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Shreveport Times
December 10, 2008

Secretary Gates Tells Airmen Nuclear Mission Vital to U.S.

By Donna Miles
American Forces Press Service

MINOT AIR FORCE BASE, N.D. (AFNS) -- Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates traveled here Dec. 1 to emphasize the importance of the Air Force's nuclear mission -- and in maintaining its long tradition of excellence -- to the men and women entrusted with carrying it out.

Secretary Gates became the first defense secretary in memory to visit the home of the 91st Missile Wing, one of the Air Force's three operational intercontinental units, and the 5th Bomb Wing, which flies the aging B-52 aircraft he said remain critical to the nuclear deterrent.

"As stewards of America's nuclear arsenal, your work is vital to the security of our nation," Secretary Gates told the Airmen.

"Handling nuclear weapons -- the most powerful and destructive instruments in the arsenal of freedom -- is a tremendous responsibility," he said. "We owe you the attention, the people and the resources to do your job right."

Secretary Gates reminded the Airmen that their job is the most sensitive in the entire U.S. military, demanding constant vigilance and leaving no room for error.

America's security depends on a reliable and credible nuclear deterrent, Secretary Gates said, even as the country continues to reduce its nuclear arsenal. While few argue that abolishing nuclear weapons is a worthy long-term goal, he said, the grim reality is that day hasn't yet come. "As long as others have nuclear weapons, we must maintain some level of these weapons ourselves to deter potential adversaries and to reassure over two dozen allies and partners who rely on our nuclear umbrella for their own security, making it unnecessary for them to develop their own," he said.

Secretary Gates cited threats posed by rising and resurgent powers, rogue nations pursuing nuclear weapons, proliferation and international terrorism. These challenges make it necessary for the United States to maintain a hedge that makes clear its ability to provide an "overwhelming, devastating" response to attack, if necessary.

"Try as we might, and hope as we will, the power of nuclear weapons and their strategic impact is a genie that cannot be put back in the bottle, at least for a long time," Secretary Gates said.

But possessing nuclear weapons means accepting the responsibilities involved, he said citing "serious lapses of last year" over the Air Force's handling of nuclear weapons and related material.

Those involved a mistaken shipment of sensitive missile parts to Taiwan in 2006, and -- even more troublesome to airmen here -- an unauthorized transfer of munitions from Minot Air Force Base to Barksdale AFB, La., in August 2007.

Severe consequences followed, starting at the unit level and reaching into the highest levels of the Air Force. Secretary Gates ordered the resignations of then-Air Force Secretary Michael W. Wynne and then-Chief of Staff Gen. T. Michael Moseley. Another 15 officers, including six generals, received disciplinary action in connection with the nose-cone shipment.

The problems, an investigation determined, resulted from "a long-standing slide in the service's nuclear stewardship, where this critical mission -- and the career field associated with it -- did not receive the attention, funding or personnel it deserved," Secretary Gates said.

But Secretary Gates told the Minot Airmen he's confident the Air Force is now on the right track.

"Based on everything I have seen, heard and learned in recent months, I strongly believe that the Air Force is now moving in the right direction to reclaim the standards of excellence for which it was known throughout the Cold War," Secretary Gates told the Minot Airmen.

Secretary Gates cited initiatives in place or under way:

-- A new office within the Air Staff that focuses exclusively on nuclear policy and oversight and reports directly to Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Norton A. Schwartz;

-- A new Global Strike Command to be stood up that will bring the nuclear-capable bombers and intercontinental ballistic missile under one entity;

-- Revitalization and expansion of the Nuclear Weapons Center at Kirtland Air Force Base, N.M.;

-- A top-to-bottom review that is determining which nuclear components need to be taken out of the supply chain and placed under control of the Nuclear Weapons Center; and

-- The Air Force's development of a stronger, more centralized inspection process to ensure that nuclear material is handled properly.

In addition, Secretary Gates noted that he awaits recommendations from a task force he formed to review nuclear enterprise oversight within the Air Force and Defense Department overall. Former Energy and Defense Secretary James Schlesinger is heading that effort.

Secretary Gates closed by reminding the Airmen of his own Air Force background, when he served as a second lieutenant at Whiteman AFB, Mo., as part of Strategic Air Command.

"Your mission at Minot Air Force Base is as important as ever in the demanding security environment that our nation faces today - and will undoubtedly face tomorrow," he told them. "I have every confidence in you and in the Air Force that has served this nation so well for over six decades."

<http://www.shreveporttimes.com/article/20081210/BARKSDALEWARRIOR/812100355>

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UPI.com

December 9, 2008

Obama to Face Nuclear Weapons Decision

WASHINGTON, Dec. 9 (UPI) -- One security issue U.S. President-elect Barack Obama will consider is whether to build new nuclear warheads, sought by President George Bush, officials said.

The Bush administration wants to build the first U.S. nuclear warheads since the Cold War, but Congress demanded the decision wait until an assessment of U.S. nuclear weapons is completed in 2009, USA Today reported Tuesday.

The outcome will determine whether eight nuclear research and manufacturing facilities nationwide focus on maintaining existing warheads or gear up for new production, the newspaper said.

"This is not just a decision about the future of U.S. nuclear weapons, but about how the United States will address the challenges of ... nuclear terrorism, nuclear proliferation and our entire 21st-century nuclear strategy," said Clark Murdoch, a senior adviser at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

The challenges of nuclear warhead production have percolated for some time, Murdoch said, "and the Obama administration is going to have to deal with them."

While candidate Obama said he wanted a world without nuclear weapons, he said the United States must "always maintain a strong (nuclear) deterrent as long as nuclear weapons exist."

Obama's statements during the campaign and after his election don't indicate a position on the Bush plan.

Among other things, Obama promised to bolster non-proliferation programs, reach disarmament deals with Russia and strengthen sanctions against North Korea, Iran and other states with rogue nuclear programs.

San Francisco Chronicle

Experts say U.S. Needs a Cybersecurity Agency

Deborah Gage, Chronicle Staff Writer

Tuesday, December 9, 2008

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The Department of Homeland Security has failed to secure the Internet and should no longer take the lead role in trying, say government and security experts who on Monday urged President-elect Barack Obama to create a new national office to police cyberspace. Their report also calls for new laws to protect privacy and speed investigations of cybercrimes; strong identification of all people and devices connecting to networks belonging to power plants and other organizations critical to U.S. security; and secure software for everybody who connects to the Internet - not just the military and national security agencies.

The recommendations are included in a 96-page document, "Securing Cyberspace for the 44th Presidency," released Monday by the Center for Strategic and International Studies. The center, a nonprofit think tank in Washington, began working on this report last year after cyberattacks were launched against the country of Estonia and several U.S. federal agencies, including the Pentagon and the departments of commerce and state. "We still have an industrial-age government that was organized a century ago," Jim Lewis, the center's director, said in an interview in September. "The DHS has a 1970s-style solution to a 21st century problem."

The Department of Homeland Security was formed by the Bush administration from 22 separate agencies after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks and was the biggest reorganization of the federal government. Lewis said in the same interview that although the department has made some progress on cybersecurity, the government would still in some cases have to call a committee meeting if it suffered a cyberattack because so many different agencies have jurisdiction over the problem. Every branch of the military, for example, has its own cybercommand.

