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New York Times

August 15, 2008

Pg. 1

U.S. And Poland Set Missile Deal

By Thom Shanker and Nicholas Kulish

WASHINGTON — The United States and Poland reached a long-stalled deal on Thursday to place an American missile defense base on Polish territory, in the strongest reaction so far to Russia's military operation in Georgia. Russia reacted angrily, saying that the move would worsen relations with the United States that have already been strained severely in the week since Russian troops entered separatist enclaves in Georgia, a close American ally. But the deal reflected growing alarm in countries like Poland, once a conquered Soviet client state, about a newly rich and powerful Russia's intentions in its former cold war sphere of power. In fact, negotiations dragged on for 18 months — but were completed only as old memories and new fears surfaced in recent days.

Those fears were codified to some degree in what Polish and American officials characterized as unusual aspects of the final deal: that at least temporarily American soldiers would staff air defense sites in Poland oriented toward

Russia, and that the United States would be obliged to defend Poland in case of an attack with greater speed than required under NATO, of which Poland is a member.

Polish officials said the agreement would strengthen the mutual commitment of the United States to defend Poland, and vice versa. "Poland and the Poles do not want to be in alliances in which assistance comes at some point later — it is no good when assistance comes to dead people," the Polish prime minister, Donald Tusk, said on Polish television. "Poland wants to be in alliances where assistance comes in the very first hours of — knock on wood — any possible conflict."

A sense of deepened suspicions — and the more darkly drawn lines between countries in the region — were also apparent in the emotional reaction from Russia.

"It is this kind of agreement, not the split between Russia and United States over the problem of South Ossetia, that may have a greater impact on the growth in tensions in Russian-American relations," Konstantin Kosachyov, chairman of the foreign affairs committee in the Russian Parliament, told the Interfax news agency on Thursday in Moscow.

South Ossetia is the pro-Russian enclave inside Georgia where Russia sent troops last week, following a military crackdown by the pro-Western government in Georgia.

The missile defense deal was announced by Polish officials and confirmed by the White House. Under it, Poland would host an American base with 10 interceptors designed to shoot down a limited number of ballistic missiles, in theory launched by a future adversary such as Iran. A tracking radar system would be based in the Czech Republic. The system is expected to be in place by 2012.

In exchange for providing the base, Poland would get what the two sides called "enhanced security cooperation," notably a top-of-the-line Patriot air defense system that can shoot down shorter-range missiles or attacking fighters or bombers.

A senior Pentagon official described an unusual part of this quid pro quo: an American Patriot battery would be moved from Germany to Poland, where it would be operated by a crew of about 100 American military personnel members. The expenses would be shared by both nations. American troops would join the Polish military, at least temporarily, at the front lines — facing east toward Russia.

Russia has long opposed the deal, saying the United States was violating post-cold-war agreements not to base its troops in former Soviet bloc states and devising a Trojan Horse system designed to counter Russia's nuclear arsenal, not an attack by Iran or another adversary.

Stop-and-start negotiations over the arrangement that was sealed Thursday had been under way for almost two years, with the Polish government reluctant to press the deal in the face of strong opposition — and retaliatory threats — from Moscow.

For its part, Washington had balked at some of Poland's demands, in particular the sale of advanced air defense systems that were unrelated to shooting down ballistic missiles.

But in a sign of the widening repercussions of the conflict in Georgia, those concerns were cast aside, as the offensive by Russia's military across its borders was viewed around the world as a sign of Moscow's determination to reimpose its influence across the old Soviet bloc.

Polish officials, in announcing the agreement, said it would be presented to the National Legislature, although it remained unclear whether the American base would require a vote of approval.

The other half of the American missile defense system in Europe would be an advanced radar in the Czech Republic for tracking specific targets and then precisely guiding an interceptor to destroy a warhead. Likewise, that deal has been signed by the country's leaders, and is awaiting debate in the Czech Parliament.

At the White House, the press secretary, Dana M. Perino, confirmed that senior officials had initialed the agreement. "In no way is the president's plan for missile defense aimed at Russia," she said. "In fact, it's just not even logically possible for it to be aimed at Russia, given how Russia could overwhelm it. The purpose of missile defense is to protect our European allies from any rogue threats, such as a missile from Iran."

The Bush administration, in an attempt to prove its sincerity and transparency, had invited Moscow to join as a partner in a continentwide missile defense system, sharing information and technology with NATO allies.

While Russian and American experts have discussed cooperation, senior officials in Moscow have kept up a nonstop stream of complaints about the system.

The agreement also poses potential political problems for Democratic critics of missile defense who would be fighting to cut financing for the program in the face of the specific request from Poland and in light of the Russian offensive into Georgia.

There is no such ambivalence on Russia's periphery, where Moscow's attack signaled danger, and offered logic for closer ties with Washington and NATO.

In Poland, the war in Georgia has dominated the front pages of newspapers, where it has been starkly characterized as Russian invaders attacking Georgia. For Poles, Russia's actions also come as a vindication of Poland's distrust of

its former conqueror and was a warning about issues like energy security, one of the primary areas in which a resurgent Russia first began to exert itself.

"We are worried that we are facing, under the strong arm of Russia, a situation where some kind of understanding would be reached that Russia would be given a free hand in the region," said Eugeniusz Smolar, director of the Center for International Relations, a nonprofit, nonpartisan research group in Warsaw.

Thom Shanker reported from Washington, and Nicholas Kulish from Tbilisi, Georgia. Clifford J. Levy contributed reporting from Moscow.

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/15/world/europe/15poland.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=U.S.%20And%20Poland%20Set%20Missile%20Deal&st=cse&oref=slogin

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Huntsville (AL) Times

August 14, 2008

General Urges Missile Technology Investment

Obering cites gains by Iran, N. Korea; funding a challenge

By Shelby G. Spires, Times Aerospace Writer

Ballistic missile threats to the United States and its allies continue to evolve, missile defense leaders said in Huntsville Wednesday. And that leads to a growing concern that a balance must be struck between maintaining old missile defense programs and developing new ones to counter potential threats.

