



USAF COUNTERPROLIFERATION CENTER CPC OUTREACH JOURNAL

Maxwell AFB, Alabama

Issue No. 602, 17 December 2007

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New York Times
December 12, 2007

White House Is Confident Of Broad Support On Iran

By Steven Lee Myers and Thom Shanker

WASHINGTON — A week after American intelligence agencies reported that Iran halted work on a covert nuclear weapons program in 2003, the Bush administration expressed confidence on Tuesday that it had rallied international support to intensify diplomatic and economic pressure on Iran's government.

On a day that Iran's president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, called last week's assessment "a step forward," President Bush responded by demanding that Iran disclose its weapons program to international inspectors and end its continuing uranium-enrichment program. Iran has denied it ever had a military program, and has insisted that it is enriching uranium for civilian energy use.

"We believe Iran had a secret military weapons program," Mr. Bush said at the White House. "And Iran must explain to the world why they had a program."

After a week of conflicting statements, senior administration officials now increasingly express chagrin that last week's National Intelligence Estimate, a document representing the consensus views of 16 intelligence agencies, incorrectly focused on the suspension of a secret weapons program and not on the accelerated effort to enrich uranium. That undercut the administration's main rationale for confronting Iran, and left the administration seeking to regain the diplomatic initiative for continued sanctions.

Acknowledging this, administration officials said that a United Nations vote on new sanctions, originally scheduled for this month, would most likely be deferred until next year.

The chief American official in talks on Iran's nuclear program, Under Secretary of State R. Nicholas Burns, conferred by telephone on Tuesday with his counterparts from the four other permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and Germany to discuss a third resolution that would tighten sanctions on Iran's government.

The new sanctions, one official said, could include economic strictures and a ban on foreign travel by senior Iranian officials involved in the nuclear program or suspected of supporting terrorism. Such sanctions would be somewhat similar to those the United States unilaterally imposed on the Quds division of Iran's Republican Guard Corps, although apparently they would not go nearly as far.

The State Department's spokesman, Sean McCormack, said that the conference call would be followed soon by another "with an eye toward, in the next several weeks, in the coming weeks, having a final Security Council resolution that can be voted on."

Mr. McCormack added, "And what is very interesting about this is that we're not talking about whether or not there's going to be a resolution, but we're talking about what are the elements to a new Security Council resolution." Since the release of a declassified version of the assessment last week, the administration has scrambled to salvage a policy that sought a diplomatic solution to Iran's nuclear ambitions while preserving the option of military strikes, or at least the appearance of such an option.

At the Pentagon, civilian officials and military commanders have been reserved in their prescriptions, warning that force should be a last resort.

In interviews since the assessment was released, those officials said it undermined the efforts to restrain Iran diplomatically, raising the prospect of Iranian defiance and thus possibly worsening the standoff.

They expressed concern that a public perception was taking root that Iran had somehow been exonerated by the new assessment, a view Iran's president has embraced.

"If the Americans take two or three more steps, issues between the two countries would be resolved," Mr.

Ahmadinejad said in a news conference in Iran's capital, Tehran. He went on to say that those steps could consist of dropping the sanctions imposed by the first two rounds of Security Council resolutions.

The White House has made it clear that it would discuss lifting sanctions only if Iran suspended its enrichment program, which it has refused to do. At a briefing, Dana Perino, Mr. Bush's press secretary, called Mr. Ahmadinejad's remarks "fanciful thinking."

Israel's prime minister, Ehud Olmert, expressed support for Mr. Bush's efforts. At a conference of the Institute for National Security Studies in Tel Aviv, he said Iran continued "to attain two vital components to create nuclear weapons: the development of a sophisticated electrical system and ballistic missiles, while at the same time producing enriched uranium."

He added that Iran did not need "to act with frenzied haste to create enriched uranium — unless it wants to develop nuclear weapons."

Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, visiting Bahrain on Saturday, described the assessment as being "explicit that Iran is keeping its options open and could restart its nuclear weapons program at any time — I would add, if it has not done so already."

An administration official said that the new assessment was making its way through the government bureaucracies of Britain, France, Russia and China and predicted that it would ultimately bolster the case for more pressure on Iran.

President Bush spoke to President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia and President Hu Jintao of China last week to explain the new intelligence findings, based, officials have said, on intercepted notes and conversations among Iranian nuclear officials.