Members of Obama's transition team - at least five of whom contributed to the report - look forward to reviewing the recommendations, a spokeswoman said. The Department of Homeland Security, however, disagreed with its conclusions. "We're the first ones to admit that there's more work to be done ... but to stop midstream and reorganize the deck chairs is not an effective use of resources," said department spokeswoman Laura Keener. The report has bipartisan backing from the lead Democrat and ranking minority member - Rep. James Langevin, D-R.I., and Rep. Michael McCaul, R-Texas - of a House Homeland Security subcommittee in charge of legislation in this area, as well as contributions from more than 50 academics and security experts.

It also comes as an unprecedented amount of malicious code is being released on the Internet, code that in some cases is designed to attack and steal intellectual property from Fortune 500 companies, said Mary Landesman, a researcher at ScanSafe, a security vendor in San Francisco. ScanSafe scans Web sites for corporate clients and blocks those that it detects as compromised. The company has detected malicious code coming from Russia and especially China that is capable of detecting which systems it has infected and then invisibly redirecting victims to fake Web sites or altering data as it passes between computers in order to steal information.

Energy and oil companies are especially targeted - in October, their rate of exposure to these attacks was up 73 percent, Landesman said - along with banks, financial companies and engineering and construction firms. She said thousands of companies are at risk. In some cases, the infections were introduced when employees used corporate machines to access Web mail or browse social networks at home. Or they brought infected USB drives into the office and loaded them on corporate machines. "For the first time, back doors and password stealers outpace all other forms of malware," she said. "The level of sophistication (of these attacks) is very concerning." Several other security vendors - including SecureWorks, Symantec, McAfee and Finjan - also are releasing reports citing increases in malicious code and various cyberattacks.

How government could tighten Internet security

Cybersecurity experts are urging Obama to:

- Commit to protecting cyberspace using all instruments of national power.
- Establish a new National Office for Cyberspace, moving responsibility from the Department of Homeland Security.
- Foster a public-private partnership on cybersecurity.
- Require strong authentication of identity on critical infrastructures for both devices and people, and allow consumers to use government-issued credentials online.-- Streamline laws governing online crime to increase investigation speed.

Source: Securing Cyberspace for the 44th Presidency, Center for Strategic and International Studies

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2008/12/09/BUKT14K4D4.DTL>

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Financial Times

Obama Urged to Prioritise Cyber-Security

By Demetri Sevastopulo in Washington

December 9 2008

President-elect Barack Obama should elevate cyber- security to the top tier of national security issues as the US government increasingly comes under attack, according to a new commission.

The issue was "one of the most important national security challenges" facing the US and could "no longer be relegated to information technology offices", according to a report by the Commission on Cyber Security for the 44th Presidency, directed by the Center for International and Strategic Studies, a think-tank.

"This is a strategic issue on par with weapons of mass destruction or global jihad," said the report, which comes as the US government increasingly falls victim to cyber-attacks. In the past year, Chinese hackers have successfully broken into systems at the Pentagon and the White House. The World Bank recently ordered a comprehensive review after its systems were penetrated.

The commission reported that the state department had also lost "terabytes" of data through hacking, while Nasa had to impose e-mail restrictions on employees ahead of launches of the space shuttle. Cyber-intrusions also forced the Commerce Department to take its Bureau of Industry and Security's computer network offline for several months.

Mr Obama will be the most internet-savvy president so far. He has said he wants to be the first president to have a computer on his desk in the Oval Office, and has been negotiating with government lawyers to keep his BlackBerry.

The commission urged Mr Obama to create a new White House cyber-security office that with the National Security Council would create a comprehensive strategy. The commission praised the Bush administration's Comprehensive National Cyber Security Initiative, but said it was insufficient. It added that too much secrecy surrounding the programme was reducing the deterrent impact on potential hackers.

"The current US deterrent posture is reminiscent of the scene in the film *Dr Strangelove* ," the report said, "where after the Russian ambassador explains that they invented a doomsday machine to deter the US from attacking, Dr Strangelove responds by saying: 'Yes, but the whole point of the doomsday machine is lost if you keep it a secret. Why didn't you tell the world?'"

The commission concluded the US was struggling to devise a strategy to counter cyber-related threats with an outcome being "a kind of strategic indecision that puts the US at risk" with the economy facing "immediate risk".

"America's failure to protect cyber-space is one of the most urgent national security problems facing the new administration that will take office in January 2009 . . . It is a battle we are losing," it said.

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/bb9ae852-c592-11dd-b516-000077b07658.html>

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New York Times
December 9, 2008

Panel Presses to Bolster Security in Cyberspace

By JOHN MARKOFF

SAN FRANCISCO — License plates may be coming to cyberspace. A government and technology industry panel on cyber-security is recommending that the federal government end its reliance on passwords and enforce what the industry describes as “strong authentication.” Such an approach would probably mean that all government computer users would have to hold a device to gain access to a network computer or online service. The commission is also encouraging all nongovernmental commercial services use such a device. “We need to move away from passwords,” said Tom Kellermann, vice president for security awareness at Core Security Technologies and a member of the commission that created the report.

The report, which offers guidance to the Obama administration, is a strong indictment of government and private industry efforts to secure cyberspace to date. “The laissez-faire approach to cyber-security has failed,” Mr. Kellermann said. Restricting Internet access is one of a series of recommendations that a group of more than 60 government and business computer security specialists will make in a public presentation, “Securing Cyberspace in the 44th Presidency,” on Monday.

The report has been prepared during the last 18 months under the auspices of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington policy group, after a number of break-ins into government computer systems. “The damage from cyber attack is real,” the report states. “Last year, the Departments of Defense, State, Homeland Security, and Commerce, NASA and the National Defense University all suffered major intrusions by unknown foreign entities.” The report describes a laundry list of serious break-ins ranging from the hacking of the secretary of Defense’s unclassified e-mail to the loss of “terabytes” of data at the State Department.

The group recommends the creation of a White House cyber-security czar reporting to the president and the consolidation of the powers that have largely been held by the Homeland Security Department under the Bush administration. The report argues that cyber-security is one of the most significant national security threats and that it can no longer be relegated to information technology offices and chief information officers.

The commission included the top Democrat and Republican members of the House Homeland Security subcommittee that oversees cyber-security. The chairmen of the commission included Jim Langevin, a Democratic congressman from Rhode Island; and Michael McCaul, a Republican congressman from Texas.

Scott Charney, corporate vice president for trustworthy computing at Microsoft; and Harry D. Raduege Jr., a retired Air Force lieutenant general who is chairman of the Center for Network Innovation at Deloitte & Touche, were also on the commission. The report calls for new laws and regulations governing cyberspace. “We believe that cyberspace cannot be secured without regulation,” the report said. The proposed regulations included new standards for critical infrastructure providers like the finance and energy industries, as well as new federal product acquisition rules to force more secure products.

The report does not entirely reject the work of the Bush administration. It cites the creation of the Comprehensive National Cybersecurity Initiative, adopted by the government as part of a presidential memorandum issued last January as a good starting point for remaking the nation's cyber-security strategy. That effort has led to a commitment by the federal government to spend more than \$30 billion in the next seven years to enhance computing security.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/09/technology/09security.html?em>

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COMOPS Journal
December 11, 2008

A Bad Year for Dr. Zawahiri

by Monika Maslikowski

For Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri's communication strategy, it's been a year full of ups and downs. Individually, the mishaps seem like minor blips in an otherwise burgeoning online presence, but when combined, they could point to Zawahiri's diminishing abilities as a skilled communicator and principal figure of al-Qaeda's online media strategy.

Earlier this year, Zawahiri held an extensive online Q&A session, soliciting questions from anyone who wanted to ask. It was initially thought of as a strategic move to engage directly with followers and teach them about al-Qaeda, or to show an ability to respond intellectually to critics. However, the Q&A revealed serious shortcomings in Zawahiri's ability to defend the realities of al-Qaeda's extremist ideology and provide clear justifications for their worldwide operations.