In Huntsville and other sites across the nation, the Missile Defense Agency (MDA) continues to maintain and improve missile defense programs, but the military needs reasonable amounts of money to develop technology, Air Force Lt. Gen. Trey Obering, MDA's director, told an audience Wednesday at the 11th annual Space and Missile Defense Conference at the Von Braun Center. The conference concludes today.

Iran and North Korea are making large investments in long-range missiles that could strike the United States and its allies, he said. It is an era of development that Obering likened to Nazi Germany's industrial build-up before World War II.

"We were telegraphed what the Nazis were doing and nobody heeded those warnings," Obering said. "We see that same belligerent dissent today with Iran."

Among the top items on Obering's wish list are improved Navy sea-based missile defense programs, advanced multiple kill vehicles - the destructive end of missile defense interceptors - new space satellite sensors to detect and track launches, and a mobile missile shield known as the Kinetic Energy Interceptor (KEI).

Finding the money for all that could be a challenge, missile defense analyst Victoria Samson told The Times this month.

"That Congress is taking a harder look and cutting money from these programs signals that the love affair previous members have had with this program is starting to wane," said Samson, who works for the Virginia-based watchdog group Center for Defense Information. "Current programs are probably too far along to face severe cuts, but future ones may be a tough sell on the Hill."

All the programs have a local connection. Northrop Grumman is managing the KEI program here and Lockheed Martin in Huntsville also is working on part of the multiple kill vehicles.

KEI, which is in an early development stage, is managed in Huntsville and has about 80 people working on it here, said retired Army Lt. Gen. Larry Dodgen, a Northrop Grumman vice president for missile defense in Huntsville.

If fully developed, the program could be transported quickly around the world, and a variant could be placed on ships, "giving leaders flexible options to destroy (enemy missiles) just after launch, or the boost phase," or higher in the atmosphere, Dodgen told The Times.

"That buys back battle space, meaning it gives commanders time before they have to resort to the last option" of launching an interceptor just before a missile hits a target, said Dodgen, who commanded both Army Aviation and Missile Command and the Army Space & Missile Defense Command on Redstone Arsenal.

A key space sensor development program is scheduled to launch in early 2009 two demonstrator satellites that would track missiles just after launch and send information to interceptors in flight and quickly confirm a warhead's destruction, Obering said.

"We want to be able track these from birth to death," he said.

<http://www.al.com/huntsvilletimes/stories/index.ssf?/base/news/1218705346306300.xml&coll=1>

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Philadelphia Inquirer
August 16, 2008

Russia Warns Poland Over U.S. Missiles

By agreeing to house U.S. interceptors, Moscow said, Poland is "exposing itself to a strike."

By Jim Heintz, Associated Press

MOSCOW - Russia warned Poland yesterday that it is exposing itself to attack - even a nuclear one - by accepting a U.S. missile-interceptor base on its soil, delivering Moscow's strongest language yet against the plan.

American and Polish officials stuck firmly by their deal, signed Thursday, for Poland to host a system that Washington says is meant to block missile attacks by rogue nations such as Iran.

Moscow says it is convinced the base is aimed at Russia's missile force, however, and the deal comes as relations already are strained over the fighting between Russia and U.S.-allied Georgia over the separatist Georgian region of South Ossetia.

"Poland, by deploying [the system], is exposing itself to a strike - 100 percent," Gen. Anatoly Nogovitsyn, deputy chief of staff of Russia's armed forces, said, according to the Interfax news agency.

He said Russia's military doctrine permits the use of nuclear weapons "against the allies of countries having nuclear weapons if they in some way help them."

Russian President Dmitry A. Medvedev said the deal "absolutely clearly demonstrates what we had said earlier - the deployment has the Russian Federation as its target."

Speaking at a news conference with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, however, Medvedev appeared to take a softer position than Nogovitsyn's on the Polish base, saying "it is sad news for all who live on this densely populated continent, but it is not dramatic."

U.S. officials defended the missile-defense deal and said the timing was not meant to antagonize Russian leaders amid the conflict in Georgia.

"Poland is an independent country. And it's an ally of the United States. And it's a democratic country, to whose security the United States is committed" through NATO, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said during a visit to Georgia's capital, Tbilisi.

Polish Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski said Poland was willing to let Russia inspect the future missile base to give Moscow "tangible proof" it is not directed against Russia's arsenal, the Polish news agency PAP reported.

At a news conference earlier in the day, Nogovitsyn reiterated Russian warnings that placing missile interceptors in Poland and a linked radar post in the Czech Republic would bring an unspecified military response.

But his later reported statement substantially stepped up the war of words.

Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said the United States agreed to help augment Poland's defenses with Patriot missiles in exchange for placing 10 missile defense interceptors in the Eastern European country.

He said the deal also included a "mutual commitment" between the two nations to come to each other's aid "in case of trouble."

That clause appeared to refer to Russia, whose renewed muscle-flexing in the region worries Polish leaders.

http://www.philly.com/inquirer/world_us/27046159.html

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London Daily Telegraph
August 16, 2008

Russia Threatens Nuclear Attack On Poland Over US Missile Shield Deal

By Harry de Quetteville and Andrew Pierce

Russia threatened a nuclear strike against Poland after a landmark deal to site American global anti-missile shields in the country.

Only 24 hours after the weapons agreement was signed Russia's deputy chief of staff warned Poland "is exposing itself to a strike 100 per cent".

General Anatoly Nogovitsyn said that any new US assets in Europe could come under Russian nuclear attack with his forces targeting "the allies of countries having nuclear weapons".

He told Russia's Interfax news agency: "By hosting these, Poland is making itself a target. This is 100 per cent certain. It becomes a target for attack. Such targets are destroyed as a first priority."

Russia's nuclear rhetoric marks an intense new phase in the war of words over Georgia. The Caucasus conflict has spiralled into a Cold War style confrontation between Moscow and Washington in less than a week.

