in Lebanon and more aggressive support for Hamas and Hezbollah. Tehran also could incite Shia populations in the Gulf States, thus threatening the survival of moderate Arab governments.

Iran's possession of a nuclear bomb would likely start a nuclear cascade across the Middle East, as nations threatened by Iran question U.S. security guarantees and seek their own deterrent capability. Within a decade, we could see the number of nuclear states grow dramatically, as Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt and others seek nuclear weapons to protect against Iranian aggression. This would spell the end of nonproliferation. As more nations develop their own nuclear deterrent, our ability to control nuclear stockpiles and prevent the spread of nuclear materials to dangerous actors could collapse.

A nuclear Iran would itself pose an unprecedented proliferation risk. Tehran already supplies dangerous weapons to Hezbollah and Hamas, and might share nuclear materials with radical extremists. The result would be a growing risk that nuclear or radiological weapons will get in the hands of terrorists, who would not hesitate to use them against the U.S., Israel and other allies.

Some insist we could deter Iran much as we deterred the Soviet Union. This is far from clear. The leaders of the USSR dreamed of establishing a global communist empire, but they were also rational pragmatists whose first priority was survival in this world. The hard-line elements in Iran include religious fanatics who speak of ushering in the end of this world by hastening the arrival of the 12th Imam. While few Iranian officials are millenarian radicals, the existence of even one is too many. For such actors, the doctrine of "mutual assured destruction" might be taken as a promise, not a threat. We could wind up in a nuclear showdown with Iran, similar to the Cuban missile crisis, without the benign outcome.

These scenarios may seem far-fetched to some, but the terrible lesson of Sept. 11 is that "the future is not what it used to be." Rather than yield to the notion that the nuclear ambitions of Iran's current regime are unchangeable, we should redouble our efforts to bring about a change of heart in the regime through sanctions if possible; by other means if necessary.

• *William S. Cohen is the chairman of the Cohen Group, an international business consulting firm. He served in the House and Senate from 1973 to 1996 and as secretary of defense from 1997 to 2001.*

http://washingtontimes.com/news/2009/dec/17/cohen-what-to-expect-from-a-nuclear-iran/?feat=home_headlines

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Wall Street Journal

OPINION

December 17, 2009

How To Stop Iran

The West has reached a defining moment in its bid to prevent the rogue state from going nuclear.

By OLIVIER DEBOUZY

The lack of progress in negotiations with Iran, together with the latest report from the International Atomic Energy Agency and Iran's announcement that it would develop new enrichment facilities, all point toward an inconvenient truth: Iran is not only not serious about negotiating in good faith. It is also very likely that it has, for more than a decade now, concealed a significant part of what appears to be a major nuclear military effort. This week's revelations about Iran's recent work on warhead design underscore the point. No country has ever gone so far along the road toward the acquisition of a nuclear military capability without actually developing one.

Iran could well stop at the threshold of such capability, letting it be known to all specialists that it has a military capability without openly deploying it. This would still leave it uncertain, in the eyes of the public, whether it really has an effective nuclear arsenal. But this would not change much in practical terms. Western decision makers are now at a defining moment.

Politically, no Israeli prime minister could survive the fact that Iran became a nuclear-armed state, officially or unofficially, on his watch. The pressure on the Israeli government to do something to counter Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons would be so strong that it could well be tempted to play a desperate gamble, regardless of any security guarantees that the U.S. might offer.

Similarly, no U.S. president (especially one endowed with a Nobel Prize) could escape blame for having let Iran become a nuclear-weapon state by consistently underestimating its ability to conceal its preparations. The intelligence community's credibility would be devastated, and the indecision by successive administrations (Clinton, Bush and now Obama) to quash a program that has been suspected for 15 years and openly known for seven would be seen as a failure of major proportions.

What's more, the message sent to all U.S. and Western allies in the Gulf region would be dire. For all the promises made to these allies, the West has been unable to prevent a rogue state—one intent on destabilizing their societies, the strategic balance in the Middle East and beyond, and the oil market—from acquiring nuclear weapons that will make it much more difficult to compel it to behave prudently.

Last but not least, the nuclear non-proliferation regime, which has been significantly weakened by the North Korean antics and the Iranian finessing, would be close to collapse: If Iran has nukes, the temptation for countries such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Turkey, among others, to equip themselves with such weapons would be almost irresistible. The 2010 review conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty would be rendered a feckless pantomime, with almost as little effect as those aimed, between the two world wars, at preventing armed conflict.

It is now necessary, therefore, to plan for the worst—some form of military constraint upon Iran. It is urgent that the U.S., Great Britain and France, together with Israel if possible (in a discreet and deniable way, of course), gather and try to reach agreement on how to terminate the Iranian nuclear program militarily. Those three permanent members of the U.N. Security Council should not be cowed by the argument—which has already been deployed repeatedly by Iranian advocates and *idiots utiles*—that such an endeavour would be akin to pitching "the West against the rest." They would actually be exercising an implicit mandate on behalf of all the states that have renounced nuclear weapons and do not accept being threatened and bullied by rogues.

How could this be done? The experience of the 1962 Cuban crisis provides an interesting precedent. Applying pressure on the Iranians by interdicting any imports or exports to and from Iran by sea and by air would send a message that would undoubtedly be perceived as demonstrative by Tehran. Additionally, reinforcing the Western naval presence inside or immediately outside the Gulf would make it clear to the Iranians, without infringing on their territorial waters, that they (and all states dealing with them) are entering a danger zone. In parallel to this slow strangulation, measures should be taken to deter Gulf states (such as Dubai) from engaging in any trade or financial transactions with Iran and to encourage them to freeze Iranian assets in their banks. This should not be too difficult, as the threat of disconnecting any renegade from the Swift system would be sufficiently persuasive in the current circumstances, in which Dubai sorely needs international financial assistance.

It might be necessary to go beyond that and actually resort to force to prevent the Iranians from achieving nuclear military capabilities. Planning for a massive air and missile attack on Iran's nuclear facilities (known and suspected) should be considered seriously, and this planning made public (at least partially) to convince Iran that the West can not only talk the talk, but also walk the walk. Such planning should also, to the extent possible, involve NATO, against the territory of which there is little doubt that the majority of Iranian missiles and nuclear weapons would be targeted (if only because they cannot yet reach the U.S.). The U.S., U.K., French and Israeli intelligence services should better co-ordinate what they know, and contributions from others should also be welcome, as well as any information that could be provided by internal opposition movements in Iran.

The idea here is simple, and has been expressed many times by theoreticians of deterrence: When one plans for war, when one deploys forces and rehearses military options, one actually conveys a message. Deterrence is about dialogue. Whether the Iranian government would listen to it is uncertain. But at least it would have been properly warned.

The time for diplomacy has passed. Iran must cave in, and quickly. If the West is not prepared to force it to comply with its commitments under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, this in effect means that the treaty is dead and that the Gulf countries are being abandoned—stealthily, but nonetheless very definitely. It also means that the non-proliferation regime is, for all practical purposes, dead. Is this really what we want?

Mr. Debouzy is a lawyer and a former specialist in nuclear military affairs and intelligence for the French government. He writes here in a strictly personal capacity.

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