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The Wall Street Journal
SEPTEMBER 27, 2008

U.S., Russia Agree to Criticize Iran

By JAY SOLOMON

WASHINGTON -- The Bush administration and Russia agreed Friday to push forward a new United Nations Security Council resolution condemning Iran's pursuit of nuclear technologies, but without any new economic sanctions. A missile sits in front of a poster of Iranian leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, during a military exhibition in Tehran this week. This agreement, said diplomats involved in the process, reflected a compromise between Washington and Moscow, whose relations have soured since Russian troops entered Georgia last month.

The Bush administration initially hoped to use the annual U.N. General Assembly this month to increase the financial pressure on Iran for its efforts to develop a nuclear fuel cycle. The U.N.'s atomic watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, recently warned that Tehran is significantly increasing its production of nuclear fuel while failing to address questions about its suspected pursuit of nuclear warheads. Moscow, however, rebuffed a U.S. call this week for an emergency meeting of the Security Council, plus Germany, to address Iran's action, citing a lack of urgency. Russian diplomats publicly complained that the Kremlin didn't see the need to cooperate with the White House at a time when U.S. officials were condemning Moscow's actions in Georgia.

On Friday, Russian and European officials said the decision to ultimately move ahead with a new Security Council resolution against Tehran reflected the recognition that pressure needed to be maintained again Tehran. Iranian officials have repeatedly declined offers from the U.S. and its negotiating partners that would see the West drop any new sanctions against Iran in exchange for Tehran freezing the expansion of its nuclear program. The draft resolution reflects "our unity of purpose as far as the problem of the Iranian nuclear program is concerned," Russia's U.N. Ambassador Vitaly Churkin told reporters in New York. He stressed, however, that "this is a resolution in the absence of the sanctions resolution. ... No new sanctions have been discussed."

Western diplomats said they hoped the 15 members of the U.N. Security Council could pass the new censure of Iran next week. The draft resolution reaffirms existing U.N. actions against Tehran and "does not rule out" the possibility of new sanctions down the line, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said at the U.N. Many Western diplomats involved in the Iran diplomacy said they remained concerned that the lack of additional financial pressure on Tehran would ultimately lead the country to push ahead on developing the nuclear fuel cycle. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad repeatedly told audiences at the U.N. this week that his country wouldn't succumb to outside "bullying." European and U.S. officials said, as a result, that their governments would likely have to move outside the U.N. system to exact new financial pain on Iran.

This month, the U.S. Treasury Department blacklisted Iran's largest shipping company, the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines, or IRISL, for allegedly aiding Tehran's nuclear program, as well as sanctioning an additional six Iranian military firms. Washington and its allies have been attempting to drastically increase the cost for doing business with Iran, by targeting its banks and import-export companies. "We're seeking to develop good coordination to disrupt Iran's procurement channels," said a senior U.S. official working on the sanctions program.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice also said Friday that she will push the Security Council to censure Iran for Mr. Ahmadinejad's repeated calls for the state of Israel to be eliminated. In his speech before the Security Council Tuesday, the Iranian leader also charged that a clique of "deceitful Zionists" is responsible for the current global economic crisis. "That is simply unacceptable," Ms. Rice told the Security Council. "The United States of America will be asking that the council convene again to take up the matter of one member of the United Nations calling for the destruction of another member of the United Nations."

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB122244296833579069.html?mod=googlenews_wsj

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International Herald Tribune

Iran Calls New UN Resolution Not Constructive

The Associated Press
Saturday, September 27, 2008

TEHRAN, Iran: Iranian state TV says a new United Nations Security Council effort to condemn its nuclear program is not constructive. In Saturday's report, Iran's top nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili says the new resolution would cause "mistrust" and won't help global peace and security. On Friday, the U.S. and Russia led a new effort to condemn Iran's controversial program that includes no new sanctions. The brief resolution seeks to reaffirm three previous ones, which imposed sanctions on Iran for refusing to halt its uranium enrichment program. The council agreed to hold further talks on the proposal as soon as Monday. The U.S. and some European countries suspect Tehran is pursuing nuclear weapons. Iran denies the charge.

http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2008/09/27/news/ML-Iran-Nuclear.php

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Reuters

Iran Dismisses Draft U.N. Nuclear Resolution

Saturday
September 27, 2008 8:40am EDT

TEHRAN (Reuters) - Iran said on Saturday a draft U.N. resolution over Tehran's disputed nuclear program was not constructive and could indicate divisions between world powers, state television reported. Six world powers handed the U.N. Security Council the draft on Friday after the United States, facing stiff Russian opposition, failed to secure agreement for new penalties over work the West believes is aimed at building atomic bombs. The Council has imposed three rounds of sanctions on Iran since 2006 for failing to heed a call to halt sensitive nuclear work, that Tehran insists is peaceful. Russia and China backed all three sets but only after watering down the sanctions.

"These (resolutions) are not constructive," Iran's chief nuclear negotiator, Saeed Jalili, told state television when asked about the draft resolution. "What they need to do is to attract the trust of the Iranian nation through constructive cooperation and collective commitment." He also said the draft either showed world powers had failed to come up with a "logical response" to Iran over its nuclear work "or they have lost internal cohesion as they have acknowledged themselves, and through this action they want to show there is actually cohesion."

The U.N. watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), reported this month that Iran was not cooperating enough with its inspectors. Diplomats said members of the 15-nation council would consult their governments and the resolution could come to a vote early next week. Previous resolutions included travel bans and asset freezes on Iranian individuals and companies. The draft was backed by the five permanent Security Council members -- the United States, Britain, France, Russia and China -- plus Germany.

(Reporting by Hashem Kalantari, writing by Edmund Blair)

http://www.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUSTRE48Q1ZF20080927

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The Jerusalem Post

Teheran: Enrichment Will Continue, Despite UN Resolution

September 29, 2008
Associated Press, THE JERUSALEM POST

Iran said Monday it will continue its disputed uranium enrichment activity despite a new UN resolution seeking suspension of the process. Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Hasan Qashqavi said in his weekly briefing that

enriching uranium was Iran's "right" and that it intended to continue to do so. He describes as "beyond the law" demands for the suspension of Iran's uranium enrichment.

The US and Russia on Friday sponsored a new UN resolution reaffirming three previous resolutions that imposed sanctions on Iran for refusing to halt its uranium enrichment program. The US and several European nations say Teheran wants to build nuclear weapons. Iran denies the accusation. Meanwhile, in a farewell interview with *Yediot Aharonot* published Monday, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said talk of a unilateral Israeli strike on Iran was "part of our delusions of grandeur." Iran was the world's problem, not just Israel's, he said. "The thought that if America, Russia, China, Britain and Germany cannot deal with the Iranians we Israelis can ... is an example of a loss of perspective," added the outgoing prime minister.

http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1222017422075&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FPrinter

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New York Times
September 29, 2008
Pg. 21
OP-ED Contributor

An Arms Race We're Sure to Lose

By Gary Milhollin

Washington -- The coverage of the latest bombastic tour of Manhattan by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran may have obscured the fact that the International Atomic Energy Agency has released its latest report on Tehran's nuclear program, and it contains some unpleasant news: By the time we inaugurate our next president, Iran is likely to achieve "virtual" nuclear weapon status. This means that it will be able to produce, within a few months of deciding to do so, enough weapon-grade uranium to fuel a bomb. But how is that possible? After all, about the only thing the Bush administration and our European allies seem to agree on regarding Iran is that there is a lot more time for diplomacy and sanctions to work before the ayatollahs can cross the nuclear line. Unfortunately, that's no longer the situation.

Since last December, Iran has been feeding uranium into its bank of rapidly spinning centrifuges at an increasing clip. Out has come a growing stockpile of what scientists call "low enriched" uranium, which is ideal for fueling a reactor. However, if you re-circulate this material through the centrifuges, it becomes highly enriched bomb fuel. By Aug. 30, according to the atomic agency's Sept. 15 report, Iran's stockpile had reached 1,060 pounds of low-enriched uranium hexafluoride, and it was producing a little more than 100 pounds a month. At this rate, Iran will have produced at least 1,500 pounds by mid-January. Re-circulated, this could produce 35 pounds of weapon-grade uranium, enough for a bomb. (In fact, this was about the amount called for in the implosion device that Saddam Hussein's scientists were trying to perfect in the 1980s; according to intelligence sources, the Iraqi design has circulated on the nuclear black market and could well be in Iranian hands.) It would take about two to three months to raise the enrichment level to weapon-grade — meaning Iran could potentially present the world with a bomb by Easter.

There is a ray of sunshine here. Experts and diplomats have long assumed that no country would want just one bomb. It would want a first bomb to test (proving its nuclear capacity) and three or four more to deter attack. If Iran follows this line of thinking, it pushes the magic date farther down the road, but not much. Iran is adding centrifuges, so it could probably produce enough highly enriched uranium for a second bomb within a year from now. By February 2010, it should have enough for a third, and the rate will only increase as the number of centrifuges goes up.

Nonetheless, simply having enough material on hand to make a single bomb is bound to make a difference in how Iran sees the world. Our new president and his allies will be trying to negotiate with a country that could decide at any time to escalate its nuclear threat. In effect, Iran can say, "If you don't like what we're doing now, how would you like it if we kicked out the international inspectors and made a few bombs' worth of weapon-grade material?" This threat alone would put the West into a diplomatic corner.

This holds true even though no one knows for sure whether Iran has the rest of the components needed for a bomb, or whether the bomb would work. Making these components is far easier than making the fuel, and there is a lot of evidence that Iran has been working on them. It would be dangerous to assume that the other components would not be yet available by the time enough fuel for a bomb had been produced.

The best time to stop the Iranian nuclear program was from 2002 to 2006, after its illicit nature was discovered but before it gained its present momentum. But the Bush administration, paralyzed by the war in Iraq, mounted only a haphazard and absent-minded policy. At first, it refused to back Europe's negotiations with Iran, without offering any viable alternative. Then, when the administration finally joined Europe's effort, it was too late.

Now, it will be necessary to perform a diplomatic miracle. Just as Iran is about to reap the fruits of its nuclear program, America and its allies must convince the mullahs that they would be better off without it. This will require more than the weak sanctions achieved so far. No less than a credible threat of international economic and diplomatic isolation — of making Iran a pariah state — will cause Iran to blink. It's still worth a try, but time is shorter than we thought.

Gary Milhollin is the director of the Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control and the executive editor of the Web site Iran Watch.

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/29/opinion/29milhollin.html

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New York Times
September 29, 2008
Pg. 6

Bush Sends His Negotiator for Talks in North Korea

By David E. Sanger

WASHINGTON — The Bush administration is dispatching its chief North Korea negotiator, Christopher Hill, to Pyongyang this week in a last-ditch effort to rescue what the White House had hoped would be a singular foreign policy achievement: an accord leading to the country's nuclear disarmament. The rapid decision to send Mr. Hill to the North Korean capital, days after North Korea broke the seals that United Nations inspectors placed on its equipment and said it was restarting a facility to manufacture bomb-grade plutonium, seemed to underscore the administration's desperation to restore an accord that took most of President Bush's second term to negotiate and implement. Mr. Hill, one administration official said, is "flying blind," hoping to get a previous agreement back on track.

