



USAF Center for Unconventional Weapons Studies (CUWS) Outreach Journal

Issue No. 1150, 30 January 2015

Welcome to the CUWS Outreach Journal! As part of the CUWS' mission to develop Air Force, DoD, and other USG leaders to advance the state of knowledge, policy, and practices within strategic defense issues involving nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons, we offer the government and civilian community a source of contemporary discussions on unconventional weapons. These discussions include news articles, papers, and other information sources that address issues pertinent to the U.S. national security community. It is our hope that this information resource will help enhance the overall awareness of these important national security issues and lead to the further discussion of options for dealing with the potential use of unconventional weapons. **All of our past journals are now available at http://cpc.au.af.mil/au_outreach.aspx.**

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FEATURE ITEM: "Red China's "Capitalist Bomb": Inside the Chinese Neutron Bomb Program". Authored by Jonathan Ray; published by National Defense University Press, Washington, D.C., January 2015, 62 pages.

<http://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/stratperspective/china/ChinaPerspectives-8.pdf>

This paper examines why China developed an enhanced radiation weapon (ERW) but did not deploy it. ERWs, better known as "neutron bombs," are specialized nuclear weapons with reduced blast effects and enhanced radiation, making them ideal tactical and antipersonnel weapons. Declassified U.S. intelligence and Chinese press reports indicate the People's Republic of China (PRC) was interested in an ERW in 1977 and successfully tested a device on September 29, 1988. To date, however, these sources provide no evidence of deployment. This study exploits primary source documents to reconstruct the ERW program's history, assesses drivers behind decisions throughout the program, and considers broader implications for PRC decisionmaking on weapons development. This case study suggests a model of a "technology reserve" in which China develops a weapons technology to match the capabilities of another state but defers deployment. This paper presents an analytic framework for examining how the technology reserve model might apply to China's decisionmaking on ballistic missile defense (BMD), antisatellite (ASAT), and hypersonic glide vehicle (HGV) systems.

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IHS Jane's 360 – London, U.K.

USAF Wants to Dodge Latest Air Defences with Bomber's New Secret Weapon

- *The proliferation of advanced air defences provided the impetus behind the design of the new LRSO missile.*
- *The USAF has completed its AoA and is now waiting on civilian leaders to allow the acquisition to begin.*

By Marina Malenic, Washington, DC - *IHS Jane's Defence Weekly*

27 January 2015

Maintaining the shroud of secrecy surrounding the US Air Force's (USAF's) new Long-Range Strike Bomber (LRS-B), the general in charge of the USAF's nuclear forces would only tell reporters that advances in air defence technology drove the development of the Long-Range Standoff (LRSO) cruise missile being designed to arm the US bomber fleet.



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"As we look around the world, air defences are getting more and more sophisticated as technology improves," said Lieutenant General Stephen Wilson. "We'll need a missile that can penetrate more sophisticated air defences."

He added that a conventional variant of the LRSO would be built after a nuclear-tipped missile is first developed.

The general said the USAF has completed its analysis of alternatives (AoA) and is now waiting on senior Pentagon leadership to allow the acquisition effort to proceed.

"We've finished the analysis of alternatives except for the Office of the Secretary of Defense coming forward, but we are proceeding on track," he said. "We're proceeding with an LRSO, working on the phasing and the timing and the funding for that going forward."

The USAF studied "a variety of options - different capabilities, different speeds, lots of different options", he added. "We narrowed our focus to what we currently have. Beyond that, I can't get into specifics."

In December 2012, the Pentagon announced plans to issue separate contracts to Boeing, Raytheon, Lockheed Martin, and Northrop Grumman for the technology development (TD) phase of the LRSO programme. A request for information released just ahead of that announcement contained no details about whether the USAF was seeking a subsonic, a supersonic, or even a hypersonic weapon.

Only a small amount of information about what the USAF is seeking in an LRSO missile is in the public domain.

Testifying before the Senate Armed Services strategic forces subcommittee in 2012, Lt Gen Wilson's predecessor described the LRSO as a stealth cruise missile. He was earlier on the record as saying that the weapon's range would be longer than the 500 n mile (c.900 km) range of the Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile Extended-Range (JASSM-ER) and "closer to the current air-launched cruise missile [ALCM] range". The maximum range of the legacy nuclear-armed AGM-86B ALCM is 2,500 km. The maximum range of the conventionally armed AGM-86C and D models is 1,200 km.

The warhead for the nuclear-tipped LRSO is also unknown.

The US National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) and the USAF have asked Sandia National Laboratories and the Los Alamos and Lawrence Livermore National Laboratories to examine three existing nuclear warheads for possible use in the LRSO missile: the B61-12 (a nuclear bomb intended to replace four current but ageing B61 variants), the W84 (originally used on the now-retired BGM-109G Ground Launched Cruise Missile), and the W80 (currently used on the nuclear-armed version of the AGM-86).

COMMENT

The USAF's top brass have been vocal in defending the LRS-B from attacks on both the cost and capabilities fronts. But while air force procurement officials have spoken openly about the methods employed to keep the programme's price in check, the generals have been tight-lipped about the capability the country is getting in exchange for what will still likely be a hefty expenditure despite careful planning.

The USAF's assistant chief of staff for strategic deterrence and nuclear integration recently admonished critics of the programme to wait until details of the technology are revealed before passing judgment on it.

However, that notion cuts both ways when the Pentagon chooses to release no information about one of its costliest weapon acquisitions. The lack of information about the programme has inspired scepticism in many who might otherwise be supportive of the effort to upgrade the Pentagon's Cold War-era nuclear arsenal.

<http://www.janes.com/article/48385/usaf-wants-to-dodge-latest-air-defences-with-bomber-s-new-secret-weapon>

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The Daily Beast – New York City, NY

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\$348 Billion in Nukes Ain't Enough. The Air Force Wants New ICBMs, Too.

Even the defense secretary thinks new nuclear missiles are a waste. That's not stopping the Air Force from getting ready to build an updated ICBM.

By Dave Majumdar
January 28, 2015

The Pentagon is embarking on an ambitious new plan to develop and build a next generation nuclear-tipped intercontinental ballistic missile. But experts question if the U.S. military really needs to spend billions of dollars on a new missile when the service's current Minuteman III could easily be refurbished and used for decades to come.

Moreover, there are serious questions about whether the U.S. even needs a land-based ICBM—especially when the Congressional Budget Office is projecting that the American taxpayer is on the hook for at least \$348 billion over the ten years to pay for its range of air-, sea-, and land-based nuclear weapons.

A number of experts—including Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel—have written that land-based ICBMs are only really useful against single foe: Russia. But there are other nuclear adversaries on the horizon, including China, North Korea, and even Iran. Against them, Hagel and others have written, such weapons would be largely ineffective because they would have to overfly Russian airspace.

“The Government is preparing to acquire a replacement for the MM III [Minuteman III] intercontinental ballistic missile system that replaces the entire flight system,” reads an Air Force document of posted on the Federal Business Opportunities website on Jan. 23. “The new weapon system will use the existing Mk12A and Mk21 Reentry Vehicles (RV) in the single and multiple RV configurations. The remainder of the missile stack will be replaced.”

But arms control advocates say that the Pentagon is looking for something it doesn't need. “There is no need to build a new ICBM,” Kingston Reif, director for disarmament and threat reduction policy at the Arms Control Association, told The Daily Beast. “RAND did a report last year showing that the United States can maintain the ICBM leg of the [nuclear] triad [of bombers, ballistic missile submarines and land-based missiles] for decades to come by simply pursuing refurbishment,” Reif said. “That would be much cheaper.”

The counter argument is that though the Minuteman III has been refurbished many times, the older the weapon gets, the harder and more difficult it is to maintain. That means that the Pentagon would have to spend ever increasing sums of money to keep the 40-year-old Minuteman III viable. The Air Force wants to field the new ICBM “in the 2027 timeframe” due to Minuteman's rocket and guidance ageing-out and not having enough spare missiles lying around.

Yet the missiles aren't quite the creaky old machines they appear to be. In recent years, the missiles' engines, guidance systems, and other parts have been replaced.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, it costs about \$2.6 billion per year to maintain the ICBM force. That sounds like a lot—it is a lot—but it's a relative pittance, compared to the cash needed to maintain the other legs of the nuclear triad. And building replacements from scratch could cost much more. Further, the Pentagon could save a lot of money by reducing the number of existing ballistic missiles. “The ICBM force is the least important leg of the triad,” Reif said.

The Air Force's ICBM force is largely designed to be a sponge to absorb part of a massive hypothetical Cold War-style Soviet nuclear attack. “An adversary would have to fire hundreds, if not thousands, of missiles to eliminate that leg of the triad,” Reif said. The only potential adversary capable of doing so is Russia—China only has about 100 missiles that are able to hit U.S. territory.

A 2012 report co-authored by Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel, among others, made a similar argument, that land-based ICBMs are only useful against Russia. That is because to hit other potential targets like China, Iran and North Korea, the missiles would have to overfly Russia.

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"ICBMs can only support nuclear wartime operations against Russia because current-generation ICBMs fired from the existing three bases on their minimum energy trajectories have to overfly Russia and China to reach targets in potentially adversarial third countries (e.g., Iran, North Korea), and fly dangerously close to Russia to reach Syria," reads the 2012 Global Zero U.S. Nuclear Policy Commission Report. "U.S. ICBMs would also have to overfly Russia to reach targets in China."

Therefore, Reif noted, ICBMs are inherently inflexible weapons that are of limited utility. But getting rid of them is extremely controversial, even if they are more or less costly white elephants.

Mark Gunzinger, an analyst at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments and former Air Force B-52 pilot, disagreed. He told *The Daily Beast* that maintain a nuclear triad of bombers, missile submarines and ICBMs is necessary. "Without a land-based ICBM, we would be in a situation where an enemy would only need to strike a very small number of targets to greatly diminish our strategic deterrence posture," he said. "We have three bases for nuclear-capable bombers and two bases for SSBNs [ballistic missile submarines]. SSBNs at sea during an unannounced, 'bolt from the blue' nuclear strike would be secure, but the entire boomer fleet is not at sea during peacetime."

But even if an enemy nuclear first strike eliminated the bomber and submarine bases, there are a number of *Ohio*-class ballistic missile submarines at sea at all times. Those submarines can carry up to 24 Trident D5 submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM) each carrying multiple warheads. Those submarines would be able to launch a devastating counter-attack on any enemy or combination of enemies. "That would ruin anyone's day," Reif said.

The U.S. Navy is already planning on shelling out over \$100 billion to develop and build a new fleet of ballistic missile submarines. While the Navy is refurbishing its fleet of Trident IIs nuclear missiles, it is, for now, deferring the construction of new ones; part of the reasoning for that is the exorbitant cost of the weapons, Reif said. The Navy is already fretting over how the bill for those submarines will impact the rest of its fleet.

Meanwhile the Air Force has embarked on a project to build a new extremely stealthy Long-Range Strike Bomber and associated Long-Range Standoff (LRSO) nuclear-tipped cruise missiles. The Air Force hopes to buy between 80 and 100 of the new nuclear-capable stealth bombers for roughly \$550 million each—plus the cost of development for both the aircraft and the LRSO missile. Meanwhile, the Pentagon and Department of Energy will shell out \$6.8 billion to develop a new nuclear warhead for the new LRSO cruise missile.

Now, on top of the expense of building a ballistic missile submarine for \$4.9 billion each—if we're lucky—a new bomber and a new cruise missile, the Pentagon wants to buy a new ICBM, Reif said.

It's a decision that comes as a surprise to some arms control experts. "I was very interested to see that because up to this point I was operating under the assumption that the Air Force had yet to decide how exactly they would pursue a follow-on to the Minuteman III," Reif said.

Even the CBO—which issued a report earlier this month on the cost of maintaining America's nuclear forces through 2024—seems to have been caught by surprise. "The department plans to operate the current Minuteman III ICBM through 2030. Although it is considering several options for fulfilling the ICBM's mission after 2030—such as refurbishing existing missiles, developing a new missile, or both—its plans are not final," reads the CBO report.

The CBO had anticipated that Air Force would defer developing a new missile until it had completed refurbishing its existing weapons—which would have saved some money over the long-term.

But as the Air Force document indicates, the Pentagon is already getting the ball rolling to replace its Minuteman III arsenal. But why now?

"There is a lot that must be done before the Air Force finalizes key performance parameters for a new ICBM and issues an RFP [request for proposals] to industry," Gunzinger said. "A replacement missile will then have to be developed, tested, launched, and go through a certification process to ensure it will be safe and reliable. This takes time. Developing a non-nuclear major weapon system typically takes ten or more years. This is something that we want to take the time to do right—it is about sustaining our nation's strategic deterrence posture."

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Another part major reason is that defense companies need the Pentagon's business to keep missile engineers busy. While arm-manufacturers like Lockheed Martin—which builds the Navy's Trident D5 nuclear missile—still have the engineers to develop a new missile, they might not in a few years.

