



USAF Center for Unconventional Weapons Studies (CUWS) Outreach Journal

Issue No. 1155, 06 March 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: "Nonstrategic Nuclear Weapons". Authored by Amy F. Woolf, Specialist in Nuclear Weapons Policy; published by Congressional Research Service (CRS); February 23, 2015, 41 pages. A CRS Report prepared for members and committees of Congress.

<http://fas.org/sgp/crs/nuke/RL32572.pdf>

The FY2013 Defense Authorization Act (H.R. 4310, Section 1037) indicated that it is the sense of Congress that "the United States should pursue negotiations with the Russian Federation aimed at the reduction of Russian deployed and nondeployed nonstrategic nuclear forces." The United States and Russia have not included limits on these weapons in past arms control agreements. Nevertheless, some analysts and Members of Congress have argued that disparities in the numbers of nonstrategic nuclear weapons may become more important as the United States and Russia reduce their numbers of deployed long-range, strategic nuclear weapons.

During the Cold War, the United States and Soviet Union both deployed nonstrategic nuclear weapons for use in the field during a conflict. While there are several ways to distinguish between strategic and nonstrategic nuclear weapons, most analysts consider nonstrategic weapons to be shorter-range delivery systems with lower yield warheads that might be used to attack troops or facilities on the battlefield. They have included nuclear mines; artillery; short-, medium-, and long-range ballistic missiles; cruise missiles; and gravity bombs. In contrast with the longer-range "strategic" nuclear weapons, these weapons had a lower profile in policy debates and arms control negotiations, possibly because they did not pose a direct threat to the continental United States. At the end of the 1980s, each nation still had thousands of these weapons deployed with their troops in the field, aboard naval vessels, and on aircraft.

In 1991, the United States and Soviet Union both withdrew from deployment most and eliminated from their arsenals many of their nonstrategic nuclear weapons. The United States now has approximately 760 nonstrategic nuclear weapons, with around 200 deployed with aircraft in Europe and the remaining stored in the United States. Estimates vary, but experts believe Russia still has between 1,000 and 6,000 warheads for nonstrategic nuclear weapons in its arsenal. The Bush Administration quietly redeployed and removed some of the nuclear weapons deployed in Europe. Russia, however seems to have increased its reliance on nuclear weapons in its national security concept. Some analysts argue that Russia has backed away from its commitments from 1991 and may develop and deploy new types of nonstrategic nuclear weapons.

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Air Force Times – Tysons Corner, VA

New Phones, Computers for Nuclear Silos are Years away

By Jeff Schogol, Staff writer
February 28, 2015

Airman who stand ready to unleash the most destructive power known to humanity will have to make due with 1980s technology for a while longer.

Global Strike Command plans to start replacing antiquated phones, computers, printers and other equipment in nuclear silos starting in the second quarter of fiscal 2018, said Col. Scott Edwards, chief of the command's ICBM requirements division.

The reason it is taking so long to upgrade office equipment is that any equipment that goes into a nuclear-certified system needs to be nuclear-certified as well, Edwards told Air Force Times on Feb. 27.

"That includes – I know this sounds strange to the folks out in the world – printers, and [computer] drives and all of these things that we are talking about," Edwards said. "So there are significant Air Force and nuclear security requirements they have to meet."

The process of upgrading the silos is funded to 2020, said Mark Silliman, deputy chief for the ICBM division.

"We're going to do it as smartly as possible and from an operational perspective because this block upgrade is not the only modification that we have going on," Silliman said.

The Air Force may end up using off-the-shelf equipment, but it would have to modify it so that it works with the other technology in nuclear silos, he said.

"A lot of the concern has to do with proximity with crucial circuits, so we have to make sure that that off-the-shelf item is packaged correctly so it can operate correctly with all the cyber and nuke-surety concerns addressed," Silliman said.

Several agencies have to make sure that the equipment in nuclear silos meets standards, so the process of upgrading any technology takes a long time, Edwards said.

"That's why we can't just go out to Walmart or Target or wherever and just buy these off the shelf and plug them right in like we would at home, because they have to be hardened; they have to be able to withstand blast with shock and nuclear effects and all of that kind of stuff," Edwards said.

Both the phones and computers in nuclear silos are 80s technology that were fielded in the early 1990s. In April, CBS News' "60 Minutes" showed that missileers still use computer with eight-inch floppy disk drives and their phones work so poorly that it is hard for them to hear what people are telling them.

The phones are not used to transmit launch orders, Edwards said. Rather than replace the phones, computers and other equipment separately, Global Strike Command plans to upgrade all of the equipment at once, Edwards said.

"That process, the disadvantage is it is difficult and long to go through, but the advantage is: We know this process very well, we've been doing it for almost 50 years, and it works," he added. "So we know when we go through this process the equipment that is certified will work as advertised."

<http://www.airforcetimes.com/story/military/2015/02/28/upgrades-to-silos-will-take-years/24124069/>

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San Antonio Express-News – San Antonio, TX

Training Command Loses a Star

Nuclear force ills prompt changes

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Maxwell AFB, Alabama

By Sig Christenson
February 28, 2015

In a shift sparked by a series of embarrassing missteps in its handling of nuclear weapons, the Air Force has ordered an organizational change that will cost the San Antonio-based Air Education and Training Command its four-star general.

The Air Force said its Global Strike Command would rise to four-star status and that AETC's commander, Gen. Robin Rand, would lead it once confirmed by the Senate.

Congress has authorized nine four-star commands. To boost the Global Strike Command, it had to reduce the status of another, dropping the AETC to a three-star outfit.

Air Force spokeswoman Ann Stefanek said "a three-star commander could effectively command and lead our important education and training mission." What that means to San Antonio, which long has been home to the state's highest-ranking general officer, wasn't clear.

Former Air Force Secretary F. Whitten Peters predicted there likely would be a "marginal" reduction in AETC's general staff as well as the number of majors, colonels and captains.