The fact that Mr. Hill is going to Pyongyang at all shows how much has changed in the administration. In his first term. Mr. Bush refused to talk to the country, and American strategy was to hasten North Korea's economic collapse. But the country refused to buckle, and sped ahead with its nuclear enrichment facility. In more recent years, the administration argued for months about whether to allow Mr. Hill to participate in direct talks with the North Koreans, particularly in Pyongyang. His efforts to go there were repeatedly blocked by hard-liners who argued that to show up in North Korea would be to reward the government there. But if there were any such arguments this time, they appear to have been brief. The United States must decide in the next month or two whether to continue sending oil shipments to North Korea; before it cuts them off, officials say, Mr. Hill wanted to make a direct appeal to the North Korean leadership. But it is not clear who is controlling the country, after reports President Kim Jong-il suffered a stroke.

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/29/world/asia/29korea.html?partner=rssnyt&emc=rss

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Washington Post
September 28, 2008
Pg. 6

Nuclear Pact With India Gets Approval Of House

By Glenn Kessler, Washington Post Staff Writer

The House overwhelmingly gave final approval yesterday to a landmark civil nuclear agreement with India, putting the Bush administration in reach of a substantial foreign policy achievement. The legislation, which passed 298 to 117, still faces obstacles in the Senate, where it has been approved by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee but several senators have blocked it from coming to the floor for debate. The administration has pressed for final action before Congress adjourns, even though the 2006 bill that gave preliminary approval to the deal called for a much longer period of discussion and debate.

"I urge the Senate to quickly take up and pass this important piece of legislation before their October adjournment," President Bush said yesterday. "Signing this bipartisan bill will help strengthen our partnership with India." Senate Majority Leader Harry M. Reid (D-Nev.) promised a vote on the agreement in his chamber perhaps as soon as tomorrow.

The deal, which has been fiercely opposed by nuclear proliferation experts, would give New Delhi access to U.S. nuclear technology for the first time since it conducted a nuclear test in 1974. Since then, India has been barred from the worldwide nuclear trade, leaving it without advanced uranium-enrichment and plutonium-reprocessing technology that is superior to India's homegrown methods.

The administration has argued that the deal would bring a substantial portion of India's nuclear industry -- though not the facilities that produce materials for weapons -- under international observation and would forge ties between two large democracies that have had an antagonistic relationship in the past. But critics say the deal undermines efforts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons because it rewards a country that violated nonproliferation norms by building bombs with material from civilian reactors.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who first pitched the deal to India in 2005, shortly after her confirmation, persuaded a leading skeptic, Rep. Howard L. Berman (D-Calif.), last week to help ease its passage. Berman, the chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, had planned to offer a bill that differed from the Senate version, which would have required House-Senate negotiations to resolve. But after a call from Rice on Thursday, Berman agreed to bring the Senate legislation to the House floor.

In exchange, Rice pledged that the United States in November would push a 45-nation group that governs trade in nuclear equipment and materials to issue guidelines that would ban sales of sensitive nuclear equipment to countries that, like India, have not signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/09/27/AR2008092702309.html

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EUObserver.com
September 29, 2008

EU Extends Nuclear Co-operation with India

VALENTINA POP

The European Union has extended its civil nuclear co-operation with India in a move championed by French President Nicolas Sarkozy, who is expected to sign a bilateral deal with the Indian prime minister on Tuesday (30 September). The move, which comes despite India not being a party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, echoes a similar agreement signed between the Asian country and the United States.

Nicolas Sarkozy hopes to strike a bilateral deal with India while extending EU civil nuclear co-operation with the Asian country. The development was announced following an EU-India summit in Marseille on Monday (29 September). Additionally, European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso hailed a "joint action plan on climate change" sealed with India, adding that civil nuclear co-operation would be extended with the Asian country on nuclear fusion.

Mr Barroso said that India is to be part of the ITER group of nations, an international project aimed at developing a viable fusion power reactor in France, at a site near Marseille where the summit took place. Mr Barroso also stresed that the EU would like to see "reinforced co-operation between EURATOM and India on nuclear safety and research. I think the time has come to sit down and reflect and pick up on existing civil nuclear co-operation work – specifically on scientific co-operation." For his part, following the summit, President Sarkozy said that France supports the development of India's civil nuclear technology sector as part of its efforts to fight the effects of climate change. "I can't see how we can tell India to participate in fighting climate change without civil nuclear energy when we know it is the cleanest form of energy – it makes no sense," Mr Sarkozy said. He added that on Tuesday he will host Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at a bilateral summit, "and in all likelihood we shall discuss this matter and take decisions."

Mr Singh also expressed confidence that he would sign a bilateral agreement with Mr Sarkozy on Tuesday, with the Indian domestic civil nuclear market representing an estimated €20 billion for French investors. According to Amit Mitra, general secretary of the Indian Chamber of Commerce, "India needs 60,000 megawatts of extra capacity for nuclear energy. This requires an investment of €97 billion over the next 15 years." "I expect France to carry 25 per cent of these investments," he added.

In August, the Indian atomic energy agency pre-selected the US-based Westinghouse Electric Company, the US-Japanese operation General Electric-Hitachi, France's Areva and the Russia's Rosatom for possible commercial contracts, once the political agreements are signed.

Competition with US and Russia

"India seeks co-operation with all countries of the world in matters relating to the promotion of civil nuclear technology in our country," Prime Minister Singh told journalists after the EU-India summit in Marseille, highlighting a bilateral political agreement permitting the sale of civilian nuclear material already sealed with the Bush administration, which is currently being considered by the country's Congress. The deal requires congressional approval because US law prohibits nuclear sales to countries who have not signed the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The deal was signed after the Nuclear Suppliers Group - international overseers of nuclear commerce - agreed to it even though India is not a signatory to any of the key global non-proliferation pacts.

Energy-hungry India, which has 17 nuclear power plants, was blacklisted for 35 years by the global atomic commerce community as punishment for its nuclear-weapons tests. Russia is also seen as a competitor for the EU on the Indian civil nuclear market. "Russia has always supported our desire to develop nuclear technology. Following the lifting of the sanctions, we count on broadening our co-operation with this country, especially in the field of building nuclear plants and scientific exchange," Anil Kakodkar, the head of the Indian Atomic Agency told RIA Novosti on Monday.

http://euobserver.com/9/26825

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New York Times
September 29, 2008
Pg. 8

New Security Organization Will Try To Prevent Nuclear Theft

By William J. Broad

A new organization is being unveiled Monday in Vienna that seeks to bolster security at thousands of nuclear sites around the world in an effort to block atomic theft and terrorism. Its aim is to promote the best security practices, eliminate weak links in the global security chain and, ultimately, keep terrorists from getting the bomb. No single organization now does that for the world’s expanding maze of nuclear sites — private and public, civilian and military.

“The stakes are very high,” Sam Nunn, a former United States Democratic senator from Georgia and the force behind the new organization, said in an interview. “There’s no doubt that terrorist groups are trying to get this material.” An atom bomb that could raze Lower Manhattan requires a ball of nuclear fuel no larger than a

grapefruit. The Nuclear Threat Initiative, a private group in Washington led by Mr. Nunn, is setting up the new organization, known as the World Institute for Nuclear Security, or WINS. The institute is starting with $6 million in donations and plans to expand in the next two years to an annual budget of perhaps $8 million and a staff in Vienna of a dozen or so nuclear specialists. The institute intends to provide a forum where nuclear security professionals can meet and share information about how to keep dangerous materials out of unfriendly hands. Its focus will be less on locks and cameras than on such management issues as how to keep guards alert and how to foil sophisticated attackers. "These are common concerns," said Corey Hinderstein of the Nuclear Threat Initiative. "But, until now, these professionals have had no way to talk to their peers about how to handle these kinds of challenges."

The institute's first director is to be Roger Howsley, who until recently was director of security for British Nuclear Fuels, which employs about 10,000 people.The institute is being set up in Vienna mainly because of its proximity to the headquarters of the International Atomic Energy Agency, which provides some nuclear security advice to United Nations member states. Mohamed ElBaradei, the agency's director, is expected to be at the unveiling on Monday and has strongly endorsed the institute. "I am confident," he wrote to Mr. Nunn, that the new forum will help establish "a global nuclear security regime." The public announcement of the institute's founding is to take place on Monday afternoon at the Austria Center as part of the I.A.E.A.'s annual meeting.

The atomic energy agency, an arm of the United Nations whose principal job is to make sure that member countries use their atomic facilities for peaceful ends, also tracks atomic theft and smuggling. It reports that 18 cases of illicit trafficking have involved relatively small amounts of atom bomb fuel. Experts worry that some of the seizures have involved what amount to samples on the global nuclear black market. Initially, the World Institute for Nuclear Security plans to work with sites handling materials that can fuel an atom bomb, which number in the hundreds. It then expects to expand its agenda to include sites that use a wider array of radioactive materials, which number in the thousands.

The institute is modeled on the World Association of Nuclear Operators, an organization founded in London after the 1986 Chernobyl disaster to promote global atomic safety. Mr. Nunn said that he got the idea for the security institute after working for the operator association and finding that its agenda gave little attention to preventing nuclear theft. "The world cannot afford what I call a security Chernobyl," he said. "That would set back the whole effort to use the atom for positive purposes," like diminishing the global addiction to fossil fuels. "So I think this effort is enormously important, beyond preventing the human tragedy that would come from any kind of security disaster."

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/29/world/europe/29nuke.html?partner=rssnyt&emc=rss

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GlobalSecurityNewswire.org
September 26, 2008

U.S. Air Force Might Modify Nuclear Bomb

By Elaine M. Grossman, Global Security Newswire

WASHINGTON — For the first time in more than a decade, the U.S. Air Force is studying the option of adding significant new features to one of its aging atomic bombs, according to a senior service official. The proposed modifications to the B-61 gravity bomb — which service officials are dubbing the "B-61 Mod 12" — would exceed the extent of parts repair or replacement typically performed to increase a weapon's service life.

The new plans would infuse the bomb — originally designed and built in the 1960s — with state-of-the-art capabilities to reduce the risk of theft and prevent an accidental detonation, the senior Air Force official said in a Sept. 10 interview. The official asked not to be identified because of sensitivities associated with discussing the attributes of U.S. nuclear weapons. The initiative would also lend the weapons another 20 to 30 years of service life, a service spokesman said. Yet the inclusion of a large array of upgrades in the overhaul could raise hackles on Capitol Hill, where lawmakers have strongly opposed anything that appears to be a "new" nuclear weapon.

Beginning with an initial design investment of roughly $120 million over the next two years, the Mod 12 would eventually replace all but the very newest versions of the B-61, the official said. As many as 920 B-61 Mods 3, 4 and 7 could undergo the upgrades beginning as early as 2015, though the figures could decline if the arsenal shrinks in the coming years, the official said. An estimated 35 B-61 Mod 11s remaining in the force are modern enough that

they would not have to undergo the refurbishment. The move comes in response to congressional rejection of Bush administration efforts to develop a new nuclear warhead to modernize the entire U.S. arsenal. For the second year in a row, Capitol Hill has zeroed funding for the Reliable Replacement Warhead, touted as offering increased reliability, maintainability, safety and security relative to today's stockpile.