The Russians—whose industry imploded in the years since the collapse of the Soviet Union—have had all sorts of troubles building new nuclear missiles to replace their old Cold War-era hardware. Without a new project to work on, engineers and factory workers find other jobs—since people have families to feed. “It would be interesting to ask industry if the answer would still be ‘yes’ [we have the engineering talent] if a new ICBM program were delayed another ten years,” Gunzinger said.

Gunzinger admits that a new ICBM will be expensive, but said it is a necessary price to pay. “It will be expensive, but maintaining our nation's strategic deterrence posture is worth the investment,” he said. “I would never try to evaluate the cost effectiveness of our nuclear triad from the ‘will it be used in combat’ perspective. Rather, we should ask what is needed to ensure that it is never used and our enemies understand that a nuclear act of aggression against the United States risks a devastating response.”

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/01/28/348-billion-in-nukes-ain-t-enough-the-air-force-wants-new-icbms-too.html>

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The Moscow Times – Moscow, Russia

U.S. 'Cannot Stop' Russian Nuclear Missiles — Deputy Prime Minister

The Moscow Times

January 26, 2015

U.S. missile defense “cannot stop” Russia's nuclear weapons, a top minister said, in an apparent reversal of Moscow's policy of slamming U.S. anti-ballistic missile capability as a dire threat to Russian security.

Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin, who oversees Russia's military-industrial complex, boasted of unspecified breakthroughs in Russian military technology during a talk show on the state-run Rossiya 1 television channel on Sunday night.

“We will not disclose those technical details to anybody,” Rogozin said, according to comments quoted by Interfax news agency. “But I can tell you one thing: The work conducted today on combat missile technologies ... shows that neither the current, nor even the projected American missile defense system could stop or cast doubt on Russia's strategic missile potential.”

U.S. missile defense has long been a sore point between Moscow and Washington. The United States in 2009 scrapped plans for missile defense bases in Poland and the Czech republic and switched focus to sea-based capability in part to mollify Russian opposition.

Russia had insisted that missile defense is a threat to its own security — a view aggressively advocated by Rogozin during his stint as Russia's ambassador to the U.S.-led NATO alliance from 2009 to 2011. The United States — and Western military analysts — maintained that the system is designed to protect it and its European allies from Iranian missiles, and that Russia was not a target.

Following Russia's annexation of Crimea last year, U.S. Senator Joe Donnelly, a Democrat from Indiana, asked at an April Senate hearing whether the United States should strengthen missile defenses in Europe in response to Russia having “invaded” the Ukrainian peninsula.

<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/u-s-cannot-stop-russian-nuclear-missiles-deputy-prime-minister/514884.html>

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The Washington Free Beacon – Washington, D.C.

Pentagon Warns of Chinese Arms Dominance

'Alarmed' at PRC buildup over last 15 years

By Bill Gertz

January 28, 2015

China's development of precision weapons and other advanced capabilities has undermined U.S. military superiority, the Pentagon's senior weapons developer told Congress on Wednesday.

"We're at risk and the situation is getting worse," Frank Kendall, undersecretary of defense for acquisition, said.

Kendall singled out China's military buildup as a major worry, noting that in 1994 the communist state was assessed by U.S. intelligence agencies to be a backward military power, but one that would be more advanced in 10 or 15 years.

He also noted Russia's increasingly threatening military posture.

"The intelligence estimates were correct," he said, of China. "And I became, I think it's fair to say, alarmed as soon as I started seeing technical intelligence reports on China's modernization programs."

"And I can say the same with Russia's modernization programs as well," he added.

The U.S. military was dominant following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, he said, and the U.S. action in the Persian Gulf war demonstrated the nation's conventional force prowess.

But beginning in 2001 the military has focused on counterinsurgency and counterterrorism campaigns against a very different kind of threat.

"No one observed more carefully the dominance that we demonstrated in 1991 than the Chinese," Kendall said, referring to U.S. precision arms capabilities, stealth forces, and ability to conduct wide area surveillance.

"And what I'm seeing [now] in foreign modernization, again, particularly China's, is a suite of capabilities that are intended, clearly to me, at least, to defeat the American way of doing power projection, [the] American way of warfare when we fight in an expeditionary manner far from the United States," Kendall said.

The U.S. military's use of what Kendall termed "high-value assets" such as satellites for targeting and communications, aircraft carriers, and foreign U.S. air bases are now targeted by the Chinese and others with precision weapons, especially missiles.

"So if I we're worried about one aspect of the threat, I would start by talking about missiles," he said. "Both ballistic and cruise missiles that can attack those high-value assets."

China has been aggressively building up its missile forces with as many as six or seven new types of ballistic and cruise missiles of varying ranges, including three new land-based ICBMs and a new submarine-launched ballistic missile, as well as new intermediate and medium-range missiles.

Both the Chinese and Russians understand that large numbers of highly accurate missiles are being developed and deployed for the goal of taking out those U.S. high-value targets, Kendall said.

"And once those missiles become highly accurate and can kill the thing that you're trying to actively penetrate, then you have a problem," he said. "That's the change that has occurred. And we've pioneered that change, but it's now been emulated by others. And without saying too much about the Chinese, in particular, and again, though to a lesser extent, the Russians, are going beyond what we have done."

Both countries are developing advanced weapons to defeat U.S. defenses of the targets.

Kendall said senior Pentagon leaders understand the problem but protecting the assets has been complicated by budget cuts and the cost of maintaining global commitments.

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“We also have readiness concerns,” he said. “We also have the threat of sequestration in front of us. So this is a serious problem for the country.”

In addition to missile threats, electronic warfare capabilities, anti-satellites weapon and other weapons to be used against U.S. space systems are a problem, Kendall said, all of which “are being developed very consciously to defeat the American way of projecting power and we need to respond to that.”

Kendall’s remarks came during questioning from House Armed Services Committee Chairman Rep. Mac Thornberry (R., Texas) who asked about his concerns on U.S. military technology superiority.

Kendall said during the hearing that fixing the military shortcomings is “very much is like changing an airplane engine, while the engine’s in flight.”

“We still have to defend the country while we look to make improvements,” he said.

China has been building up its military forces aggressively for the past three decades.

However, close U.S. business ties with China have made the U.S. government reluctant to respond to the threat.

China’s People’s Liberation Army has developed key high technology weaponry as part of a strategy of forcing the United States to abandon its military presence in Asia.

The weapons include large number of ballistic and cruise missiles, including a carrier-killing DF-21D missile, anti-satellite missiles, lasers that can destroy space systems, and cyber warfare capabilities designed to cripple the U.S. military’s ability to operate and support forces overseas.

Russia’s military has been building up nuclear forces in response to what Moscow views as potential threats in Europe to its offensive missile capabilities.

Moscow is building new generations of strategic missiles as well as a new strategic bomber.

Sharp defense cuts under the Obama administration, including a \$478 billion cut over 10 years imposed during the first term and an additional \$600 billion cut in the coming years, have hampered the modernization of U.S. forces.

<http://freebeacon.com/national-security/pentagon-warns-of-chinese-arms-dominance/>

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Defense News – Tysons Corner, VA

Will Russia's Sub-Building Boom Matter?

Despite Numbers, Experts Question Combat Effectiveness

By Christopher P. Cavas

January 24, 2015

WASHINGTON — The Russian Navy's submarine force is on a roll.

Four different kinds of submarines are under construction and more are coming. The country expects to lay down five new nuclear submarines in 2015.

The Navy is accepting Borey-class nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines, Yasen-class nuclear attack submarines, and Kilo- and Lada-class diesel electric attack submarines. Six Kilos are being built for Vietnam and more are offered for export.

This rate of construction is beginning to look more like Cold War days rather than the lethargic shipbuilding rates prevalent since the 1990s.

By comparison, the US only recently returned to building two nuclear attack submarines per year, and industry is gearing up to begin construction of a new class of ballistic submarines in 2021 — a three-subs-per-year construction rate not seen since the Reagan era.

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Combine the revived Russian submarine construction rate with President Vladimir Putin's aggressive stances of the past year, along with the steady drumbeat of Chinese naval expansion, and the question might be asked — is a submarine race going on?

"I know a lot of folks like the term arms race, but I think it's more complicated than that," said Thomas Mahnken, a former US defense official and now a professor at the Naval War College. "There's definitely competition going on — with the US, other NATO navies, China — but there's also modernization going on. An increasing portion of what Russia is doing is replacing aging systems or systems that already have been retired."

"I would be skeptical," cautioned Norman Friedman, a longtime naval analyst and author. "There's a history in that country of laying down things that don't get finished for a long time. No question they'll lay down the subs, but actually building them after that is a more interesting question."

The Russians frequently issue proclamations that they intend to increase naval construction, including statements about building a fleet of aircraft carriers. But ship construction remains modest, and the Navy remains largely a collection of Cold War relics. Yet Russia has a long tradition of building tough and innovative submarines.

"The Russians have put their money where their mouth is with regard to submarine construction and development," said Bryan Clark, a former US Navy submariner and strategist, now an analyst with the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments. "They see that as a way to generate an asymmetric advantage over US forces. If they can develop a really high-end submarine force like they did in the Cold War, it would create a problem for US naval planners and strategists thinking through how to deal with a potential Russian threat — one that could emerge without a lot of warning."

Construction Delays

The most lethal new subs are those of the Yuri Dolgoruky class, also known as the Project 955 Borey class. Construction of the Dolgoruky has been a protracted affair — the ship was laid down at the Sevmash military shipyard in Severodvinsk in 1996 but not launched until 2007. Sea trials began in 2009, but development of the ship's primary weapon, the Bulava intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), itself has been fraught with problems. It was only in 2014 that the submarine submerged with a full load of 16 ICBMs, according to Russian media.

A second Borey, the Alexander Nevsky, was laid down in March 2004 and began sea trials in 2011. Like the Dolgoruky, the ship and its missiles have experienced numerous problems, and trials continued at least through 2013. Vladimir Monomakh, the third Borey, was commissioned last December after eight years of construction and trials.

Three more Boreys are under construction, and Russian Navy chief Adm. Viktor Chirkov said in December two more would be laid down in 2015, for a total of eight, all expected to be in service by 2020.

The design of the Dolgorukys uses many features of earlier submarines. In fact, the first units used pieces and components built for earlier submarines that were either scrapped or never finished. Russian media reports indicate the Vladimir Monomakh used significant hull components of the decommissioned Akula-class attack submarine Ak Bars.

"I get the feeling for all the big talk from the Russians about building a new fleet, they're probably having trouble getting stuff," Friedman said. "For the first subs, they used pieces from earlier subs."

The Dolgoruky carried out an operational test firing of a Bulava in October, the Itar-Tass news agency reported — the third successful test launch since a September 2013 failure — and two more will take place in 2015.

Meanwhile, construction of Yasen-class Project 885M nuclear attack submarines is picking up. The first unit, Severodvinsk, was commissioned at the end of 2013 after a 20-year construction period, during which the submarine underwent significant re-design. A second unit, laid down in 2009 at Sevmash, could be delivered this year.

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Two more Yasens were laid down in 2014. Itar-Tass reported on Dec. 26 that Mikhail Budnichenko, head of Sevmash, said three Project 885 Yasen-class subs would be laid down this year along with two Boreys.

Non-nuclear submarine construction also continues. Along with several Kilo-class subs being built for the Russian Navy and export, at least one more Lada-class diesel-electric submarine is to begin construction this year.

Numbers vs. Effectiveness

But can Russia sustain this prodigious submarine construction effort?

"The naval production we're likely to see this year is an artifact of decisions made some time ago when oil prices were fairly high and before a number of Western countries imposed sanctions on Russia," Mahnken said.

"Whatever the Russians do this year, I think it'll be very hard for them to sustain naval production going forward."

Added Friedman: "Putin doesn't have that much money. And with the drop in oil prices, they have very bad problems."

With the post-1990 decline in shipbuilding, Friedman said, the shipyards have lost much of their submarine-building expertise.

"A lot of people quit the yards" when construction all but ended, he said. "If they lost a lot of their smarter people, there's a difficulty in recreating what they had. Coming back 15 years later and trying to recreate it is kind of dubious."

Clark agreed.

"Their industrial base is weakened from two decades of not being used," he said. "You've got a significant reduction in the number of skilled engineers, the aging out of people who otherwise would be part of the Russian design base.

"While Russian engineering and technology development is top-notch, they don't necessarily have the people to be able to do all the legwork necessary to take an idea into a reality. That's why you see things like submarines taking 10 or more years to construct, because they just don't have the design and construction base to support high-rate production."

But are the new submarines cause for worry?

The Yasen attack subs "are probably what you could get in 1989, plus improved combat systems," Friedman said. "They got access to microprocessors and things like that. But they're not going to the insertion of new technology, because they're not that flexible. But I would guess the combat systems have improved substantially."

Clark sees no cause for alarm in the pace of Russian submarine construction.