AETC hasn't always been a four-star command. A four-star general officer has been in charge since 1992, but it was a three-star billet from 1942 to 1975, when it was elevated to four stars. It went back to three stars in 1986.

AETC will remain among the Air Force's largest commands, with 60,000 military, civilian and contract personnel at 12 bases, 23 wings and 11 geographically separated groups in 15 states. The command also oversees recruiting in the U.S. and around the world.

The Air Force's decision was hailed by retired Gen. Eugene Habiger, who once headed U.S. Strategic Command and had long sought the change. He noted that most major Air Force commands are headed by four-star generals, and that it was critical one lead its Global Strike Command.

"The nuclear enterprises in the Air Force have gone to great lengths to make changes in response to a series of tragic incidents that occurred in 2007, when the Air Force flew nuclear-tipped cruise missiles from North Dakota to Louisiana and shipped nuclear weapons parts to Taiwan," Habiger, who led all U.S. nuclear forces from 1996-98, said Friday.

Problems occasionally emerged in the U.S. nuclear force even after Global Strike Command's creation in 2009. Just last year, allegations of cheating on nuclear proficiency exams emerged, as did a drug abuse scandal at six bases.

In 2013, a two-star general responsible for all 450 Air Force intercontinental ballistic missiles was yanked from his post days after the U.S. Strategic Command's No. 2 officer was removed.

The Shreveport, Louisiana-based command oversees the nation's intercontinental ballistic missiles, the B-52 and B-2 bomber wings, and replaced a patchwork system in which Air Force nuclear assets were placed under various commands after the Strategic Air Command was eliminated in 1992.

Rand will come to his new command with limited nuclear weapons experience, a gap in his resume that has drawn skepticism. While he's spent no time in missile silos, Rand was on nuclear alert as an F-16 pilot in Europe. He also led the U.S. Air Force Weapons School at Nellis AFB, where he oversaw tactical skills training for B-52 and B-2 bomber crews.

"In my view, Gen. Rand can certainly overcome this skepticism and do a most credible job," Habiger said. "He goes out, he bonds with the missileers, he bonds with the bomber guys to establish some credibility."

<http://www.expressnews.com/news/local/article/Training-command-loses-a-star-6108262.php>

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Air Force Times – Tysons Corner, VA

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Air Force: Stealth Bomber in Need of Modernization, Upgrades

By Brian Everstine, Staff writer
March 4, 2015

The B-2 stealth bomber is one of the Air Force's youngest aircraft, but its maintenance and modernization needs are great. To meet those needs, the services has an effective maintenance program and is seeking authorization for multiple modernization projects in its fiscal 2016 budget, a top acquisition official told lawmakers Wednesday.

William LaPlante, assistant secretary of the Air Force for acquisition, credited new sustainment programs with keeping the B-2 Spirit in the air. The aircraft in fiscal 2014 flew at a mission capable rate of 56.9 percent, up from 46.7 percent the year before.

The increase is because of a "cost effective" program to sustain problem areas of the stealth bomber, namely the stealth materials on its skin, LaPlante said.

"In fact, one of the biggest contributors to the availability challenge is the maintenance of those materials," LaPlante told the House Armed Services projection forces subcommittee. "That's something going in the right direction. The availability is getting better because of that work."

The service only flies 20 of the B-2s. With a constant rotation of the jets in scheduled depot maintenance, the mission-capable rate of the aircraft has been lower than those of other aircraft in the service's fleet. The depot cycle takes approximately 13 months at Northrop Grumman's Plant 42 in Palmdale, California. About 70 percent of the B-2's programmed depot maintenance tasks is related to treating the low-observable coating system, according to the Air Force.

The biggest modernization priority is an effort to upgrade the jet's Defensive Management System, which includes new on-board computers and antenna systems.

"If we don't do DMS, we won't have the capability to operate in a modern, contested environment," LaPlante said.

The service is also operating other software on the jet, including a new weapons strike program that will let it carry advanced weapons such as the modernized B61-12 nuclear bomb.

<http://www.airforcetimes.com/story/military/tech/2015/03/04/air-force-budget-upgrade-b2/24388631/>

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The Jerusalem Post – Jerusalem, Israel

Senior General: US considering possible Middle East missile defense

Missile defense advocate says a THAAD system in the Middle East would be a "political chess move" in the current US talks with Iran over ending its nuclear weapons program.

By Reuters
March 05, 2015

WASHINGTON - The US military is considering sending its THAAD missile defense system to the Middle East, a senior US Army general said on Wednesday, citing what he called an urgent need to respond to foes with missile systems and the will to use them.

General Vincent Brooks, head of US Army Pacific Command, said no decisions had been made about deploying a US-owned Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) battery in the Middle East or South Korea, another region where he saw an urgent need given the threat posed by North Korea.

"The need is there in ... those two places, urgently, because we have adversaries who have capability and they have demonstrated that they are willing to use it," Brooks told Reuters in an interview.

Brooks did not name Iran, but US military officials have raised concerns in the past about Iran's development of longer-range missiles that could reach Israel and potentially Europe.

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The US military must weigh its options, given the high cost involved in deploying the THAAD weapon system, built by Lockheed Martin Corp, Brooks said. He said the US military also continued to explore options for lower-cost systems to defend against lesser threats, but gave no details.

The Army is preparing to swap out a THAAD battery that has been operating in Guam for about a year. It has four active THAAD batteries, with a fifth to start training this year.

"They have to decide where the need is greatest," said one congressional aide said. "The question is, what does the Central Command commander need to protect US forces."

The commander of US troops stationed in South Korea last June said he had proposed deploying THAAD missiles to South Korea to counter the growing threat of nuclear-armed North Korea's weapons capabilities.

Critics say such a deployment could inflame tensions with China and Russia as they see the move as a threat to their security interests.

US Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in Seoul last month that a THAAD deployment in South Korea was not under active discussion.