Lawmakers have demanded that the government show how such a new weapon would fit into its overarching nuclear strategy before they would consider funding. One key sticking point has been concern about building a new nuclear warhead at a time when the United States is spearheading efforts to discourage proliferation around the globe. Another worry is that the Energy Department might need to test the design through underground explosions, despite a U.S. moratorium in place for more than a decade. "It's dead under this administration, that's pretty clear," the senior service official said of the Reliable Replacement Warhead. "Let's see what happens in a new administration. But it's not going to come out of this one."

Both presidential candidates have left open the possibility of developing a new nuclear warhead, while still expressing a degree of caution. Senator Barack Obama (D-Ill.) has said he does not support "a premature decision to produce" the weapon, while Senator John McCain (R-Ariz.) has said he would support only a warhead "that is absolutely essential for the viability of our deterrent" and helps facilitate force reductions.

A Demand for 'Real Estate'

Air Force interest in an expanded upgrade effort aligns with a new approach laid out recently by U.S. Strategic Command, under which some of the advanced technologies previously imagined for the Reliable Replacement Warhead might now be retrofitted into existing weapons as they undergo maintenance. The idea would be to fulfill as many RRW objectives as possible without a wholesale replacement of the warhead.

The Energy Department's semiautonomous nuclear weapons agency has said that short of building a new Reliable Replacement Warhead, it is already incorporating all the safety and security features it can into existing weapons in the stockpile via ongoing Life-Extension Programs.

The National Nuclear Security Administration view reflects size and yield constraints on the current array of weapons in the U.S. stockpile, according to experts. However, if the Pentagon could either increase the size of a given weapon system or reduce its explosive yield, additional safety and security features imagined for the replacement warhead might instead be incorporated into existing hardware as it is overhauled, the Air Force official said. "It's that sort of thing that really allows you to get into this design space, that gives you a little more margin, without testing," Siegfried Hecker, a former director of the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico, said in a telephone interview this week. While declining to describe specific safety and security upgrades under contemplation, the Air Force representative said they are modifications that "we know how to do, but they take 'real estate' [inside the weapon package]. They take volume. They take weight and mass."

The official explained that desired security features would improve on "permissive action links" that for years have served as "a lock on the door" of each nuclear warhead, the official said. Little public information is available about how such security devices work, but the Joint Chiefs of Staff describes them as mechanisms "in or attached to a nuclear weapon system to preclude arming and/or launching until the insertion of a prescribed discrete code or combination." Amid growing concern about potential workarounds that might allow unauthorized access to a weapon, older permissive action links should be upgraded or replaced by the latest tools, the Air Force official argued. More modern devices might effectively neutralize the weapon upon any intrusion, this and other defense officials have said.

Moving to 'Plan B'

The service has received initial indications that Capitol Hill might be amenable to altering the B-61's size to allow for RRW-like improvements. However, legislators still might find it difficult to accept that the initiative remains within the bounds of a traditional Life-Extension Program, the official acknowledged. "If you can put it in a bigger case, some people in the past thought that was not an LEP," the official said. It is even less clear whether lawmakers would allow a change in yield, the official said. "We are in discussions with staffers on the Hill on that, [having] talked to some of the people on the authorization committees very recently," said the senior official. The service also planned to consult with the House and Senate appropriations committees "in the very near future," the official added. "Initial feedback" has been that lawmakers might "allow some exploration in more volume [or to] change the shape" of the B-61, if that would open up space for additional safety and security features, the official said.

However, in keeping with congressional mandates against creating a new atomic weapon, legislators want to preserve "the same military capabilities" that the B-61 currently has, the official said.

The Energy Department's nuclear weapons arm is wrapping up a limited life-extension effort for two variants of the B-61 — the Mod 7 and Mod 11 — that can be delivered by strategic bomber aircraft. John Broehm, an NNSA spokesman, said his organization would complete the refurbishment by the end of fiscal 2009.

The Air Force told the National Nuclear Security Administration "about a year ago" that it wanted to study expanding the scope of the B-61 life extension effort, given early congressional resistance to the replacement warhead idea, the service official said. The study is scheduled to begin as of the new fiscal year next month. Depending on its results, the Air Force might offer the nuclear agency more detailed guidance on how much new room would be available on the bomb to include additional features. "Say we can still meet the same mission … and we get agreement from the Hill that [we can] grow the case by, say — just to pull a number — an inch in diameter, and could add, say, 500 pounds of weight to the bomb," the Air Force official said. "[If] we show them it's the same mission set, and that's still a B-61 Mod 12, then they can do so much more."

The Air Force defines a "mod" as a change to a weapon that reflects new or different performance standards, such as explosive power or destructive capability against reinforced targets. Smaller changes, called "alterations," replace a part or subsystem but do not involve a change in performance. Life-extension efforts typically constitute only an alteration. The first weapon the RRW program was to replace was the Navy's W-76 warhead. The initial concept for the B-61 Mod 12 grew out of plans for an RRW-2 weapon – a provenance that might not sit well with lawmakers who have opposed the replacement warhead. The RRW-2 variant was to replace not only the B-61s but all air-delivered nuclear warheads, including cruise missiles, the official said. "Remember, this is the second year in a row" that Congress has cut the replacement warhead from the administration's budget, the official told GSN. "[The] B-61's getting kind of long in the tooth. So a Mod 12 was always our backup if RRW did not go forward. "When House and Senate appropriators opted this year to deny funding again, "that was not a surprise," said the official. For the Air Force, "it was, 'OK, Plan B: Mod 12.'"

An Initial Look

While a boost in the B-61's casing might be more politically palatable, the upcoming life-extension study is also expected to assess how a decrease in yield might be traded for additional safety and security features, the senior service official said. The service must assess whether a B-61 with less of an explosive punch would remain capable enough to reliably destroy the same targets as it could today, the official said.

Would the Air Force be able to "hold the same targets at risk?" asked the official, in describing performance alternatives the design study would consider. "What's the same? What can be allowed to change?" The roughly $120 million required for the two-year assessment would likely come from an $80.4 million catch-all line item for "B-61 Stockpile Systems" in the fiscal 2009 NNSA budget, along with a projected $111.3 million for B-61 efforts in fiscal 2010.

Between 2010 and 2013, NNSA officials, "in coordination with the DOD, will initiate a new LEP for the B-61 while researching, developing, and producing required weapon upgrades/modifications," according to budget documents the nuclear organization provided to Congress this year. The cost to actually undertake the B-61 life extension is unknown at this point, and "really depends upon what you put in," said the Air Force official. Cost estimates also vary depending on how many bombs would be upgraded.

A Nuclear Posture Review that the incoming presidential administration is expected to launch next year could lead to changes in the size of the U.S. arsenal. In turn, that could affect the quantity of B-61s undergoing life extension, the official said. "The beauty of the timing here, though, is the engineering study needs to go on no matter whether you build 10 or 300 or 500," the official said. "So while the NPR's going on and we're deciding that path forward for the next administration, we still do that [B-61 design] work in parallel."

Ultimately all of the Air Force and Navy nuclear warheads would undergo life extension, absent a warhead-replacement program, a senior Strategic Command official said in an interview last month. After initiating the B-61 bomb project, the weapon next up for Air Force life extension would be the Minuteman 3 ICBM's W-78 warhead. To improve that weapon's safety and security components, the Air Force would have fewer options compared to the gravity bomb. Warheads customized for ballistic or cruise missiles cannot grow in size to accommodate additional

features because they must continue to fit on their delivery platforms, the Air Force official noted. There is more latitude to change the size or shape of a gravity bomb, which is delivered from bomber or attack aircraft.

"You can gain some [room] with modern electronics. They're more compact than what we used in the '70s," the service official said. "And if that's not enough [for the W-78 modernization], then you need to get a smaller physics package, which makes a smaller yield." The "physics package" includes all the explosive components of the warhead, so reducing its size to allow for the addition of other features would result in a less powerful weapon. Along with the Energy Department, the Air Force is drafting a "Joint Life Extension Study" to lay out when each warhead in its stockpile should be modernized. The organizations launched the study over the past year and expect to complete it in fiscal 2009, the official said.

What Constitutes 'New'?

For the near term, as the Air Force crafts a more ambitious life-extension effort for the gravity bomb, it could run afoul of congressional efforts to block a new nuclear weapon, according to Jeffrey Lewis, head of the Nuclear Strategy and Nonproliferation Initiative at the New America Foundation. However, Lewis said he would "not necessarily [be] opposed to an LEP approach" if it could offer safety or security benefits, short of building a new warhead. "We don't know how far you can press the LEP program," said Hans Kristensen of the Federation of American Scientists. "Can you press it so far that it constitutes a new weapon?"

The Air Force official said that while the proposed changes would exceed a typical life extension, they would not require building a new "pit," the atomic core of a weapon. By contrast, officials planned on a new pit for the Reliable Replacement Warhead. That distinction, combined with the widely supported objective of increasing nuclear weapons safety and security, might ultimately garner congressional support for the effort, according to several Washington insiders. "If you can combine the best features of an RRW program" with a refurbishment of the existing stockpile, "then you've potentially got a more marketable product" on Capitol Hill, a House aide said last week. To the extent that a B-61 Life-Extension Program "can incorporate more safety and security functions … that would be a good idea," Kristensen said. "Nobody is against that." He added, though, that Capitol Hill should ensure that safety and security risks to U.S. nuclear warheads are assessed realistically so that the cost to modify the weapons remains reasonable.

"The question is: Who sets the requirement for how much safety is necessary?" said Kristensen, who directs his organization's Nuclear Information Project. Similarly, without rigorous oversight, escalating concerns about the potential for nuclear terrorism could mean that virtually "anyone who comes around with new security features will get the go-ahead" to produce such components, he said. Other thorny issues that first arose with the replacement warhead could also dog the new administration next year if it embraces the life-extension concept, several analysts noted. Among the questions raised would be whether warheads undergoing an expanded life extension could continue to be certified as reliable without explosive testing, the House aide said.

Hecker, the former Los Alamos lab director, advocates undertaking detailed studies and prototypes prior to any ambitious LEP overhauls, to prove the designs would be dependable without underground tests. "If you can't do it without testing, you can't do it," said Hecker, now a scholar at Stanford University's Center for International Security and Cooperation. Expanded life-extension efforts "take you through as many questions as you had" with the Reliable Replacement Warhead, a program he supported, he said.

The Strategic Command official interviewed last month voiced confidence that additional life-extension measures could be implemented without a need to break a U.S. test moratorium in place since the early 1990s. "I can test the fuses, I can test the high explosives that are in there, I can test a lot of the pieces. I can test all those both independently and [integrated] all the way to short of a [nuclear explosive] test," the senior command official said. "So I can tell you everything in the weapon short of nuclear explosion happens in the way we predict it to happen. We do that still today with the current weapons." Another lingering uncertainty, even after an expanded life-extension effort is complete, is whether today's sizable stockpile of backup warheads would still be needed as a "hedge" against potential technical failures, the House aide noted.