"They don't have very many submarines today, and they certainly don't have very many frontline submarines that would be anywhere close to US submarines," he said. "The best submarines the Russians are producing are perhaps equivalent to some of the older US submarines currently in use. It would take a while for the Russians to build up enough of those to where they create a potential problem for the US.

"The main concern," Clark added, "is that even a small number of very good submarines can be problematic from an intelligence-gathering and surprise strike kind of perspective. But they're not able to cause a debilitating effect to a fleet."

<http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/naval/submarines/2015/01/24/russia-navy-submarine-shipbuilding-nuclear/22190761/>

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Sputnik News – Russian Information Agency

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New Russian Heavy Ballistic Missile Sarmat to Be Test Launched in 2016-2017

The Sarmat ICBM, with an operational range of no less than 5,500 kilometers, will replace the world's largest strategic missile Voevoda (NATO reporting name – Satan) between 2018 and 2020.

29 January 2015

MOSCOW, January 29 (Sputnik) — Full-scale testing of the new Russian Sarmat intercontinental ballistic missile may be held in a year or year and a half after the drop tests scheduled in 2015, Lenta.Ru reported Thursday.

"If the drop tests go according to the plan and the missile performs well, it will be test launched in a year or a year and a half" according to a military source.

In the missile industry, the drop tests are primary tests aimed at performing the starting procedure of the missile.

The drop tests check the separate stages of the missile, according to the source.

"We use a special platform for checking the missile's lift capacity," the source said.

The schedule of the drop tests is difficult to ascertain now, but in the industry they are usually performed at the end of the year, the source added.

Earlier, Deputy Defense Minister Yuri Borisov said the drop tests of Sarmat were scheduled for this year. Besides, Russian Strategic Missile Forces commander Col. Gen. Sergei Karakayev said the new missile was set to enter service by 2020.

The Sarmat ICBM, with an operational range of no less than 5,500 kilometers (over 3,400 miles), will replace the world's largest strategic missile Voevoda (NATO reporting name – Satan) between 2018 and 2020.

While the technical specifications are currently unknown, the missile has been designated as heavy. Earlier Borisov said Sarmat's payload would be roughly 10 tons.

According to the classification of the START treaties, a heavy missile is a missile weighing more than 105 tons. Satan is 211 tons in bulk and has a payload of 8.7 tons.

<http://sputniknews.com/military/20150129/1017517853.html>

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Interfax News Agency – Moscow, Russia

Russia Has to Respond to Creation of Missile Defense System by U.S. – General Staff

Interfax

January 30, 2015

MOSCOW. Jan 30 (Interfax-AVN) – The creation by the United States of a missile defense system violates the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty and START III Treaty, which makes Russia take measures to respond, General Valery Gerasimov, the head of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces, said.

"We can't ignore such actions taken by the West and we have to take measures to respond," he said at a meeting of the Defense Ministry collegium in the National Defense Administration Center on Friday.

Gerasimov said these measures "are aimed primarily at equipping the Russian army and fleet with promising weapons systems that will help neutralize the potential of the U.S. missile defense system and which will have increased capabilities to overcome it."

<http://www.interfax.com/newsinf.asp?id=568311>

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Deutsche Welle – Bonn, Germany

US Jury Convicts Former CIA Officer of Leaking Classified Iran Nuclear Details

A United States federal court jury has found a former CIA officer guilty of leaking spy secrets to a journalist. Jeffrey Sterling was accused of leaking details of a failed operation to thwart Iran's nuclear ambitions.

Associated Press (AP), Reuters, Deutsche Presse-Agentur (dpa)

26 January 2015

Following three days of deliberations, jurors on Monday convicted 47-year-old Jeffrey Sterling of all nine counts, most of which related to unauthorized disclosure of national defense information. Prosecutors had said Sterling's actions had put lives at risk as well as compromising efforts to deter Iran's contested nuclear plans.

Earlier in the day the jurors had informed the judge that they could not reach a unanimous verdict, but they were urged by the judge to keep talking and a few hours later they delivered guilty verdicts.

The central issue in the two-week trial was who had told James Risen, a reporter for the New York Times, about the top-secret mission.

The plan involved using a CIA asset, a former Russian nuclear engineer nicknamed Merlin, to supply the Iranians with deliberately flawed plans for nuclear weapons, in the hope that Iran would spend years attempting to develop parts which stood no chance of working. The mission was outlined in Risen's 2006 book "State of War." Sterling had been Merlin's case handler.

Prosecutors had acknowledged a lack of direct evidence against Sterling, however said there was strong circumstantial evidence against him. They said Sterling believed he had been mistreated by his employer. Defense attorney Barry Pollack said it made more sense for a US congressional staffer at Capitol Hill to have leaked to Risen.

The court case against Sterling was delayed for several years because prosecutors were trying to make Risen divulge his sources, which he refused to do.

Iran has maintained its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes but the US and its Western allies fear it to be a front for producing nuclear weapons and had targeted Iran with heavy economic sanctions. Following a breakthrough in negotiations in late 2013 which led to an interim deal for limited sanctions relief in exchange for Iran curbing some aspects of its program, negotiations have been underway to reach a long-term agreement by June 30 this year.

<http://www.dw.de/us-jury-convicts-former-cia-officer-of-leaking-classified-iran-nuclear-details/a-18216111>

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Albuquerque Journal – Albuquerque, N.M.

Former LANL Scientist Sentenced to Five Years for Attempt to Sell Nuclear Secrets

By Mark Oswald, Journal Staff Writer

Wednesday, January 28, 2015

Bringing a bizarre case of would-be espionage to a close, former Los Alamos National Laboratory scientist P. Leonardo Mascheroni was sentenced to five years in prison Wednesday for trying to pass classified nuclear weapons information to a man he believed to be a Venezuelan government official.

The sentence was handed down in federal court in Albuquerque.

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In a rambling statement to the judge, Mascheroni denied he ever intended to help Venezuela acquire nuclear weapons. "What I was selling was completely science fiction," he said.

Mascheroni said his real goal was to find a venue to pursue his research on fusion energy, an idea he had tried unsuccessfully to push both at the lab and at the congressional level.

Prosecutors said Mascheroni has never shown remorse for improperly trying to pass classified information to an undercover federal agent he thought represented Venezuela.

Prosecutor Fred Federici said the classified information belonged to the American people. "It was never his to give away or to sell."

In August, his wife Roxby Mascheroni, 71 years old at the time, was sentenced to a year and a day in federal prison for her role in the scheme.

The couple's actions as described by federal agents often sounded like a James Bond movie plot. Leonardo Mascheroni, now 80, was alleged to have told an FBI officer masquerading as a Venezuelan agent that he could help Venezuela develop a nuclear bomb in 10 years and 40 missiles with nuclear warheads in 20 years.

According to court documents from the indictments of the Mascheronis in 2010, he also suggested an explosion over New York that could produce an "electromagnetic pulse" to knock out the metropolis' electrical power and a laser that could blind satellites; in Venezuela, a secret underground reactor for enriching uranium and another subterranean facility for undetectable tests of "microbombs"; and making Venezuela Latin America's defense "umbrella," able to retaliate against attacks with nuclear bombs.

In 2009, after federal agents raided his Los Alamos home, Mascheroni acknowledged that he had received \$20,000 from a man claiming to represent Venezuela in return for a report on how Venezuela could develop "a nuclear deterrent" that he hoped would show then-President Hugo Chavez that a nuclear weapons program was impractical.

He maintained then that all of the information was unclassified from the Internet and contained nothing that could help Venezuela develop a nuclear weapon. The Mascheronis and their attorneys couldn't be reached Friday, after the U.S. Attorney's Office announced the guilty pleas late in the day.

The Mascheronis were indicted on 22 counts in September 2010, about a year after agents searched their home. In 2012, the couple pleaded guilty to various charges under the federal Atomic Energy Act.

Leonardo Mascheroni pleaded guilty to two counts of communication of "restricted data" and one count of retention of national defense information; two counts of conversion of government property; and six counts of making false statements.

Mascheroni admitted in his plea agreement that, in November 2008 and July 2009, he unlawfully communicated the restricted data "with reason to believe that the data would be utilized to secure an advantage to Venezuela."

This came after he visited the Venezuela embassy in Washington and told personnel there that he had worked at LANL for many years, that he "was interested in working for Venezuela" and asked for a meeting. He also later adopted the code name "Luke," Mascheroni admitted.

He also acknowledged that he illegally converted Department of Energy information to his own use and selling it and "failing to deliver classified information relating to the United States' national defense to appropriate authorities and instead unlawfully retaining the information in his home."

Finally, Mascheroni, a naturalized U.S. citizen from Argentina, acknowledged lying to FBI agents when he was interviewed in October 2009, when his home was searched.

Roxby Mascheroni, now 71 or 72, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to communicate restricted data, another conspiracy count and making false statements.

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Roxby Macheroni, a contract employee at Los Alamos National Laboratory until the investigation of her and husband emerged in 2010, had previously pleaded guilty to conspiring to violate the Atomic Energy Act and making false statements to the FBI.

At sentencing in August, her attorney and friends portrayed her as the victim of a husband who was narcissistic and controlling and who so thoroughly dominated his wife that she learned not to resist.

Under the terms of his plea agreements, Leonardo Mascheroni could have sentenced to a prison term up to 5 1/2 years.

Mascheroni worked for LANL from 1979-88 with a "Q" security clearance providing access to classified information. He attracted national attention with charges that he was dismissed from the lab on trumped-up security risk charges and because of differences on how to advance laser fusion, which tries to harness nuclear energy similar to that of the sun and hydrogen bombs. The lab has maintained that he was laid off in a reduction of force.

In recent years, Mascheroni went to Congress to question management of the nation's nuclear weapons labs and argue that his laser would help weapons reliability.

He said in October 2009, after the FBI raid at his house, that when his appeals to Congress went unheeded, he reached out to other countries, leading to his supposed contact with Venezuela. He said his actions were meant to move "toward a world without nuclear weapons" and "to seduce other countries into going without nuclear weapons."

<http://www.abqjournal.com/533015/abqnewsseeker/former-lanl-scientist-sentenced-to-five-years-for-attempt-to-sell-nuclear-secrets.html>

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Business Insider.com – New York City, NY

The Pentagon Is Pushing for Better Weapons to Stay Ahead of China and Russia

Andrea Shalal, Reuters
January 28, 2015

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. Deputy Defense Secretary Robert Work on Wednesday urged NATO allies to develop and make more innovative weapons, and said bold action was needed to stay ahead of rapid weapons development by China, Russia and other countries.

Work said the Pentagon has a new plan called "Defense Innovation Initiative" and a separate effort targeting longer-term projects to ensure that the United States continues to have a decisive competitive advantage against potential foes.

"We must coordinate and collaborate, avoid duplication, leverage niche capabilities, and push our establishments to innovate in technology, concepts, experimentation, and wargaming," Work said at a conference hosted by the Center for a New American Security. He underscored the need for NATO members to make good their promise at a September meeting last year to spend two percent of national output on defense.

Work said it was critical to increase collaboration with allies in NATO, Asia and other areas, ranging from mission planning to investments in new weapons programs.

Concerns about weapons development from other countries was a key reason the Pentagon's \$534 billion budget plan for fiscal 2016 exceeds the budget caps set by Congress by \$35 billion and reverses five years of declines in U.S. military spending. That budget plan is expected to be delivered to Congress Monday.

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Work gave no details ahead of the official release, but said the budget would include "significant" investments in nuclear weapons, space control capabilities, advanced sensors, missile defense and cyber, as well as unmanned undersea vehicles, sea mining, high-speed strike weapons, an advanced jet engine, high energy lasers and rail gun technology.

Work said the plans need to address different threats in different regions, and should leverage work by commercial firms on robotics, autonomous operations and other key technologies.

Lockheed Martin Corp, Boeing Co, and other key weapons makers have repeatedly urged the Pentagon to step up investments in key technologies.

Pentagon arms buyer Frank Kendall told the House Armed Services Committee in a separate hearing that he was deeply concerned about heavy investments by China, Russia and others in weapons designed to target critical U.S. military capabilities such as aircraft carriers and satellites.

"I am very concerned about the increasing risk of loss of U.S. military technological superiority," he said. "We're at risk and the situation is getting worse."

Kendall said the department would also earmark funds for development and prototyping of a new "next-generation X-plane" that would eventually succeed the F-35 fighter jet, and a new engine.

Editing by Bernard Orr

<http://www.businessinsider.com/r-pentagon-official-urges-nato-to-focus-on-innovative-weapons-2015-1>

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Want China Times – Taipei, Taiwan

China Took only Five Years to Complete DF-41 ICBM: Report

Staff Reporter

January 25, 2015

China only spent five years developing its DF-41 solid-fueled road-mobile intercontinental ballistic missile, which has a long enough range to strike the continental United States, according to Military Parade, a Moscow-based Russian-language website covering defense issues, on Jan. 15.