The stand off between the two cold War powers was underlined by Russian president Dmitry Medvedev, who dismissed US claims that the silo is a deterrent against 'rogue states' like Iran as "a fairy tale". He told reporters at the Black Sea resort of Sochi: "The deployment of new missile defence facilities in Europe is aimed against the Russian Federation."

President George W. Bush in a brief but pointed statement earlier in the day said: "The Cold War is over... Bullying and intimidation are not acceptable ways to conduct foreign policy in the 21st century."

Mr Bush, who is demanding an immediate withdrawal of Russian troops from Georgia now that that a ceasefire deal has been signed, added: "Only Russia can decide whether it will now put itself back on the path of responsible nations or continue to pursue a policy that promises only confrontation and isolation,"

Russia's deteriorating relationship with the West was strained further when US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice yesterday visited Georgian capital Tbilisi and concluded a ceasefire deal with Russia. It was the highest profile gesture of American political support for Georgia's embattled government since the conflict began.

Echoing President Bush's demands for a withdrawal from Georgia, she evoked the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia 40 years ago. "Russian forces need to leave Georgia at once. This is no longer 1968," she said.

Mikheil Saakashvili, the Georgian president, who was standing next to Miss Rice, said: "We were screaming to the world that Russia was going to do this... We are looking evil directly in the eye - this evil is very dangerous not only for us but for everybody."

Even as he was speaking a convoy of 17 Russian armoured personnel carriers was spotted advancing along the main highway to within 34 miles of the Georgian capital Tbilisi, their deepest move yet inside the country.

The Foreign Office also condemned Russia. A spokesman said: "Threats such as these against our EU and Nato Allies are completely unacceptable and unhelpful, especially at the present time".

The criticism was echoed by MPs, who warned of the potential for a major escalation in the diplomatic crisis.

But there was no word from either Gordon Brown or David Miliband, the Foreign Secretary, on the nuclear issue, who were earlier both criticised for not speaking out sooner over the situation in Georgia.

David Cameron, the Tory leader, will today seize the initiative by travel to Georgia, where he is expected to warn Russia to respect its neighbour's territorial integrity.

Poland and the United States reached the agreement, after 18 months of negotiation, on siting 10 interceptor missiles capable of destroying incoming long-range ballistic missiles. Washington says the system, which would be installed by 2012, is designed to protect the US and its allies from "rogue states" such as Iran. The threat of nuclear reprisals were motivated by Moscow's fears the missile shield makes Russia a target of the United States.

Radek Sikorski, the Polish foreign minister, told *The Daily Telegraph* the new US missile shield deal, and its timing, was unrelated to Georgia. "It [the deal] is a coincidence," he said. "Georgia made a dramatic backdrop to it, but the timing had nothing to do with Georgia. We have offered Russia the right to inspect at any time. It only has the capabilities we say it does, which is to say, nothing to do with Russia."

Donald Tusk, the Polish prime minister, hinted that the US had pledged to back Warsaw in the event of Russian aggression towards Poland. He said that he only agreed to host the US defence shield on the condition that the US agreed to help augment Poland's defences with Patriot missiles, which are intended to ward off any threat from Russia. "We have crossed the Rubicon," he said.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/2566005/Russia-threatens-nuclear-attack-on-Poland-over-US-missile-shield-deal.html>

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Arizona Daily Star (Tucson)

August 16, 2008

North Dakota Base In Nuclear Missile Mistake Deemed Safe

By Associated Press

BISMARCK, N.D. — A North Dakota bomber wing that came under scrutiny for mistakenly shipping nuclear missiles across the country is now operating safely, the Air Force said Friday.

The Minot Air Force base's 5th Bomb Wing "can execute its nuclear mission in a safe, secure and reliable manner," the Air Force said after conducting an inspection.

The wing was re-inspected after coming up short in an inspection in May.

The Air Force Times, citing a copy of the May report, said inspectors discovered an airman playing video games on his cell phone while standing guard at a restricted area and another airman nearby who was "unaware of her duties and responsibilities."

Last August, nuclear cruise missiles were mistakenly loaded onto a B-52 bomber at the Minot base and flown to a base in Louisiana. The foul-up cost a colonel his command.

Col. Joel Westa, the new Minot Air Force Base commander, noted that it been almost a year since that nuclear shipment mistake.

"We've been steadily improving and we will continue to improve," he said.

The Minot Air Force Base's 91st Missile Wing also has been under scrutiny. Last month, three of its officers fell asleep while holding classified launch codes. The Air Force said the public was not in danger.

<http://www.azstarnet.com/allheadlines/253052.php>

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New York Times

August 16, 2008

Pg. 12

F.B.I. Will Present Scientific Evidence In Anthrax Case To Counter Doubts

By Eric Lichtblau and David Johnston

WASHINGTON — Growing doubts from scientists about the strength of the government's case against the late Bruce E. Ivins, the military researcher named as the anthrax killer, are forcing the Justice Department to begin disclosing more fully the scientific evidence it used to implicate him.

In the face of the questions, Federal Bureau of Investigation officials have decided to make their first detailed public presentation next week on the forensic science used to trace the anthrax used in the 2001 attacks to a flask kept in a refrigerator in Dr. Ivins's laboratory at Fort Detrick, in Maryland. Many scientists are awaiting those details because so far, they say, the F.B.I. has failed to make a conclusive case.

"That is going to be critically important, because right now there is really no data to make a scientific judgment one way or the other," Brad Smith, a molecular biologist at the Center for Biosecurity at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. "The information that has been put out, there is really very little scientific information in there." F.B.I. officials say they are confident that their scientific evidence against Dr. Ivins, who killed himself last month as the Justice Department was preparing an indictment against him, will withstand scrutiny, and they plan to present their findings for review by leading scientists. But the scrutiny may only raise fresh questions.

The bureau presented forensics information to Congressional and government officials this week in a closed-door briefing, but a number of listeners said the briefing left them less convinced that the F.B.I. had the right man, and they said some of the government's public statements appeared incomplete or misleading.

For instance, the Justice Department said earlier this month in unsealing court records against Dr. Ivins that he had tried to mislead investigators in 2002 by giving them an anthrax sample that did not appear to have come from his laboratory.