The administration this week reaffirmed that, absent an RRW program, an unspecified number of warheads above a future 2,200 limit on operationally deployed weapons must be retained, in part to mitigate the risk of discovering any malfunctions in the aging arsenal. It is unclear if the emerging plans for life extension might alter that calculus.

http://www.nti.org/d_newswire/issues/2008_9_26.html#B8705677

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The Christian Science Monitor
September 29, 2008

Syrian Bombing: A Jihadi Attack?

By Nicholas Blanford

The weekend bombing that killed at least 17 people was the worst of its kind since Syria's battle with the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1970s and 80s.

BEIRUT, Lebanon - As the Syrian authorities begin investigating a bomb attack that killed 17 people in Damascus Saturday, initial suspicion points to Islamist militants, either home-grown or foreign.

A car bomb, packed with an estimated 440 pounds of explosives, blew up close to a building reportedly housing the Palestine Branch of Syrian military intelligence. It was the worst of its kind since the violent confrontation between the Syrian regime and Islamist militants of the Muslim Brotherhood in the late 1970s and early 80s. There was no claim of responsibility, and in Syria, one of the most opaque countries in the Middle East, there are plenty of potential perpetrators.

"As usual in the Middle East, there are three or four credible culprits and this is what is so frustrating. The region is chronically and increasingly violent," says Rami Khouri, director of the Issam Fares Center for Lebanon, a think tank. "Who knows who did it, but in a way it's surprising that no one has tried to do this stuff before because so many people are angry with Syria."

The London-based Ash-Sharq al-Awsat newspaper claimed Sunday that a brigadier general who was a senior Syrian intelligence officer was among the 17 people killed in the explosion. While the Syrian authorities have said only civilians were killed in the attack, the general's death, if true, could indicate that the bombing was a targeted assassination rather than a random mass-casualty attack. Still, initial speculation suggests that those responsible for the bomb attack were Sunni jihadists reacting to a possible crackdown by the Syrian authorities.

The Syrian regime survives through coercion, guile, and force and has enjoyed considerably more stability than its neighbors in the past quarter century. But since 2004, there has been a spate of attacks and clashes between the Syrian security forces and suspected Al Qaeda-style militants.

Some analysts say the clashes, which included an attack on the US embassy in Damascus two years ago, were contrived by the state to win sympathy from the West. Others believe that Syria faces a genuine threat from the region's jihadists who resent the regime's domination by the Alawites (an off-shoot of Shiite Islam that Islamic hard-liners regard as heretical), abhor Syria's ties with Shiite Iran, and oppose Damascus's indirect peace talks with Israel.

On top of the potential jihadist threat, Syria has been rocked by mysterious assassinations and security breaches this year. They include the February car-bomb killing of Imad Mughniyah, top military commander of Lebanon's militant Shiite Hezbollah, and the assassination of a leading Syrian general and adviser to Syrian president Bashar al-Assad who had alleged links to Hezbollah. "We have extremists in Iraq and in Lebanon. Any one of them can be suspects," in the Damascus bombing, says Sami Moubayed, a Syrian political analyst. "If an intelligence war has been waged by any of the usual suspects against Syria, we are in for difficult times since security is a red-line in Syria."

Since the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the United States has repeatedly accused Syria of facilitating the entry of foreign Arab militants into neighboring Iraq and demanded Damascus tighten border security. US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, however, acknowledged to the London-based Al-Hayat daily Friday that the flow of militants entering Iraq from Syria has decreased. She pinned the downturn on US and Iraqi government actions inside Iraq, rather than assistance by Syria.

President Assad last month warned of violence from jihadist militants in northern Lebanon and called on the Lebanese Army to mount a crackdown. Since May, Sunni militants in northern Lebanon have clashed with the small Alawite community, which has close links to the Syrian regime. A reconciliation agreement reached earlier this month has quelled fighting for now, but north Lebanon remains tense.

Two weeks ago, Syria deployed several thousand special forces troops along Lebanon's northern border, an unusual development that sparked speculation in Beirut that Damascus was contemplating a military incursion into its neighbor. Syria said that the deployment was nothing more than an antismuggling drive. But Syria's state-run Al-Thawra newspaper Sunday suggested that the perpetrators of the Damascus bomb attack had come from another country. "Syrian security is solid, but the region is throbbing with terrorists," it reported. "We need to protect our frontiers to prevent infiltration by terrorists, explosions, and acts of sabotage."

Lebanon's northern border is the favored conduit for Sunni jihadists crossing between Lebanon and Syria. North Lebanon lies close to Syria's "Sunni belt," once hotbeds of support for the Muslim Brotherhood. "If Syria is cracking down on jihadis along the Iraq border and along the Lebanon border, then it would not be surprising if the jihadis strike back," says Andrew Tabler, editor of Syria Today magazine.

http://www.csmonitor.com/2008/0929/p07s02-wome.html

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Spiegel Online
INSIGHTS INTO THE CYBER-JIHAD

Tracking the Terrorists Online

By Yassin Musharbash in Washington, D.C.
08/29/2008 06:08 PM

For years, al-Qaida and other terror groups have set up shop in the Internet. Those who track them have covertly followed. The companies SITE and IntelCenter have penetrated even deeper into the terror Web than most intelligence agencies.

When al-Qaida was founded, Josh Devon was nine years old. Ben Venzke was 15. The year was 1988, and Devon and Venzke were as uninterested in the terrorist network as its leader, Osama bin Laden, was in the two young Americans.

Now, two decades later, things have changed. Venzke and Devon have both become fascinated in terrorism and have turned that interest into careers. And al-Qaida now takes careful note of their work.

Venzke and Devon are two of the most prominent "terror trackers" worldwide. In the United States, and increasingly in other countries, the term refers to a community of people who spend their days analyzing traces that al-Qaida and affiliated organizations leave behind, especially on the Internet. The two Americans are essentially digital trackers in the age of globalized terrorism.

IntelCenter and SITE Intelgroup are the companies that Venzke and Devon, respectively, have founded. They enjoy a strong reputation within the relatively small community of terrorism experts. Beyond that, though, they are virtually unknown -- but wrongly so.

Bin Laden's Words

The two companies exert tremendous influence, worldwide and around the clock. News agencies, intelligence services and law enforcement organizations from the entire Western world are among Devon's and Venzke's clients. SITE and IntelCenter deliver their product -- information -- via e-mail, telephone or fax, or directly to clients' PDAs or mobile phones.

Almost every statement by Osama bin Laden published on the Internet, to name only one example, is first made public by SITE and IntelCenter. They find the statements in the confusion of Web sites associated with al-Qaida, and within seconds they have sent the first screen shots to their subscribers. It takes the companies only minutes to summarize bin Laden's speeches and within hours, they will have provided full translations, analysis included.

Because hardly any news agencies, newspapers or magazines are in a position to obtain or examine this information themselves, the translations often end up being quoted verbatim in the media. They also land on the desks of intelligence analysts in the United States and Europe, providing them with special delivery, albeit secondhand, of bin Laden's words.

It is a hot day in June on the East Coast of the United States. The location of SITE Intelgroup's headquarters cannot be disclosed. The company is housed in an inconspicuous office building -- there is no company sign. The interior -- neutral carpeting and light-colored desks, a humming air-conditioning system and a gurgling water cooler -- offers little hint of the company's delicate field of business. Josh Devon, holding a cup of ice tea from Starbucks, invites his visitor into a conference room where the walls are draped with maps. This is where Devon briefs FBI agents. The 29-year-old is wearing a white shirt and sporting three-day growth. When he founded SITE, together with Rita Katz, he was all of 23.

'We Simply Followed'

"We simply followed the jihadists," he says, describing the idea behind SITE. "We went where they went." He means online. When he and Katz joined forces, Devon was still a student of Middle Eastern Studies, but his business partner was already a legend. Beginning in the late 1990s, Katz almost single-handedly uncovered a number of funding sources of Islamists. Katz, a Jew born in Iraq who speaks Arabic, infiltrated Islamist organizations disguised as a Muslim woman -- and wearing recording equipment. She passed her findings on to the authorities. There were court cases, and some organizations were banned.

Then came Sept. 11, 2001.

A short time later, Rita Katz and Josh Devon were among the first to notice that al-Qaida and its ilk were creating an online presence. They established SITE, an acronym for "Search for International Terrorist Entities," and began surfing their way in pursuit of radical Islamic terrorist organizations. A US magazine was one of their first subscribers. Government agencies in Switzerland and the families of Sept. 11 victims soon followed. SITE was in business.

Today this former non-profit organization has been turned into a business enterprise. But Devon and Katz see their work as more of an avocation than running a business. They are only offline when commuting between their offices and homes. In a later e-mail interview Katz, who was not at the SITE offices during the June visit, wrote: "I believe what I do is very important. It's a mission." Devon says: Terror tracking "is very addictive, especially when you experience a major success."

And SITE has certainly been successful. There is a reason Katz has a letter of appreciation from FBI Director Robert S. Muller III hanging on the wall in her office. The company's work has also led to arrests abroad, including those of would-be suicide bombers who had left farewell letters in chat rooms that SITE managed to penetrate.

'Could Blow Your Cover'

SITE doesn't like to discuss methods. But even without such information, it is not hard to figure out where its expertise lies. Katz and her employees surf the Net as if they were cyber jihadists. "In a sense it's similiar," she says, alluding to her previous undercover mission, "because in both cases you have to be very careful not to disclose your true identity and not make mistakes that could blow your cover."

In the past few years, al-Qaida volunteers have created a stable online infrastructure. Its mainstays are a handful of Arab-language discussion forums, where supporters of terrorism hold their debates. Most of all, however, the administrators of these sites allow terrorist organizations to post their speeches, videos and claims of responsibility for attacks and other acts of terror.

The forums are password-protected, but this is only the first hurdle. Anyone who wants more information than can be gleaned by reading the posts has to work up through the informal hierarchy. He or she must be able to credibly convey, using suitable language and the right tone, that he is a true jihadist. Gaining the confidence of the key users and, eventually, of the administrators is vital. Only then can one becomes a part of cyber networks with close ties to al-Qaida and other affiliated terrorist organizations, networks that posses the raw footage of terrorist videos, coordinate the flow of funds and know the real e-mail addresses of forum users.

SITE's competitive edge is that it got into the game earlier than government agencies. According to a European intelligence official, SITE has a head start of four to five years.

SITE's work for government agencies is always confidential and, in some cases, based on concrete assignments. Its public products include newsletters about Taliban activities, the situation in Iraq and the latest news from the jihadist chat rooms. Aside from official information from terrorist organizations, SITE also provides accounts of the "atmosphere" in the terrorist community.

Competition in the Hunt for Terrorists

SITE is frequently quoted by such papers as the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*. More often, though, SITE appears indirectly and without attribution in newspaper stories worldwide, although the company is now seeking less public profile than in recent years.

SITE is likely also the source of some of the reports exchanged by cooperating intelligence services. "In the worst case," criticizes terrorism expert Magnus Ranstorp of the Swedish National Defense College, "it's an echo chamber." In other words, because intelligence services do not reveal their sources to each other, the same report can become its own confirmation. Of course, every intelligence service worth its salt also pursues cyber jihadists on its own. But SITE and IntelCenter are often faster, and their products are also sent to departments that lack these capabilities.