The country reportedly spent just US\$1.1 billion to design the DF-41, which can carry multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles, according to Sergei Tikhonov, a Russian expert on China's military development. The rate of growth in China's military budget ranks number two in the world after Russia and has been so for the last five years. Tikhonov said that the Chinese leadership had invested their resources wisely in the development of the missile.

In 2009, China began a missile program called Project 41H with the participation of 156 institutes. After five years of research and development, China successfully tested the DF-41 in 2014. With a speed of Mach six and a range of 15,000 kilometers, the DF-41 can be used to attack the US homeland with multiple nuclear warheads, Tikhonov said.

The United States spent about 12 years and US\$16 billion to develop its UGM-133 Trident II submarine-launched ballistic missile with similar capabilities to the DF-41, according to Tikhonov. China devoted most of its resources and budget to the design of strategical and tactical missile systems because it is still unable to build conventional weapons with similar quality to those of the United States.

<http://www.wantchinatimes.com/news-subclass-cnt.aspx?id=20150125000037&cid=1101>

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The Korea Times – Seoul, South Korea

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U.S. Military to Hold Seminar on N.K. Nukes, Missiles

January 27, 2015

The United States plans to hold a high-level military forum this week to explore ways to better respond to North Korea's weapons of mass destruction amid their growing security threats to the world, officials said Tuesday.

The Korea Senior Seminar (KSS) "will take place at the U.S. Special Operations Command Wargame Center in Tampa, Florida, tonight (U.S. time) on how to respond to North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programs," a military officer here said, requesting anonymity.

Gen. Curtis Scaparrotti in charge of U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) will lead the meeting, he said, confirming an earlier report on the issue carried by the American media website, the Washington Free Beacon.

While declining to offer specifics, the USFK said in a brief release that the KSS "includes consideration of the challenge presented by North Korean weapons of mass destruction, as well as how we may potentially enhance our support to the Republic of Korea's role in maintaining regional stability." The Republic of Korea refers to South Korea.

Noting that the dialogue is an important step to ensuring interagency coordination and engagement, the seminar "brings together key leaders from across the U.S. government to consider how we can proactively support enhancing stability on the Korean Peninsula," it said without further elaboration.

This year's seminar is the second of its kind, with the previous session taking place in June 2013, another military officer here said, adding that South Korean military figures would not attend the session.

The seminar is to take place at a time when the international community is witnessing evolving security threats posed by North Korea.

The belligerent regime has pursued nuclear weapons development for decades, and is believed to have reached a "significant" point in efforts to mastering the warhead miniaturization technology.

Pyongyang carried out underground detonation tests three times in 2006, 2009 and 2013, and has built a facility to enrich uranium, which gives it a second way of building nuclear bombs in addition to its plutonium program.

The North is also believed to have built a new intercontinental ballistic missile, the KN-08, which has a 6,000-mile range. Last year, it carried out engine tests for the ICBM, according to officials and analysts.

During his lecture at the South Korean Army Association in November last year, the USFK commander said North Korean leader Kim Jong-un "has focused his military's development on training on asymmetric capabilities."

Asymmetric capabilities include nuclear arms and cyber-capabilities that cannot easily be countered with conventional weapons. Amid its international isolation that has damaged its economy, North Korea has pushed to raise those capabilities.

Expressing concern over "very little warning of an unprovoked asymmetric attack which could start a cycle of action and counter-action, leading to an escalation," the commander stressed the need for the allies "to maintain a high level of readiness and vigilance." (Yonhap)

http://m.koreatimes.co.kr/phone/news/view.jsp?req_newsidx=172492

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Want China Times – Taipei, Taiwan

China Buys Six S-400 Missile Battalions from Russia: Report

Staff Reporter

January 27, 2015

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China has purchased six battalions of Russian-built S-400 surface-to-air missile systems to enhance its air defense capability against the United States and its allies in the Western Pacific, reports the Washington-based Strategy Page.

Each battalion has eight launchers, a control center, a radar and 16 missiles available as reloads. A launcher can fire two missiles simultaneously and all equipment is mobile. The cost of each battalion is US\$500 million. Originally known as the S-300PMU-3, SA-21 or Triumf, the system was renamed the S-400 because the missile turned out to be far more than just another upgrade of the S-300. Russia deployed its first S-400 battalion in 2010.

The development of the S-400 was undertaken particularly with electronic countermeasures in mind. Compared to its US counterpart, the Patriot system, the S-400 is physically larger and has a longer range but is very expensive, according to the report. With a range of 400 kilometers, the S-400 missile can hit targets at altitudes as high as 31,000 meters and its radar can acquire targets 700 kilometers away.

Two types of missiles are compatible with the S-400. The smaller missile has a shorter range of 120 kilometers. Four of those missiles can be deployed to a launcher, similar to the S-300 systems. The larger missile has two versions as well. One is designed with a range of 250 kilometers while the more expensive one has a range of 400 kilometers.

However, without real combat experience the system's performance still remains unknown, said the report.

<http://www.wantchinatimes.com/news-subclass-cnt.aspx?cid=1101&MainCatID=11&id=20150127000074>

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The London Telegraph – London, U.K.

Signs North Korea Restarting Nuclear Reactor

North Korea may be attempting to restart its main nuclear bomb fuel reactor after a five-month shutdown, a U.S. research institute said Thursday.

Agence France-Presse (AFP)

29 January 2015

Recent satellite images suggest North Korea may be about to restart the nuclear reactor seen as its main source of weapons-grade plutonium, a US think-tank said Thursday.

When fully operational, the five-megawatt reactor at the Yongbyon nuclear complex is capable of producing around 13 pounds of plutonium a year - enough for one nuclear bomb, experts say.

North Korea has conducted three nuclear tests, and recently threatened a fourth, amid tensions over fresh US sanctions and UN moves to censure Pyongyang for its human rights record.

The US-Korea Institute at Johns Hopkins University said the latest satellite images showed fresh activity at Yongbyon suggestive of "the early stages of an effort to restart the reactor".

Signs included steam coming from a probable pressure relief valve on a steam pipe just before it enters the turbine building, and meltwater running off the centre of the turbine-building roof, the institute said in a post on its closely-followed 38 North website.

The analysis stressed that the activity was too "limited" to enable an accurate assessment of when the reactor might be tested and become operational.

North Korea shut down the Yongbyon reactor in 2007 under an aid-for-disarmament accord, but began renovating it after its last nuclear test in 2013.

The UN's nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, said in September last year that steam discharges suggested the reactor might already be operational again.

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But analysis of later satellite imagery led other experts to conclude it had either failed to restart properly or had been shut down again - possibly for refuelling or renovation.

Pictures have also detected activity at a separate Yongbyon facility, thought to be used for enriching uranium.

The North says the purpose is to produce low-enriched uranium for a new reactor it is constructing, but experts suspect that the real goal is weapons-grade uranium, an alternative to plutonium for a nuclear bomb.

Earlier this month, North Korea offered to suspend nuclear tests in exchange for a temporary freeze on US-South Korea joint military exercises.

Washington rejected the offer, which it described as an "implicit threat" to detonate a fourth nuclear device.

A separate analysis on the 38 North website two weeks ago said satellite images of the North's Punggye-ri nuclear test site showed there were no signs that a detonation could be imminent.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/northkorea/11375943/Signs-North-Korea-restarting-nuclear-reactor.html>

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RT (Russia Today) – Moscow, Russia

Russia Develops Heavy Drone, Promises S500 Missile System by 2017

January 25, 2015

The Russian military is putting the finishing touches to its very own heavy military UAV. The drone is part of a wider modernization effort, with the cutting-edge flagship S500 missile system coming in 2017.

The drone *"already exists,"* according to Russian Deputy Defense Minister Yury Borisov.

The heavy UAV, created in cooperation with the Federal Security Service (FSB), will perform *"a variety of tactical, operational and strategic tasks,"* said Borisov, but he didn't give any further details such as the name of the vehicle.

The Russian government is expected to release several innovations and upgrades in the near future, as part of defense modernization. Borisov mentioned at least four current projects, now *"in their final stages of development."*

The country's latest state-of-the-art air defense system currently at the research and development stage – the S500 – will also appear in 2017, the deputy defense minister told RSN radio. It is an advanced version of its predecessor – the S400 and is designed to lock on to and intercept multiple ballistic missiles in seconds. It possesses the ability to operate at an altitude of up to 124 miles.

The new S500 is rumored to be able to engage 10 missiles at once and have a refined radar system, as well as make speeds of up to 4.3 miles per second. It's also expected to rival US tech, which currently touts the RAS3 Patriot missile defense system against the S400.

In 2015, Russia will test its 'Sarmat' missile, expected for shipment before 2020. According to the senior official, *"the missile is capable of delivering a 10-ton payload."* The super heavy liquid-propelled intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) has also received upgrades. *"It will be able to fly over both the North and South Poles."*

In the meantime, the Russian-French standoff with the delivery of the Mistral helicopter carriers has led to Russian readiness to accept almost any way out of the deadlock. The Defense Ministry disclosed on Saturday the figure it paid upfront for the Mistral delivery that never came.

"We paid one billion euro upfront, France has received payment. If it is unable to deliver Mistral, we intend to raise the issue of the repayment of debt," Borisov said.

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The Russian side is *"open to any civilized solution to this situation,"* whether it includes delivery or a return of the money spent, he stressed. The deputy minister also pointed out that either outcome will have no bearing on the ongoing modernization of Russian defenses.

The Ukrainian crisis has strained relations between Russia and France, with Paris putting on hold the delivery of the amphibious assault ships to Moscow. President Francois Hollande is already wary of the strain foreign sanctions are putting on Russia, which he says are having an effect on Europe as well.

<http://rt.com/news/226003-russia-heavy-military-drone/>

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The Moscow Times – Moscow, Russia

Russia's Massive Rearmament Program Spared From 10 Percent Defense Cut

By Matthew Bodner

January 28, 2015

Russia will cut defense spending 10 percent this year but will not touch its massive rearmament program, which eats up more than 60 percent of the defense budget, Deputy Defense Minister Tatyana Shevtsova told news agency Interfax on Wednesday.

"We believe that the budget planned for implementing the state rearmament program is an investment in the defense industry. It guarantees orders for business, new jobs and stable revenues [for the industry]," Shevtsova was quoted by Interfax as saying.

It was not immediately clear from Shevtsova's statements whether the 10 percent reduction would be based on the size of the military budget as a whole or just on the 40 percent not devoted to new procurements.

The decision to spare the rearmament program from a budget cut represents a huge victory for the defense establishment, according to Ruslan Pukhov, director of the Moscow-based Center for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies, a defense industry think tank.

"Historically, whenever there is a financial crisis and the government has to reduce spending, military procurement is the first to go," Pukhov said. Many economists have already called for Russia to slow the pace of its rearmament campaign, which dictates 20 trillion rubles (\$300 billion) in spending over 10 years.

The defense industry's victory may be short-lived, Pukhov added: "If there is another readjustment in spending, it is very likely that procurement will take a hit."

The defense spending cuts come as part of the government's anti-crisis measures, published on Wednesday, which aim to bring federal spending goals in line with economic realities — namely, falling oil prices, the collapsing ruble and pressure from Western sanctions.

The plan mandates that most state expenditures be decreased by 10 percent with the exception of a few categories, which include spending aimed at "ensuring the government's defense capabilities."

Russia's 2015 defense budget was originally slated to come in at 3.3 trillion rubles (\$49 billion), a 812 billion ruble (\$12 billion) increase over 2014 and Russia's largest annual defense budget on record.

Even if the cuts apply to the entire military budget, a 10 percent reduction — bringing this year's military budget to around 3 trillion rubles (\$45 billion) — would not reverse the upward trend in Russia's defense spending.

<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/massive-rearmament-program-spared-from-10-percent-defense-cut/515032.html>

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TASS Russian News Agency – Moscow, Russia

Russian Strategic Bombers Perform Patrolling Mission Tasks — Defense Ministry

"The long-range aviation strategic bombers flew through neutral waters in the Barents and Norwegian Seas and Atlantic Ocean," the Russian Defense Ministry press service said

January 29, 2015

MOSCOW, January 29. /TASS/. Two strategic bombers Tupolev Tu-95MS that took off from the Engels Air Force Base in the Saratov region (Volga area) on Thursday "successfully performed the air patrolling mission tasks," the Russian Defense Ministry press service said.

"The long-range aviation strategic bombers flew through neutral waters in the Barents and Norwegian Seas and Atlantic Ocean. The Tu-95MS crews made two aerial refuelling manoeuvres with the help of the Ilyushin Il-78 tanker aircraft. The flight continued for more than 19 hours," the press service reported.

On the flight route the Russian long-range aviation planes were accompanied by the MiG-31 fighter-interceptor aircraft of the Russian Air Force. At separate patrolling stages, the strategic bombers were followed by the UK Air Force Typhoon warplanes, Norway's F-16 fighters and France's Mirage fighters.