Questions were submitted from exasperated followers, wondering why al-Qaeda hadn't focused more attention on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and questioning al-Qaeda's tactics of targeting civilians. Zawahiri's answers were vague and roundabout, and he provided few clear answers or new ideas. According to Brian Fishman, Director of Research at West Point's Combating Terrorism Center, the Q&A was a mistake. In an interview with NPR, he said that

Al-Qaida is an organization run top down with people that don't want to share power. And in that kind of an environment, it's dangerous to expose yourself to too many questions. It reveals the amount of discontent within the movement. And one of the things that al-Qaida needs to do, especially from a religious perspective, is that they try to funnel people into a specific set of beliefs. And the more debate that clouds that picture, the weaker al-Qaida is going to be.

In a message released in April, Zawahiri confidently stated that "backing the mujahidin in Iraq is...the most important task of the Islamic nation today." He sarcastically asked: So where are the Awakening Councils, which Petraeus announced six months ago that they will achieve victory in Iraq? Were not these Awakening Councils supposed to expedite the date of the US forces' withdrawal?

Well, it turns out that the Awakening Councils showed up after all. This plus increased levels of U.S. troops in Iraq greatly helped to stabilize the nation, making an expedited withdrawal more possible. And so, like any other embarrassed politician would have done in his position, Zawahiri tried to change the subject and focus on other areas of conflict.

A message released in August was addressed explicitly to Pakistani citizens and members of the Pakistani military and government. This one was decidedly NOT a strategic communication failure. It was skillfully executed and honed in on issues that are naturally contentious for most Pakistanis, namely their government's alliance with the U.S. and India. In light of the recent Mumbai terrorist attacks, this message is particularly interesting. He concludes the statement with:

Finally, I request every Muslim in Pakistan to ask himself seriously: Does he want Pakistan to truly become Pakistan? Or is he going to stand by idly and passively until it becomes part of Greater Hindustan?

The relationship between al-Qaeda's calls to action and specific attacks around the world is still unclear. One could suppose that there is some connection between this particular message and the recent attacks in India. Perhaps an affiliate extremist group wants to answer Zawahiri's call and help re-ignite the jihad in South Asia. But its more than likely a coincidence. Lashkar-e-Toiba, the Pakistani group suspected to be responsible for the Mumbai attacks, doesn't seem to take its cues from al-Qaeda central.

In November, Zawahiri taped a message in response to the election of Barack Obama. This message received a lot of attention in the press and online, mainly because Zawahiri essentially characterized President-Elect Obama as an African-American that is subservient to his white "masters". Although the phrase *abeed al-beit*, translated as "house negro", has been used in previous messages, this particular usage struck a chord for many people.

In general, however, this message came up short. The target audience of most of al-Qaeda's messages are the individuals unsure of whether or not they want to join jihad - the people on the fence. If you consider this, then you'd expect Zawahiri to make a dedicated and passionate statement about the need to continue with jihad, regardless of who leads the U.S. In the past, his rhetoric was fiery and convincing, self-assured and motivating. Yet the best he could come up with this time was a recycled racial slur and the same rhetoric we've heard for years, antagonizing fence-sitters who are hopeful about the changes Obama might bring and/or African-American Muslims in the U.S. who he had hoped to influence.

In this critical moment, Zawahiri's job was to communicate to those individuals that were unsure how to react to Obama's election so that al-Qaeda would remain steadfast in its battle against the U.S. and the West. Now, it's understandable that he may be a little distracted lately, but it's hard to understand why Zawahiri didn't come up with a better response to Obama's election than this message.

A strike against Zawahiri's reputation came in November from Sayyid Imam, aka Dr. Fadl. He recently released his new book through a series in *Al-Masry al-Youm* (for summaries, start here), denouncing Zawahiri and challenging him to a sort of spiritual death-match. While this text was perceived by some as an inconsequential list of character attacks that won't have an impact on the broader extremist movement, others claim that these sort of character indictments will have a negative effect on Zawahiri's credibility and could influence al-Qaeda's target audience. I tend to agree with the latter, because as one of the main faces of al-Qaeda, and thus the broader jihadist movement, Zawahiri's success as a leader is dependent on whether or not he can gain trust and support.

In late November, in an interview produced by *As-Sahab*, Zawahiri expounded on some potential new tactics promoted by al-Qaeda (a translation, by the NEFA Foundation, was released on December 10). He spoke extensively about the need for Muslims who are unable to bear arms to join the fight in other ways, specifically via protests and strikes. Although he's mentioned these tactics before, messages in prior years rarely devoted so much discussion on them. In effect, Zawahiri is suggesting an easier way to wage jihad.

Finally, last week, Zawahiri released another message, titled "The Death of Our Heroes and Betrayal of Our Rulers." As the title suggests, he discusses the recent executions in Indonesia of the convicted perpetrators of the Bali bombing, and Saudi Arabia's participation in an inter-faith conference held at the United Nations earlier this month (which included Israel).

These two latest messages discuss issues that people all around the world can rally around, not just the minor factions of extremists. They are umbrella issues, mentioned because of their ability to attract more moderate listeners who share some of al-Qaeda's concerns and goals, but may not necessarily agree with their tactics. From a strategic communication perspective, this was a good move for Zawahiri. Focusing on issues that appeal to many more listeners is a way for al-Qaeda to get back to the basics of their ideology and mobilize support.

There are a lot of ways to spin this year's developments. Maybe Zawahiri is being forced to take the helm in al-Qaeda's communication strategy because bin Laden is otherwise unavailable. Or perhaps he worries that people will not put their faith in a leader who is an untrustworthy hypocrite (as Sayyid Imam would argue), and is struggling to repair his image. Maybe Zawahiri has largely ignored the issue of Iraq in the past few months because he knows al-Qaeda is losing there. Regardless of the explanation, there appears to be a golden opportunity for Zawahiri's opponents to counter his successes and exploit his mistakes.

Last week, in an op-ed for the Small Wars Journal, Dalton Fury wrote about the need to methodically tear down bin Laden's character. In light of the various mishaps that centered around Zawahiri this year, the time is ripe for a similar campaign against him. Fury writes that:

Our country spent more time, energy, and money on digging up dirt on the Presidential candidates and quickly putting out short psychotronic movie clips than we do on targeting UBL's character.

U.S. actions against the characters of bin Laden and Zawahiri could include anything from direct responses to al-Qaeda messages (a tactic that is much debated in strategic communication circles), to launching more targeted PSYOP campaigns that focus specifically on de-legitimizing these two al-Qaeda leaders.

This string of mistakes and negative PR for Zawahiri could help strip away any credibility he may have with those individuals on the fence. Although al-Qaeda's ideology has "gone viral" and spread into a worldwide ideological movement, the leadership of the organization is still the central mouthpiece of the global jihadist network. Their tarnished credibility could be used as a catalyst for further breaking down the ideology's resonance and breadth throughout the world. After all, al-Qaeda's leadership has gone to great lengths to criticize and insult America's leadership in the past eight years - I can see no reason why the U.S. shouldn't respond in-kind.