Ranstorp sees other problems as well. He believes that SITE and companies like it are commercializing intelligence and influencing analysts with their reports. Most of all, however, Ranstorp wishes there were more companies like SITE. "Then there would be more competition." In fact, SITE has only one serious competitor: Ben Venzke. He scored one of his most recent scoops in late July, when IntelCenter employees were the first to find a video on the Internet in which the Turkestan Islamic Party threatened to commit acts of terror during the Olympics.

Never Trusted the News

At 9:07 p.m., IntelCenter reported the discovery to its subscribers using the Flash Messaging System. Translated key passages followed at 9:46 p.m., and freeze images at 10:39. At the same time, the first news agency took up the report. The next day, Venzke analyzed the group's credibility and later send out information from an earlier video.

Although Ben Venzke doesn't look quite as young as Josh Devon, he still doesn't look like someone who routinely provides US special units with intelligence material. "This here," says Venzke cheerfully, wearing a casual black shirt, "is my second living room." The waitress in the café at the Four Seasons Hotel recognizes him immediately and brings him a cup of tea.

Venzke was even younger than Devon when he founded IntelCenter 19 years ago: 16, to be exact. He later studied journalism in college and eventually wrote for the *Boston Globe* and *Jane's Intelligence Review*.

Terrorists can be found all over the Internet -- if you just know where to look.

"I never trusted the news to give the full picture," says Venzke. He says that he wanted to understand "how things really worked."

His motto goes something like this: "In order for a society to function, people have to be able to know they are safe. Life should be about film and music, not about worrying about buildings collapsing."

IntelCenter has a lot in common with SITE, but there are also some important differences. Both are capable of finding every important al-Qaida communiqué, sometimes even before it is published. Both can quickly send out relatively accurate translations of terrorist material, including videos, speeches and claims or responsibility. Both work for similar clients.

But IntelCenter, which also keeps its location a secret, provides more customized preliminary work for the intelligence services and the military -- at least based on what we are able to see and hear.

Involved in almost every Hostage Crisis

Venzke's catalog illustrates this approach. It contains services that he offers to government agencies only, such as the 24/7 "Hostage/Kidnapping Profiling and Incident Monitor" -- at a cost running up to more than $500,000 (€323,000) a year. According to Venzke, IntelCenter is involved in almost every hostage crisis.

IntelCenter seems to act more like a subcontractor to government agencies than SITE. "Much of what we do, they could probably do themselves, but we often have more experience in our specialty areas and can do it faster and cheaper," says Venzke. He explains that he invested heavily in infrastructure to meet the requirements of the intelligence community, including, for example, redundant power, cooling and other systems. Some clients want raw data, while others prefer finished analyses. IntelCenter offers both and can format the information using the standard "Analyst's Notebook" software.

Venzke prides himself on his professionalism. There is gossip about how Rita Katz once took it upon herself to call foreign officials, because she was convinced that somebody was planning something and US officials were

unwilling to help her. Sometimes she acts as a private terrorist hunter, sometimes as an expert and sometimes as a business partner. Venzke, for his part, would never talk to strangers about this sort of potentially critical information.

Perhaps for this reason, Venzke has little praise for SITE. "What SITE does, is not even remotely in our class." Rita Katz disagrees: "Our information is of the highest quality and of unparalleled accuracy." She declined to comment on the work of others.

The Secret, Hidden Part

The competition between these two companies is probably healthy. Criticism exposes more of what SITE and IntelCenter do, but not, of course, the secret, hidden part. In the end, both companies earn more working for government agencies and businesses than for the media.

Still, compared to other private-sector companies that are contractors with the CIA, the Pentagon and the like, SITE and IntelCenter are transparent, tiny and laughably insignificant. "I've never thought about our influence," says Josh Devon with complete innocence. "We try to do the best job we can."

Nevertheless, both companies are part of an information oligarchy that hardly anyone in the Western hemisphere can monitor or assess. And the conspiracy theories pontificating that SITE and IntelCenter shoot the bin Laden videos themselves will continue to exist in the future. And Katz, Venzke and Devon will continue to see the humor in such theories: Yep, this is Mossad Headquarters. Exactly!

But then something beeps, or a pager starts humming to indicate that a jihadist is sending a message. And they will keep on digging through information. And the hunt will begin all over again.

Translated from the German by Christopher Sultan

http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,575276,00.html

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Washington Times
September 29, 2008
Pg. 1

U.S. Urged To Go On Offense In Cyberwar

Networks seen at risk of attack

By Shaun Waterman, United Press International

The United States needs to do more to develop an offensive cyberwar capability rather than just focus on defending its networks from attack, says the chairman of the House cybersecurity subcommittee. "The best defense is a good offense and an offensive [cyberwar] capability is essential to our national defense," Rep. Jim Langevin told United Press International, calling it "a necessary deterrent." "Warfare is forever changed. ... Never again will we see major warfare without a strong cyber component executed as part of it," the Rhode Island Democrat added, citing the assault on Georgian government Web sites that accompanied Russia's invasion last month.

Mr. Langevin, chairman of the House Homeland Security subcommittee on emerging threats, cybersecurity and science and technology and a member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, also called on the White House to declassify much more of its Comprehensive National Cybersecurity Initiative (CNCI) and said the Department of Homeland Security should be stripped of its lead role in defending the nation's computer networks. His call for a more robust offensive capacity in cyberwarfare highlights an ongoing debate in government about how

best to address the complex challenges posed by U.S. dependence on the Internet and other computer networks - a vulnerability that the nation's enemies could exploit.

One issue that analysts highlight is the difficulty in determining the origins of cyber-attacks, which often are launched using "bot-nets" of compromised computers owned by innocent users anywhere on the planet. The issue was raised earlier this month in two House hearings in which lawmakers heard testimony from members of a bipartisan, blue-ribbon panel - the Commission on Cyber Security for the 44th Presidency.

"We have a tremendous amount of trouble determining attribution ... where an attack actually came from, who was responsible, who might have been behind that computer. And we have a very, very long way to go on that," commission member Paul Kurtz, a former White House cybersecurity official, told the House intelligence committee. "Until we start to get clarity in that piece, it's going to be very difficult to contemplate the military option, of responding appropriately," Mr. Kurtz added.

Another issue raised at the hearings was that, in order for any offensive capacity to be a deterrent for adversaries, it would have to be made public, whereas the U.S. military's cyberwar capacities are largely classified. "Clearly, our offensive capabilities and sources and methods we probably do not want to disclose in any detailed way," AT&T executive John Nagengast, formerly an assistant deputy director at the National Security Agency, told the committee. "But as part of an overall doctrine and strategy in cyberspace, we need to consider what are the deterrent factors. ... [What] do we want to make public, as part of that deterrence strategy, and what do we need to keep secret because most of our offensive capabilities should be kept secret?" he added.

Former intelligence official Suzanne E. Spaulding told the hearing that focusing on offensive capabilities and giving a lead role to the military might make it harder for the United States to work with other countries on cyber issues, where the lines separating crime, terrorism and warfare are often hard to draw. "My concern is that [the Defense Department] has been so vocal about the development and deployment of cyberwarfare capabilities that it will be very difficult for that department to develop and sustain the trust necessary to undertake essential collaboration on defense cybersecurity efforts with the private sector and with international stakeholders," she said. "There is a significant risk that these vital partners will suspect that the collaboration is really aimed at strengthening our offensive arsenal," she concluded.

Mr. Langevin told UPI that work on international treaties to deal with cyberwar offered no real alternative to developing an offensive capability. "That discussion at the international level may be appropriate at some point," he said. "There are treaties on cybercrime that do exist, but it doesn't mean that cybercrime doesn't occur."

http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2008/sep/29/us-urged-to-go-on-offense-in-cyberwar/

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World Politics Review
September 29, 2008

Missile Defense Moves Forward

Alan W. Dowd
World Politics Review Exclusive

These are heady and crucial days for the burgeoning international missile defense system (IMD), which the United States is building in cooperation with its closest allies. Indeed, every week seems to bring with it another validation of IMD's necessity, viability or practicality. The past several weeks are no exception.

On the capabilities front, just this month, the Airborne Laser (ABL) was successfully tested aboard its demonstrator aircraft (though not yet in the air; that comes next year). "We have now demonstrated all of the technical steps needed to shoot down a boosting missile in flight," explained Lt. Gen. Henry Obering, director of the Missile Defense Agency (MDA). "And we're on track to do that next year in a flight test."

Obering reported in July that there are now 15 Aegis ships ready to launch sea-based SM-3 interceptors. "We should have a total of 18 ships by the end of this year," he said. The IMD inventory also will include a total of 30 ground-

based interceptors by the end of the year. By 2011, the U.S. will have 44 interceptors at U.S. sites -- and likely more outside the U.S.

Indeed, according to Obering, no less than 18 nations are collaborating with the U.S. on IMD. He calls it "an integrated layered system." It's not unlike a chain-link fence stretching from Australia and Japan, to Alaska and California, to Greenland and Britain, to Poland and the Czech Republic, to Israel and the Persian Gulf, all linked by numerous assets at sea and in space.

Since 2001, IMD assets have scored successes on 35 of 43 hit-to-kill intercepts, or 81.39 percent of the time. And MDA is deploying new radars to enhance the system's ability to distinguish between warheads and decoys -- and improve the odds of success.

On the diplomatic front, Washington and the UAE announced plans earlier this month to cooperate on deployment of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system (THAAD). Aviation Week reports that the UAE will purchase "three THAAD fire units equipped with 147 THAAD missiles." It will be America's first THAAD sale to a foreign country, according to Reuters, and the UAE seems an ideal candidate. Not only does the UAE sit just across the Persian Gulf from Ahmadinejad's Iran, it would be a prime target for Iranian missiles in a time of hostilities due to its relationship with the United States. According to the State Department, the UAE "hosts more U.S. Navy ships than any port outside the U.S."

In August, Poland and the U.S. ended their months-long impasse and agreed to deployment of IMD interceptors on Polish soil. The Polish bed of interceptors will be placed at an old airbase near the Baltic Sea town of Redzikowo. Some 500 U.S. troops will man the base, according to an Associated Press report. The bed of interceptor missiles will work in tandem with a new radar facility in the neighboring Czech Republic.

Brushing back Russian claims that the U.S. is acting provocatively and aggressively, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice stated the obvious after inking the deal with Poland -- namely, that missile defense is a matter of, well, defense. "It is in our defense that we do this," she explained. Moreover, it pays to recall that the IMD elements in Poland could never defend against Russia's arsenal -- due to both the placement of the system and the number of Russian missiles.

As Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security John Rood has noted, Russia's recent START declarations reveal that Moscow deploys 850 ICBMs -- with thousands of warheads. A measly 10 interceptors simply cannot counter a missile force of that size.

"We proposed the Czech Republic for the radar and Poland for the interceptors because, very simply, technically they were the optimum locations" for tracking missile launches from Iran and its neighborhood, Obering said.