On Tuesday, Mr. Bush again pressed his argument that Iran's dissembling in its declarations with the International Atomic Energy Agency meant it could not be trusted to have a civilian program to enrich uranium.

"Iran is dangerous," he said, "and they'll be even more dangerous if they learn how to enrich uranium."

Mark Mazzetti contributed reporting from Washington, Nazila Fathi from Tehran, and Steven Erlanger from Jerusalem.

http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/12/washington/12prexy.html?_r=1&ref=washington&oref=slogin

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Los Angeles Times

December 12, 2007

Ahmadinejad Lowers The Volume

The Iranian leader, in his first news conference since a U.S. report concluded that Tehran had halted its nuclear weapons program, takes a conciliatory tone.

By Ramin Mostaghim and Borzou Daragahi, Special to The Times

TEHRAN —In his first formal news conference since a U.S. intelligence report last week undercut claims that Iran was secretly developing nuclear weapons, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad struck an unusually mild tone Tuesday, calling for dialogue with Washington and forgoing his usual anti-American and anti-Israeli rhetoric.

He also denied that Iran had resumed a secret nuclear weapons program, a claim made by an Iranian exile group, the Mujahedin Khalq, which has been listed as a terrorist organization by the U.S. State Department and the European Union. The group cited unidentified sources in Iran as saying the Islamic Republic had restarted its program in 2004. A U.S. National Intelligence Estimate released last week concludes that Iran halted its weapons program in 2003. Tehran denies ever having such a program.

Ahmadinejad initially gloated over the report as vindication for Iran, though it says his country continued to enrich uranium and that Iran easily could restart its weapons program. But at the two-hour news conference, Ahmadinejad described the report as "a positive and forward step" by the U.S. to ease tensions in the Middle East.

"We do hope there will be one or two steps forward so as to make a different atmosphere for finding solutions," he told reporters. "If further steps are taken, then our problems will be less complicated."

Despite the softened tone, Ahmadinejad said Iran would continue its uranium enrichment program in defiance of international standards. He predicted Iran would have the ability to run 50,000 high-speed centrifuges within five years. Iran has about 3,000 centrifuges, which if run continuously for a year could in theory produce enough highly enriched uranium for one nuclear bomb, though inspectors have not detected high levels of enrichment at Iran's facility in Natanz.

Many officials in Iran viewed the U.S. report as an olive branch, and some analysts have urged the Iranian leadership to take the opportunity to enhance ties or at least reopen channels of communication between Tehran and Washington. The two nations have had a hostile relationship since the 1979 revolution in Iran.

U.S. and Iranian officials are scheduled to meet in Baghdad on Dec. 18 for the fourth round of talks over securing Iraq. Such meetings have usually been preceded by chest-thumping and accusations on both sides. But at Tuesday's news conference, his eighth since taking office in 2005, Ahmadinejad expressed confidence that the meetings would eventually produce positive results for bolstering security in Iraq.

Regardless of what the U.S. report concludes, Iran still faces the prospect of a third round of international sanctions over its enrichment of uranium. A team of International Atomic Energy Agency experts arrived in Tehran on Sunday in an attempt to clear up lingering questions over the country's nuclear program. Iran insists its goal is to generate electricity, but the West suspects the effort is a cornerstone for an eventual weapons program.

Iran's nuclear program and political and material support for armed groups fighting Israel have brought Tehran under heightened international scrutiny. Ahmadinejad and his circle also have come under enormous pressure from multiple quarters within Iran's fractured political class.

On Monday, influential lawmaker Ahmad Tavakoli criticized Ahmadinejad for gloating over the U.S. report, which Tavakoli said contains many allegations that cast Iran in a negative light.

"By expressing happiness we may increase the credibility of these kinds of reports," said Tavakoli, a former ally of Ahmadinejad. "In the future, they may release some reports which will have more credibility and are against the Islamic Republic of Iran."

Former President Mohammad Khatami, who tried unsuccessfully to liberalize Iran's Islamic system, told students at Chamran University on Tuesday that people should not be "Islamicized by force," a criticism of Ahmadinejad's hard-line social policies.

Witnesses said students chanted, "Death to despotism!" Hundreds of students demonstrating at Tehran University on Sunday burst through the campus gates, chanting, "Ahmadi-Pinochet, Iran will not be Chile!" before they were dispersed by riot police.