Lockheed will make initial deliveries of a THAAD system bought by the United Arab Emirates under a \$1.96 billion sale first announced in December 2011, but it will take a year or more until the system is fully operational.

Lockheed hopes to finalize a similar deal with Qatar over the next two years, and Saudi Arabia is also considering a possible purchase.

Brooks said the US military remained in dialog with various Asian countries about how they could take responsibility for self-defense, and how any capabilities could be networked together to help defend allies elsewhere in the region.

Sources familiar with the THAAD system said they did not believe a deployment to the Middle East was imminent.

Riki Ellison, founder of the nonprofit Missile Defense Advocacy Alliance, said putting a THAAD system in the Middle East would help cover potential gaps in the existing coverage of the area such as provided by the Aegis system on US destroyers and Patriot missile batteries.

Ultimately, he said, a decision to station a THAAD system in the Middle East would be a "political chess move" in the current US talks with Iran over ending its nuclear weapons program.

<http://www.ipost.com/Middle-East/Senior-General-US-considering-possible-Middle-East-missile-defense-392983>

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TASS Russian News Agency – Moscow, Russia

US Nuclear Weapons Deployed in Europe Can Reach Russian Territory **— Russian FM**

The diplomat noted that further reductions of and restrictions on nuclear arsenals can be carried out on condition of equitable and indivisible security for all countries

March 02, 2015

GENEVA, March 2. /TASS/. Operationally deployed US nuclear weapons still remain in Europe, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on Monday at a disarmament conference in Geneva.

The minister said that within the framework of the implementation of the so-called Presidential Initiatives of 1991-1992 Russia has by three-thirds cut its non-strategic nuclear weapons arsenal, transferred such weapons "to the category of non-deployed and placed them in central storages within the boundaries of the national territory."

"This is an unprecedented step taken despite the fact that US nuclear weapons' capable of reaching Russia's territory are still operationally deployed in Europe," Lavrov said.

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"Moreover, these American weapons are being modernized, and some European non-nuclear NATO members are actively involved in the so-called joint nuclear missions," the foreign minister said. "These joint drills of using nuclear weapons with the participation of non-nuclear NATO countries, confirmed by decisions of last year's NATO summit in Wales, are conducted in violation of the first two fundamental articles of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons."

Lavrov commented on the development of the US anti-ballistic missile system.

"Today, the strategic parity is affected by many factors," the minister said. "Those are the unilateral activities of the United States and their allies in organisation of the global ABM, which have already affected destructively the strategic stability, realistically undermining progress towards the so-called Nuclear Zero - the objective, which, I believe, many participants are sharing."

The diplomat noted that further reductions of and restrictions on nuclear arsenals can be carried out on condition of equitable and indivisible security for all countries.

"It is obvious that any further reductions of and restrictions on nuclear arsenals can be carried out only on the condition of ensuring equitable and indivisible security for all states," he said. "This is precisely the approach to nuclear disarmament that is enshrined in the consensus action plan for the 2010 Non-Proliferation Treaty."

He also stressed that the potential of the Disarmament Conference hasn't been exhausted, and its functions should be restored fully.

"The Disarmament Conference, which has offered several basic international agreements in control over armaments and non-proliferation, has a special role," he said. "The potential of this negotiations body is not exhausted."

"We share concerns about "lack of movement" the Conference demonstrates now, and urge for restoring its functions fully by adopting an acceptable programme for its work," Lavrov said. "For that, we all should demonstrate flexibility, should find balance of interests, surely, without damaging the Conference's basic principles."

Lavrov stressed that Moscow insists that all the nuclear states should ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

"One cannot ignore the fact that today many types of precision weapons in their capacities have already approached towards the weapons of mass destruction," Lavrov said.

"In case of a abandoning or a sharp reduction of nuclear potentials, the leading countries in creating and manufacturing precision systems will gain a clear military advantage that could result in the ruining of parity and destabilisation," he said.

Russia is seriously concerned that entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is delayed indefinitely, Lavrov said.

"Unilateral moratoriums are important, but they are not equivalent to treaty obligations," Lavrov said. "The CTBT should be ratified by all the nuclear states without exceptions," he said, reminding that Russia ratified the treaty back in 2000.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has been signed by 183 countries but ratified only by 163 states. The states that need to take further action for the treaty to enter into force are the United States, China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, North Korea and Pakistan.

Russia calls for launching talks on creating nuclear-free zone in Middle East

The diplomateat noted the importance of launching negotiations on creation of a nuclear weapon free zone in the Middle East (MENWFZ).

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"There is serious concern about uncertainty on holding a conference on creating a zone free of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction and delivery of such weapons in the Middle East," Lavrov said. "It seemed like efforts made by many countries, including Russia, gave hope for finding a comprehensive 'package' of the agenda and format of such forum," the minister added.

However, "the conference failed to gather in the set timeframe," he noted. "Nevertheless, the issue of launching negotiations on creating MENWFZ remains a priority on the international agenda, and we think it is important to continue dialogue with the participation of all countries in the region in the interests of holding the conference as soon as possible," the minister said.

"Russia is also ready to sign a protocol to the Bangkok treaty on the Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zone in Southeast Asia," he said.

<http://tass.ru/en/russia/780395>

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Russia Beyond the Headlines (RBTH) – Moscow, Russia

Sergei Lavrov: U.S. Actions in Missile Defense Sabotage Prospects of 'Nuclear Zero' Achievement

Interfax

March 2, 2015

The unilateral actions carried out by the United States in the sphere of missile defense sabotage strategic stability, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said.

"A whole number of factors now influence strategic parity. Among them are the unilateral actions taken by the U.S. and their allies in the sphere of missile defense, which have already had a destructive effect on strategic stability, essentially sabotaging the prospects of achieving 'nuclear zero', a goal that, as I understand, many people who are present in this room share," Lavrov said at a disarmament conference in Geneva on Monday.