But the Bear is wide awake and eager to flex its muscles. "Russia will be forced to react and not only through diplomatic" channels, the Associated Press quoted the Russian Foreign Ministry as saying late last month.

"Poland," blustered Russian Gen. Anatoly Nogovitsyn, "is exposing itself to a strike."

If Russia's invasion of Georgia didn't validate the Polish-Czech embrace of the U.S. -- as embodied by NATO membership and IMD participation -- Russia's bellicose words certainly have.

Call it a self-fulfilling prophecy; call it a sign of insecurity in Moscow and insensitivity in Washington; call it avoidable. But don't blame these countries that were forgotten after World War II and orphaned after the Cold War for wanting the West's protection -- and wanting it in more than writing.

Indeed, the threats to America and its allies are growing.

* There were120 ballistic missile launches in 2007 alone, according to Obering.

* As recently as July, Obering points out, "Iran orchestrated launches of several short- and medium-range ballistic missiles capable of striking Israel and the U.S. bases in the Middle East."

* Once deployed, Iran's latest variant of the Shahab-3 will be able to hit targets in southern Europe and across the Middle East. The Defense Intelligence Agency "estimates that Iran could have an ICBM capable of reaching the United States by 2015," Obering said, adding ominously, "We should not assume that we have full understanding of ballistic missile activities around the world. We have been surprised in the past."

* That brings us to the unpredictably dangerous regime in North Korea, which makes a habit of getting our attention with missile tests -- and now has an ailing leader at the helm.

"None of this existed just four years ago," Obering is quick to remind us, pointing to IMD's blossoming assets. If given room and resources to grow, just imagine what IMD will look like four years from now.

The good news is that Obering and his team already have.

Alan W. Dowd is a contributing editor with World Politics Review and a senior fellow with the Fraser Institute.

http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/article.aspx?id=2721

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NPR
September 22, 2008

Series Overview: The Future of U.S. Missile Defense

Morning Edition (NPR), 11:00 AM

STEVE INSKEEP: The Bush administration has committed $60 billion to missile defense. And starting today, we're going to examine what we get. Missile interceptors are now in silos in the ground in Alaska and California. U.S. warships have them too. U.S. allies are involved. There is still, though, the question of whether missile defense is worth it. Here's NPR's Mike Shuster.

MIKE SHUSTER: Proponents of U.S. missile defense believe the threat to the United States from the spread of ballistic missiles around the world is imminent and growing. Witness this Hollywood-style video on the Web site of the Pentagon's Missile Defense Agency depicting a variety of missile attack scenarios the U.S. might face now or in the future.

(Soundbite of video clip) UNIDENTIFIED ANNOUNCER: Inform Pentagon and White House, two threats remain in system, one for impact point in Hawaii and one for impact point in San Francisco. Time to intercept threat to Hawaii, T plus 10 minutes.

SHUSTER: North Korea, Iran, and potentially other hostile states are developing their missile capabilities. North Korea already has a nuclear weapon, and many believe Iran could acquire one in the not-too-distant future. If those states or others also develop missiles that could reach the United States, then say proponents of missile defense, we must be able to destroy hostile missiles before they reach American soil. And so, since 2002 the Bush administration has deployed missile interceptors. Four at Vandenberg Air Force Base in California and 14 more, so far, at Fort Greely in Central Alaska, housed in buried silos on several flat fields against the dramatic backdrop of the snow-covered Alaska mountain range.

We've opened a little round window in the temporary hatch on top of the silo, right?

COL. GEORGE BOND: We've opened up the clamshell cover that covers the interceptor.

SHUSTER: Colonel George Bond gazes down at the nosecone of a powerful three-stage missile primed for launch to prevent a devastating nuclear attack.

BOND: We're looking at a ground-based interceptor. This is the 54-foot missile that is designed to intercept an intercontinental ballistic missile headed to the territory of the United States.

SHUSTER: It was a quest that began with a speech by President Ronald Reagan 25 years ago.

(Soundbite of President Reagan speech)PRESIDENT REAGAN: What if free people could live secure in the knowledge that their security did not rest upon the threat of instant U.S. retaliation to deter a Soviet attack, that we could intercept and destroy strategic ballistic missiles before they reached our own soil or that of our allies? I know this is a formidable technical task, one that may not be accomplished before the end of this century. Yet current technology has attained a level of sophistication where it's reasonable for us to begin this effort.

SHUSTER: President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative, quickly dubbed "Star Wars," got no further than the research laboratory. He was overly optimistic about the scope, pace, and sophistication of the technology, and about the political firestorm his proposal would ignite. But when President George W. Bush took office, he brought with him advisers that were convinced a scaled-down version of missile defense must be deployed to confront the threat, not from Russia's huge arsenal of ICBMs, but from the isolated rogue states of the world which were developing missiles and which, the reasoning went, could not be deterred from using them against the U.S. Lieutenant General Henry Obering is the director of the Missile Defense Agency.

LT. GEN. HENRY OBERING (Director, Missile Defense Agency): There could be groups that are either non-state actors or groups within a government operating potentially outside the government that want to use this to strike a blow for their cause. They would not be deterable necessarily. They would not even concern themselves with retaliation, because they don't care. These are the kind of things we're trying to think through as we face the future.

SHUSTER: Just this past summer, Iran very publicly tested several short and medium-range missiles. North Korea has constructed a second missile test launch site, and just last week it fired an engine component that analysts believe could be used on a North Korean ICBM designed to reach the U.S. The Missile Defense Agency lists more than 20 nations with missile capabilities now, arguing that the proliferation of this technology makes defenses more necessary than ever. That was Secretary of State Rice's message when she traveled to Prague earlier this year to sign an agreement with the Czech Republic beginning the expansion of the U.S. missile defense system to Europe.

SECRETARY OF STATE RICE: Ballistic missile proliferation is not an imaginary threat. As we know, the Iranians continue defiance of international obligations to suspend their enrichment and reprocessing. But they also continue apace in their missile development. And so we need to be prepared for that threat.

SHUSTER: But not everyone is convinced this threat justifies the billions of dollars spent so far. Joe Cirincione is an expert on missile proliferation and author of "Bomb Scare: The History and Future of Nuclear Weapons".

JOSEPH CIRINCIONE (President, Ploughshares Fund; Author, "Bomb Scare: The History and Future of Nuclear Weapons"): The Iranians like to brag about their missile program, to exaggerate their threat to puff themselves up. And U.S. officials are only too happy to take those exaggerations in order to justify the budgets for their anti-missile program. We're engaged in sort of a hype-hype rhetorical battle going on here.

SHUSTER: In fact, the Iranians doctored a photo they released this summer that sought to cover up what might have been a failure of one of their missile test flights. Joe Cirincione argues that the proliferation of ballistic missiles is not as serious a threat as Rice, Obering, and others make out.

CIRINCIONE: When you actually look at it, when you actually count the missiles, there are far fewer missiles in the world now than there were 20 years ago, fewer missile programs in the world now than 20 years ago, fewer hostile states.

SHUSTER: Then there's the attack scenario itself. Would the leaders of North Korea and Iran be so insane as to launch one or two missiles against the United States with the certainty that in the face of overwhelming American retaliation they would be committing national suicide? Richard Garwin doesn't think so. Garwin has been a key adviser to many administrations over the years on issues involving nuclear weapons. Garwin testified before a congressional panel earlier this year that the threat of attack with nuclear weapons is real, but not delivered by intercontinental ballistic missiles.

DR. RICHARD GARWIN (Physicist; IBM Fellow Emeritus, Thomas J. Watson Research Center): A state wishing to deliver nuclear weapons to injure the United States' homeland would far more likely use short-range ballistic missiles or cruise missiles launched from a ship to attack U.S. coastal cities with nuclear weapons than use an ICBM for that purpose.

SHUSTER: The Bush administration has been working hard to develop sea-based missile defenses. The latest successful anti-missile flight test at sea involved the USS Lake Erie off Hawaii several months ago.

(Soundbite of anti-missile flight test at sea) UNIDENTIFIED ANNOUNCER: Fireball, Fireball, Fireball. Track 7Q55. Track lifting. Nine, eight, seven...

SHUSTER: The deployment of U.S. missile defenses continues, as does the debate over its cost and capabilities. General Obering, the head of the Missile Defense Agency, views it as an insurance policy.

OBERING: If we can prevent one attack - whether it be from another country, from a non-state actor, terrorist organization using these types of weapons - one attack on an American city, we would more than pay for this program many, many times over, and of course, the prevention of the loss of life.

SHUSTER: All this week we will be exploring the American Missile Defense System. Tomorrow we travel to Alaska for a close look at the centerpiece of the system, the ground-based interceptors at Fort Greely.

Mike Shuster, NPR News.

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NPR
September 23, 2008

Critics Question Ability of Missile Defense System

Morning Edition (NPR), 11:00 AM

LINDA WERTHEIMER: This week, we're taking a close look at the Bush administration's missile defense system and whether the roughly $60 billion spent so far is worth the potential benefits. The most important part of this system consists of missiles based on land at Fort Greely in Alaska and at Vandenberg Air Force Base in California. NPR's Mike Shuster begins the second part of our series in Fort Greely.

MIKE SHUSTER: Fort Greely is located in central Alaska, about a hundred miles south of Fairbanks, and not far from the magnificent peaks of the Alaska Range. The base was little more than an airstrip during World War II. And during the Cold War, the U.S. military trained here for winter operations against the Soviet Union. It almost closed in the 1990s. But when George W. Bush took office eight years ago, Fort Greely was in for a resurrection of sorts. Because of its position on the globe and the geometry of missile flights, Fort Greely was perfectly situated to house the ground-based interceptor, the key component of the U.S. missile defense system. There are several missile fields here, either completed or under construction. Colonel George Bond is the lead officer from the Pentagon's Missile Defense Agency.

COL. GEORGE BOND (Lead Officer, Missile Defense Agency): Off to the far left, you see missile field three where we have 20 silos. By the time we complete the missile field in 2010, there will be 40 silos.

SHUSTER: The missiles are housed in silos below ground, covered over by steel clamshell-shaped hatches. The missile chamber is accessible by ladder. The silos are temperature and humidity controlled to keep the missiles fueled and ready for launch.

BOND: You'll see these yellow cables are the umbilical cords that provide the data from our command launch equipment to give the missile its weapons task plan, basically the information that it needs to launch and get on an interception path with the incoming warhead.

SHUSTER: There are three stages in the trajectory of a missile: the launch and initial ascent, called the boost phase; the mid-course, when the warhead is flying through space; and the terminal phase, when it re-enters the atmosphere and is heading toward the target. The missiles at Fort Greely are mid-course interceptors. Colonel Bond explains that they use an Exoatmospheric Kill Vehicle, or EKV, to destroy the hostile warhead.

BOND: It's 140 pounds. It contains absolutely no explosives. And it destroys an incoming warhead simply by kinetic energy. It's traveling at speeds of approximately 15,000 miles an hour, so at 140 pounds, at those kind of speeds, it creates tremendous kinetic energy when it strikes the rocket.