Rival conservative, moderate and reformist Iranian political factions see Ahmadinejad and his loyalists as vulnerable in upcoming March parliamentary elections, primarily because of his administration's failure to curb inflation, create jobs or draw foreign investment.

Although he confidently answered questions about Iran's nuclear program, the security situation in Iraq and his country's opposition to Israel, Ahmadinejad brushed aside a question about the reason for recent increases in the price of dairy products and other foods.

"In the near future," he said, "I will explain it in a press conference to the people."

Mostaghim is a special correspondent and Daragahi a Times staff writer.

http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-iran12dec12,1,2018107_story?coll=la-headlines-world

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Seattle Post-Intelligencer
December 13, 2007

Rice Holds To Iran, N. Korea As Nuclear 'Dangers'

By Anne Gearan, Associated Press

WASHINGTON -- North Korea and Iran have a long way to go to get off the Bush administration's list of nuclear threats, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said Wednesday.

In light of last week's retrenchment of U.S. claims that Iran is now seeking an atomic weapon and word of new diplomatic and cultural outreach to North Korea, Rice was asked whether the United States still considers those nations part of President Bush's post-Sept. 11 "axis of evil."

"They are clearly still states about which there are significant proliferation concerns," Rice said during an interview at her State Department office. "It would be very irresponsible not to deal with those dangers."

During the wide-ranging interview, Rice took responsibility for the Blackwater Worldwide debacle. "Of course, anything that happens in this department, I'm ultimately responsible," she said.

She would not comment on the specifics of the September killing of 17 Iraqi civilians by private Blackwater security guards working for the State Department.

Rice said she believed her staff and the Pentagon had developed adequate rules for contractors to prevent a repeat of the incident, which led the department's diplomatic security chief to resign.

The top U.S. diplomat also said a rocky first session for Israeli and Palestinian peace negotiators on Wednesday was to be expected.

"Both parties are committed to moving this forward and they will move this forward," Rice said of the U.S.-backed effort to negotiate a Palestinian state by the end of 2008.

She condemned Wednesday's assassination of a senior Lebanese military figure. She said she spoke to Lebanon's U.S.-backed prime minister, Fuad Saniora, whose government has been paralyzed for months by a bitter political split.

On North Korea, Rice was cautious. She spoke a day after the New York Philharmonic announced it would play a concert in the North Korean capital and a week after word of a personal letter being sent from Bush to the leader of the communist nation, Kim Jong Il.

"This is not a regime that the United States is prepared to engage broadly" until the North has completely scrapped its nuclear weapons program, Rice said.

The closed, secretive country exploded a nuclear device last year but agreed months later to accept economic and energy incentives if it gave up its weapons.

Iran is an obstacle throughout much of the administration's foreign policy, and the U.S. claim that the government is trying to build a bomb has been an organizing principle.

In a reassessment, U.S. intelligence agencies last week said Iran once had a weapons program but shelved it four years ago.

Rice brushed aside Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's suggestion that the findings of the National Intelligence Estimate, or NIE, could open better relations with the United States.

She said Tehran still needs to account for its past secret nuclear weapons activities and stop nuclear development that alarmed the West.

Iran says its program is meant to produce civilian nuclear energy.

http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/national/343322_rice13.html

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Washington Post
December 13, 2007
Pg. 35

Misreading The Iran Report

Why Spying and Policymaking Don't Mix

By Henry Kissinger

The extraordinary spectacle of the president's national security adviser obliged to defend the president's Iran policy against a National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) raises two core issues: How are we now to judge the nuclear threat posed by Iran? How are we to judge the intelligence community's relationship with the White House and the rest of the government?

The "Key Judgments" released by the intelligence community last week begin with a dramatic assertion: "We judge with high confidence that in fall 2003, Tehran halted its nuclear weapons program." This sentence was widely interpreted as a challenge to the Bush administration policy of mobilizing international pressure against alleged Iranian nuclear programs. It was, in fact, qualified by a footnote whose complex phraseology obfuscated that the suspension really applied to only one aspect of the Iranian nuclear weapons program (and not even the most significant one): the construction of warheads. That qualification was not restated in the rest of the document, which continued to refer to the "halt of the weapons program" repeatedly and without qualification.