"We can't ignore the fact that many types of high-precision weapons by their capabilities are now close to weapons of mass destruction, and by giving up or sharply reducing nuclear potential will give countries at the forefront of creation and production of high-precision systems a clear military advantage, which may also disrupt parity and cause destabilization," Lavrov said.

Russia is concerned about the presence of United States' nuclear weapons in Europe and the involvement of NATO non-nuclear countries in the training of the use of nuclear weapons, minister said.

"U.S. nuclear weapons capable of reaching Russian territory remain operatively deployed in Europe. The U.S. weapons are being modernized, moreover, some European 'non-nuclear' members of NATO are actively involved in the so-called 'joint nuclear missions'," Lavrov said.

"The joint training of the use of nuclear weapons involving NATO 'non-nuclear countries' supported by decisions of the NATO summit held in Wales last year is violating the first two fundamental articles of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)," the minister stated.

"Russia adheres to nuclear disarmament. That is clearly confirmed by the strict observance of the Russian-U.S. New START Treaty. Our priority is to reach the delivery vehicle and warhead levels envisaged by the Treaty by 2018," Lavrov said.

Moscow to insist on Middle East WMD-free zone conference

Moscow is concerned about uncertain prospects of a conference dedicated to a zone free from nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, minister Lavrov said.



"The efforts of many countries, among them Russia, gave hope for a reasonable package [of documents] regarding the agenda and procedure of the forum. Yet the attempt to hold this important event on time failed," the minister said.

"The task of launching negotiations on the WMD-free zone remains a primary item on the global agenda," Lavrov said.

"We think it is important to carry on the dialogue involving all regional countries for the soonest convocation of the conference," the minister said.

The minister welcomed the expansion of nuclear-free zones.

"A protocol to the Central Asia nuclear-free zone agreement signed by the Five [P5] last year was an important contribution to the process. Russia is also ready to sign a protocol to the Bangkok treaty on the nuclear-free zone in Southeast Asia," the Russian minister said.

http://rbth.com/news/2015/03/02/sergei_lavrov_us_actions_in_missile_defense_sabotage_prospects_of_nuclear_free_zones.html

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Want China Times – Taipei, Taiwan

PLA's Type 094 Sub Upgrade allows Greater Missile Capacity

Staff Reporter

March 04, 2015

China has begun upgrading its Type 094 nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine, according to the military news website of the country's nationalistic tabloid Global Times, citing a Russian media report.

China had originally planned to build five or six of the submarines. US intelligence suggests that in the end they built five.

The submarines have a submerged displacement of 11,000 tonnes and should be capable of carrying 12-16 ballistic missiles, according to the report. The original design allowed for 12 missiles, but a few years ago an image of a Type 094 submarine carrying 16 missiles appeared, which suggests that experts have been working on an upgrade to the submarine.

The submarine will carry JL-2 submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs). The JL-2 missiles are reportedly based on the DF-31 land-based ICBM, according to some sources. The JL-2 weighs in at around 42 tonnes and carries a payload of 2-2.5 tonnes, according to estimates. There is currently no information on its charge. The missile has a liquid propellant rocket engine and has a range of around 7,500-8,000 kilometers.

PLA Navy ballistic submarines are not known for being able to carry a large weapons payload but China seems to be pushing in this direction. Talk of ballistic submarines in China has been dominated over recent years by the Type 096 submarine, currently thought to be under development. This long-range submarine will be larger than any sub currently in service with the PLA. Another source said that the Type 096 nuclear submarine will carry 24 SLBMs. New nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines in China are likely to be equipped with JL-3 missiles, said to have a range of 10-11,000 km.

The current state of development of the Type 096 ballistic missile submarine is unknown, as no official reports on it have been issued. However, there are rumors that the first Type 096 submarine has already been constructed and is currently undergoing tests.

China's strategic nuclear deterrent is mainly concentrated on land-based missile systems. The five Type 094 ballistic missile submarines will be able to carry a total of no more than 80 JL-1A and JL-2 missiles, if the aforementioned reports are accurate. Currently China is reported to have 100-120 missiles equipped with nuclear warheads, including several dozen JL-2s.

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<http://www.wantchinatimes.com/news-subclass-cnt.aspx?id=20150304000074&cid=1101&MainCatID=11>

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Sputnik International – Russian Information Agency

Unannounced Test of Strategic Nuclear Weapons Readiness Starts in Russia

Russia's Strategic Missile Forces began an unannounced test of the nuclear weapons near the central Russian city Yoshkar-Ola, the SMF's press center said Wednesday.

4 March 2015

MOSCOW (Sputnik) – Russia's Strategic Missile Forces (SMF) have begun an unannounced test of its nuclear weapons near the central Russian city Yoshkar-Ola, the SMF's press center said Wednesday.

"The Committee of the Command of Strategic Missile Forces is conducting an unannounced test of the condition and security provisions of nuclear weapons in the Yoshkar-Ola Missile Unit," the SMF's press service said in a statement.

The Yoshkar-Ola missile unit is armed with the Topol intercontinental nuclear-capable ballistic missile complex.

In February, the SMF held record-long drills that included more than 30 missile regiments. The same month, missile forces also completed command and staff exercises testing the troops' combat readiness.

In January, SMF spokesman Col. Igor Egorov said that the Russian Strategic Missile Forces planned to conduct more than 100 drills in 2015.

<http://sputniknews.com/military/20150304/1019036371.html>

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TASS Russian News Agency – Moscow, Russia

Moscow Urges US Not to Politicize Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty — FM

The topic is too serious for being a subject matter of speculations, says Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov
March 04, 2015

MOSCOW, 4 March. /TASS/. Moscow urges the United States not to politicize the implementation of the treaty on the elimination of intermediate and shorter range missiles treaty (INF) and to avoid using this topic for fanning tensions, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has told TASS.

"To our deep regret our US counterparts keep inflating this theme in the media space without any reliance on facts," Lavrov said. "We are prepared for that, but the question is being obviously politicized and used for fanning unnecessary, artificial tensions."