The Russian long-range aviation pilots perform regular scheduled patrolling flights over neutral waters of the Arctic, Atlantic Oceans, over the Black Sea, the Pacific Ocean, taking off from their airbases and from tactical airfields.

"All flights of the Air Force planes have been performed and are performed in strict compliance with the international rules of the use of airspace over neutral waters without violating the borders of other states," the Defense Ministry said.

<http://itar-tass.com/en/russia/774048>

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The Economic Times – New Delhi, India

Russia Says Nuclear Arms to Keep Military Edge over NATO, United States

By Reuters

30 January 2015

MOSCOW: The chief of Russia's armed forces said today a strong nuclear arsenal will ensure military superiority over the West as Russia seeks to fulfil a multi-billion dollar plan to modernise its forces by 2020.

Russia, facing a likely recession this year after US and European sanctions over Ukraine and a fall in oil prices, must deal with new forms of Western aggression, including economic confrontation, said armed forces chief General Valery Gerasimov.

Despite deep economic woes, he said Russian armed forces would receive more than 50 new intercontinental nuclear missiles this year.

"Support for our strategic nuclear forces to ensure their high military capability combined with...growth of the military potential of the general forces will assure that (the United States and NATO) do not gain military superiority over our country," said Gerasimov.

Tensions between Russia and the West have risen over the conflict in eastern Ukraine, where the United States and Europe say Moscow is fuelling an insurgency by sending in troops and weapons. Moscow denies this.

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Russia has criticised NATO expansion in eastern Europe and President Vladimir Putin has accused the Ukrainian army, which is fighting pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine, of being puppets of NATO with a policy of "containing" Russia.

Russian military planes increasingly have been spotted over Europe on radar in recent months. Britain summoned the Russian ambassador yesterday for an explanation to the flight of two Russian long-range bombers that flew over the English Channel, forcing British authorities to reroute civil aircraft.

Russia promises to push through by 2020 a more than 20-trillion-rouble (\$286.62 billion) military modernisation plan conceived by Putin, and military expenditures will remain unchanged even in the face of a growing economic crisis that has cut the budgets of other ministries.

The modernisation project aims to revamp Russia's weapons systems to assure that 70-100 percent of the armed forces weapons and equipment has been modernised by the end of the decade - a plan confirmed by Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu.

"We plan to fulfil the government armament programme and reach by 2020 the intended quantities of modern weapons systems," he said at the meeting.

Speaking against a backdrop of rising prices brought on in part by a weaker rouble, Gerasimov said Russia had to deal with new forms of Western aggression.

"Western countries are actively using new forms of aggression, combining military as well as non-military means. Political, economic and information methods are also being used," Interfax news agency cited him as saying.

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/russia-says-nuclear-arms-to-keep-military-edge-over-nato-united-states/articleshow/46066491.cms>

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TASS Russian News Agency – Moscow, Russia

Russia to Complete Chemical Weapons Destruction at 4 of 5 Facilities by End of 2015

At 4 facilities the destruction of dangerous stockpiles will be completed by the end of 2015, and at the 5th facility will continue the process of destruction for the next 5 years

January 30, 2015

MOSCOW, January 30. /TASS/. The transfer of 4 of Russia's 5 chemical weapons destruction facilities to economic turnover is planned to be completed by the end of 2015. This issue is put on the agenda of Friday's meeting of the State Commission on chemical disarmament.

"As of January 29, Russia has destroyed nearly 34,000 tons of toxic substances, or 84.8% of the declared stockpiles of chemical weapons," the press service of the Russian presidential envoy to the Volga Federal District, Chairman of the State Committee on chemical disarmament Mikhail Babich, said.

At the moment, 5 facilities are in operation — Maradykovsky (Kirov region), Leonidovka (Penza region), Shchuchye (Kurgan Region), Pochep (Bryansk region) and Kizner (Udmurtia). "At 4 facilities the destruction of dangerous stockpiles will be completed by the end of 2015, and only the Kizner facility will continue the process of chemical weapons destruction for the next 5 years," the press service said.

According to the press service, the phase of liquidation of the so-called complex ammunition, a very complicated engineering and technological process that requires specific safety measures, has begun.

<http://itar-tass.com/en/russia/774371>

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FARS News Agency – Tehran, Iran

Sunday, January 25, 2015

Iran's Top Security Official Takes West Responsible for Potential Failure of Talks

TEHRAN (FNA) - The six world powers should account for any trouble or failure of the nuclear talks, Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Ali Shamkhani warned after the US congress threatened to impose a new set of sanctions on Tehran.

"Iran's nuclear negotiations with the G5+1 serve as a test of these countries' honesty to see how committed they are to the path of negotiation and removal of all the illegal and cruel sanctions," Shamkhani said in a meeting with Georgian Parliament Speaker Davit Usupashvili in Tehran on Sunday.

He stressed that Iran has shown a good will in the negotiations, "and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reports endorse this fact".

"But we will show proper reaction and take due action appropriate to the attitude and performance shown by the opposite side," Rear Admiral Shamkhani underlined.

"The responsibility for any troubling the talks and adoption of the approaches whose fruitlessness had already been proved (in similar cases) in the past lies on the opposite side," Shamkhani underlined.

In relevant remarks on Saturday, Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani underlined that US President Barack Obama should account for any possible failure in the nuclear talks between Tehran and the world powers.

"The issues between the US administration and the congress and their internal problems are not related to us," Larijani said, addressing a forum in Tehran.

His remarks came after the US congress (mostly grabbed by the Republicans) threatened the Obama administration that it will impose new sanctions against Iran, an issue which has been described as a redline by Tehran in the interim nuclear agreement reached with the world powers in November 2013.

"If the negotiations do not end in results, Obama should account for rocking the boat," he said.

Also on Monday, Iranian Foreign Minister and top negotiator Mohammad Javad Zarif called on the US officials to stop the policy of pressures against Tehran, adding that the negotiations with the world powers have entered a complicated stage.

"If the Americans want to reach results, they should put an immediate end to the dangerous game of pressuring Iran," Zarif told reporters in Tehran.

Elaborating on the latest round of talks between Tehran and the G5+1 which was held in Geneva last Sunday, he said, "The negotiations have become very complicated and we are studying the details. Positions on general points are clear; we have been studying the details for a long time."

"As I have repeatedly stated, the principle of enrichment, the necessity for removing the sanctions and preserving Iran's nuclear program have all been accepted and we have been negotiating on details for several months now," Zarif said.

Asked if the Iranian side was ready to reach a comprehensive agreement with the world powers by mid-March which marks the new Iranian year, he said, "We believe that if the other side shows determination and good will, one week will be enough for reaching an agreement" and the Iranian side is ready for a final deal by the anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran on February 11.

In relevant remarks last week, Zarif cautioned the G5+1 not to miss the present opportunity for cutting a final deal with Iran.

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Speaking in a televised interview in Geneva, where he held a meeting with US Secretary of State John Kerry, Zarif advised nuclear negotiators to use opportunity for resolution of the deadlock over Iran's nuclear program.

The 10th round of negotiations between Iran and the six world powers was held in Vienna from November 18 to 24, where the seven nations decided to extend the talks until July after they failed to strike an agreement.

The latest round of the nuclear talks between the two sides was held at the level of deputy foreign ministers in Geneva, Switzerland, on January 18.

The two sides decided to continue their talk early in February.

Both Iran and the G5+1 negotiators have underlined that cutting a final deal before the July 10 deadline is possible.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13931105001160>

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Tasnim News Agency – Tehran, Iran

New Sanctions to Trigger Iran's 60% Uranium Enrichment, MP Warns

January 25, 2015

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Iran's Parliament will push for a bill obliging the administration to enrich uranium to 60 percent purity level with the new generation of centrifuge machines in case new sanctions are imposed on the country, a lawmaker announced.

Member of the parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission Mohammad Hassan Asafari said in a radio interview on Sunday that the plan will take effect if the parties engaged in nuclear talks with Iran are perceived to be trying to impose fresh sanctions and be reluctant to lift the previous sanctions.

In similar comments on Saturday, Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani unveiled retaliatory plans should the US imposes fresh sanctions on the country over its peaceful nuclear program.

The legislature has "seriously considered scenarios" to make the US regret if the Congress decides to slap new sanctions on Iran, Larijani said.

He pledged that a "jump in Iran's nuclear technology" will occur in case of fresh sanctions, saying Tehran is absolutely capable of doing that.

Iran and the Group 5+1 (Russia, China, the US, Britain, France and Germany) are in talks to hammer out a final agreement to end more than a decade of impasse over Tehran's nuclear energy program.

<http://www.tasnimnews.com/English/Home/Single/632971>

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FARS News Agency – Tehran, Iran

Monday, January 26, 2015

Iranian President Calls for Tighter Cooperation with N. Korea against Bullying Powers

TEHRAN (FNA) - Iranian President Hassan Rouhani in a meeting with new North Korean Ambassador to Tehran Kang Sam Hyon underlined the necessity for the further consolidation of cooperation with Pyongyang against the bullying of certain world powers.

"The sanctions against North Korea have merely harmed the country's people. We have always condemned the illegal sanctions and pressures and we should resist against those who are unrighteously seeking more power, through cooperation," Rouhani said during the meeting in Tehran on Monday.

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He underlined Iran's support for the establishment of peace and security in the Korean Peninsula, and said the two Koreas should move towards unity and settle their problems through talks and understanding.

Rouhani said Tehran seeks to further broaden its relations with North Korea in political, international, economic and technological fields.

Hyon, for his part, stressed his country's enthusiasm for the further development of ties with Iran, and said the Iranian government and nation have gained great success in foiling the US plots and defending the country's nuclear rights.

In relevant remarks earlier this month, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif expressed pleasure in North Korean Leader Kim Jong-un's offer for peace talks with Seoul, stressing that tension in the Korean Peninsula should be soothed through peaceful means.

"We believe that the Korean Peninsula issues should be settled peacefully," Zarif said in a meeting with Hyon.

He described foreign meddling in issues related to the two Koreas as harmful, and said, "Our approach is comprised of emphasis on talks and avoiding use of force and military mechanisms."

Zarif also referred to his North Korean counterpart's visit to Tehran, and said, "Bilateral issues are on the agenda and we will follow the existing grounds to expand relations."

Hyon, for his part, conveyed the greetings of the North Korean foreign minister to Zarif, and said, "North Korea is willing to develop economic relations with Iran along with the political ties."

Earlier this month, Kim Jong-Un proposed the "highest-level" talks with South Korea, opening the way to a historic summit.

The sudden move, made during Kim's traditional New Year message, would clear the path for the first inter-Korean leaders' meeting since a 2007 summit in Pyongyang.

"Depending on the mood and circumstances to be created, we have no reason not to hold the highest-level talks," Kim said in the televised speech, calling for a thaw in icy relations between the two Koreas, which remain technically at war.

Seoul welcomed the overture as "meaningful".

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13931106001142>

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The Daily Star – Beirut, Lebanon

Zarif Summoned to Parliament over Walk with Kerry

Reuters

January 26, 2015

Page – A8

DUBAI: Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif is to appear before parliament following controversy over a promenade with his American counterpart during intense nuclear negotiations in Geneva, state media reported Sunday.

Zarif, who leads Tehran's talks with "P5+1" – the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China – had a 15-minute walk down Geneva sidewalks with U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry during discussions on Jan. 14 aimed at reaching a settlement of the 12-year nuclear dispute between Iran and the West.

Media images of the top diplomats from old adversaries strolling together in a foreign land provoked an outcry among Iranian hard-liners deeply wary of rapprochement with the "Great Satan."

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On Friday, conservative-leaning prayer leaders heaped scorn on Zarif and President Hassan Rouhani for the “diplomatic slip-up” and newspapers said 21 members of parliament had signed a petition to call in the moderate minister to provide an explanation.

“Given the Great Satan’s endless demands and sabotage during the course of the nuclear negotiations, there is no conceivable ground for intimacy between the foreign ministers of Iran and America,” the petition in hard-line Fars News said.

“Your exhibitionist walk together with [Kerry] along Geneva sidewalks was certainly outside the norms of diplomacy, so why don’t you put a stop to such behavior?”

The row over the diplomatic stroll is the latest in a series of summons since Zarif took charge of the nuclear file in late 2013. In February 2014 he caused an uproar with public comments condemning the Holocaust and was subsequently summoned to parliament. Holocaust denial has been a staple theme of public speeches in Iran for decades.

Tehran and Washington broke diplomatic ties after Iran’s 1979 Islamist revolution, establishing tentative direct contact on specific cases such as the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and more recently as part of the nuclear talks between Iran and “P5+1,” underway since after President Rouhani’s 2013 election.

Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has endorsed official interaction with the United States within the nuclear framework, leaving the field wide open for controversy.

Speaking to reporters in Tehran last week, Zarif sought to justify the private walk with Kerry: “We had a serious earnest session and perhaps there was a need to pause a few minutes and resume in another form. These are quite normal in the world of diplomacy, especially since our hotel had no yard or garden and surrounding alleys were packed with curious journalists.”