<http://comops.org/journal/2008/12/11/a-bad-year-for-dr-zawahiri/>

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Washington Post

Pakistan Closes Offices of Charity Linked to Terror Group

By Candace Rondeaux

Washington Post Foreign Service

Thursday, December 11, 2008; 9:16 AM

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan, Dec. 11 -- Pakistan closed nine offices of a controversial Islamic charity today and the nation's prime minister promised to honor new United Nations sanctions against the organization. The move to shutter offices of Jamaat-ud-Dawa comes amid mounting international pressure on Pakistan to crack down on a militant network blamed for the deadly terrorist attacks in the Indian city of Mumbai last month that killed 170 people. Ostensibly a charity, Jamaat-ud-Dawa has historic ties to the militant group Lashkar-i-Taiba, which Indian authorities blame for the Mumbai attacks.

Along with closing the offices, Pakistani Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani said the country would honor the restrictions placed on the group Wednesday night by the U.N. Security Council. The Security Council measure extend to the group's leadership and the four suspected masterminds of the Mumbai attacks, and includes a freeze on assets, a travel ban, and a prohibition against arms sales. "Pakistan has taken note of the designation of certain individuals and entities by the U.N.," Gilani said in a statement, noting that the country would "fulfill its international obligations."

Following on U.S. and Indian demands, the United Nations on Wednesday placed Jamaat-ud-Dawa on a list of designated terrorist organizations, saying the charity was directly linked to Lashkar-i-Taiba, the Pakistani militant group [India](#) has blamed for the Mumbai massacre that killed more than 170 people. Sanctions imposed against Jamaat-ud-Dawa, its leadership and four suspected masterminds behind the Mumbai assaults include a freeze on the group's assets, a travel ban and an arms embargo.

Included in the sanctions are Jamaat-ud-Dawa's leader Hafiz Muhammad Sayeed and Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi, the alleged operational commander and architect of the Mumbai attacks. Sanctions were also imposed on alleged Lashkar financiers Haji Muhammad Ashraf and Mahmoud Ahmed Bahaziq.

The U. N. move came four days after Pakistani security forces arrested Lakhvi and more than a dozen others in a dramatic raid on a Jamaat-ud-Dawa camp on the Pakistani side of the disputed Himalayan territory of Kashmir. The raid was the first public attempt by Pakistan to answer a demand from India to crack down on Lashkar and other militant groups operating within Pakistan.

Indian officials hailed the U.N. action against Jamaat-ud-Dawa as a long overdue step in the right direction and called on Pakistan to heed the measures taken by the international organization. Indian Deputy Foreign Minister Anand Sharma said the sanctions were welcome. "This only underscores what India has maintained throughout. That the forces of violence and terror, the organized groups which have attacked India on many occasions, including the recent dastardly attacks in Mumbai, whether it is the [Lashkar-i-Taiba] or whether it is their other front, Jamaat-ud-Dawa, such groups pose a threat to civil world," Sharma said.

Indian Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee told the country's parliament that Pakistan needed to follow up on its promises of action against militant groups. "They are banning organizations. Lashkar-i-Taiba was banned. But simply they are changing name, they are changing signboards," Mukherjee said. "Faces are the same, ideology are the same. How does it help us?"

In response to the U.N. actions, Jamaat-ud-Dawa leader Sayeed vowed to lodge a strong protest with the U.N. and the International Court of Justice in the Hague. During a press conference of his own held at Jamaat-ud-Dawa's headquarters in the eastern Pakistani city of Lahore, Sayeed struck a defiant tone. He denied the suggestion that Jamaat-ud-Dawa began operating as a front for Lashkar, saying the two groups split after Pakistan banned Lashkar following the terrorist group's 2001 attack on India's parliament. Sayeed also denied reports in India that he had met with one of the Mumbai attackers at Jamaat-ud-Dawa's campus in the Pakistani town of Muridke.

It was not immediately clear whether the group's Lahore office were among those closed by the Pakistani government. "Jamaat-ud-Dawa is a thorn in the eye of India because Jamaat-ud-Dawa does not support anything which India does to Pakistan or Kashmir," Sayeed said. Sayeed, a former professor of Islamic studies at a university in Lahore, was arrested by Pakistani authorities in August 2006 in connection with a series of Lashkar train bombings in India. He was released under a court order three weeks later then placed under house arrest for two months. Since then, Sayeed has been active in expanding Jamaat-ud-Dawa's reach across Pakistan. The group provides education and medical treatment at schools and clinics located in 66 cities across the country. He regularly gives weekly lectures at Jamaat-ud-Dawa's mosque in Lahore.

Known best in Pakistan for its work to bring emergency aid to thousands victims of the devastating 2005 earthquake in northern Pakistan, Jamaat-ud-Dawa operates on a yearly budget of \$750,000 to \$1 million, which group members say is largely drawn from charitable donations from Pakistanis around the world. Jamaat-ud-Dawa's center in Muridke houses a hospital, several residential hostels and several schools attended by about 2,000, according to the group's members.

The U.S. and India have long pushed for the U.N. to bring sanctions against Jamaat-ud-Dawa, directly linking its activities to Lashkar terrorist acts. But China, a top Pakistan ally and one of five permanent members on the Security Council, blocked two previous attempts -- once in May 2007 and once in April 2006.

It remains to be seen whether the sanctions will prod Pakistan to roundup more Jamaat-ud-Dawa members or close more of the group's operations. But the U.N. move drew a mixed response from Pakistani politicians and analysts Thursday. Tariq Azim Khan, a member of Pakistan's senate and a top leader in the opposition Pakistani Muslim League-Q party, said a Pakistani led investigation into and further action against Jamaat-ud-Dawa could well be in the works. "It's incumbent on the government -- because we are, of course, a member nation of the U.N. -- to abide by the directives of the Security Council," Khan said. "It's not only a matter of banning now it's a matter of investigating and taking any charges to court."

But Khan cautioned that Indian demands to extradite Sayeed and other alleged members of Pakistani terrorist groups could fuel further tensions between the two nuclear armed rival countries. He said plans are in the works for a delegation of Pakistani parliamentarians to travel to the Indian capital of New Delhi. "There is now a new thinking. It's quite obvious because of the number of suicide bombings this year," Khan said. "It used to be someone else's problem -- in Kashmir or elsewhere. But now there's a sense that its come to our homes. With the Marriott bombing this year there's a sense that this has to be dealt with."

Special correspondents Rizwan Mohammed in Lahore, Pakistan and Rama Lakshmi in New Delhi, India contributed to this report.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/story/2008/12/11/ST2008121100903.html>

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Los Angeles Times

Second Suspected Mumbai Plotter in Custody, Pakistan says

The arrest comes amid pressure to crack down on Lashkar-e-Taiba after the Mumbai attacks. But Pakistan backtracks on reports that the leader of another Kashmiri extremist group was detained.

By Henry Chu

December 11, 2008

Reporting from New Delhi -- Pakistan said Wednesday that it had detained a second suspected plotter of last month's Mumbai terrorism rampage, stepping up its bid to mollify India and the United States over the alleged involvement of Pakistani militants. Pakistani Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gillani told reporters that security forces had taken Zarar Shah, a member of the outlawed Lashkar-e-Taiba militant group, into custody. Shah is reportedly the communications chief for Lashkar-e-Taiba, or Army of the Pure, and is suspected of having worked out communication methods for the 10 gunmen who stormed luxury hotels and other busy venues in Mumbai in a 2½-day siege in which more than 170 people were killed. Since the attacks, New Delhi and Washington have leaned heavily on the government in Islamabad to crack down on the Islamist group, whose roots are in the Pakistani-controlled portion of Kashmir.