"The work must be completely depoliticized and rely on a professional dialogue. The topic is too serious for being a subject matter of speculations," he said.

<http://tass.ru/en/russia/780942>

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Sputnik International – Russian Information Agency

US Ready to Negotiate Nuclear Weapons Reduction - Obama

US President Barack Obama said in a statement on the 45th anniversary of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

Issue No.1155, 06 March 2015

United States Air Force Center for Unconventional Weapons Studies | Maxwell AFB, Alabama

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(NPT) that the United States is reducing strategic nuclear weapon stockpile to the lowest levels in more than a half century, and the US is prepared to negotiate further reductions.

05 March 2015

WASHINGTON (Sputnik) – The United States are ready to continue reducing their nuclear weapons arsenal and negotiate additional reductions, US President Barack Obama said in a statement issued on Thursday on the 45th anniversary of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

“Under New START [Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty] and in conformity with our NPT obligations, we are reducing our strategic nuclear weapon stockpile to the lowest levels in more than a half century, and we are prepared to negotiate further reductions, while protecting our security and that of our friends and allies around the world,” Obama stated.

Obama stressed that the United States reduced the size of its nuclear weapons arsenal during his presidency, and called on other countries to strengthen the NPT regime.

“As we prepare for the Ninth Review Conference of the NPT, the United States stands ready to work with other NPT Parties to achieve a successful outcome that reinforces the vitality of this Treaty which is so fundamental to global security,” the president said.

Obama also noted that the global nuclear stockpiles are at their lowest levels since the 1950s.

NPT is an international agreement signed in 1968 and effective since 1970, which ensures the prevention of the spread of nuclear weapons and technology.

The main concepts of the treaty, its so-called “pillars” consist of non-proliferation, disarmament and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. There are 189 states party to the treaty, including Iran.

The first START was signed in 1991 by the then presidents George H. W. Bush of the United States and Mikhail Gorbachev of the Soviet Union. The treaty expired in 2009 and another deal, called New START, was signed between Russia and the United States in 2010 that came into force the following year.

New START stipulates limiting the number of deployed ballistic missiles and heavy bombers equipped for nuclear armaments to 700, the number of deployed nuclear warheads to 1,550 and deployed and non-deployed launchers to 800.

New Start obliges the two countries to meet the stipulated limits on strategic arms by February 5, 2018.

The treaty is valid until 2021 but may be extended for an additional period of up to five years.

<http://sputniknews.com/politics/20150305/1019114075.html>

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Bangkok Post – Bangkok, Thailand

N.Korea Warns has Power to Conduct 'Strike' on US

Agence France-Presse (AFP)

4 March 2015

GENEVA - North Korea's foreign minister warned Tuesday Pyongyang had the power to conduct a "pre-emptive strike" on the United States, following joint US-South Korea military drills earlier this week.

Speaking before the UN Disarmament Conference in Geneva, Ri Su-yong said the military exercises that kicked off Monday were "unprecedentedly provocative in nature" and could spark a war.

"The DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) cannot but bolster its nuclear deterrent capability to cope with the ever-increasing nuclear threat of the US," he said.

"Now the DPRK has the power of deterring the US and conducting a pre-emptive strike as well if necessary."

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The annual joint exercises always trigger a surge in military tensions and warlike rhetoric on the divided peninsula.

North Korea fired two short-range Scud missiles into the sea off its east coast on Monday, and South Korea's Yonhap news agency reported Tuesday that Pyongyang may be readying to test fire a medium-range missile.

Missile tests have long been a preferred North Korean method of expressing anger and displeasure with what it views as confrontational behaviour by the South and its allies.

Seoul and Washington insist the exercises are defence-based in nature, but they are regularly condemned by Pyongyang as provocative rehearsals for invasion.

<http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/asia/487880/n-korea-warns-has-power-to-conduct-trike-on-us>

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China Daily – Beijing, China

Chinese Army Investigates More Generals

(Xinhua)

March 02, 2015

BEIJING - The Chinese military authority on Monday released a list of 14 generals who have been investigated or convicted in the recent days.

Guo Zhenggang, deputy political commissar of the Zhejiang provincial military command, was put under investigation by the military procuratorate in February for suspected "serious legal violations and criminal offenses".

Zhu Heping, head of the Joint Logistics Department of the Chengdu Military Area Command, was put under investigation in August 2014 for suspected "serious disciplinary violations" and was transferred to the military judicial organ in January.

Wang Aiguo, former head of the Joint Logistics Department of the Shenyang Military Area Command; Huang Xianjun, former head of the political department of Shanxi provincial military command; Duan Tianjie, deputy head of the political department of the National Defense University; Yuan Shijun, former commander of Hubei provincial military command; and Huang Xing, former head of the research guidance department of the Academy of Military Sciences, have all been put under investigation for suspected "serious disciplinary violations" and their cases have been transferred to the military judicial organ.

Other senior officers being investigated include Zhang Dongshui, deputy political commissar of the Second Artillery Force; Liu Hongjie who is in charge of logistics support under the People's Liberation Army General Staff Headquarters; Cheng Jie, deputy chief of staff of Beihai Fleet; Chen Jianfeng, former deputy head of the joint logistics department of Guangzhou Military Area Command; Chen Hongyan, deputy head of the political department of the air force of Beijing Military Area Command; and Wang Sheng, head of logistics department of Guangzhou Military Area Command air force. All are suspected of "legal violations and criminal offenses".

Lan Weijie, former deputy commander of Hubei provincial military command, was sentenced to life in prison in January for accepting bribes, owning property bought with unidentified sources and the illegal possession of firearms.

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-03/02/content_19696692.htm

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People's Daily – Beijing, China

China to Raise Defense Budget by around 10 Pct

(Xinhua)

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March 04, 2015

BEIJING, March 4 --China will raise its defense budget by around 10 percent this year, compared with last year's 12.2 percent, a spokeswoman for the annual session of the country's top legislature said Wednesday.