SHUSTER: These interceptors are on alert and ready for battle round the clock, every day. Control is in the hands of the 49th Missile Defense Battalion, a unit of the Alaska National Guard. Rotating squads of six soldiers operate the fire center fulltime, and every day the squads go through training exercises designed to simulate an actual missile attack. (Soundbite of missile attack simulation) (Soundbite of siren)

Unidentified Officer #1: Director, MCS reports a quick alert.

Unidentified Officer #2: Copy, quick alert.

Unidentified Officer #1: Director, all subsystems are operational and the system is at alert.

Unidentified Officer #2: Copy.

SHUSTER: The Bush administration made the decision to deploy the missile defense system in a highly unorthodox way. Digging got under way on the silos, and then the missiles were eventually placed in them before they went through a full set of flight tests to prove their capabilities. That has given rise to sharp criticism. Philip Coyle used to oversee weapons testing at the Pentagon. He is now a specialist with the Center for Defense Information. Earlier this year, Coyle testified on the current state of the missile defense system before a congressional panel.

PHILIP COYLE (Senior Advisor, Center for Defense Information): National missile defense has become a theology in the United States, not a technology. As a result, U.S. missile defenses are being deployed without well-established operational criteria.

SHUSTER: At the same hearing, Richard Garwin was even more scathing. Garwin has been a longtime adviser to the government on nuclear weapons and was a member of the National Commission on Ballistic Missile Proliferation headed by Donald Rumsfeld in 1998. Garwin told Congress that guarding the U.S. against nuclear attack will be a failure as long as the Pentagon attempts to carry it out using mid-course interceptors.

RICHARD GARWIN (Physicist; IBM Fellow Emeritus, Thomas J. Watson Research Center): Should a state be so misguided as to attempt to deliver nuclear weapons by ICBM, they could be guaranteed against intercept in mid-course by the use of appropriate countermeasures.

SHUSTER: The issue of countermeasures is at the heart of the debate over missile defense. Any missile that could deploy a nuclear warhead into space could also deploy countermeasures designed to fool an interceptor missile. These countermeasures could be chaff creating a cloud around the warhead, or miniature jammers that would interfere with signals, or balloons that look just like the warhead. In space, the decoy and the real warhead travel at the same speed. Sensors in space, on the ground, and on the kill vehicle itself have great difficulty determining which is the real threat. Lieutenant General Henry Obering, director of the Missile Defense Agency, says the system has been tested using decoys.

LT. GEN. HENRY OBERING (Director, Missile Defense Agency): It has undergone six of nine successful intercept tests since 2000, and of course four of those have been against countermeasures. The testing that we've done is realistic from an operational perspective.

SHUSTER: But the Missile Defense Agency will not provide more precise data on which countermeasures have actually been used in tests, leading critics like Joe Cirincione, president of the Ploughshares Fund, to be highly skeptical about General Obering's claims.

JOSEPH CIRINCIONE (President, Ploughshares Fund): General Obering is misleading the Congress and the American public and the troops as to the capability of our systems. If we were to have a realistic test this year, next year, it would fail. It would fail catastrophically. And they know that, which is why they don't test that way.

SHUSTER: To confront the countermeasures problem, the Pentagon has invested heavily in new sensors and high-tech radar.

This is the sea-based X-band radar, a floating oil drilling platform with an enormous white bulb on its deck that houses one of the largest and most advanced radar platforms in the world. Based in Alaska, it was recently in Hawaii for maintenance and tests. Its job is to track hostile missiles and provide data to the interceptors launched against them, says Jim Tinkham, the Missile Defense Agency specialist assigned to the SBX radar.

JIM TINKHAM (Specialist, Missile Defense Agency): Not only are we providing precision tracking, but we're starting to discriminate. We're starting to tell that's a piece of junk, this is a piece of junk, this is the target. This is what you're looking at. This is the bad guy.

SHUSTER: The team that operates the SBX won't talk in detail about how well it can discriminate the junk from the real danger. But Ken Dube of Raytheon, which helped build the SBX radar, says the system is improving.

KEN DUBE (Employee, Raytheon): We share the same concern. And to date in each of these sequential tests that we've conducted here with this national resource, we've met all the requirements of every test that we've accomplished to date.

SHUSTER: In an interview, General Obering insisted the critics are wrong. But he did concede that dealing with countermeasures is an ongoing problem.

OBERING: There's a misconception that we cannot handle countermeasures. We cannot handle very complex countermeasures. I won't go into what that means, but there are things that an enemy could do to really try to confuse the system. Have we done everything we need to do? No. Have we done what we need to do based on the pace of our fielding and our deployment? And the answer is yes.

SHUSTER: The interceptors at Fort Greely are just one component of the missile defense system. Tomorrow, a look at sea-based missile defense from the deck of the USS Lake Erie. Mike Shuster, NPR News.

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NPR
September 24, 2008

Sea-Based Missile Defense System Shows Promise

Morning Edition (NPR), 7:10 AM

STEVE INSKEEP: Next, we'll continue this week's look at the U.S. missile defense system. It has cost $60 billion since the start of the Bush administration and there are a lot of questions about how well it works.

Yesterday, we took you to Fort Greely, Alaska where the centerpiece of the system, the ground-based interceptor has been deployed. Today, we will take you on board the USS Lake Erie in the waters off the coast of Hawaii for an effort to intercept a missile in flight.

Here's NPR's Mike Shuster.

MIKE SHUSTER: The U.S. missile defense system is an intricate interweaving of various missile interceptor systems supported by advanced radars and satellite sensors. There is a sharp debate about its cost and its capabilities, but the system has seen meaningful progress at sea, says Lieutenant General Henry Obering, Director of the Pentagon's Missile Defense Agency.

LT. GEN. HENRY OBERING [Director, Missile Defense Agency]: The furthest along that we have today is probably our Aegis sea-based component. It has been through some pretty good operational testing to explore all of its envelope or quite a bit of its envelope of operation.

SHUSTER: It's early June on the four deck of the USS Lake Erie, an Aegis cruiser. The Lake Erie is sailing in the deep blue waters off Hawaii and readying itself to try to shoot down another missile launched about 180 miles away near the island of Kauai. The U.S. Navy began the development of the Aegis combat system more than 30 years ago;

essentially, it was a marriage of advanced radar and signals capabilities with a variety of guided missiles deployed on cruisers and destroyers. Their task? Defend aircraft carriers and the carriers' battle group.

When the Bush administration decided to make a big push for missile defense, it figured that the missiles the Aegis ships were using against aircraft and other ships might be modified as missile interceptors. The key was the ship's advanced radars, says Lieutenant Commander Andrew Bates, the ship's former combat systems officer.

NAVY LT. CMDR. ANDREW BATES: This is the trademark octagonal array for the SPY-1 radar. Its military designation is SPY; so obviously, it's pronounced the spy. It's a happy coincidence.

SHUSTER: The SPY-1 radar panels are positioned on both the port and starboard sides of the ship, as well as facing fore and aft. They give the ship full 360-degree eyes to watch the sea and skies. The Lake Erie is on alert for missile attack and the plan is to launch its own missiles known as SM-2s against the attacker. The ship's radar illuminators will guide the missile interceptors to the attacking missiles explains Lieutenant Commander Bates.

BATES: When that missile is heading toward its target, it's receiving uplink commands from the Aegis weapons systems. But that final bit of guidance that it gets just prior to intercept comes from these illuminators, which will point at the target, shine a beam of RF energy onto that target. The reflection from that RF energy off of that target will be picked up by the missile and it will be used to guide it in on its final stage.

SHUSTER: In the three days before the actual missile flight test, the Lake Erie's crew has been through two dry runs and one dress rehearsal that simulate missile attacks. Much of the key activity takes place in the darkened combat information center. What little light there is comes from the glow of numerous computer and video screens.

BATES: During the shipboard countdown, we are taking the system to a higher and higher state of readiness, which is what we would do if we were coming upon a vulnerability window where we had gotten intelligence that a launch may occur. At a certain point, we'll get to, basically, a stable sit and wait type of situation. The system is set up correctly. It's in a high state of readiness. And now the crew and the sailors here in CIC are looking for any indications of a ballistic missile launch.

SHUSTER: The Lake Erie is the same ship that back in February successfully shot down a disabled U.S. spy satellite that was threatening to fall out of orbit carrying half a ton of toxic fuel. The Lake Erie's missile defense system was not designed for that mission, but with modifications, the Missile Defense Agency determined it could do the job.

In a radio hookup between the Pentagon and the Lake Erie, Rear Admiral Brad Hicks explained the difference between the satellite shot and the upcoming test flight.

NAVY RADM. BRAD HICKS: The satellite – we had a predicted time we were going to intercept it. We picked a time where we wanted to intercept it to optimize the probability of success.

So the mission was totally different.

SHUSTER: The satellite was 130 miles above the Earth traveling at more than five miles per second. The missile to be intercepted in the Lake Erie's flight test will be only 12 miles high moving at about a quarter of that speed.

On the bridge on flight test day, Commander Rich Martel, the Lake Erie's executive officer, recalled February's satellite shot.

NAVY CMDR. RICH MARTEL: Even today's scenario, we know something is going to happen this morning, but the watchstanders still don't know when it's going to happen. In February we knew we should expect the satellite to pass through our area at this particular time, and in general on that day, the crew was very calm. We had done a lot of training. We were prepared.

SHUSTER: As tension builds, Commander Martel takes to the ship's intercom to tell the crew if they want to watch the missile launch, they can go out on the fantail toward the stern of the ship.

MARTEL: No personnel on the flight deck or the missile deck, only on the fantail. In the event that the missile once it takes off self-destructs, all personnel should take cover against the bulkheads or inside the skin of the ship from the fantail. That's all. Don't give up the ship.

SHUSTER: Tension continues to build and then on the internal net, Fireball, the code word for the launch of a hostile missile. Lieutenant Commander Bates says initial indications are that the attacking missile has been destroyed.

BATES: We can see an explosion around the first missile that was launched and at the same time I visually saw the explosion I heard over the internal nets the missile system supervisor say Mark India, so mark intercept.

SHUSTER: Later, Rear Admiral Hicks, speaking from the Pentagon, pronounced the flight test a success.

HICKS: Both SM-2s intercepted the target and destroyed it. We fired two to improve our probability of success, knowing that it's a terminal engagement and they fired within a second and a half of each other.

SHUSTER: The Lake Erie has successfully tested SM-2 missiles against short-range missile attacks in the atmosphere and has destroyed medium-range missiles in the midcourse of attack using the SM-3. Even sharp critics of the Missile Defense Agency like Philip Coyle of the Center for Defense Information, acknowledged that sea-based missile defenses do show some promise.

PHILIP COYLE [Center for Defense Information]: The Navy has had a greater success rate in terms of successes where they've done flight intercept tests. They've had a greater success rate than the big ground base system has had.

SHUSTER: And so the Navy is already deploying this missile defense system on more of its cruisers and destroyers. For use, says the Lake Erie's captain, Ron Boxall, anywhere it's needed.

NAVY CAPT. RON BOXALL: As you look at the proliferation of ballistic missiles throughout the world, I think it's myopic to view any specific country as the target. Our job is to produce the capability and go out and make it employable and available to the fleet and combatant commanders.