Pakistani officials this week confirmed the arrest of Zaki ur Rehman Lakhvi, also a Lashkar-e-Taiba commander and suspected mastermind of the Mumbai attacks. But Gillani backtracked Wednesday on reports that Maulana Masood Azhar, the leader of another banned Kashmiri extremist group, was under house arrest, contradicting a statement made by the Pakistani defense minister the previous day. Azhar helped found Jaish-e-Muhammad, which was implicated in a 2001 attack on India's Parliament that brought the two nuclear-armed powers to the brink of war. Gillani would not confirm that Azhar had been placed under house arrest.

It was the latest in a flurry of contradictory statements out of Islamabad this week that appear to reflect the government's ambivalence, or possibly indecision, over how best to respond to accusations that the Mumbai attacks were launched from Pakistani soil. India and the U.S. say the evidence is strong and demands aggressive action. But Islamabad is worried about a public backlash if it is seen as kowtowing to New Delhi and Washington.

Pakistani officials have therefore tried to portray the arrests of Lashkar-e-Taiba militants as being for domestic reasons, because they were members of an outlawed organization. "We are not doing anything under Indian pressure. The ban on Lashkar-e-Taiba already exists," Gillani told reporters in the city of Multan. He and other officials say the militants will not be extradited to India -- a move that would cause a popular outcry in Pakistan. In Washington, Adm. Michael G. Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said he was encouraged by the arrests and moves by Pakistan's military to close training camps used by Lashkar-e-Taiba.

"These are first steps. And so there are more steps to follow," Mullen said. "It remains very important that the government of Pakistan take not just the steps they've taken, but the steps that they need to continue to take, to root this out so it doesn't happen again." India has yet to comment on the arrests, but some Indian analysts are already cautioning the government in New Delhi to beware of Pakistani "doublespeak." Pakistan has been known to arrest militants under international pressure only to release them quietly a few months later. On Wednesday, a Security Council panel agreed to an Indian request that Jamaat-ud-Dawa be added to the U.N.'s list of terrorist groups.

Jamaat-ud-Dawa, a self-described charitable and educational organization, was created by the founders of Lashkar-e-Taiba after that group was outlawed. The group is now subject to sanctions that include an asset freeze. E. Ahamed, India's minister of state for external affairs, told the council this week: "Jamaat-ud-Dawa and other such organizations need to be proscribed internationally, and effective sanctions imposed." Police officials in India said Wednesday that they planned to question an Indian national who allegedly ran Lashkar-e-Taiba safe houses in Nepal, from which he helped shepherd militants across the border into India, the Associated Press reported.

The man, identified as Sabauddin Ahmed, was arrested in February during an attack on a police station along with another suspected Indian Lashkar-e-Taiba recruit, Faheem Ansari, who was found carrying hand-drawn maps of some of the sites targeted in the Mumbai siege. Authorities are concerned that the Mumbai gunmen, who India says were Pakistanis, might have had Indian support, but police have not said whether they believe either Ahmed or Ansari to be directly tied to the attacks.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/printedition/asection/la-fg-pakistanarrest11-2008dec11,0,1214240.story>

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Tehran Times

What We Fear Most About the Mumbai Attacks

Thursday, 11 December 2008

It is absolutely critical we find out who committed mass murder in Mumbai. Beyond seeking justice, we need to know who ordered, planned, and executed this terrorist operation, for the answer might profoundly change how we think about global terrorism and how we fight it. Let's just hope Mumbai does not herald a new chapter in our war against global terrorism.

Too many questions and uncertainties surround the terrorist attacks of Mumbai. India is still in a state of shock and it will take a while before its intelligence services are able to draw together a clear picture of the deadliest terrorist attack in the country's history. One captured terrorist's story is simply not enough.

This was not an operation of a local terrorist group no matter how high its determination or how severe its grievances may be against the Indian official establishment. India's leaders are convinced—and American intelligence officials reportedly concur—that there was involvement by terrorist elements in the attack. Specifically, they blame Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), which along with Jaish-e-Mohammad was one of the two most dangerous militant groups to help wage an insurgency against Indian rule in the part of Kashmir it controls. These groups (or elements within these groups) are now allied with al Qaeda along the Afghan-Pakistani frontier. They are alleged to have been behind—or at least lent a helping hand in—a series of bloody attacks on India: the attempt in 2001 to kill India's leaders in a raid on parliament in Delhi; the bombing in 2003 of parts of Mumbai, including the Taj Mahal hotel, a target in the latest attack; and the even bigger slaughter entailed in the coordinated bombing of Mumbai's commuter-rail network in July 2006.

We should not be surprised if al Qaeda was behind the Mumbai attacks. The attack had all the hallmarks of an al Qaeda operation: the hunt by the determined gunmen specifically for American, British, and Jewish victims smacks more of an al Qaeda agenda than that of a band of militants dabbling in the politics of Kashmir. An operation that would torpedo rapprochement between India and Pakistan, and maybe draw Pakistani soldiers away from hunting down al Qaeda and Taliban elements along the Afghan border, would surely win the approval of Osama bin Laden. Interrogation of the sole known survivor of the smaller attack group also suggests that the militants were youthful foot soldiers who must have been trained and directed and supported by more

sophisticated officers. This was an operation long in the planning that required reconnaissance, training, money, and excellent communications.

But while most terrorism analysts and counterterrorism officials seem to be focused on the very likely al Qaeda link, nobody seems to have paid attention to the scary alternative. What if al Qaeda had no hand in this? If the investigations eventually reveal that the Mumbai attacks are not operationally linked to western Pakistan where al Qaeda's central leadership resides, doesn't this speak volumes about the future of global terrorism? Since 9/11, we have reasoned that only al Qaeda is capable of perpetrating catastrophic terrorism of global implications. Mumbai could profoundly challenge that assumption. We may be dealing with a new monster in the form of very capable terrorist groups that could pull off spectacular terrorist attacks without any direct material assistance from Osama bin Laden or Ayman al Zawahri (some people would argue that this "self-starters" trend started four years ago with the train bombings in Madrid, when Spanish intelligence services could not prove their linkage to al Qaeda). Indeed, Mumbai could reveal that the LeT, the primary suspect in the attack who is officially banned in Pakistan, is an independent terrorism threat. If so, American and European intelligence agencies now have two groups with international reach and serious terrorist potential to worry about: al Qaeda and LeT (according to the U.S. National Counterterrorism Center and several American and European intelligence agencies, LeT has cells in the United Kingdom, Iraq, the Persian Gulf, India, Afghanistan and Pakistan).

If this is the case, is the safe haven of al Qaeda in the tribal areas as critical as we thought it was (we all know it is relevant, but how critical)? This resurrects the important and much publicized debate between Marc Sageman, ex-CIA case officer and author of *Leaderless Jihad*, and Bruce Hoffman, terrorism scholar and author of *Inside Terrorism*, who offer contrasting assessments of the state of al Qaeda and the roots of terrorism. The two essentially feud over whether al Qaeda is a leaderless movement (Sageman) or a terrorist organization whose safe haven in western Pakistan is critical for its survival and lethality (Hoffman).