Speaking to reporters at a press conference a day ahead of the Third Session of the 12th National People's Congress (NPC), Fu Ying said the exact figure will be published in a budget report Thursday.

China's defense budget rose by 12.2 percent last year, riding on a multi-year run of double-digit increases.

A growth rate of about 10 percent could be the lowest in five years.

Fu said as a big country, China needs an army that can safeguard its national security and people.

"To tell the truth, there is still a gap between China's armed forces [and foreign counterparts] in terms of overall military equipment. We still need more time," said Fu, adding that capital support is needed for the modernization of China's national defense and its army.

"Lagging behind leaves one vulnerable to attacks. That is a lesson we have learned from history," she said, adding that China's defense policy is defensive in nature.

<http://en.people.cn/n/2015/0304/c90786-8856979.html>

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Channel News Asia – Singapore

US says 'Seriously Concerned' about North Korea's Nuclear Work

Reuters

March 4, 2015

REUTERS: The United States remain seriously concerned about North Korea's nuclear work which it said breached international agreements, it said on Wednesday, a day after the isolated Asian country said it had the power to deter a U.S. "nuclear threat."

The United States said North Korea's graphite moderated reactor could enable it to produce additional plutonium for weapons in the near future, among other nuclear activities.

"These activities are clear violations of multiple (U.N.) resolutions and must cease immediately," the United States said in a statement on the website of its mission in Vienna, the Austrian capital that is home to the International Atomic Energy Organisation.

Reporting by Shadia Nasralla; Editing by Robin Pomeroy

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/world/us-says-seriously-concer/1695002.html>

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South China Morning Post – Hong Kong, China

Smaller Increase in PLA Budget Won't Affect Nuclear Arms Plans, Chinese General says

Minnie Chan in Beijing

Friday, 06 March, 2015

The smallest increase in defence spending in five years won't affect the PLA's development of nuclear weapons or its ongoing modernisation plan, a former top leader of the army's strategic missile troops has said.

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General Zhang Haiyang, former political commissar of the People's Liberation Army's Second Artillery Corps, told overseas media on the sidelines of the opening of the National People's Congress on Thursday that China should develop nuclear weapons.

"I believe we should develop nuclear power ... our army will have bigger development and expansion in the next five-year plan [2016-2020]," Zhang said, adding this year's 10.1 per cent increase in the military budget was "not much" compared to other leading nations.

"We understand the military budget has been decided as a fixed proportion of GDP. But military expenditure will certainly increase step by step to narrow our gap with other great powers in the world in the future."

Zhang, 65, is the son of former Central Military Commission deputy chairman Zhang Zhen. He was appointed as a vice-chairman of the NPC's Law Committee on February 28. Zhang retired from the Second Artillery Corps in December.

Other PLA delegates said the 10.1 per cent was "too little" but refused to elaborate.

Major General Qin Baozhong, who represents the Shenyang Military Command, said the amount had been decided after careful consideration.

"I can accept the slow growth because our central government needs to balance different parties' interests," he said.

Premier Li Keqiang yesterday announced the military budget would grow by 10.1 per cent, or 890 billion yuan (HK\$1.119 trillion), in the coming year, making it the lowest growth rate in five years.

Beijing-based retired senior colonel Li Jie said that despite the lower figure, it was still double-digit growth. And such a rate will continue for the next few years.

"China needs to maintain a high increase in military spending to support the long-term modernisation of the PLA, especially as its navy and air force are trying to narrow the gap between their counterparts in Western countries," he said.

<http://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1730460/smaller-increase-pla-budget-wont-affect-nuclear-arms-plans-chinese>

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RT (Russia Today) – Moscow, Russia

Russia Ready to Repel any Nuke Strike, Retaliate – Missile Forces Command Chief

March 01, 2015

Russia's Strategic Missile Forces are ready to react to any nuclear strike even if it is lightning fast, SMF Central Command chief said. A retaliatory strike would take place in all circumstances, "without hesitation," he added.

"If there's a challenge to repel a lightning-fast nuclear strike in any given conditions – it will be done in fixed time, that's dead true," the Strategic Missile Forces Central Command's chief, Major-General Andrey Burbin, told Russian News Service on Saturday.

Russia's strategic missile forces are positioned geographically in such a way that no global strike can knock them out completely, Burbin said.

In case an order is given to carry out a nuclear strike, Russian nuclear weapons operators will fulfill it, he added.

"There would be no hesitation, the task would be executed," he said.

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The unavailability of a retaliatory nuclear strike from Russia is also guaranteed by the fully automatic and constantly modernized 'Perimeter' system, also known as "Dead hand."

The system collects data from various sources, such as radioactivity and seismic sensors scattered throughout Russia, by scanning radio frequencies and communication activities.

If pooled data indicates that Russia has suffered a nuclear strike, the system launches special missiles that travel through national airspace, sending launch signals to all surviving strategic nuclear missile complexes. In this case a retaliatory missile strike is launched without human input.

Burbin also told RSN that rearmament of the Strategic Missile Forces is ongoing as planned and by 2020 up to 98 percent of Russia's nuclear deterrent forces will be armed with brand new weapons.

Nationwide war games of Strategic Nuclear Missile Forces were conducted in February, with 30 missile regiments training in 12 regions of Russia.

Missilemen performed ultimate combat operational readiness, counteraction to subversive groups and perfected defenses against airborne precision weapons.

On any given day, over 6,000 servicemen are maintaining the operational readiness of the Russian Strategic Missile Forces.

<http://rt.com/news/236573-russia-repel-nuclear-strike/>

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TASS Russian News Agency – Moscow, Russia

Defense Minister: Russian Navy will Receive Two Borei-Class Submarines this Year

In 2014 the Navy received the first Borei-class submarine along with the Severodvinsk multi-purpose submarine, the Novorossiisk non-nuclear submarine, five surface warships and ten combat boats

March 02, 2015

MOSCOW, March 2. /TASS/. The Russian Navy will receive two Borei-class strategic nuclear submarines, the Vladimir Monomakh and the Alexander Nevsky, this year, Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu said on Monday.