Despite resurgent criticisms, Zarif held another round of secret talks with Kerry Friday in Davos, Switzerland. There has been no word of a breakthrough in the quest for a deal to curb Iran’s program in return for lifting economic sanctions imposed as punishment on Iran in the past.

The U.S. and other Western countries have long suspected Iran of seeking nuclear weapons know-how, but Tehran insists its program is geared to production of nonfossil fuel and scientific research.

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2015/Jan-26/285313-zarif-summoned-to-parliament-over-walk-with-kerry.ashx>

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The Huffington Post - Canada

Does The Islamic State Have Weapons Of Mass Destruction?

By Normand Lester

January 26, 2015

Do the jihadists Canada and her allies are combating in Iraq have weapons of mass destruction or are they capable of manufacturing them? The Canadian government has not been forthcoming with an answer.

The head of media relations at the Department of National Defence, Daniel Le Bouthillier, passed the buck to the United States, stating simply that any “question regarding what the coalition ‘fears’ would be better answered by U.S. Central Command.”

National Defence also refuses to give a clear yes or no answer when asked if members of an obscure Canadian special forces unit called the Canadian Joint Incident Response Unit CBRN have been deployed in Iraq. This unit’s mission is quite specific and disconcerting: it is charged with immediate response to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) threats. Citing reasons of operational security, the military spokesperson stated only that the Canadian military is prepared and equipped to respond to any eventuality.

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If it is true that members of this unit have been deployed in Iraq, it would not be the first time the CJIRU-CBRN operated in the Middle East. CJIRU-CBRN operators were already present in Jordan a few months ago to train that country's military to respond to attacks with weapons of mass destruction. The U.S. Armed Forces posted a series of photos online of the Eager Lion 2014 exercise, which marked the end of a full year of training in Jordan carried out by CJIRU-CBRN. The presence in the Middle East theater of operations of our anti-weapons of mass destruction unit is some indication that the coalition combating the Islamic State is concerned about the possible use of such weapons by jihadists.

According to an analyst familiar with the issue who prefers to remain anonymous, the coalition in no way believes jihadists will obtain nuclear weapons, since it is nearly impossible to obtain the fissile materials required for such an undertaking. What the coalition is concerned about, and which would explain the presence of the CJIRU-CBRN in the region, is the relative ease with which the Islamic State can make radioactive, biological and chemical weapons. The materials needed to make such weapons are available in the vast territories it controls in Syria and Iraq, particularly in the city of Mosul, whose university has one of the top research centres in the Middle East. But even if the researchers at this university refuse to collaborate with the Islamic State, it can rely on the knowledge of several civil and military defectors who served in the weapons of mass destruction development programs in Iraq and Syria under Saddam Hussein and Bashar al-Assad.

Therefore, a radioactive weapon, called a "dirty bomb," could be made from various non-fissile radioisotopes used mostly in laboratory research, scientific instruments and medical technologies. Isotopes such as cesium-137, cobalt-60, iridium-192, radium-226, plutonium-238 and strontium-90 could be incorporated into improvised explosive devices.

CJIRU-CBRN operators are trained to deal with these types of threats, and they can also intervene against chemical and bacteriological attacks: sarin gas, chlorine, mustard gas, smallpox and numerous other agents which may be used as weapons of mass destruction.

In the case of an attack, the first step in the intervention scenario is for a team to go in and evaluate the threat by taking samples. Small remote-controlled vehicles and miniature drones covered in all types of sensors may be used. Potential contaminants are identified and counter-measures applied.

Operational portion of CJIRU-CBRN is based in Trenton and has means of aerial transportation, allowing it to travel quickly throughout Canada and the world.

In the 1990s, al-Qaeda under Osama bin Laden had made it a priority to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and his Islamic State now have the capability to complete this terrifying project.

This story previously appeared in Le Huffington Post Quebec.

http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2015/01/26/islamic-state-weapons-mass-destruction-isis_n_6546864.html

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Tasnim News Agency – Tehran, Iran

Iran: Main Frameworks of Nuclear Agreement Defined

January 28, 2015

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Spokeswoman for Iran's Foreign Ministry Marziyeh Afkham announced on Wednesday that the main frameworks of a long-awaited nuclear deal between Iran and six world powers have been drawn, but at the same time noted that further negotiations are still needed.

Iran and the Group 5+1 (Russia, China, the US, Britain, France and Germany) are in talks to hammer out a final agreement to end more than a decade of impasse over Tehran's nuclear energy program.

"Main frameworks of nuclear deal have been defined, and the talks have entered into technical details," Afkham underscored in a press conference in Tehran.

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The Iranian spokeswoman said that the gaps (between the two sides) are narrowed to some extent, but more talks and negotiations are still needed for reaching an agreement.

There are differences between the two sides and negotiations on how to implement the details are still underway, she stressed, adding, "Negotiations have come to a sensitive stage, and the steps to reach a deal are very decisive."

Afkham went on to say that the main principles are clear to both negotiating parties, and stated, "(Uranium) Enrichment issue has been accepted, and that no nuclear site (in Iran) would be shut down, and the Research and Development (activities) have also been accepted."

The Iranian spokeswoman also reiterated that Tehran wants a nuclear deal, but not at any price.

Earlier on Saturday, head of the Iranian team of nuclear negotiators had said that discussions between Iran and the Group 5+1 (also known as P5+1 and E3+3) have entered into details.

Iran and the European members of the Group 5+1 – France, Britain and Germany - are scheduled to hold nuclear talks in the Turkish city of Istanbul on January 29.

<http://www.tasnimnews.com/English/Home/Single/635806>

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FARS News Agency – Tehran, Iran
Wednesday, January 28, 2015

Zarif: Iran Not in Favor of Extending N. Talks

TEHRAN (FNA) - Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif stressed the failure of the West's pressure policy on Tehran, and said no one in his country believes in any further extension of the nuclear talks with the world powers.

"I believe that the other side should understand this reality that if it wants to reach an agreement with Iran, it won't be possible through keeping pressure, as Iranians don't strike agreements under pressure," Zarif told FNA on Wednesday.

Asked if extension of the nuclear talks after the upcoming deadline of July 10 will be among possible options, he said, "It is too difficult to imagine that this time can be extended again."

"No one in the Islamic Republic seems to be ready for another extension in this round (of talks)," Zarif added.

He, meantime, described reaching a final deal with the Group 5+1 (the US, Russia, China, Britain and France plus Germany) as "completely possible", and said, "We don't have any problems and our nuclear program is completely peaceful and all measures which are due to be adopted are aimed at ensuring them that this program is peaceful and no problem exists in this regard."

Asked about the possibility of holding a new round of ministerial talks between Tehran and the world powers on the sidelines of a security conference in Munich early February, Zarif said, "We haven't yet decided about holding a meeting with the G5+1 in Munich."

The Iranian top diplomat underlined that the only definite session is the Thursday meeting between Iran and the three European members of the G5+1 in Istanbul, which will be at the level of deputy foreign ministers.

The 10th round of negotiations between Iran and the six world powers was held in Vienna from November 18 to 24, where the seven nations decided to extend the talks until July after they failed to strike an agreement.

The latest round of the nuclear talks between the two sides was held at the level of deputy foreign ministers in Geneva, Switzerland, on January 18.

The two sides decided to continue their talk in February without specifying the time and venue.

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Both Iran and the G5+1 negotiators have underlined that cutting a final deal before the July 10 deadline is possible.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13931108000643>

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Press TV – Tehran, Iran

Top Iran MP Warns US Congress against New Sanctions

Friday, January 30, 2015

The first vice speaker of the Iranian parliament (Majlis) has warned that Tehran will scale up its nuclear program should Capitol Hill impose further sanctions against the Islamic Republic over its civilian atomic work.

"If the US Congress makes the slightest move to ratchet up sanctions [against Iran], Majlis will instruct the government to take measures to further advance its nuclear objectives and [increase] uranium enrichment for peaceful purposes as much as needed by the country," Mohammad-Hassan Aboutorabi-Fard told reporters on Thursday.

He said that Majlis has so far worked out the necessary strategies, advising Washington to "learn lessons" from its experience over the past few years.

Following the referral of Iran's nuclear case to the UN Security Council a decade ago, Aboutorabi-Fard said, Majlis tasked the government with pressing ahead with the country's nuclear program, adding that the Arak heavy water reactor, 19,000 centrifuges and the Fordo nuclear facility are among the achievements made by the country.

The Iranian official's remarks came after the US Senate Committee on Banking on Thursday approved a bill that would endorse further sanctions against Iran if nuclear talks between Tehran and the P5+1 group of world powers fail to lead to an agreement by a self-imposed deadline.

This comes as the US President Barack Obama administration has warned that the new Iran sanctions proposed by the US Congress would spoil the ongoing talks.

Obama has also threatened to veto further sanctions.

Earlier this month, spokesman for the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of Iran's Majlis, Seyyed Hossein Naqavi Hosseini, said that legislators are working on a motion under which the government would be obliged to step up uranium enrichment using new-generation centrifuges.

He said that the move is in reaction to recent announcements by US lawmakers that Congress mulls more sanctions against the Islamic Republic.

<http://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2015/01/30/395364/Iran-official-warns-US-over-new-bans>

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Tasnim News Agency – Tehran, Iran

Interim Political Deal Likely by March: Iranian Nuclear Negotiator

January 30, 2015

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araqchi described talks with the Group 5+1 (the five permanent UNSC members plus Germany) over Tehran's peaceful nuclear program as a difficult "Marathon", but said an interim agreement could be reached by March.

"The marathon of negotiations continues," Araqchi said after four hours of negotiations with his French, British, and German counterparts on Thursday, adding "We are trying to reach a preliminary political agreement by March".



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Deputy foreign ministers from Iran and the European members of the Group 5+1 (also known as P5+1 and E3+3) held one-day nuclear talks in Istanbul on Thursday.

The talks were part of regular meetings between Tehran and the world powers aimed at settling a decade-long standoff on Iran's nuclear case.

“Simultaneous negotiation with six countries is difficult,” he stressed, noting that the six countries have diverse opinions on the issue.

The senior negotiator said the Iranian delegation held good negotiations with the three European countries on Thursday, days after their bilateral talks with the Americans.

Araqchi added that talks with the Russian and Chinese sides are also held regularly.

He further described the negotiations as “very useful”, but noted at the same time that it is too early to say that progress has been made.

Iran and the Group 5+1 are in talks to hammer out a final agreement to end more than a decade of impasse over Tehran’s nuclear energy program.

<http://www.tasnimnews.com/English/Home/Single/637550>

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The New Indian Express – Chennai, India

Canister Launch of Agni-V on Saturday

By Hemant Kumar Rout

29th January 2015

BALASORE: After the three-day tour of US President Barack Obama, the Defence Research Development Organisation (DRDO) here is readying for the first canister launch of India’s longest range ballistic missile Agni-V in full operational configuration. The test is likely to be carried out from the Integrated Test Range (ITR) off the Odisha coast on Saturday.

Defence sources said, the test was postponed twice -- in December and early January -- due to Obama visit and lack of schedule of Prime Minister Narendra Modi who was slated to witness the launch along with the Defence Minister.

While the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) is yet to confirm Modi’s visit, the organisation is likely to go ahead with its schedule. The DRDO is planning to give a memorable farewell to its outgoing Chief Avinash Chander, who was unceremoniously removed from his post on January 13, sources in DRDO informed The Express.

“As the term of Chander, the brain behind the Agni missiles, ends on January 31, the scientists want to make the date momentous,” said sources.

Meanwhile, preparations for the launch are on in full swing at the Wheeler Island. Over 300 scientists and technical staff from several laboratories including Hyderabad-based Defence Research and Development Laboratory (DRDL), Research Centre Imarat (RCI) and Advanced Systems Laboratory (ASL) are camping here.

During the test, Agni-V will be fired from a sealed canister mounted on a launcher truck. With a dummy payload, the missile will be pushed out of the canister by a gas generator after which the actual stage separations will occur as per the coordination.

With a strike range of over 5,000, Agni-V is country’s first intercontinental range ballistic missile (ICBM) which is capable of hitting targets in all Asian countries and parts of Africa and Europe. The 17-metre long, two-metre wide, three-stage, solid-fuelled missile can carry a payload of 1.5 tonne and weighs around 50 tonnes.

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A canister-launch system gives the forces the requisite operational flexibility to promptly transport the ballistic missile and launch it from a place of their choice. The DRDO is also working on the canister version of other Agni series of missiles including I, III and IV.

A successful launch would push the missile a step forward towards its induction in the Armed Forces signaling the defence organisation to go for its production though it has to undergo two more trials before it is inducted, possibly in two years.

After Agni-V missile is inducted, the DRDO will focus more on multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles (MIRVs) and manoeuvring warheads or re-entry vehicles to defeat enemy ballistic missile defence manoeuvring systems.