But F.B.I. officials acknowledged at the closed-door briefing, according to people who were there, that the sample Dr. Ivins gave them in 2002 did in fact come from the same strain used in the attacks, but, because of limitations in the bureau's testing methods and Dr. Ivins's failure to provide the sample in the format requested, the F.B.I. did not realize that it was a correct match until three years later.

In addition, people who were briefed by the F.B.I. said a batch of misprinted envelopes used in the anthrax attacks — another piece of evidence used to link Dr. Ivins to the attacks — could have been much more widely available than bureau officials had initially led them to believe.

Representative Rush Holt, the New Jersey Democrat who has followed the anthrax case closely and requested this week's briefing from the F.B.I., said in an interview that he was not ready to draw any firm conclusions about the investigation. But he said: "The case is built from a number of pieces of circumstantial evidence, and for a case this important, it's troubling to have so many loose ends. The briefing pointed out even more loose ends than I thought there were before."

Naba Barkakati, an engineer who is the chief technologist for the Government Accountability Office and who also attended this week's briefing, said of the F.B.I.'s forensics case against Dr. Ivins: "It's very hard to get the sense of whether this was scientifically good or bad. We didn't really get the question settled, other than taking their word for it."

The bureau's lab work has come under sharp criticism in recent years for problems over DNA analysis, bullet tracing and other important forensic technology. In 2004, the laboratory mismatched a fingerprint taken from the Madrid terror bombings to a lawyer in Portland, Ore., Brandon Mayfield, who was then arrested. He won a \$2.8 million settlement.

With the main suspect in the anthrax killings now dead, F.B.I. officials say they realize they will again face tough scrutiny over the strength of their scientific evidence against Dr. Ivins. Indeed, conspiracy theories are already

flourishing on many Web sites, with skeptical observers asking whether the Maryland scientist was set up to take the fall for the attacks or, worse yet, was a murder victim. The fact that the bureau pursued another scientist, Steven J. Hatfill, for years before agreeing to pay \$4.6 million to settle a lawsuit he had filed and then later exonerating him has only fueled the skepticism.

“Do you believe Bruce Ivins was responsible for the anthrax attacks?” The Frederick News-Post, the hometown newspaper in Fort Detrick, asked its readers this week. (Of those who responded, 34 percent said no, compared with 26 percent who said yes.)

In its case against Dr. Ivins, the F.B.I. developed a compelling profile of an erratic, mentally troubled man who could be threatening and obsessive, as in his odd fascination with a sorority from his college days. But investigators were never able to place him at the New Jersey mailboxes where the anthrax letters were dropped, and the case against him relied at its heart on the scientific evidence linking the anthrax in Dr. Ivins’s laboratory to the spores used in the attacks.

It took the F.B.I. several years to develop the type of DNA testing that allowed them to trace the origins of the “attack strain,” as it was called, and they concluded that the anthrax that Dr. Ivins controlled was the only one of more than 1,000 samples they tested that matched it in all four of that strain’s genetic mutations.

Dwight Adams, a former director of the F.B.I. laboratory who was deeply involved in managing the anthrax genetic research until he left the bureau in 2006, said he was confident that the groundbreaking forensic effort would be validated by the broad scientific community.

Recalling the early skepticism that a genetic fingerprint of an anthrax could ever be obtained, Mr. Adams said, “I think the bureau and the national assets, including the national labs and others, that were applied as a team can very easily defend what they did and the results.”

But had Dr. Ivins lived and faced trial for the anthrax killings, Thomas M. DeGonia II, one of his lawyers, said his legal team would have quickly tried to have the genetic testing of the anthrax strains thrown out of court as unreliable. The type of testing the F.B.I. developed, he said “has never been proven or tested by the courts.”

Even if a jury had heard evidence about the genetic testing, Mr. DeGonia said the lawyers would have tried to show that many other scientists had access to that same strain of anthrax. He said the fact that the Justice Department had Dr. Ivins under investigation for perhaps two years or longer — and that it was executing search warrants in the case even after his death — suggests that the department itself had doubts.

“It’s interesting that they’re still attempting to gather evidence,” he said, “if the case is as strong as they say it is.”

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/16/washington/16anthrax.html?scp=1&sq=F.B.I.%20Will%20Present%20Scientific%20Evidence%20In%20Anthrax%20Case%20To%20Counter%20Doubts&st=cse>

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New York Times

August 16, 2008

Pg. 19

When The War Ends, Start To Worry

By Michael Bronner

EVEN as Russia and Georgia continue their on-again, off-again struggle over South Ossetia and Abkhazia, a frenzied tea-leaf reading about the war’s global political ramifications has broken out across airwaves and think-tank forums. But as the situation on the ground recedes inevitably to some new form of the pernicious “frozen conflict” that has plagued the region since Georgia’s civil wars of the early 1990s, few are paying attention to a less portentous but equally critical international threat: an increase in the longstanding, rampant criminality in the conflict zones that is likely to further destabilize the entire Caucasus region and at worst provide terrorist groups with the nuclear material they have long craved.

While the Russian “peacekeepers” who entrenched themselves in the conflict zones in the 1990s (and who will now likely resume their posts anew) have proved ineffectual and uninterested in maintaining stability, they’ve been highly successful in protecting an array of sophisticated criminal networks stretching from Russia through Georgian territory. South Ossetia, in particular, is a nest of organized crime. It is a marketplace for a variety of contraband, from fuel to cigarettes, wheat flour, hard drugs, weapons, people and, recently, counterfeit United States \$100 bills “minted” at a press inside the conflict zone.

“It’s a pretty sophisticated counterfeiting piece,” the American ambassador to Georgia, John Tefft, told me when I was in Georgia last year. He added that the fake bills appear so authentic that, if you weren’t specifically looking for a forgery, you’d easily miss it. More than \$20 million worth have been found up and down the East Coast of the United States as well as in Israel, Russia and Georgia.