"This year, we shall give to the Navy two nuclear-powered missile submarines Vladimir Monomakh and Alexander Nevsky and two multi-purpose submarines and five surface warships," he said.

Shoigu said the Navy received the first Yuri Dolgoruky of the Borei-class in 2014. Along with it the Navy received the Severodvinsk multi-purpose submarine, the Novorossiisk non-nuclear submarine, five surface warships and ten combat boats.

Two more Borei-class submarines are being made now under the modified 955A project. They will be called Knyaz Vladimir and Knyaz Oleg ('knyaz' is prince in Russian).

<http://tass.ru/en/russia/780381>

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TASS Russian News Agency – Moscow, Russia

Around 70% of Russian Strategic Aviation to be Modernized by 2020 — Defense Minister

Thirteen aircraft of the Russian Armed Forces' strategic aviation will be modernized in 2015

March 02, 2015

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MOSCOW, March 2. /TASS/. Thirteen aircraft of the Russian Armed Forces' strategic aviation will be modernized in 2015, Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu said on Monday. By 2020, around 70% of aircraft will be modernized, Shoigu added.

"This year, it is planned to modernize 13 aircraft of the strategic aviation. In general, by the end of 2020, the share of modern modernized long-range aircraft will be no less than 70%," Shoigu stressed.

In 2014, seven aircraft of strategic aviation were modernized, the minister said.

Expanding list of combat patrol regions

Russian strategic bombers will expand combat patrols to new regions in the future, taking into account cooperation with allies, Shoigu said on Monday.

Russian jets are always at the forefront of defending the country, conducting combat patrols in different regions, Shoigu said.

"It is important to note that such flights are regular, and we will not abandon this practice," the minister stressed.

"In the future, we plan to extend combat patrols to new regions, considering international cooperation with our allies in other regions of the world," Shoigu added.

In February, strategic bombers Tu-95MS conducted flights over the Barents and Norwegian Seas, as well as over the north-eastern part of the Atlantic, the minister said. In particular, they conducted re-fuelling in the air, he noted. It was reported earlier that Russian bombers were accompanied by British Typhoon fighter jets in February's flights.

<http://tass.ru/en/russia/780371>

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The Daily Telegraph – London, U.K.

Three out of Four Labour Candidates Oppose Renewal of Trident

Scrapping nuclear deterrent likely to be key factor in any Labour / SNP coalition deal

By Rosa Prince, Online Political Editor

03 March 2015

Three-quarters of Labour general election candidates oppose the renewal of Trident – potentially paving the way for a coalition deal with the Scottish Nationalist Party.

A survey by CND published in the New Statesman found that the party's prospective parliamentary candidates overwhelmingly favour scrapping the nation's nuclear deterrent when it comes up for renewal next year.

The SNP has suggested that cancelling Trident would be a precondition for entering into talks with the Labour Party in the event of a hung parliament at the general election in May.

Ed Miliband, the Labour leader, has hinted that he could support a cheaper alternative to Trident, and the CND poll strengthens the prospect that Britain may no longer maintain an independent nuclear defence should he enter Downing Street with the support of the SNP.

The poll includes both long-serving members of Parliament as well as a number of candidates fighting to enter the Commons for the first time. It shows that the new intake of Labour MPs is likely to be less pro-nuclear than those they are replacing.

Among those polled in the representative survey were Richard Burgon, seeking to replace retiring Leeds East MP George Mudie, who voted to maintain Trident in 2007. Mr Burgon said: "Nuclear weapons pose a threat to the whole of humanity. For the sake of the whole of humanity and for the sake of generations still to come, we need to achieve a world free from nuclear weapons."

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The survey shows that 80 per cent of the party's target seats are being fought by candidates opposed to Trident.

They include Purna Sen, Labour's candidate in Brighton Pavilion, who said: "My father joined the Aldermaston marches in the early 1960s and he introduced me to CND as a child. I grew up understanding the danger of nuclear weapons.

"We now need a brave and forward looking government that will act to deliver a world free of nuclear weapons. I will continue to oppose these weapons as an MP, including Trident."

Nicola Sturgeon, the SNP Leader, has said that cancelling Trident's replacement would be a "priority demand" and a "red line" for entering into coalition with Labour. The Labour leadership has rejected the demand, however.

With all major opinion pollsters predicting a hung parliament, analysts have predicted that a Labour / SNP coalition is one of the more likely outcomes of the election in May.

A Labour spokesman said: "Labour is committed to a minimum, credible, independent nuclear deterrent, delivered through a continuous at sea deterrent.

"We will continue to look at ways in which this can be delivered most efficiently, while also ensuring Britain takes a leading role in advancing international efforts for multilateral nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

"This has been the position of successive Labour Governments and the party's policy was most recently affirmed at the National Policy Forum and at our Annual Conference."

Angus Robertson MP, the SNP's Westminster leader and defence spokesman, said: "This suggests a growing awareness south of the Border that Scotland could well be in a powerful position in the next Westminster parliament by electing a strong team of SNP MPs - making scrapping the renewal of Trident entirely achievable."

For the Conservatives, Bob Neill said: Bob Neill MP said: "As the world becomes a more dangerous place Labour are standing up for insecurity and potentially putting lives at risk.

"Getting rid of Britain's nuclear deterrent is a ludicrous idea that serves only one purpose: helping make a Labour-SNP coalition more likely. That would mean chaos for Britain, chaos for our economic, and chaos for our national security."

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/labour/11447273/Three-out-of-four-Labour-candidates-oppose-renewal-of-Trident.html>

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The Moscow Times – Moscow, Russia

Russian Bombers Disrupt Commercial Flights in Ireland's Airspace

The Moscow Times

March 04, 2015

Irish air traffic controllers diverted commercial airliners in mid flight to avoid possible collisions with two Russian Tu-95 strategic bombers flying across civilian routes last month with their transponders switched off, the Irish Examiner reported.