<http://www.newindianexpress.com/states/odisha/Canister-Launch-of-Agni-V-on-Saturday/2015/01/29/article2642090.ece>

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The Economic Times – New Delhi, India

India-US N-deal: Pakistan Warns of Arms Race

By Press Trust of India (PTI)

30 January 2015

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has said the Indo-US agreements signed during President Barack Obama's visit to New Delhi would spark an arms race in South Asia, days after the US and India reached a nuclear trade breakthrough and agreed to extend defence cooperation for another ten year.

"Pakistan is examining the imbalance (likely to be caused by these agreements) and the possible ways and means for redressing it," National Security Advisor Sartaj Aziz said yesterday at a seminar here organised by think-tank Strategic Vision Institute on implications of Obama's visit to India. \

Aziz called on the US and other members of the international community to support the objective of regional balance and strategic stability.

"Pakistan's key concern is the paramount importance of strategic stability in South Asia," he said.

The US, he said, ignored concerns of the Pakistan government though Pakistan had "forcefully" conveyed to the US even before President Obama's second visit to India.

The US was asked to "take a comprehensive view of strategic imbalance in South Asia and avoid any steps that may jeopardise the region's strategic stability", he said.

Aziz alleged that India's military build-up through large-scale acquisition of arms from US and Russia; expansion of fissile material production facilities; and quest for advanced technology for missile and related delivery systems would accentuate the already existing conventional and nuclear imbalance in South Asia.

The worsening of the strategic imbalance at a time of the heightened Pak-India tensions, ceasefire violations along the Line of Control and the International Border was extremely worrisome, he claimed.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, Aziz had pledged to take all measures to safeguard national interests.

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/india-us-n-deal-pakistan-warns-of-arms-race/articleshow/46063915.cms>

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The National Interest – Washington, D.C.

OPINION/Feature

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The Real Nuclear Nightmare When It Comes to U.S.-Russian Ties

A two-decade era in which the U.S. and Russia worked together to dismantle and secure the deadly legacies of the Cold War appears to have drawn almost entirely to a close.

By Matthew Bunn

January 24, 2015

In the dark days at the turn of the year, all but a few bits of U.S.-Russian cooperation to strengthen nuclear security in Russia came to a halt. No longer, for now at least, will U.S. experts work with counterparts at major Russian nuclear facilities to implement better means to prevent insiders from stealing fissile material, or to improve accounting, so a theft would be quickly detected.

The crisis in Ukraine, adding to issues that have chilled relations with Moscow for years, provoked a deep freeze in U.S.-Russian relations. A two-decade era in which the United States and Russia worked together to dismantle and secure the deadly legacies of the Cold War appears to have drawn almost entirely to a close. The danger of nuclear bomb material falling into terrorist hands will be higher as a result of this downturn in cooperation – putting U.S., Russian, and global security at greater risk.

At a mid-December meeting, Russian officials confirmed what they had said for months; with only a few exceptions, Moscow cut off the U.S. role in this work. Russia is not willing to be seen as needing America's help to manage its nuclear stockpile. Given that Washington cut off nuclear energy and science cooperation as part of the sanctions over Russia's behavior in Ukraine, it was not surprising that Russia would retaliate in the realm of the nuclear security work valued by the United States. Russia has also announced it will not participate in the next and likely last Nuclear Security Summit in 2016.

To be sure, tremendous improvements in nuclear security in Russia had already been achieved. Potential nuclear bomb material is now in thick steel vaults with security cameras and armed guards when it is not in use, and there are radiation detectors to catch would-be thieves if they try to steal it.

But nuclear security is never "finished." It must be constantly improving in the face of evolving threats. There are still weaknesses in nuclear security in Russia that thieves could exploit – particularly corrupt insiders who understand how security systems work. And no one knows whether Russia will devote the resources necessary to sustain the levels of security that are now in place.

The insider threat is real: in 2012, for example, the director and two of the deputy directors of one of Russia's largest plutonium and highly enriched uranium facilities were arrested for millions of dollars' worth of corruption (though not stealing nuclear material).

As custodians of the world's largest nuclear stockpiles and the most experience in guarding them, the United States and Russia have much to learn from each other about how to fix such problems. A 2012 intrusion at the main U.S. site that stores highly enriched uranium by an 82 year-old nun and two other protesters showed there is more to do to strengthen nuclear security in the United States as well. Despite their differences over Ukraine and other issues, the two countries share a responsibility to work together to ensure that their stockpiles are secure and accounted for, and to lead the way in helping other countries provide effective security for their own inventories.

While the politicians argue, technical experts share a common language and can work together to develop solutions to dangers that face us both. Indeed, from the Cold War to the present, dialogue among scientists and engineers has often offered a critical back channel that helped the governments find new solutions.

Some small cooperative nuclear security projects are still under way, ranging from work with the Russian nuclear regulators to security improvements at a handful of small facilities. The two sides should use these remaining projects as the foundation to build a new partnership of equals, with resources and ideas from both sides, rather than a donor-recipient relationship. This should include exchanges of best practices in addressing particular nuclear security challenges; joint R&D to develop new, more cost-effective security and accounting systems; joint



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work to help other countries improve nuclear security; and exchanges of visits to nuclear facilities to compare approaches and offer confidential advice on particular aspects of security.

Some of this can and should start soon – but more is possible if there is progress in resolving the crisis in Ukraine. If that progress comes, restarting nuclear energy and nuclear science cooperation should be a top priority, to help pave the way for an expanded nuclear security dialogue. The experts from the U.S. and Russian nuclear facilities can reduce dangers to us all – if their governments will let them work together.

Matthew Bunn is a professor at Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs and is co-principal investigator with the Belfer Center's Project on Managing the Atom. He is a former adviser on nonproliferation in the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, where he focused on control of nuclear weapons and materials.

<http://nationalinterest.org/feature/the-real-nuclear-nightmare-when-it-comes-us-russian-ties-12102>

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War Is Boring.com

OPINION/Commentary

America Has a Very Expensive Plan to Replace Very Old Nukes

Pricey new Missile Could Take the Place of Today's Minuteman III

By James Drew

January 26, 2015

The U.S. Air Force has announced its strategy for replacing America's Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missiles—which have stood alert, awaiting Armageddon, for nearly five decades.

Making nukes is hard. But squeezing another multi-billion-dollar project into the Air Force's already bulging budget is perhaps the bigger challenge.

We're talking about the Ground-Based Strategic Deterrent, an effort to replace the stockpile of Minuteman nuclear missiles Boeing built for the Pentagon back in the late 1960s.

According to a Jan. 23 notice on the government's contracting Website, the Air Force wants to build an entirely new booster stack but keep the existing Minuteman payload assembly, capable of delivering one or multiple independent nuclear warheads.

The proposed missile will occupy renovated Minuteman silos and use the same launch control centers. Those have been in the ground since the '60s.

If Congress funds it, the Ground-Based Strategic Deterrent program will deliver an entirely new command-and-control network that connects the president to his nuclear options. This replaces the network of outdated computers that perhaps should be in a museum instead of commanding the most fearsome weapons on Earth.

The notice comes as the White House prepares to submit its budget for fiscal year 2016, and as outgoing Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel pushes for the Pentagon to direct more money toward the nuclear force.

Hagel's not the only one calling for more nuke cash. Recently, a top Air Force general spoke in Washington to lobby for more money to replace almost every strategic weapon system in the Pentagon's nuclear arsenal.

Maj. Gen. Garrett Harencak, assistant chief of staff for strategic deterrence and nuclear integration, said the Air Force has been on a nuclear weapons "procurement holiday" for the past quarter-century. Modernization efforts should be a priority, Harencak said.

"Other countries have not, they did not take that procurement holiday," Harencak claimed on Jan. 20. "It is unfortunate a lot of these bills are all coming due now. We should have been taking care of this, we didn't. That's in the past. I've got to deal with today and the future."

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The general's "holiday" statement is a familiar one—and not entirely fair. "If 'holiday' generally refers to 'a day of festivity or recreation when no work is done,' then it's been a bad holiday," pointed out Hans Kristensen, a nuclear weapons policy expert with the Federation of American Scientists.

"One can always want more, but the 'procurement holiday' claim glosses over the busy nuclear modernization and maintenance efforts of the past two decades," Kristensen wrote on Jan. 21.

Kristensen points to several rounds of nuclear warhead life-extensions by the Energy Department plus the Air Force's fielding of the nuclear-armed B-2 stealth bomber and the introduction of the Navy's *Ohio*-class missile submarines in the 1990s.

The government spent \$8 billion upgrading the current Minuteman system in the 2000s while the Navy fielded its new Trident II D5 missile in the Pacific. Advanced command-and-control satellites boosted into orbit and the bomber force received several new features.

So maybe it's not accurate to claim America has neglected its nuclear forces. Still, the Ground-Based Strategic Deterrent has arrived at the back of a long, long queue for funding—and it's not certain whether the next-generation ICBM project will attract kick-starter money in the next budget.

The Air Force is simultaneously seeking funds to buy new bombers worth \$550 million each, plus a new cruise missile and secondhand Army UH-60 helicopters to replace the old UH-1s that fly security missions around missile fields. The B-52 also needs a new radar and new engines.

"In truth, none can wait," Brig. Gen. Ferdinand Stoss, Air Force Global Strike Command's top planning and requirements official, wrote in an email in December. "Therefore, we are developing strategies to modernize each based on operational risk and program maturity."

These "priorities" must compete with efforts to modernize conventional forces with, among other things, new satellites and the over-budget F-35 Joint Strike Fighter. Air Force officials want to retire older, inexpensive planes such as the A-10 in order to free up cash for F-35s, but Congress has blocked the moves.

As of Friday, the Minuteman replacement program is in the "market research" phase. Defense firms are keen to offer their support, considering the billions of dollars and decades of maintenance work on the line for whichever contractors the Air Force selects for the program.

In fact, work on the new missile is already underway. Three firms have secured small contracts to begin designing new guidance systems. Contracts to help design the other components should be forthcoming as the GBSD program matures.

The Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center's ICBM division at Hill Air Force Base in Utah is directing the missile work. The focal point for industry is Falcon Hill, an aerospace research park located alongside the base.

Next month, Falcon Hill will host a briefing between the Air Force and industry to outline the main performance characteristics of the proposed missile system. By December, the Pentagon's top acquisition office should make a decision whether to move the project to the technology-maturation phase.

If Falcon Hill *does* get the green light, work will ramp up almost immediately. It would be the flying branch's first new ICBM project since the ironically-named Peacekeeper program. The Peacekeeper, capable of delivering 10 nuclear warheads to anywhere on Earth, retired from service in 2005.

To maintain and upgrade the Minuteman while simultaneously preparing for the introduction of the replacement missile, the Air Force is rejigging its ICBM contractor arrangements.

The new ICBM world order, called the Future ICBM Sustainment and Acquisition Construct, does away with the previous prime contractor model, where one company reigned supreme and everybody else was a subcontractor.

The contract arrangement has built-in flexibility so the Air Force can shrink and grow its Minuteman and Ground-Based Strategic Deterrent teams as needed, without having to repeatedly go through the source-selection process.

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The Air Force will centrally manage the Minuteman and GBSD projects, and in 2013 hired BAE Systems to assist, ending an existing prime contract that Northrop Grumman had held since 1997.

It's not all bad news for Northrop, though. On Jan. 14, the company secured a spot on the team by winning a five-year deal worth up to \$1 billion to support the Air Force's ICBM ground infrastructure, consisting of 450 silos, 45 launch control centers and dozens of test sites spread across 32,000 square miles and five states.

On Jan. 8, Boeing secured a FISAC contract that extends through 2023 to maintain the guidance subsystem. Last June, Lockheed Martin won the FISAC reentry vehicle contract. A final contract to manage the rocket booster stack is due later this year.

These awards are important for each contractors' current and future involvement in the ICBM business, according to Peggy Morse, Boeing's vice president of directed energy and strategic systems.

"It's very important for the government that anything that's done on GBSD is going to be evolutionary from what we have today, and in some cases has to be backward compatible," Morse said in a Jan. 14 interview. "From our point of view, winning this business was extremely important to keep our finger in the game."

Harencak said during his speech that the government's position is to work toward a world free of nuclear weapons. But until that "happy day" comes, he said, the Air Force cannot fall behind on nuclear modernization.

"It's not going to be inexpensive, but it's also not unaffordable," Harencak said. "It's something we have to do to protect our nation."

In reality, the cost will be enormous. This week, the Congressional Budget Office estimated the government's planned nuclear weapons spending through 2024 at \$348 billion. Spending on the ICBM force will total more than \$26 billion over the next decade, the budget office found.

"The big costs for recapitalizing and rebuilding the arsenal aren't scheduled to hit the balance sheets until the early- and mid-2020s," Kingston Reif, a nuclear weapons policy expert at the Arms Control Association, said in a Jan. 23 interview. "We're still only seeing a small slice of the planned cost."

On Jan. 1, the State Department reported that during 2014 the U.S. had 794 deployed land- and sea-based ballistic missiles and heavy bombers. There were 1,642 deployed nuclear warheads.