“We know where the printing press is,” Shota Utiashvili, a chief intelligence analyst at Georgia’s Interior Ministry, told me last year, when I was researching a study on smuggling that was published by Harvard’s Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. “We know the channels of distribution. And we know who is running the business. But the problem is neither we nor the Americans can do anything because the place is under the protection of the Russian military.” I found this sentiment echoed in my discussions at the American Embassy.

Far more dangerous contraband than fake bills is bartered in the conflict zones. On a bleak winter day last year, I hitched a ride from Tbilisi, the capital, to the “administrative border” — the semiporous line of control that swoops deep into Georgian territory from the Russian border demarking the contours of South Ossetia. I was investigating one of the most serious nuclear smuggling incidents in years — an offer of up to 3 kilograms of bomb-grade highly enriched uranium.

Because South Ossetia is within Georgia’s internationally recognized borders, Georgia doesn’t recognize the South Ossetian periphery as a legitimate frontier, and has thus refused to post border guards or impose any normal controls at the administrative line. At the grim little checkpoint, I had to navigate through dozens of armed young men, clad in seemingly random combinations of camouflage, none bearing the insignia of a national force (the scariest kind of border to cross, as there’s no way of telling who’s who).

Aside from demanding bribes from journalists, these South Ossetian irregulars, backed by the Russian peacekeepers, have long prevented Georgian forces from getting anywhere near the actual border — a two-lane hole called the Roki Tunnel that plunges into a mountainside on the Russian side of the border, cuts through two miles of bedrock beneath the Caucasus Mountains and pops out in South Ossetia, smack in the war zone.

Three years ago, Georgian intelligence officials began receiving reports from South Ossetian criminal contacts that a Russian smuggler — a North Ossetian calling himself Oleg — was circulating in Tskhinvali, the South Ossetian capital. He was reportedly looking for a buyer for what he claimed was high-quality enriched uranium pilfered from the Russian military. The price was \$1 million for the initial shipment: 100 grams at \$10,000 per gram. If the deal went well, a mother lode of up to 3 kilograms would be made available. One hundred grams of highly enriched uranium is not enough to build a nuclear bomb — it’s thought that even a top-tier terrorist group would require at least 15 kilograms — but it would be a step in the right direction.

Huge international efforts sponsored by the United States State, Energy and Defense Departments have sought to counter such nuclear smuggling (since 1994, the Energy Department has spent upwards of \$420 million installing nuclear detection equipment at international border crossings, most of that effort concentrated on Russia’s frontiers), but conflict zones like South Ossetia have been an Achilles’ heel.

In this case, we got lucky. A haphazard sting operation run by Georgian paramilitaries and Interior Ministry agents recovered the 100 grams of highly enriched uranium and captured Oleg Khinsagov, the Russian smuggler, and three Georgian associates. Testing of the material proved it to be nearly 90 percent pure — bomb-grade uranium indeed — sending secure telephone lines ringing from Washington to Langley, Va.

The Russian government refused to acknowledge the obvious — that the uranium had originated in Russia — so a quickly assembled team of American experts from the Energy Department and the F.B.I. loaded an unmarked jet and quietly raced to Tbilisi to secure the material.

Good police work is vital, but we simply cannot depend on dramatic interventions like the Georgian raid to combat the broad security threats posed by anarchy on Russia’s borders. There are some great examples of cooperation between Washington and Moscow — the setting up of nuclear detection programs at borders is clearly one of them. Somehow, however, the full spirit of cooperation has yet to reach to the top of Russia’s government — the same men, unfortunately, who seem more inclined to pouring fuel on the fire in Georgia.

Michael Bronner is an investigative journalist and filmmaker.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/16/opinion/16bronner.html?scp=1&sq=When%20The%20War%20Ends,%20Start%20To%20Worry&st=cse>

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London Sunday Times

August 17, 2008

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Russia's New Nuclear Challenge To Europe

By Mark Franchetti, Tbilisi

Russia is considering arming its Baltic fleet with nuclear warheads for the first time since the cold war, senior military sources warned last night.

The move, in response to American plans for a missile defence shield in Europe, would heighten tensions raised by the advance of Russian forces to within 20 miles of Tbilisi, the Georgian capital, yesterday.

Under the Russian plans, nuclear warheads could be supplied to submarines, cruisers and fighter bombers of the Baltic fleet based in Kaliningrad, a Russian enclave between the European Union countries of Poland and Lithuania. A senior military source in Moscow said the fleet had suffered from underfunding since the collapse of communism. "That will change now," said the source.

"In view of America's determination to set up a missile defence shield in Europe, the military is reviewing all its plans to give Washington an adequate response."

The proposal to bring back nuclear warheads was condemned by Kurt Volker, the US ambassador to Nato, who said he knew of the threat.

"It is really unfortunate that Russia chooses to react by putting nuclear warheads in different places – if indeed it does that – when the rest of the world is not looking at some kind of old-fashioned superpower conflict," he said.

The warnings came 24 hours after Russia told Poland that it could face a nuclear strike for agreeing to let the United States station components of the missile defence shield on its soil.

The Russian military also said it would ignore attempts to restrict the movement of its Black Sea fleet in and out of Sebastopol, in Ukraine. The Crimean port was emerging as a potential flashpoint in Russia's efforts to prevent former Soviet countries on its borders from joining Nato.

This weekend Ukraine further angered Russian officials by offering to create a joint missile defence network with western countries.

The Russians have already indicated that they may point nuclear missiles at western Europe from bases in Kaliningrad and Belarus. They are also said to be thinking of reviving a military presence in Cuba.

In Georgia, Russian forces extended their reach across the west of the country yesterday, occupying several towns, seizing control of a main road and blowing up a railway bridge. Working with Abkhazian fighters they seized several Georgian villages and the Enguri power station. They pulled out of Igoeti, a village near the capital, after President Dmitry Medvedev signed a ceasefire agreement. The deal gave the Russians the right to continue patrolling "a few miles" inside Georgia. President George W Bush called the signing a "hopeful step".