The reality is that the concern about Iranian nuclear weapons has had three components: the production of fissile material, the development of missiles and the building of warheads. Heretofore, production of fissile material has been treated as by far the greatest danger, and the pace of Iranian production of fissile material has accelerated since 2006. So has the development of missiles of increasing range. What appears to have been suspended is the engineering aimed at the production of warheads.

The NIE holds that Iran may be able to produce enough highly enriched uranium for a nuclear weapon by the end of 2009 and, with increasing confidence, more warheads by the period 2010 to 2015. That is virtually the same timeline as was suggested in the 2005 National Intelligence Estimate. The new estimate does not assess how long it would take to build a warhead, though it treats the availability of fissile material as the principal limiting factor. If there is a significant gap between these two processes, it would be important to be told what it is. Nor are we told how close to developing a warhead Tehran was when it suspended its program or how confident the intelligence community is in its ability to learn when work on warheads has resumed. On the latter point, the new estimate expresses only "moderate" confidence that the suspension has not been lifted already.

It is therefore doubtful that the evidence supports the dramatic language of the summary and, even less so, the broad conclusions drawn in much of the public commentary. For the past three years, the international debate has concentrated on the Iranian effort to enrich uranium by centrifuges, some 3,000 of which are now in operation. The administration has asserted that this represents a decisive step toward Iranian acquisition of nuclear weapons and has urged a policy of maximum pressure. Every permanent member of the U.N. Security Council has supported the request that Iran suspend its uranium enrichment program; the various countries differ on the urgency with which their recommendations should be pressed and in their willingness to impose penalties.

The NIE then highlights, without altering, the underlying issue: At what point would the nations that have described an Iranian military nuclear program as "unacceptable" agree to act on that conviction? Do they wait until Iran starts producing nuclear warheads? Does our intelligence assume that we will know this threshold? Is there then enough time for meaningful countermeasures? What happens to the growing stock of fissile material that, according to the estimate, will have been accumulated? Do we run the risk of finding ourselves with an adversary that, in the end, agrees to stop further production of fissile material but insists on retaining the existing stockpile as a potential threat?

By stating a conclusion in such categorical terms -- considered excessive even by the International Atomic Energy Agency -- the Key Judgments blur the line between estimates and conjecture. For example, the document says: "We judge with high confidence that the halt . . . was directed primarily in response to increasing international scrutiny and pressure resulting from exposure of Iran's previously undeclared nuclear work." It extrapolates from that judgment that Iran "is less determined to develop nuclear weapons than we have been judging since 2005" and that it "may be more vulnerable to influence on the issue than we judged previously."

It is to be hoped that the full estimate provides more comprehensive evidence for these conclusions. A more plausible alternative explanation would assign greater significance to the regional context and American actions. When Iran halted its weapons program and suspended efforts at enriching uranium in February 2003, America had already occupied Afghanistan and was on the verge of invading Iraq, both of which border Iran. The United States justified its Iraq policy by the need to remove weapons of mass destruction from the region. By the fall of 2003, when Iran voluntarily joined the Additional Protocol for Nuclear Non-Proliferation, Saddam Hussein had just been overthrown. Is it unreasonable to assume that the ayatollahs concluded that restraint had become imperative? By the fall of 2005, the American effort in Iraq showed signs of bogging down; the prospects for extending the enterprise into Iran were diminishing. Iranian leaders could have felt free to return to their policy of building up a military nuclear capability -- perhaps reinforced by the desire to create a deterrent to American regional aspirations. They might also have concluded, because the secret effort had leaked, that it would be too dangerous to undertake another covert program. Hence the emphasis on renewing the enrichment program in the guise of a civilian energy program. In short, if my analysis is correct, we could be witnessing not a halt of the Iranian weapons program -- as the NIE asserts -- but a subtle, ultimately more dangerous, version of it that will phase in the warhead when fissile material production has matured.

The NIE does not so much reject this theory; it does not even examine it. It concludes that "Tehran's decisions are guided by a cost-benefit approach rather than a rush to a weapon." But a cost-benefit analysis does not exclude a

rush to weapons on a systematic basis. It depends on the criteria by which costs and benefits are determined. Similarly, in pursuing the cost-benefit rationale, the estimate concludes that a combination of international scrutiny along with security guarantees might "prompt Tehran to extend the current halt to its nuclear weapons program." That is a policy, not an intelligence, judgment.