Russia, by contrast, had 528 deployed nuclear "delivery vehicles" and 1,643 warheads.

America's nuclear weapons stockpile in 2014, accounting for deployed and non-deployed assets, included 698 Minuteman missiles, 56 Peacekeeper missiles, and 411 Trident II missiles. There were 20 nuclear-capable B-2 bombers and 89 nuclear-capable B-52 bombers, according to the report.

<https://medium.com/war-is-boring/america-has-a-very-expensive-plan-to-replace-very-old-nukes-2451520c257d>

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The National Interest – Washington, D.C.

OPINION/Feature

5 Myths about America's Nuclear Weapons Debunked

"As the mission of our nuclear weapons changes, so should the size and shape of the arsenal. Until then, we will continue to receive unsettling reports of scandals and inefficiencies within our nuclear enterprise."

By Robert Gard, Philip Coyle, Greg Terry, John Isaacs

January 28, 2015

The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists announced last week that it has decided to move its famed "Doomsday Clock" three minutes closer to midnight or, in effect, closer to the "end of humanity." While this year, the Bulletin focused on the threat from climate change, a spokesperson added that "a nuclear arms race resulting from modernization of huge arsenals pose extraordinary and undeniable threats to the continued existence of humanity."

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Indeed, nuclear weapons still play a limited, yet very expensive, role in our national security. The Congressional Budget Office announced last week that the United States will spend about \$350 billion over the next decade to upgrade and maintain its arsenal. But at the same time, there are also misconceptions about the purpose, status and effectiveness of our arsenal. Let's disarm some of those myths:

1. Nuclear weapons are the highest priority U.S. military forces:

Out-going Secretary Hagel perpetuated this myth during his press conference announcing the results of a recent nuclear review: "Our nuclear deterrent plays a critical role in ensuring U.S. national security, and it's DOD's highest priority mission. No other capability we have is more important." While nuclear deterrence has been a vestige of U.S. defense policy since World War II, it clearly does not represent today's highest priority for the DOD in terms of attention, planning or funding.

Nuclear weapons do not address the threat of ISIL in Syria and Iraq, the Ebola epidemic, the continued insurgency in Afghanistan or Russian expansion into Crimea and Ukraine. Conventional forces, medical assistance and diplomacy are essential in addressing those issues and deserve to be prioritized for current and foreseeable threats to the United States and its allies.

Nuclear weapons have lost much of their value since the end of the Cold War. In fact, a 2012 study conducted by a group of experienced former national-security officials and political leaders chaired by former Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General James Cartwright, and including the aforementioned Hagel, declared that "No sensible argument has been put forward for using nuclear weapons to solve any of the major 21st century problems we face [including] threats posed by rogue states, failed states, proliferation, regional conflicts, terrorism, cyber warfare, organized crime, drug trafficking, conflict-driven mass migration of refugees, epidemics, or climate change In fact, nuclear weapons have on balance arguably become more a part of the problem than any solution."

2. The threat of a nuclear weapons attack on the United States is as great as or greater today than it was during the Cold War:

While our current relationship with Russia is strained, it certainly does not rise to a Cold War-level of risk of a nuclear exchange. As Lt. General James Kowalski, Vice Commander of the U.S. Strategic Command, stated in 2013, a Russian nuclear attack on the United States is such "a remote possibility" that it is "hardly worth discussing." The biggest concern to Lt. General Kowalski is not a nuclear strike, but a self-inflicted wound: "The greatest risk to my force is doing something stupid."

Accordingly, there is debate about how large an arsenal is necessary for nuclear deterrence. During the Cold War, U.S. and Soviet arsenals reached about 30,000 and 45,000 weapons, respectively. Now, U.S. and Russian levels hover around 5,000. The 2012 study involving out-going Secretary Hagel recommended a ceiling of 900 nuclear warheads as more than enough to guarantee American security, and another study has suggested as few as 311 warheads are sufficient.

3. Nuclear weapons don't cost much:

Plans to modernize the U.S. nuclear arsenal could cost up to \$1 trillion over the next three decades. As Gen. Mark A. Welsh III, Air Force Chief of Staff, explains: "[t]he cost of modernizing the nuclear infrastructure is not small. So I think that will lead to a very honest debate about where can we afford to invest, where must we invest, and how does that relate to a strategy going forward for the nation?"

Pressing forward with current nuclear modernization plans will drain funds needed for conventional forces, leaving our armed services without the funding essential to maintain combat readiness and projected levels of operation. Both the Navy and Air Force are asking for separate funds to be set up to pay for the new nuclear launchers so they don't undercut conventional forces.

4. Nuclear weapons are safe and secure, and accidents are rare:



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The larger the arsenal, the tougher it is to protect, the more expensive it is to maintain, and the more likely it is that there will be accidents. The United States has a less-than-perfect track record of nuclear stewardship; at least 1,200 nuclear weapons were involved in “significant” accidents between 1950 and 1968. Highlights of the United States’ extensive history of nuclear blunders include a 1980 incident in which a dropped wrench led to a fatal explosion of a nuclear missile in Arkansas and a recently declassified crisis in 1961 in which the U.S. Air force dropped two nuclear bombs over North Carolina (combined blast power of 260 times the bomb that devastated Hiroshima) that miraculously didn’t detonate.

While some may argue that these accidents are in the past, blunders continue to plague the nuclear enterprise. The recent firing of two Air Force nuclear commanders along with other officers for incompetence, rampant cheating in both the Navy’s and Air Force’s nuclear programs, and a serious “Bent Spear” incident involving an accidental flight of six nuclear-armed cruise missiles across the United States without authorization or proper security, all highlight the inherent risks of maintaining a large nuclear arsenal. Also, today’s incidents are testimony that the high-priority postings for young officers are not in the nuclear forces.

5. Money can fix the problems with our nuclear arsenal:

New reports have identified more than 100 fixes, costing several billions of dollars over a five-year period, to address some of the issues identified during various investigations. While the review and its recommendations may improve the morale and management of U.S. nuclear forces, throwing money at the nuclear arsenal certainly will not resolve the major issues associated with the outdated structure of our current forces designed for the Cold War confrontation with the Soviet Union. No amount of equipment upgrades or reorganization can instill an operational value in weapons that will never be used. It’s no wonder that Air Force personnel find no satisfaction and see no career advancement in babysitting weapons with no high-priority purpose in today’s world. As the mission of our nuclear weapons changes, so should the size and shape of the arsenal. Until then, we will continue to receive unsettling reports of scandals and inefficiencies within our nuclear enterprise.

Robert G. Gard Jr. is a retired Army Lieutenant General and chairman of the board of the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation. Philip E. Coyle is the Senior Science Fellow, Greg Terryn is a Scoville Fellow and John Isaacs is a Senior Fellow at the Center.

<http://nationalinterest.org/feature/5-myths-about-americas-nuclear-weapons-debunked-12136>

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The Hill – Washington, D.C.

OPINION/Congress Blog

Time Now to Confront our Strategic Threats

By USAF Maj. Gen. Howard N. Thompson (ret.)

January 28, 2015

With a new Congress potentially capable of actually passing legislation for presidential signature, the time for decisive action on countering strategic threats is now. Recent headlines and the media focus on terrorist events or ISIS while significant strategic threats to the Homeland continue to grow larger and more complex. These threats come in three primary areas: cyber, rogue nation ballistic missiles, and new highly capable cruise missiles. The American people must come to understand the reality and complexity of these threats and demand a holistic strategy to mitigate them, beginning with key program investment decisions.

The cyber threat is possibly the most prolific in this information age, but it hides in plain sight with nearly all of the US’s cyber tools hidden behind a necessary veil of secrecy. Yet with little imagination we can all appreciate the potential impact to our electric power, financial, and communications networks. Joint Chief’s Chairman Dempsey recently highlighted that while the US enjoys clear superiority in other domains, we face peer level threats within the cyber domain, and even non-state actors possess both disruptive and destructive cyber capability.

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This parity is not acceptable and cannot continue. We need to act now to develop a comprehensive new cyber approach that includes defensive, offensive, and consequence mitigation capabilities and policies that allow the Pentagon and National Security Agency to share defensive cyber capabilities with these vital commercial/public providers.

Another threat is the Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) now emerging in Iran and North Korea. Both countries are continuing massive national efforts to develop nuclear weapons suitable for their ICBM's capable of reaching the US. Recent open source reports conclude that both rogue regimes are in fact closer to achieving their goals than previously reported by US Intelligence agencies, and yet Ground-Based Missile Defense (GMD) funding has been reduced by over \$1B over the past five years.

GMD funding must be restored and even increased to fully support several Missile Defense Agency (MDA) priorities. At the figurative "tip of the spear" is the Exoatmospheric Kill Vehicle (EKV) that needs a near-term redesign and refinement to better discriminate the actual reentry warhead from missile debris and countermeasures that assure the kill. In order to get there in quantity, MDA needs funding for Ground-Based Interceptor (GBI) missile modernization and procurement. MDA also wants to develop and field the new Long Range Discriminating Radar (LRDR) in Alaska to provide enhanced detection and cueing as well as continue the "Aegis Ashore" program in Romania. Finally, to effectively evolve our missile defense system we must also bolster testing to confirm performance, enable refinement, and help deter the enemy from pursuing ICBMs.

The third strategic threat comes from Cruise missile technologies that have figuratively and literally exploded over the past decade, especially within Russia. Russia has developed a family of conventional and nuclear cruise missiles with a combined range and stealth to be virtually undetectable to the US until target impact. One packaging scheme includes a "containerized" cruise missile that appears outwardly as an innocuous shipping container to be carried aboard any commercial container ship. As much as cyber and ICBMs, these cruise missiles are highly destabilizing and constitute an undetectable "first-strike" capability against the Homeland that cannot be discounted.

An outstanding first step has been congressional support for the JLENS program, which represents a crucial down payment on an eventual cruise missile defense capability for the Nation. JLENS is currently undergoing field testing at Aberdeen, Maryland. This testing must continue, as it will guide development of an adequately persistent and capable National cruise missile defense strategy and capability.

Going forward, Congress, the Pentagon, and industry must work together to develop the capability to transfer JLENS-like technology to a family of untethered, high-altitude aerostats that will significantly increase detection and reaction range. Also, all future improvements and evolved systems must include JLENS' capability to fully integrate with all current and future weapons systems and command and control architectures.

This new Congress represents a tremendous opportunity to undo years of defense budgetary fecklessness. Action will require understanding these threats and the courage, statesmanship, decisiveness, and leadership to move forward. This includes ending blind unthinking sequestration cuts and instead terminating lower priority and/or failing programs. Congress will then be able to immediately fully fund MDA's priorities for ground-based missile defense, continue support for robust JLENS testing while concurrently challenging industry to take that technology to the next level, and take the lead in formulating an effective cyber defense policy for the nation.

The defense of the Homeland is a "Sacred Trust" levied upon our military and government. Responsible members of Congress and the administration must put that sacred trust first in these dangerous and challenging times.

Thompson is a former chief of staff at NORAD/NORTHCOM.

<http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/homeland-security/230899-time-now-to-confront-our-strategic-threats>

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The USAF Counterproliferation Center was established in 1998 at the direction of the Chief of Staff of the Air Force. Located at Maxwell AFB, this Center capitalizes on the resident expertise of Air University, while extending its reach far beyond - and influences a wide audience of leaders and policy makers. A memorandum of agreement between the Air Staff Director for Nuclear and Counterproliferation (then AF/XON), now AF/A5XP) and Air War College Commandant established the initial manpower and responsibilities of the Center. This included integrating counterproliferation awareness into the curriculum and ongoing research at the Air University; establishing an information repository to promote research on counterproliferation and nonproliferation issues; and directing research on the various topics associated with counterproliferation and nonproliferation .

The Secretary of Defense's Task Force on Nuclear Weapons Management released a report in 2008 that recommended "Air Force personnel connected to the nuclear mission be required to take a professional military education (PME) course on national, defense, and Air Force concepts for deterrence and defense." As a result, the Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center, in coordination with the AF/A10 and Air Force Global Strike Command, established a series of courses at Kirtland AFB to provide continuing education through the careers of those Air Force personnel working in or supporting the nuclear enterprise. This mission was transferred to the Counterproliferation Center in 2012, broadening its mandate to providing education and research to not just countering WMD but also nuclear deterrence.

In February 2014, the Center's name was changed to the Center for Unconventional Weapons Studies to reflect its broad coverage of unconventional weapons issues, both offensive and defensive, across the six joint operating concepts (deterrence operations, cooperative security, major combat operations, irregular warfare, stability operations, and homeland security). The term "unconventional weapons," currently defined as nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons, also includes the improvised use of chemical, biological, and radiological hazards.

The CUWS's military insignia displays the symbols of nuclear, biological, and chemical hazards. The arrows above the hazards represent the four aspects of counterproliferation - counterforce, active defense, passive defense, and consequence management.

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