David Cameron, the Conservative leader, seized the initiative with a lightning trip to Tbilisi, becoming the first British politician to meet President Mikhail Saakashvili since the conflict began. Critics have accused government ministers of dithering.

Writing in today's Sunday Times, Cameron says: "Russian armies can't march into other countries while Russian shoppers carry on marching into Selfridges."

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/europe/article4547883.ece>

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London Daily Telegraph

August 18, 2008

Georgia: Terror Fears Over Whereabouts Of Region's Nuclear Material

By Thomas Harding, Defence Correspondent

Georgia's conflict with Russia has raised fresh concerns over the whereabouts of the region's nuclear material that could be used by terrorists to make a "dirty bomb".

When the breakaway region of Abkhazia split from Georgia in 1993, the world's only known case of enriched uranium going missing was reported after up to 2kg of the potentially devastating material was stolen from a laboratory.

There are now fears that the organised criminal gangs that are rife in the region could exploit the confusion of the current conflict to loot other stocks.

Security services are worried that terrorist organisations such as al-Qa'eda could purchase weapons grade uranium and mix it with a detonator as basic as fertiliser to make a deadly device. While an estimated 15kg of uranium is needed to make a nuclear bomb just a small amount is needed for an unconventional device.

"There is no fear of a nuclear bomb coming out of this region but the bigger danger is that a small amount of uranium combined with conventional explosive terrorists could make a dirty bomb that would make an area the size of the City's Square Mile unusable for 30 or 40 years," said a security source. "The economic impact would be catastrophic."

Between half a kg and 2kg of uranium-235 was taken from a physics institute in Abkhazia's principal town Sukhumi after scientists fled during fighting but was not discovered as missing until four years later in 1997.

But it is not the only incident in the region. A smuggler attempted to sell up to 3kg of uranium in South Ossetia three years ago with a price tag of \$1 million per 100 grams. While not enough to make a nuclear device it could

contribute to a dirty bomb. The Russian smuggler, from North Ossetia, never had the chance to sell the entire stock after he was arrested by Georgian security forces. The uranium was found to be 90 per cent pure, which is weapons grade standard.

Before she retired as MI5's director general Eliza Manningham Buller warned that it was only a "question of time" before terrorists could assemble a dirty bomb.

The separatist regions in Georgia could prove a goldmine for radioactive material which would have a huge value on the black market.

In the last decade there have been a number of occasions when traffickers have been caught with uranium including a smuggler stopped on the Armenian border with a tablet of the heavy metal in a packet of tea.

In the Georgian capital of Tbilisi in 2003 a weighed-down taxi was found with lead lined boxes contained the strontium and caesium, both highly radioactive.

On at least two occasion smugglers have been caught going through rebellious Adzharia province in southern Georgian through the port of Batumi on the Black Sea.

It is possible some of the material could have been smuggled to Iran for its nuclear weapons programme or even to a terror organisation that have yet been unable or unwilling to use it.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/georgia/2575223/Georgia-Terror-fears-over-whereabouts-of-regions-nuclear-material.html>

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Boston Globe
August 19, 2008

Georgia Chaos Halts Nuclear Security Effort

US was helping track smugglers; Traffickers could take advantage

By Bryan Bender, Globe Staff

WASHINGTON -- The chaos in Georgia has forced the United States to halt a high-priority program that was helping the former Soviet republic to identify possible smugglers of nuclear bomb components across its borders, long considered a transit point for terrorists seeking to obtain weapons of mass destruction, according to US officials.

A team from the US Nuclear Security Administration was providing Georgian authorities with radiation equipment and training at key border crossings and the Batumi airport on the country's Black Sea coast when Russia invaded two weeks ago. The advisers were forced to flee the country within days, according to a spokesman from the Department of Energy.

The program is part of a series of US-led international "threat reduction" projects in Georgia - totaling nearly \$50 million - to improve the security of nuclear research facilities and prevent the spread of radioactive materials that terrorists could use to build a crude nuclear weapon or a so-called "dirty bomb" designed to spread radiation over a wide area.

With the effort now on hold, and a general breakdown in order throughout the republic, American officials fear would-be nuclear traffickers could take advantage of the situation.

"Georgia has been a hotbed of nuclear smuggling," said Gene Aloise, a senior analyst at the Government Accountability Office, the investigative arm of Congress, which has conducted several studies on nuclear security in Georgia. "Because of these past incidents, one as recently as 2006, any type of disruption - like tanks rolling in from Russia - is a cause for concern."

Twice in the last five years Georgian authorities have thwarted attempts to smuggle quantities of highly enriched uranium - dangerous, weapons-grade nuclear material. Over the past decade other radioactive materials, including plutonium, have also been intercepted on the black market.

Last week, at previously scheduled meetings between American and European experts on deterring nuclear terrorism, the discussions focused heavily on the worsening situation in Georgia.

"We have raised questions about this conflict and about the broader issues that it raises," Ambassador Wendy Sherman, a member of the US Commission on the Prevention of Weapons of Mass Destruction Proliferation and Terrorism, said by telephone from Vienna, where the congressional body was meeting with the International Atomic Energy Agency. "The commission is taking a look at what else we might be doing."

She said one question looms in her mind: "Are the borders secure?"

In 2003, Georgian border guards, using detection technologies provided by the United States, intercepted 173 grams of highly enriched uranium at the Sadahlo border crossing with Armenia. Then in 2006, a Russian man was arrested for allegedly trying to sell 100 grams of highly enriched uranium - with the promise of 10 pounds more - to a Georgian official posing as an Islamic radical.

Officials also fear that the chaos could loosen security at several facilities inside Georgia containing radioactive materials. Although the nuclear weapons that had been stationed on its territory during the Cold War have been removed, Georgia has three nuclear research facilities - including one located in a province that has been a flashpoint in the recent conflict with Russia.

The I. Vekua Institute of Physics and Technology in Sukhumi, in the pro-Russia province of Abkhazia, is not safeguarded by the International Atomic Energy Agency. Georgian authorities have previously reported they believe some radioactive materials that had been stored there - including highly enriched uranium - have been sold to terrorists, an assertion the local government has denied.