We usually dread the day when Osama bin Laden or Ayman al Zawahiri releases a message to assess their "state of the Islamic union". This time, however, we might be getting some awkward sense of relief if either of these two leaders publicly praises the Mumbai attack and claims responsibility. There is nothing scarier than the thought of fighting powerful, global terrorists whose leadership is a mystery. In the business of counterterrorism, spectacular and catastrophic terrorism has to have an address. (Source: Brookings)

http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=184570

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New York Times
December 12, 2008

Terror Arrests Ahead of E.U. Summit

By STEVEN ERLANGER

PARIS — The Belgian police arrested 14 people suspected of terrorist links in raids early Thursday, federal prosecutors said. Though the possible target was not clear, the arrests came on a day when European Union leaders began a two-day summit meeting in Brussels. One of those arrested was a man thought to have been planning a suicide attack and had "said goodbye to his loved ones," said federal prosecutor Johan Delmulle in Brussels. But Mr. Delmulle told reporters that details were vague. "We don't know where the suicide attack was to take place," he said. "It could have been an operation in Pakistan or Afghanistan, but it can't be ruled out that Belgium or Europe could have been the target." Given the summit meeting, which marks the effective end of the French presidency of the European Union, Mr. Delmulle said the Belgian authorities felt they had "no choice but to take action today."

One of those arrested on Thursday, according to the prosecutor's office, was Malika El Aroud, who calls herself a female warrior for Al Qaeda and writes jihadist screeds on the Internet under the name of "Oum Obeyda." The police carried out 16 raids in Brussels and one in the eastern city of Liege. The timing of the arrests was forced by the summit meeting, the prosecutor's office said, and come after threats against Belgium contained in a video sent to Belgium and Dutch television networks at the end of November. The threats are connected to the group around Nizar Trabelsi, a former soccer player and member of Al Qaeda jailed in Belgium since 2001 for involvement in a plot to blow up the American Embassy in Paris, the prosecutor's office said. A year ago, Belgium issued a national alert and arrested some people, including Mr. Trabelsi's wife, in a suspected plot to free him and attack a Belgian target.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/12/world/europe/12belgium.html>

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The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Terrorism Charges against Georgians Detailed

By BILL RANKIN

Wednesday, December 10, 2008

Atlanta terrorism defendants Syed Haris Ahmed and Ehsanul Islam Sadequee communicated with and gave information to terrorists bent on waging violent jihad, according to new indictments by a federal grand jury. In newly amended indictments against each man, prosecutors added information on the breadth of the defendants' communications before their arrests two years ago. Both men are charged with conspiring to provide material support to terrorists. That includes their trying, in 2005, to join Lashkar-e-Taiba, the militant group that India blames for the bloody three-day siege of Mumbai last month.

Ahmed and Sadequee have pleaded not guilty and will be tried separately. Ahmed's trial is set for June 1 in federal court in Atlanta. Sadequee is to stand trial next August. They are being held without bond. Ahmed's lawyer, Jack Martin, said the new indictment does not substantially change the allegations against Ahmed or his defense. "And, once again," Martin added, "it's quite clear from the indictment there's no allegation he committed any terrorist act or act of violence whatsoever."

Don Samuel, a lawyer for Sadequee, said his client will plead not guilty to this indictment as well. "Nobody's heard our side yet," he said. "The grand jury hears only the government's side of the story." During an April 2005 trip to Washington, Ahmed, a former Georgia Tech student, and Sadequee, of Roswell, recorded amateurish videos of "symbolic and infrastructure targets for potential terrorist attacks," said the indictment.

In one video, Ahmed and Sadequee pass the Pentagon as they drive toward Washington. "This is where our brothers attacked the Pentagon," Sadequee says on the video, the indictment said. The videos were sent to Aabid Hussein Khan, who is in prison in England for possessing articles for terrorism. According to Tuesday's indictment, when he was arrested in June 2006, Khan had the videos recorded by Ahmed and Sadequee.

Khan also had maps and timetables for the Washington and New York public transit systems; information on truck routes into New York; schematics of the financial district in lower Manhattan; aerial photos of the U.S. Naval Base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba; and information on paramilitary training camps in Pakistan, the indictment said. Separately, the new indictment said, between August 2005 and April 2006, Sadequee was in contact with a number of supporters of violent jihad. They included Mirsad Bektasevic, who was arrested in Bosnia Herzegovina in October 2005 after being found with more than 20 pounds of plastic explosives, firearms, bomb-making materials and a manifesto promising an attack on Western interests, the indictment said.

http://www.ajc.com/cherokee/content/metro/stories/2008/12/10/georgia_terrorism_suspects.html

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The New Straits Times, Malaysia

Yazid 'No Longer a Security Threat'

By : Eileen Ng
11 December 2008

KUALA LUMPUR: Suspected Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) terrorist Yazid Sufaat, allegedly linked to the Sept 11, 2001 attacks in the United States, has been released from detention under the Internal Security Act (ISA).

Home Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said Yazid, 43, was among six ISA detainees released. The others were two Thais from Kumpulan Pemisah Thai, Muhammad Faizal and Anbalavan, Abdul Rahman and Muhamad Tarmizi, who aided foreign intelligence agencies, and Murad Sudin, who was linked to JI. Except for Yazid, who was freed last month, the rest were released on Dec 4.

Syed Hamid was speaking to reporters after the Singapore Straits Times had reported that the government had recently released more than a dozen extremists linked to JI. He said the six were released as they were no longer considered a threat to national security. "They should be released as they are no longer a threat and will no longer pose a threat to public order or the security of the nation," he said at the Parliament lobby yesterday.

Yazid emerged as a key figure in JI's regional network because of his links to Zacarias Moussaoui, a French citizen of Moroccan descent who was convicted of conspiracy in the Sept 11 attacks. Yazid hosted Moussaoui during his visit to Malaysia in September and October 2000. Eight months earlier, he allowed Khalid al-Midhar and Nawaf al-Hazmi, the two hijackers of the American Airlines aircraft that crashed into the Pentagon, to use his apartment.

Syed Hamid said Yazid was not detained because of any role in the Sept 11 attacks but for his involvement in JI. "He was considered a threat because JI was trying to establish an Islamic government in the region. But now, he has been rehabilitated and can return to society." Syed Hamid said with the release, there were 46 people still detained under the ISA -- 16 for links to JI, 13 linked to militant group Darul Islam Sabah, 10 for falsifying documents, the five Hindraf leaders and two who worked with foreign intelligence agencies.

"We free ISA detainees from time to time when we find that they are no longer a threat to national security. The government will not detain anyone longer than they deserve. "Usually, people are detained for two years under the ISA but it depends on the recommendations of the detention centre's advisory board." On another matter, Syed Hamid said he had directed the National Registration Department to open a counter to allow those affected by the Bukit Antarabangsa landslide to replace or renew their MyKad.

http://www.nst.com.my/Current_News/NST/Thursday/National/2425233/Article/index.html

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Malaysia Star
Thursday December 11, 2008

Suspected JI Member Released from ISA Detention

By LOURDES CHARLES

KUALA LUMPUR: Suspected Jemaah Islamiyah terrorist Yazid Sufaat, who allegedly abetted and housed several terrorists involved in the September 2001 attacks in the United States, has been freed from Internal Security Act detention.

Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Musa Hassan said Yazid, 44, was released with another Malaysian, Sulaiman Suramin, on Nov 24.

"We released him as he had shown remorse and had repented," he added.

"His release was conditional upon his reporting to the police from time to time and not leaving the state without prior permission from us.

"Our officers will also be monitoring him, as well as several others who had been released over the past years, to ensure they do not go back to their old ways," Musa said.

It is learnt that the Government had over the past year released 17 suspected JI members, eight of them Indonesians.

Yazid, a biochemistry graduate from a US university, was detained in January 2002 and is said to have allowed his home to be used in early 2000 as a meeting place for al-Qaeda members planning the Sept 11, 2001, attacks in the United States.

Two of the men were identified as Khalid al-Midhar and Nawaf al-Hazmi, who were aboard the plane which crashed into the Pentagon in Washington.