A coherent strategy toward Iran is not a partisan issue, for it will have to be implemented well after the present administration has left office. I have long argued that America owes it to itself to explore fully the possibility of normalizing relations with Iran. We do not need to tranquilize ourselves to the danger in order to pursue a more peaceful world. What is required is a specific vision linking assurances for Iran's security and respect for its identity with an Iranian foreign policy compatible with the existing order in the Middle East. But it must also generate an analysis of the strategy to be pursued should Iran, in the end, choose ideology over reconciliation.

The intelligence community has a major role in helping to design such a vision. But it must recognize that the more it ventures into policy conjecture, the less authoritative its judgments become. There was some merit in the way President Richard Nixon conducted National Security Council discussions at the beginning of his first term. He invited the CIA director to brief on the capabilities and intentions of the countries under discussion but required him to leave the room during policy deliberations. Because so many decisions require an intelligence input, this procedure proved unworkable.

I have often defended the dedicated members of the intelligence community. This is why I am extremely concerned about the tendency of the intelligence community to turn itself into a kind of check on, instead of a part of, the executive branch. When intelligence personnel expect their work to become the subject of public debate, they are tempted into the roles of surrogate policymakers and advocates. Thus the deputy director for intelligence estimates explained the release of the NIE as follows: Publication was chosen because the estimate conflicted with public statements by top U.S. officials about Iran, and "we felt it was important to release this information to ensure that an accurate presentation is available." That may explain releasing the facts but not the sources and methods that have been flooding the media. The paradoxical result of the trend toward public advocacy is to draw intelligence personnel more deeply than ever into the public maelstrom.

The executive branch and the intelligence community have gone through a rough period. The White House has been accused of politicizing intelligence; the intelligence community has been charged with promoting institutional policy biases. The Key Judgments document accelerates that controversy, dismaying friends and confusing adversaries. Intelligence personnel need to return to their traditional anonymity. Policymakers and Congress should once again assume responsibility for their judgments without involving intelligence in their public justifications. To define the proper balance between the user and producer of intelligence is a task that cannot be accomplished at the end of an administration. It is, however, one of the most urgent challenges a newly elected president will face.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/12/12/AR2007121202331.html>

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Washington Times
December 14, 2007
Pg. 7

Inside The Ring

By Bill Gertz

NIE and missile shield

Senior Pentagon officials said privately this week that the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Iran undermined efforts to conclude agreements with Poland and Czech Republic for a third missile-defense site in those nations and also bolstered opposition of the plan, namely the Russian government and left-wing anti-defense groups in Europe.

Publicly, senior Defense Department leaders say the intelligence community's reversal on Iran's nuclear program does not lessen the threat of Tehran's missiles and the need for the 10-interceptor anti-missile site in Poland and radar in Czech Republic.

However, Congress already moved to limit funding for the missile-defense interceptor base and radar until agreements are reached with the governments in Warsaw and Prague.

Air Force Lt. Gen. Henry A. Obering, head of the Pentagon's Missile Defense Agency (MDA), said his agency is committed to going ahead with a third missile-defense site in Europe despite the recent release of the NIE on Iran's nuclear program that said Tehran probably halted its arms program in 2003.

"Iran did have a nuclear-weapons program that they kept hidden for years, and that they're keeping their options open — continuing their nuclear enrichment program which could restart their nuclear weapons program at any time," Gen. Obering told The Washington Times.

"More importantly for MDA, Iran continues significant investment in the development and testing of a robust ballistic missile program," Gen. Obering said. "They are, in fact, continuing to develop ballistic missiles of ever-increasing ranges which already could threaten our European allies.

"Our plans for deployment of up to 10 interceptor missiles and a radar in Europe will move forward," he said. "Our objective continues to be the ability to intercept and destroy a ballistic missile warhead before it can strike a target in Europe or the U.S., regardless of its payload."

Pentagon press secretary Geoff Morrell said the NIE did not address Iran's missile program, but "we were recently reminded of the threat posed by that program when Tehran tested a missile capable of hitting targets up to 2,000 kilometers away."