SHUSTER: Admiral Hicks says 15 ships have anti-missile capabilities now. Most are operating in the Pacific with a few deployed in or near the Middle East.

HICKS: We have now taken a look at what we require for the Fifth Fleet in the Arabian Gulf and we, in fact, have assets in theater now. We have also had our first asset that operated in the eastern Meditteranean.

SHUSTER: In fact, U.S. missile defense is about to go global with the inclusion of ground-based missiles stationed in Europe. Tomorrow, the clash over U.S. missile defense in Poland and the Czech Republic.

Mike Shuster, NPR News.

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NPR
September 25, 2008

Tough Sell For U.S. Overseas Missile Defense Bases

Morning Edition (NPR), 7:10 AM

RENEE MONTAGNE: The U.S. missile defense system is going global. The Bush administration now is pressing Europe to accept components of the system, including actual missile interceptors. The purpose? To combat Iran's growing missile capabilities. This has provoked some sharp debate in Europe in demonstrations against the system. Russia is also against it and Moscow's attack on Georgia in August has complicated the matter even further.

Here's NPR's Mike Shuster.

MIKE SHUSTER: For more than a year, the Bush administration has been urging the Europeans to embrace missile defense, specifically to install a high-tech radar system in the Czech Republic and ten ground-based interceptor missiles in Poland. The Bush administration maintains this is all about the potential threat from Iranian missiles, but it has failed to convince the Russians that it does not pose an eventual challenge to their nuclear strike capability.

Nevertheless, the NATO alliance backed the proposal and in the spring, the Czech government agreed. Secretary of State Rice traveled to Prague for the formalities.

SECRETARY OF STATERICE: I'm very proud to stand with you today to sign this landmark agreement. I think that it is truly a landmark agreement. It is an agreement that is befitting for friends and allies who face a common threat in the 21st century and wish to address it through the application of the best defensive technologies that we can bring to bear.

SHUSTER: It may have been easy to gain the Czech government's backing, but the Czech public has been divided on the issue. There have been several demonstrations in Prague against missile defense led by a group called No To The Base, the base that would house the missile radar.

Jan Tomasch, a leader of the group, said the government's agreement is not the last word.

JAN TOMASCH [Leader, No To The Base Group]: The signing of the treaty doesn't really change much because the treaty has to be ratified by the Czech parliament and the position of the government in the parliament is very weak. So I don't think they will be able to get this treaty to be ratified by the parliament anytime soon, if at all.

SHUSTER: For some in the Czech Republic, the radar and the American soldiers that would operate it recall the many years when Soviet soldiers were stationed on their territory. Jiri Tutter is a leader of a Greenpeace, which opposes the missile defense system.

JIRI TUTTER [Greenpeace]: There's a simple feeling that we would have yet another country on the soil of the Czech Republic. It looks to be difficult to accept for our public.

SHUSTER: Earlier this year, the political situation was similar in Poland. Many there oppose the deployment of ten interceptor missiles and came out into the streets to protest. The government in Warsaw favored the system, but the talks stalled when Poland wanted the U.S. to commit to its air defense should it accept the missiles, then Russia invaded Georgia. Almost immediately, the Polish government signaled its willingness to sign up and in early September, Poland's Prime Minister Donald Tusk hosted Secretary of State Rice in Warsaw.

DONALD TUSK [Polish Prime Minister]: This is a very special moment in our common history. We have achieved the main goal. It means Poland and the United States of America will be more secure.

SHUSTER: Secretary of State Rice again insisted that the missile interceptors in Poland would have nothing to do with Russia.

RICE: This is an agreement that, of course, will establish a missile defense site here in Poland, a missile defense site that will help us to deal with the new threat to the 21st century of long-range missile threats from countries like Iran or from North Korea. This is a system that is defensive and is not aimed at anyone.

SHUSTER: But for many in Europe and, indeed, around the world, it was difficult to believe Russia was not a motivating factor. After all, it was Russia's attack on Georgia that brought about quick agreement between Washington and Warsaw. This has fueled Russian suspicions about the Americans, says Alexei Arbatov, a scholar at the Moscow Carnegie Center.

ALEXEI ARBATOV [Moscow Carnegie Center]: They say, believe us, we are good guys. We do not mean harm to anybody. So you should, rest assured, we don't mean anything against you. That's what the American position boils down and Russians have a lot of reason to be mistrustful because we have an example of NATO extension, which started with three countries ten years ago, and now they're talking about Ukraine and Georgia as members of NATO.

SHUSTER: For some in NATO, especially those states that were forced to remain in Moscow's orbit during the Cold War, that is precisely the point. Andrej Cirtek is the spokesman for the Czech Defense Ministry

ANDREJ CIRTEK [Spokesman, Czech Defense Ministry]: From a political point of view, placing elements of missile defense in Europe means the strengthening of NATO, especially the link between both sides of the Atlantic. So it's no surprise that Russia opposes it.

SHUSTER: Many of the proponents of missile defense in the U.S. have tried hard to convince Moscow that it has nothing to do with Russia's nuclear arsenal. Lieutenant General Henry Obering, the director of the Pentagon's Missile Defense Agency, expresses frustration that the Russians won't see that the system is focused on Tehran.

LT. GEN. HENRY OBERING [Director, Missile Defense Agency]: Having ten interceptors in Poland and a radar in the Czech Republic does not change the strategic balance, I mean, Russia has hundreds of ICBMs, thousands of warheads and there's no way that these interceptors threaten that.

SHUSTER: But Alexei Arbatov suspects that the U.S. missile defense deployments in Europe will not stop with those ten interceptors.

ARBATOV: The Americans have never explained to Russia where would be the limits of the system and how Russia may rest assured that this is not a system designed to undermine Russians' strategic deterrence.

SHUSTER: Late last year in order to overcome Russian suspicions, Secretary of Defense Gates proposed to delay the crucial last phase in the American deployment until there was incontrovertible proof of Iran's missile development.

DEFENSE SECRETARYGATES: We have not fully developed this proposal, but the idea was we would go forward with the negotiations. We would complete the negotiations. We would develop the sites, build the sites, but perhaps would delay activating them until there was concrete proof of the threat from Iran.

SHUSTER: Russia's leaders did not embrace the offer. Russian analysts say a verbal agreement like this is not good enough. It needs to be written down after negotiations between Washington and Moscow. If anything, the Russian invasion of Georgia and NATO's hostile reaction has hardened the opposition in Moscow to U.S. missile defenses, a subject Russia's president Dmitri Medvedev touched on in an interview with Italian TV earlier this month. "If the decision to deploy missile interceptors is made," Medvedev said, "if the radar is switched on, we will have to respond because we haven't received any reasonable explanation why it's being done. This won't help security in Europe."

Russian analysts like Arbatov argue that if the U.S. really wants to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons, which its missiles could carry, it should work closely with Russia because Russia has leverage over the Iranians.

ARBATOV: They can be prevented from moving so close to actual capability to produce weapons-grade uranium, but in order to do that, first of all, Russia and the United States have to have a joint position on that and in order to do that, the United States should not do things which make Russia very hostile and very suspicious about American intentions with respect of Russia.

SHUSTER: Before the war in Georgia, the gap between the U.S. and Russia was considerable. Now, it appears unbridgeable, on missile defense and most other key issues where both the U.S. and Russia have strong interests.

Mike Shuster, NPR News.

MONTAGNE: Tomorrow, the future of missile defense.

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NPR
September 26, 2008

Future Missile Defense Expected To Remain Controversial, Expensive

Morning Edition (NPR), 7:00 AM

STEVE INSKEEP: All this week on “Morning Edition,” we’ve been hearing about the U.S. missile defense system. There are ground-based interceptors in Alaska. There are missiles on ships poised to shoot down missiles and there are Russian objections to parts of the program in Europe.

Today, we’re going to look at the future of missile defense, which is likely to be just as controversial and just as expensive as its past.

Here’s NPR’s Mike Shuster.

MIKE SHUSTER: The Missile Defense Agency at the Pentagon imagines a future where the threat from hostile ballistic missile attack is growing, but so is the arsenal of weapons to neutralize it. Witness this video from the Agency’s Web site.

ANNOUNCER: Americans and their friends abroad striving day and night, side by side, to meet the challenge to protect fellow countrymen and secure liberty worldwide.

LT. GEN. HENRY OBERING [Director, Missile Defense Agency]: We believe that the threat that is represented by ballistic missiles is clear and present today and will continue to grow in the future, and while the system that we’re developing and that we are fielding is the first step down this path. It is certainly not the last.

SHUSTER: That’s Lieutenant General Henry Obering, Director of the Missile Defense Agency. When Obering talks about the future of missile defense, he is often talking about new weapons for the system, like the airborne laser, a modified 747 equipped with two high energy lasers designed to destroy a hostile missile shortly after launch or the kinetic energy interceptor, a much faster missile designed to attack hostile missiles also in the early phases of flight or the multiple kill vehicle, an interceptor that could deploy several kill vehicles to hit multiple hostile warheads or General Obering says, help to overcome the problem of decoys.

OBERING: Today, we have a single kill vehicle on each one of our interceptors. In the future, we will have many kill vehicles on one interceptor and that will allow us to handle the more complex threats.

SHUSTER: Critics of the Missile Defense Agency say the multiple kill vehicle is an admission that today’s interceptors are not sophisticated enough to overcome decoys.

Philip Coyle is an advisor at the Center for Defense Information.

PHILIP COYLE [Center for Defense Information]: The Missile Defense Agency knows that the current approach cannot be relied upon and so they’re developing this multiple kill vehicle hoping that that will work. The concept behind it is it’s sort of like a shotgun instead of having a single kill vehicle; you have half a dozen or perhaps more. It’s hard to get many of them on the interceptor.

SHUSTER: All of these components of missile defense are in development, not yet fully tested, let alone deployed and in operation. This raises key questions about the future budget for missile defense. The Bush administration has spent about $60 billion to deploy missile defenses so far. That’s on top of another $60 billion the U.S. spent before President Bush took office. General Obering has proposed spending another $60 billion or so over the next five years to keep the deployed system functioning and fund new weapons development.

OBERING: We are spending $4.5 to $5 billion a year now just on fielding and sustainment and testing. That’s not any advanced or new development.

SHUSTER: But it’s far from clear that the next president and the next Congress will want to continue spending for missile defense at current levels, what with the enormous cost of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and now the crisis in the credit markets.

JOE CIRINCIONE [President, Plowshares Fund]: I think the missile defense bubble is about to burst.

SHUSTER: Joe Cirincione is a long time critic of missile defense and President of the Plowshares Fund.

CIRINCIONE: As the overall budget shrinks, missile defense programs are the first to go. Why? Because the Joint Chiefs have never valued them. They would rather spend the hard-earned national defense dollars on ships and planes and tanks, things that really matter.

So I think you're going to see the high water mark of missile defense spending this year and you're going to see declines no matter who is president in the next administration back down to something like $5 billion a year.

SHUSTER: That's still a significant amount of money. A clear indication that missile defense will remain a controversial issue in the U.S. for years to come.

Mike Shuster, NPR News.

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