The former, a military officer, has also been implicated in the 2000 Christmas Eve bombings in Medan, Indonesia.

He was questioned by US investigators in November 2002 over his connection with French citizen Zacarias Moussaoui, a Sept 11 suspect.

Yazid's wife, Sejahtul Dursina @ Chomel Mohamad, an IT company director in Ampang, was also detained under the ISA.

The California State University graduate was detained on April 17, 2002, and released on June 13.

<http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2008/12/11/nation/2778386&sec=nation>

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New York Times
December 11, 2008

Sunni Militants' Chief May Have Been Killed or Caught in Syria

By [GRAHAM BOWLEY](#) and [SOUAD MEKHENNET](#)

The fugitive leader of a Sunni extremist group who led a prolonged standoff against the Lebanese Army last year at a Palestinian refugee camp near Tripoli, [Lebanon](#), may have been killed or captured in Syria, according to a statement posted by the group on militant Web sites.

During the summer of 2007, the Lebanese Army battled fighters from a militant group, Fatah al Islam, which claims to have allegiances with Al Qaeda, in the Nahr al Bared refugee camp.

The army routed the group and nearly leveled the camp, but the group's leader, [Shakir al-Abssi](#), was never caught. In the statement posted on Web sites on Monday, the group said that Mr. Abssi had fled to Syria, where he tried to rebuild his organization, but that he and two companions were ambushed by what it called Syrian security agents as they were going to meet supporters. Mr. Abssi may have died in the resulting hourlong firefight, the Fatah al Islam statement said.

The group named Abu Muhammad Awad as his successor, according to the statement.

"Up to this moment, we have no knowledge, even though we are inclined to think they died," according to the statement, which was provided by the SITE Intelligence Group, an organization that monitors militant Web sites. "Yet, we have no evidence that proves this matter to us," the statement said.

Its authenticity could not be verified. A senior Syrian security official could not confirm Mr. Abssi's death or capture.

Last year Lebanese officials said they believed that Mr. Abssi had died in the last hours of the 15-week battle, but DNA testing of a body thought to be his proved negative, and a captured member of his group told officials he had escaped the night before the army's final assault.

Tensions have lingered in Tripoli since then, and many in the city say they believe that a series of attacks on the Lebanese Army earlier this year were meant to avenge the Fatah al Islam militants killed in the fighting last year. In August, a bomb hidden in a briefcase tore through a bus packed with soldiers on their way to work, killing 15 people, including nine soldiers, and in September, a remotely detonated car bomb exploded near another bus carrying army troops, killing four soldiers and a civilian.

The Syrian government blamed Fatah al Islam for a bombing in September in Damascus that killed 17 people and was the deadliest attack in Syria since the 1980s. Syrian state television showed what it said were 12 members of the group, including Mr. Abssi's daughter, confessing that they had helped plan the attack.

Mr. Abssi was convicted and sentenced to death in Jordan for helping to organize the 2002 assassination of an American diplomat, Laurence Foley. Court papers show that he worked with Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the leader of Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, who was killed in 2006 by United States forces in Iraq.

Graham Bowley reported from New York, and Souad Mekhennet from Frankfurt. Robert F. Worth contributed reporting from Mumbai, India.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/11/world/middleeast/11syria.html?ref=world>

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International Herald Tribune
Wednesday, December 10, 2008

A U.S.-Iranian Conversation

By Roger Cohen

THE HAGUE: The United States and Iran are talking to each other about the elimination of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. That is a good thing. On the eve of Barack Obama's inauguration, it shows there is nothing in the DNA of the two nations that precludes dialogue. The discussions - often bruising but never to the point of a breakup - are proceeding within the framework of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. That's an unwieldy name for something the world should cheer.

The OPCW brings together 185 nations working in near total obscurity toward an April 29, 2012, deadline for the final elimination of the scourge that has brought death and agony from the fields of Flanders in World War I to the Tokyo subway in 1995. Countries representing 98 percent of the global population have adhered to the Chemical Weapons Convention, which came into force 11 years ago. More than 40 percent of the world's 71,000 metric tons of declared chemical agents, most of them in the United States and Russia, have been destroyed. States including Albania and South Korea have already completed the destruction of their chemical weapons stockpiles. At American, Russian, Indian and other sites, work proceeds to ensure the likes of mustard gas, sarin gas and the lethal VX nerve agent are not only eliminated, but never again produced or used.

"We work by consensus, and Iran and the United States are very much key figures in that," Rogelio Pfirter, the Argentine director-general of the organization told me. "Through engagement, and despite robust exchanges, we are able to move forward on a central disarmament and nonproliferation issue." The other day, at the OPCW's annual conference, I sat with Eric Javits, the widely respected U.S. ambassador, while Seyed Mohammad Ali Hosseini, an Iranian deputy foreign minister, spoke.

Referring to Saddam Hussein's use of chemical weapons during the Iran-Iraq war, in attacks that left more than 100,000 Iranian casualties, Hosseini said: "As the last victim of chemical weapons, the Islamic Republic of Iran strongly believes that promoting international peace and security is subject to the realization of a world free from the threat and existence of weapons of mass destruction." Not so much as an eyebrow was raised by Javits, although Iranian centrifuges are widely believed to be spinning in the pursuit of fissionable material for a nuclear weapon.

Nor did the ambassador's composure show cracks when Hosseini referred to the "chemical and nuclear weapons" of the "Zionist regime" as the "most dangerous threat to regional and international peace."

Afterward, Javits described his approach to me. "I'm here to get everyone to feel like a partner," he said. Including the Iranians? "I am friendly with them, although negotiations are tough. They are committed to this organization because of what happened under Saddam." And what of Iran's Israel bashing? "Look, we've gotten results here through patient diplomacy. I don't bring up things outside the purview of this organization. An enormous lesson here is that other nations want to feel they're treated by the big guys on an equal basis. This is an example of effective multilateralism. We've neglected how to put the multilateral tool to successful use."

Earlier this year, at the organization's second review conference, Javits played a decisive role in preventing a collapse. Tensions boiled over Iran's contention that the United States was trying to turn the OPCW into an antiterrorist organization focused more on chemical industry inspections aimed at ensuring nonproliferation than on destruction of existing weapons. At the 11th hour, a formula balancing the two objectives was found. "Javits is a patient listener and this is very much appreciated," Ali Reza Hajizadeh, a counselor at the Iranian embassy, told me. There are lessons here. The first is that listening is more productive than lecturing. Sure, chemical weapons are a far easier field for diplomacy than nuclear weapons because of their now limited military usefulness. But dialogue has reduced tensions and it can in the nuclear field, too. The second is that dialogue will be very tough. Iran's focus on Israel's unacknowledged nuclear weapons may cause discomfort in Washington, where the subject tends to be taboo, but it's impossible to understand the psychology of the Iranians without taking the Israeli bomb into account. Hearing their views directly is salutary. Obama's proposal to push for an Iranian dialogue is his single most important diplomatic proposal.

The Middle East has been the one area where the OPCW has had limited success precisely because of mistrust over weapons of mass destruction. Israel, Egypt and Syria have not joined the treaty. "Israel says nothing is solved until everything is solved," Pfirter told me. "Egypt and Syria say they cannot join until the Middle East is free of weapons of mass destruction. But logic suggests that moving ahead with eliminating chemical weapons might advance peace overall and certainly benefit the people of the Middle East." Pfirter is right. To make progress on these issues, they need to be aired. As Javits put it to me, "Consensus sometimes means equal disappointment, but it's no less valuable for that."