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20071214/NATION04/112140088/1008>

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Washington Post
December 14, 2007
Pg. 34

Nuclear Pact Extended

The United States and Kazakhstan on Thursday announced a seven-year extension of the agreement for combating the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Kazakhstan renounced nuclear weapons after the collapse of the Soviet Union; the new extension will continue efforts to secure nuclear materials and biological pathogens.

The agreement was hailed by former senator Sam Nunn (D-Ga.) and Sen. Richard G. Lugar (R-Ind.), who co-sponsored the Cooperative Threat Reduction program that has been used since 1992 to counter proliferation threats and clean up the legacy of the Cold War in the former Soviet Union and beyond.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/12/13/AR2007121302098.html>

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New York Times
December 15, 2007
Pg. 8

North Korea Replies To Bush With An Offer And A Condition

By Helene Cooper

WASHINGTON — Responding to a recent letter from President Bush, North Korea agreed on Friday to follow through on its pledge to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula, provided the United States reciprocates by normalizing relations between the countries.

President Bush said Friday that his initial letter, which was delivered by Assistant Secretary of State Christopher R. Hill to the North Korean leader, Kim Jong-il, on Dec. 5, achieved its purpose.

"I got his attention with a letter and he can get my attention by fully disclosing his programs, including any plutonium he may have processed and converted some of that into whatever he's used it for. We just need to know," Mr. Bush told reporters in the Rose Garden after a cabinet meeting. "As well, he can get our attention by fully disclosing his proliferation activities."

North Korea agreed in October to dismantle all of its nuclear facilities and to disclose all of its past and present nuclear programs by the end of the year in return for 950,000 metric tons of fuel oil or its equivalent in economic aid.

That agreement has come under fierce criticism from national security hawks, in part because it does not require North Korea to turn over its existing stockpiles of weapons-grade plutonium and any nuclear warheads it may already have produced. But many foreign policy experts point to it as a rare diplomatic success for President Bush in a period that has been dominated by frustration in Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Middle East.

"An important step is a full declaration of programs, materials that may have been developed to create weapons, as well as the proliferation activities of the regime," Mr. Bush said.

A White House official said that Mr. Kim's response was delivered to State Department officials through an intermediary, North Korea's representative to the United Nations. The official said that the reply contained a pledge that the North would follow through on its promise as long as the United States held to its end of the bargain.

The proliferation issue has taken on new importance after an Israeli strike in Syria in September, which administration and Israeli officials say was conducted against a nuclear-related facility near the Euphrates River that

was supplied with material from North Korea. Administration officials want North Korea to disclose whatever help it may have given Syria, although they note that the help for Syria predated the North's agreement to dismantle its nuclear reactor and disclose its nuclear programs.

The exchange between Mr. Bush and Mr. Kim is a huge leap from the veritable cold war that prevailed throughout most of the Bush administration. In 2002, during a meeting with Republican senators, Mr. Bush compared Mr. Kim to a "spoiled child at a dinner table," according to news reports at the time.

http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/15/washington/15korea.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

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Washington Times
December 15, 2007
Pg. 5

Musharraf Tightens Control Over Nukes

By Combined Dispatches

Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf yesterday brought the country's nuclear weapons under the control of the president, rather than the prime minister, a day before he was scheduled to lift a six-week-old state of emergency. Mr. Musharraf also made last-minute changes to the constitution yesterday, cementing the powers he assumed under the emergency rule imposed Nov. 3.

The nuclear weapons program in Pakistan is managed by the National Command Authority. Under a 2000 law, the head of government, meaning the prime minister, has command over it. Mr. Musharraf yesterday changed the control over it through an ordinance — which will have to be ratified by parliament in six months — putting the president in command.

His move comes amid concern in the West that Pakistan's nuclear arsenal could fall into the hands of Islamist terrorists.

The military yesterday again rejected such concerns, saying the safety of its atomic arsenal was "foolproof."

Pakistan confirmed last month that the U.S. was helping ensure the security of its atomic weapons.

Mr. Musharraf issued a constitutional amendment order late yesterday which exempted him from getting parliamentary ratification for imposition of the emergency rule, Attorney General Malik Mohammad Qayyum told Agence France-Presse.

"The amendments relate to presidential election procedure, others are related to establishment of Islamabad High Court, oath of judges and pension benefits to judges who refused to take oath," Mr. Qayyum said.