Georgia is also home to "thousands of radiological sources," the legacy of the then-Soviet Union's vast complex of weapons sites, nuclear research reactors, and scientific and medical institutions, according to the GAO. The sites house large quantities of Cesium and Strontium that could be used to fashion a dirty bomb.

The Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration reported that in 2006 Georgian authorities detected and seized small amounts of plutonium and cesium-137 during two separate smuggling attempts.

To help improve the country's ability to deal with the problem, NNSA - along with the State Department and the international Global Threat Reduction Initiative - has conducted training programs for Georgian officials and helped build a secure depository for radioactive waste.

Until the invasion, NNSA was also in the process of providing state-of-the-art radiation detection equipment at 20 sites in Georgia, including 14 border crossings, two seaports, three airports, and a training center. To date, only six border crossings, two seaports, and the training center are considered secure, NNSA said.

But for safety reasons, the 10 US technicians who were providing the on-the-ground assistance to the Georgians were ordered out of the country on Aug. 9.

"NNSA regards work in Georgia as a priority due to its location with respect to potential nuclear smuggling routes," said agency spokeswoman Casey Ruberg. "We look forward to continuing this work as soon as advisable."

Since the end of the Cold War, the United States and the international community have spent billions to help Russia and its neighbors secure excess nuclear materials, find peaceful employment for weapons scientists, and beef up border security.

Now, some specialists worry the fighting between Georgia and Russia - and the damage it has caused to Washington-Moscow relations - has jeopardized those efforts. "It is hard to see how cooperation between our two countries on any matter, including the cooperative threat reduction, can be sustained," said Leonard S. Spector, deputy director of the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies in Washington.

But others insisted that US and Russian leaders cannot let those efforts falter.

"They ought not look at all [US-Russia] relationships and terminate them," said former secretary of defense William S. Cohen.

"We have to deal with the immediate situation, but it remains in their national security interest and ours to have threat reduction [programs]," added Sherman. "When it comes to nuclear material or nuclear weapons, this is very serious business."

http://www.boston.com/news/world/europe/articles/2008/08/19/georgia_chaos_halts_nuclear_security_effort/

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New York Times

August 19, 2008

Pg. 11

Iran Offers To Launch Satellites

By Nazila Fathi and Thom Shanker

TEHRAN — A day after Iran declared that it had test fired a new rocket capable of launching a satellite, the country said Monday that it was prepared to help other Muslim countries send up satellites. But by then, Pentagon and military officials in Washington were concluding that the Iranian missile launching had been a failure.

The officials, speaking on ground rules of anonymity to discuss intelligence reports, said the first stage of the missile performed successfully, but the second stage failed. It flew off wildly, they said, destroying the top of the missile and its nose cone.

Despite the mission's overall failure, the launching was expected to add to Iran's knowledge about how to improve its missile skills, and thus was still viewed as a worrisome development, according to the American officials.

A rocket that can carry a satellite to space could also deliver nuclear warheads, and the Iranian announcement added to concerns over whether Iran's nuclear program is for purely peaceful purposes, as Iran maintains.

Iran has made several recent claims of test firing missiles that Western analysts have said were inflated. Last month, Iran said it had launched a number of missiles, including at least one that Tehran said could reach Israel. Western

analysts said that the war games featured more bluff than displays of real power and that the description of the largest missile was misleading.

On Sunday, Iranian television showed images of the nighttime rocket launching, and said a satellite had been sent into orbit. Iranian officials later said that only the rocket had been fired.

On Monday, Reza Taghipour, head of Iran's space agency, told state television, "I am announcing now that Iran is ready to launch satellites of friendly Islamic countries into space."

The minister of defense, Mostafa Mohammad Najar, dismissed concerns of Western nations, saying they wanted to prevent Iran's scientific progress, the Fars news agency reported. He said Iran "would soon place its national satellite" into orbit, but he did not say when.

Nazila Fathi reported from Tehran, and Thom Shanker from Washington.

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/19/world/middleeast/19iran.html?_r=1&ref=world&oref=slogin

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Christian Science Monitor

August 19, 2008

Pg. 10

Why US-Poland Missile Deal Rouses Russian Bear

By Gordon Lubold, Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

Washington -- Russia's strident objections to the deal between the United States and Poland on a missile defense system are largely unfounded.

That's the view of American officials and analysts, who say Moscow's aim in the controversy is to divide NATO and drive a wedge between the US and its allies.

Moscow reacted angrily over the weekend to the agreement between the US and Poland to put a missile defense system comprised of 10 interceptors in Poland. American officials have long maintained that the system will protect Israel and US bases in the Middle East against a rogue nuclear missile strike from the likes of Iran, and does not pose a threat to Russian security. Russia sees the site as a threat and fears greater intrusion into its traditional sphere of influence.

But analysts in Washington widely believe Russia is using controversy over the agreement within Europe and NATO to further divide the US and its allies.

"I think that the Russian argument is a disingenuous one, and everyone knows it," says Chris Hellman, a policy fellow at the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, a policy group in Washington. "It really isn't targeted at those guys."

Yet the agreement also reflects the growing fear in countries such as Poland, Ukraine, and Estonia that they could be attacked by Russia as it attempts to reemerge as a international power.

Meanwhile, the New York Times reported this week that Russia is sending launchers for short-range ballistic missiles into South Ossetia that are capable of targeting the Georgian capital of Tblisi. The move hints that Russia isn't planning to remove its troops from Georgia any time soon under the truce agreements announced over the weekend.

Some European allies have not supported the missile shield agreement, for fear it could amp up nuclear proliferation and cause nuclear ripples across the globe, where other countries such as India, China, or even Pakistan must reassess their own nuclear capabilities.

The US has tried to counter that fear, saying the proliferation of ballistic missiles is in part due to the lack of defenses against them, thus justifying a system such as the one to be put in Poland.

"If we join together - US, NATO, Russia - and field effective missile defenses, I believe it will have an effect on the value of these weapons," said Lt. Gen. Trey Obering, director of the Missile Defense Agency, at the Pentagon last month. "It will devalue them in the eyes of some of these countries."