<http://www.iht.com/bin/printfriendly.php?id=18556107>

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Hindustan Times

Iraq Urges Obama to Talk to Iran

Agence France-Presse

Baghdad, December 11, 2008

The Iraqi government on Thursday called on US president-elect Barack Obama and his future administration to open a dialogue with Iran to deal with the Middle East's problems.

"I call on the new administration to open a dialogue with Iran to resolve the exceptional problems which are affecting stability in the region," Ali al-Dabbagh, the government spokesman, said in a statement received today.

"The time has come for a new policy respected by all countries and based on principles of non-interference in states' internal affairs, respect for the wishes of populations, respect of international law and avoiding recourse to force or threats," said the statement issued after an international conference in Washington in which Dabbagh took part.

On Sunday, Obama confirmed his intention to hold talks with Iran, stating his readiness to end a 30-year stand-off between Washington and Tehran.

"We need to ratchet up tough but direct diplomacy with Iran," he said in an interview aired on the NBC television programme "Meet the Press" in the United States on Sunday, promising a "set of carrots and sticks."

Security in Iraq has improved greatly this year, but US officials continue to say that Iran is financing, arming and training armed Iraqi groups -- a claim Tehran denies.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage/StoryPage.aspx?sectionName=&id=de885c85-caad-4564-89ec-7dbcf232f723&MatchID1=4855&TeamID1=6&TeamID2=2&MatchType1=1&SeriesID1=1223&PrimaryID=4855&Headline=Iraq+urges+Obama+to+talk+to+Iran>

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RIA Novosti

U.S. May Offer Israel 'Nuclear Umbrella' Against Iran

Thursday, 11 December 2008

MOSCOW, December 11 (RIA Novosti) - The new U.S. administration will provide Israel with nuclear deterrent guarantees in case of a potential nuclear attack from Iran, an Israeli newspaper said on Thursday.

The Haaretz newspaper cited a source close to U.S. president-elect Barack Obama's transition team as saying "the U.S. will declare that an attack on Israel by Tehran would result in a devastating U.S. nuclear response against Iran."

Israel is widely believed to have had its own nuclear weapons since the late 1960s, but does not officially confirm or deny their existence. As of the late 1990s, the U.S. Intelligence Community estimated that Israel possessed up to 130 nuclear warheads.

According to the source, the U.S. nuclear guarantee would be backed by a new Israeli missile defense system, and the U.S. early-warning radar system already deployed in the Negev desert to counter Iranian missiles.

The paper suggested that by granting Israel a nuclear guarantee the U.S. is willing to come to terms with a nuclear Iran, where the uranium enrichment program has reportedly "passed beyond the point of no return."

Mohamed ElBaradei, the head of the UN nuclear watchdog, admitted in an interview with the Los Angeles Times published on December 6 that international efforts to halt Iranian nuclear activity have been futile.

Tehran is under three sets of relatively mild UN Security Council sanctions over its nuclear program, but over the past five years has steadily advanced with its controversial nuclear program.

The IAEA reported last month that Iran now has more than 5,000 uranium enrichment centrifuges in operation.

In an interview broadcast on Sunday, Obama vowed to negotiate with Iran over its nuclear program, offering economic incentives for the country to abandon its uranium enrichment program, along with the threat of tougher sanctions if it refused the deal.

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20081211/118804758.html>

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London Daily Telegraph

December 10, 2008

Russian Diplomat: Iran Not Yet Able to Build Nuclear Bomb

A top Russian diplomat has hinted that his country's extensive spying network believes Iran is not yet able to build a nuclear bomb.

"One cannot say today that Iran can create nuclear weapons and the means of delivering them," said Vladimir Voronkov, head of the Russian foreign ministry's department of European cooperation.

"This information is confirmed by all the services responsible for the collection and analysis of information."

Mr Voronkov, quoted by the Interfax and ITAR-TASS news agencies on Tuesday, appeared to be drawing on information supplied by Moscow's intelligence services.

Western countries, which believe that Iran is using an ostensibly peaceful atomic programme to secretly develop nuclear weapons, have persuaded the United Nations to impose economic sanctions on Tehran.

Yet Russia has greater access to Iran's nuclear programme than most countries: one of its companies, Atomstroyexport, is building the Bushehr reactor on the humid Gulf coast, giving teams of Russian engineers first-hand contact with their Iranian counterparts.

It is also a key supplier of military hardware to the Islamic republic, including the anti-missile defences that now protect its nuclear sites.

While the West has pushed hard for action against Iran, however, Russia has advocated a softer approach. It has sometimes infuriated Western diplomats by holding up their proposals for action at the United Nations Security Council.

"The difference is that our partners want to use instruments of pressure," said Mr Voronkov. "We do not consider such instruments to be always effective."

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iran/3689314/Russian-diplomat-Iran-not-yet-able-to-build-nuclear-bomb.html>

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London Daily Telegraph

North Korea Nuclear Disarmament Talks Collapse

Talks on nuclear disarmament for North Korea collapsed on Thursday night after the reclusive regime of Kim Jong-il rejected a Chinese proposal on how to verify the dismantling of its facilities.

By Richard Spencer in Beijing

11 December 2008

The move by North Korea leaves another unsolved problem for the incoming administration of President-Elect Barack Obama, as well as challenging relations with Mr Kim's most important ally, Beijing.

China was given the task of drawing up a draft document on how to ensure North Korea had kept its promises to dismantle its nuclear weapons programme, in line with a deal struck in February last year.

But according to delegates to the behind-closed-doors talks, North Korea, also known as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, refused to accept it.

"Ultimately, the DPRK was not ready, really, to reach a verification protocol with all the standards that are required," said Christopher Hill, the American delegate to the six-party talks, after leaving the negotiations and heading straight for Beijing Airport to fly home.

"I'd like to mention that a number of us, especially the US and Russian delegations, we have a lot of familiarity on what these things look like and what the standard should be. So we tried to acquaint the DPRK with these standards but ultimately couldn't get it done in this round."

The talks were called to address North Korea's refusal to allow samples from its nuclear processing plant at Yongbyon, which created the material used for its first nuclear test in October 2006, to be taken out by independent inspectors for tests.

China was asked to draw up the proposals as host of the talks. But it was also hoped that North Korea would be reluctant to snub its ally, on which it relies for economic and trade support.

But even before the last day's session began, South Korea's delegate, Kim Sook, said North Korea appeared unlikely to accept.

"Other participants mostly have a consensus on the verification protocol, but North Korea insisted on not agreeing to it," he said.

Mr Hill said there was a difference between what North Korea had promised and what it was prepared to commit itself to formally.

"The North Koreans don't want to put into writing what they are willing to put into words," he said, as the talks got under way.

"We can't go forward on a verification protocol without something written down. We've laid out our views on the verification protocol."

Under the 2007 deal, North Korea will receive energy supplies equivalent to one million tons of fuel oil in return for dismantling Yongbyon. It is also supposed eventually to declare and dismantle any other nuclear weapons programmes and material.

But it has regularly stalled on individual aspects of the deal, apparently seeking to win more concessions. It may feel that these could be more readily forthcoming from the incoming administration, particularly as Mr Obama said in his campaign he was prepared under certain circumstances to meet Kim personally.

China made no comment on the snub. Its foreign minister, Yang Jiechi, was quoted by a spokesman as saying: "After several days of discussions, there is agreement but still differences.

"We hope the parties can maintain confidence and patience and exert wisdom and maximum flexibility and continue to work for positive results."

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/northkorea/3707486/North-Korea-nuclear-disarmament-talks-collapse.html>

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