Soon after declaring emergency, Mr. Musharraf fired the Supreme Court justices critical of him, and replaced them with his choice of judges, who immediately approved his re-election as president.

This is the second time Mr. Musharraf has amended the constitution since he imposed emergency rule.

On Nov. 21, he issued the first order to amend the constitution to stipulate that imposition of emergency "is declared to have been validly made" and "shall not be called in question in any court or forum on any ground whatsoever."

All other decisions made in relation to emergency rule "shall ... be deemed to be and always to have been validly made," added the earlier order.

Mr. Musharraf will address the nation live on TV and radio today after lifting the emergency rule, his spokesman said.

Critics say that with only three weeks left to campaign for parliamentary elections, and dozens of those arrested still in detention, the lifting of the emergency rule will make little practical difference.

Mr. Musharraf drew international criticism for imposing a state of emergency as he faced several legal challenges to his October re-election. Thousands of people have been put in jail since emergency rule was imposed.

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/article/20071215/FOREIGN/112150028/1003/foreign>

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Chicago Tribune
December 14, 2007

Don't Trust Nuke Sneaks

U.S. report says Iran isn't building a bomb, but don't put stock in that assessment

By Victor Davis Hanson

Last week's U.S. National Intelligence Estimate states, with "high confidence," that Iran quit trying to get a nuclear bomb in late 2003. That's exactly the opposite of what the NIE reported just two years ago, when it claimed Iran's ruling mullahs were still developing nuclear weapons.

The reaction here at home to the new NIE was a good deal clearer than the often mealy-mouthed wording of the report. By an overwhelming margin, according to a Rasmussen poll conducted after the new NIE report's findings were made public, Americans don't buy that Iran has quit trying to go nuclear.

They may be wiser than the intelligence minds who put together the new NIE. After all, oil-rich Iran continues to enrich uranium even though it doesn't need new sources of energy. This enriched uranium can be used as terrorist dirty bombs or diverted to nuclear weapons rather quickly.

So isn't it a lose/lose situation if Iran still could be working toward being able to develop a bomb while our own intelligence services have now assured the world that that's not the case?

Yes--but the full answer is more complex, because the world itself has changed since the 2005 NIE even more than the unreliable opinions of our intelligence services have.

Two years ago, the growing furor over the Iraqi war had created the conventional wisdom that Iran had come out the real "winner." Tehran's arch-enemy, Saddam Hussein, had been removed. And Iran was able to tie down the U.S. in Iraq through its Shiite terrorist proxies.

Meanwhile, with the U.S. busy in Iraq and the West split (former allies like France and Germany damned almost everything the U.S. did in the Middle East), Iran's ruling mullahs got a pass to cause more trouble in Gaza and Lebanon with subsidies to Hezbollah and Hamas.

But that was then. With Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's election as president of Iran in August 2005, the United States was given a public relations bonanza. We no longer had to warn the world that the largely silent mullahs in Iran were unstable and dangerous. Loud-mouthed Ahmadinejad did all that and more for us.

When he bragged that a mesmerized UN audience couldn't blink when he spoke, or that Israel should disappear from the map, the rest of the world on its own concluded that he was either outright crazy or scary--or both.

There are now pro-American governments in France and Germany. Both are terrified about Iran. That's understandable since both--unlike us-- could soon very well be in range of Iran's newest North Korean-made missiles.

Meanwhile, Iran's other interests in the Middle East have taken a hit. Hezbollah is still clearing out the mess from the 2006 Lebanon war; that will cost its Iranian patron billions in war reconstruction aid. Israel has proved that it can take out Syrian weapons facilities with ease; its recent raid of a suspected nuclear plant won the quiet applause of almost everyone in the Middle East.

Iraq is quieting down. The country's Shiite majority in the democratic government is increasingly acting a little more like nationalists than lackeys of Iran.

And the entire Sunni Arab Middle East is lining up against Iran, scared stiff that its traditional rival may still go nuclear and shake them down for either tribute or cuts in oil production.

Internally, Iran gets worse each year. It spent billions on subsidies for terrorists and a pricey nuclear bomb plant that its people will now hear was shut down. And Iranians still can't figure out why gas is rationed when the country's oil earns \$90 a barrel.

As the increasingly isolated Iranian economy tanks and the country becomes an international embarrassment, demonstrations against the government continue. At one last week at the University of Tehran, a sign blared out "Live free or die" -- the motto of New Hampshire.