The US has maintained that it will base the interceptors in Poland but not activate them until a true threat from Iran emerges. But while some countries believe the missile shield causes problems in a broader, political context, most recognize that it is not a threat to Russia.

But that hasn't stopped a politically savvy Moscow from venting, Hellman says, and exploiting disagreements within NATO, of which Poland is a member, that a missile defense system there is a good idea. "The Russians treat it as a threat, but they know it's not going to work," Hellman says.

Reports of the finalized agreement sparked an angry response from Moscow, with Gen. Antoly Nogovitsyn, deputy chief of staff of Russia's armed forces, reportedly saying Poland was exposing itself to a strike if the missile shield was located there.

But Russian President Dmitry Medvedev struck a more diplomatic tone, saying Russia "will continue to work on this subject and discuss the problem" while acknowledging his government's frustration with the timing of the agreement, which has been in the works for more than a year.

"The deployment of the new missile defense forces in Europe is aimed at Russia," President Medvedev said on Friday in Sochi. "So, fairy tales about deterring some rogue states with the help of these facilities do not work." The comments came during intense negotiations between Russia and Georgia over Russia's incursion into the South Ossetia region of Georgia earlier this month.

Russia's fears would be justified if the US was basing not 10 interceptors, essentially designed to counter an accidental strike or a single missile, but hundreds more, says Michael O'Hanlon, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, another think tank in Washington.

"It is possible to contrive a worst-case cold-warlike scenario of the US placing 500 rather than 10 interceptors in Poland, but that's the sort of thing it would take to give Russia any real basis for concern."

Mr. O'Hanlon notes that if Russia were to base the same number of interceptors in Cuba, it would spark wide concern among "old fashioned nuclear targeteers," but that in the end the concerns are baseless.

The deal also signals a new level of security agreements between the US and Poland, amounting to a bilateral security assistance agreement that effectively protects Poland beyond NATO. The agreement also includes the deployment of an American Patriot missile defense system, which may further antagonize Russia.

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2008/0819/p10s01-woeu.html>

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Honolulu Advertiser

August 17, 2008

Clock May Be Ticking On North Korea Regime

By Richard Halloran

An array of intelligence analysts, Asian and American scholars, specialists in think tanks, and workers in relief organizations have renewed speculation that the North Korean regime of Kim Jong Il is in danger of collapsing because that nation is on the brink of mass starvation and mounting isolation.

No one will even guess when this might happen — within a year, more likely within five years, and almost surely within 10 years? Will the collapse be a "soft landing" in which Kim's regime gradually falls apart with the pieces picked up by the South Koreans, or will it be a "hard landing" in which Kim's regime implodes and chaos sweeps the land?

The consequences of a regime change in Pyongyang could be staggering. Immediately, U.S., South Korean and Chinese troops could charge into North Korea to secure its nuclear facilities —and confront each other. Midterm, reviving North Korea could cost South Korea, Japan, China, and the U.S. enormous sums. Long term, a reunited Korea would change the power balance of East Asia — but unpredictably.

Analysts everywhere point to a decade of hunger that has left 7-year-old North Korean children 8 inches shorter and 20 pounds lighter than their South Korean cousins. North Korean soldiers in a regime that gives priority to the military forces have been reduced to two skimpy meals a day. Factory workers nap on the floor for lack of food and energy.

That has led to conjecture that North Koreans, despite the pervasive controls in the Hermit Kingdom's police state, may throw caution to the winds. "We just don't think they can go along with this much longer," said an American official with access to intelligence assessments.

The Peterson Institute for International Economics in Washington reports that North Korea, after 10 years of food shortages, stands on the precipice of famine that could have political consequences. "The possibility of widespread social distress and even political instability," the institute said in a study, "cannot be ruled out."

Another study, from the non-partisan Congressional Research Service, says: "Dismal economic conditions also foster forces of discontent that potentially could turn against the Kim regime — especially if knowledge of the luxurious lifestyle of communist party leaders becomes better known or as poor economic performance hurts even the elite."

Even so, an assessment from Jane's, publisher of security reports, said five years ago: "The only significant power base that might challenge the regime is the military. Since Kim Jong Il became chairman of the National Defense Commission, however, he has promoted 230 generals. Most of the army's 1,200-strong general officer corps owe their allegiance to him." Nothing appears to have changed that judgment — except starvation.

Added to the pressures on the regime is the increasing isolation of Pyongyang. The six-party talks among North Korea, South Korea, China, Japan, Russia and the U.S., which are intended to persuade Kim to give up his nuclear ambitions, are stalled with no end in sight.

China and Russia no longer seem to have an ideological commitment to their fellow communists in North Korea and were clearly miffed when North Korea detonated a nuclear device in 2006. Japan has begun to negotiate warily with North Korea to get an accounting of the Japanese it kidnapped over a long period. Most sanctions remain in place. Seoul's contacts with North Korea slowed after, among other things, a North Korean soldier killed a South Korean woman taking an early morning walk on a beach near the North Korean resort she was visiting. Moreover, South Korean young people have shown less interest in reconciliation with North Korea than their parents and grandparents because of the cost.

For the U.S., officials of the Bush administration are going through the motions of negotiating with the North Koreans for an enforceable agreement under which Kim Jong Il would give up his nuclear weapons. In return, he would get a peace agreement replacing the truce that ended the Korean War of 1950-53, diplomatic relations with the U.S., and aid and trade benefits. But little real progress is in sight.

The opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympic Games, a political event if ever there was one, reflected power relations in East Asia. President Hu Jintao of China was the host, of course. U.S. President George Bush the 43rd was there along with his father, President George Bush the 41st. Premier Vladimir Putin represented Russia, Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda represented Japan and President Lee Myung-bak represented South Korea.

Kim Jong Il wasn't there.

Richard Halloran is a Honolulu-based journalist and former New York Times correspondent in Asia.

<http://www.honoluluadvertiser.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2008808170304>

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