What are we to make of this mixed-up picture of Iran and its nuclear program?

With the new intelligence assessment, our allies got, and did not get, their wishes. There will probably be no American pre-emption against Iranian nuclear sites and, unfortunately, less American strong-arming for more sanctions on an Iran that seems to have been already reeling under the pressure.

But there will also be for our allies the growing nightmare that a sneaky Iran could now think it is free to race to the nuclear finish line -- something that will endanger them far more than us.

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Washington Times
December 16, 2007
Pg. B3

Promises, Promises

By Richard Halloran

Once again, rosy optimism billows out of the Korean Peninsula. And once again the rest of the world might remember that atop the regime in Pyongyang sit world-class thugs who have repeatedly refused to abide by their agreements.

President Bush started the latest surge of hope two weeks ago with a personal letter to North Korean leader Kim Jong-il, urging him in polite but firm terms to keep his pledge to abandon his nuclear weapons. Six years ago, Mr. Bush made Mr. Kim a charter member of the "axis of evil."

Then the New York Philharmonic accepted North Korea's invitation, with the blessings of the State Department, to give a concert in the North Korean capital of Pyongyang in February. To ensure the orchestra was prepared, the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) has posted on its Web site the full score, from piccolo to bassi, of the North's national anthem.

And for the first time since the end of the Korean War in 1953, a South Korean cargo train chugged into North Korea last week headed for the joint North-South Korean Kaesong industrial complex. Unification Minister Lee Jae Jeong was onboard as a representative of the Seoul government.

And Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill has asserted North Korea has been dismantling its nuclear reactor at Yongbong even if it is not yet ready to account for the rest of its nuclear program. U.S. officials, however, have neglected to point out that experts who have seen the reactor said it was falling apart and nearly useless.

Amid this mostly upbeat news, people outside of Korea might recall a South Korean diplomat named Lee Bum Suk. In autumn 1972, Lee was among those who escorted a visiting North Korean delegation around Seoul. It was the first such journey since the Korean War and included a stroll through the Secret Garden that once was the joy of Korean kings.

In autumn 1983, Lee, then Seoul's foreign minister, was murdered along with 16 other South Korean dignitaries by North Korean terrorists who exploded a bomb among them during a trip to Burma. In charge of such operations then was Kim Jong-il, who is now the North Korean leader.

In addition, North Korea tried to assassinate South Korean President Park Chung Hee in 1968 and again in 1974, when an assailant missed the president but gunned down his wife, Yook Young Soo. The nonpartisan Congressional Research Service reported recently that North Korea sent 3,693 armed agents into South Korea from 1954 to 1992 and had continued intermittent incursions and kidnappings since.

Today, clues to current North Korean thinking abound. The reaction to Mr. Bush's letter to Mr. Kim was distinctly underwhelming. It rated all of two sentences in a KCNA dispatch, far less than its report on Mr. Kim's inspection of a cotton plantation.

At the same time, KCNA published a blistering attack on the United States, lamenting that the Bush administration had manifested "extreme hostility toward the DPRK," or Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea, the formal name for North Korea.

KCNA asserted that North Korea was acquiring nuclear weapons, despite the difficulties in doing so, "to cope with the U.S.' continued hostile policy toward the DPRK." The official organ declared: "The DPRK can never abandon its nuclear program unless the U.S. rolls back its hostile policy toward the DPRK."

In another dispatch last week, KCNA contended that the port call of an unnamed U.S. nuclear-powered submarine in Pusan, South Korea, was "a reckless criminal act of chilling the denuclearization process in the Korean Peninsula and driving the situation into the brink of war."

All this, KCNA concluded, "convinces the DPRK that there is no other option but to increase the military capabilities for self-defense in every way." The news agency, widely considered to reflect the thinking of Kim Jong-il closely, occasionally expresses contempt for the West, particularly its democracy. It claimed last week that much-touted freedom and democracy "are nothing but camouflage to hoodwink working masses and cover up the reactionary nature of bourgeois dictatorship."

An authority on North Korea, Aidan Foster-Carter of the University of Leeds in Britain, has said periods of optimism about North Korea are but "false dawns." He has argued: "Again and again, we start over with North Korea without asking what went wrong the last time or how come we never get past first base."

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