The dangerous maneuvers are the latest in a streak of provocative Russian bomber flights along the sovereign airspace of Western European nations.

According to the Irish Examiner, the Tu-95 "Bear" long-range strategic bombers weaved through major civilian air routes on Feb. 18 about 40 kilometers off the Irish coast, crossing flight lanes used by incoming flights from North America.

The bombers cloaked their presence by switching off their transponders, which broadcast to air traffic controllers an aircraft's type, altitude, location and other information.

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The Irish Aviation Authority told the Irish Examiner that British authorities had notified them that the bombers were moving toward Irish air space and warned that steps should be taken to ensure the safety of civilian flights. One flight from Dublin Airport had to be delayed to prevent a collision with the Russian aircraft, the paper said.

The incident came just weeks after Irish airspace was buzzed by Russian bombers that flew down the English Channel in late January.

After that scare the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade sought assurances from the Russian ambassador in Dublin that military aircraft would not fly unannounced into Irish-controlled airspace, according to the Examiner. Irish airspace extends 22 kilometers from the Irish coast, but the country manages air traffic over a large area of the north Atlantic Ocean.

The flights are part of a resurgence of Russian naval and aerial activity around Europe over the past year as Moscow seeks to demonstrate its military muscle amid a stand-off with the West over Ukraine.

Ireland is not a member of the U.S.-led NATO military alliance, which raised hackles in Russia by incorporating former Soviet republics after the collapse of communism in 1991.

<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/russian-bombers-disrupt-commercial-flights-in-ireland-s-airspace-/516970.html>

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TASS Russian News Agency – Moscow, Russia

Moscow Dismisses NATO Allegations that Russia Conducts Large-Scale Nuclear Drills

NATO Deputy Secretary General Alexander Vershbow said that Russia conducts large-scale military exercises to drill nuclear tasks, including the 'nuclear component' in the conventional weapons' drills

March 05, 2015

MOSCOW, 5 March. /TASS/. Moscow on Thursday dismissed NATO's allegations that Russia conducts large-scale military exercises to drill the use of nuclear weapons, the Foreign Ministry said.

"We've paid attention to NATO Deputy Secretary General Alexander Vershbow's speech on March 2 at a conference in Doha (Qatar) on issues of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, in which he said that the conflict in Ukraine has a dimension associated with weapons of mass destruction," the ministry said in a commentary. "In particular, he made a dogmatic statement that Russia conducts large-scale military exercises to drill nuclear tasks, including the 'nuclear component' in the conventional weapons' drills."

"We have again heard reproaches that Russia's strategic aviation ostensibly performs flights closer and closer to the borders of NATO countries," the ministry said. "These allegations are totally ungrounded, and we have repeatedly proven this with facts to our foreign partners."

"Alexander Vershbow's attempts to threaten the world community with Russian nuclear weapons look inappropriate on the backdrop of NATO's long-time practices to involve non-nuclear members of the bloc to performing 'nuclear missions,' i.e. to planning and drilling nuclear strikes, including delivering nuclear bombs to targets," the Russian Foreign Ministry said. "For these ends, American nuclear weapons are being stored in Europe and NATO servicemen are training their uses. The latest such exercises, Steadfast Noon, were held last autumn in Italy."

The Russian Foreign Ministry reminded that nuclear and non-nuclear members of the North Atlantic Alliance are signatories to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), article one of which prohibits nuclear countries to transfer nuclear weapons and control over such weapons to non-nuclear countries. Article two prohibits non-nuclear states to accept nuclear weapons or control over them from nuclear countries. "It means that NATO's nuclear strategy, which provides for the possibility of using aviation of the alliance's member



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countries enjoying a non-nuclear status to deliver U.S. nuclear bombs, runs counter to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons," the ministry stressed.

"NATO's leadership should better straighten this contradiction rather than to lay the blame on Russia, which has no nuclear weapons on others' territories and unlike the United States keeps its reduced stockpiles of non-strategic nuclear arms in a non-deployed state," the ministry underscored.

<http://tass.ru/en/russia/781364>

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Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) – Tehran, Iran
01 March 2015

Iran Rules Out Suggestions on Keeping Part of Sanctions in Place

Tehran, March 1, IRNA – Head of Strategic Research Center affiliated to the Expediency Council Ali Akbar Velayati on Sunday ruled out suggestion made by US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman on keeping part of sanctions in place after signing the nuclear deal with Iran.

Velayati made the remarks on the sidelines of a meeting with Italian Foreign Minister Paulo Gentiloni.

Ali Akbar Velayati told reporters that her comment has been to appease the radicals inside the US and to calm critics of President Obama Administration.

Of course, President Obama and US Administration also make different and sometime contradictory stances, but Sherman has made illogical suggestion, he added.

Velayati said that the western governments have imposed arbitrary sanctions on Iran, but they should know that Iran would never overlook its principles.

Concerning the comments made by Netanyahu that President Obama should pay attention to security of Israel in nuclear talks with Iran, Velayati said that he is a peddler, and his statements have no basis.

Velayati said that Netanyahu remarks are irrelevant and many people dismiss his rhetorics.

<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/81524936/>

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Mehr News Agency – Tehran, Iran
March 03, 2015

Zarif Slams Obama's Remarks on Iran's Nuclear Activity

TEHRAN, Mar. 03 (MNA) – Iranian Foreign Minister has dismissed US President Barack Obama's recent remarks on Iran as unacceptable, underlining that Tehran will not give in to excessive demands by the other side in the nuclear negotiations.

In response to Obama's remarks, Iranian FM Mohammad Javad Zarif pointed to Iran's honesty in nuclear talks with 5+1, stressing that it will continue the negotiations until restoring its true nuclear rights and will never surrender to other side's greed and excessive demands.

Zarif, who is in Montreux, Switzerland to hold nuclear talks, said Obama's recent remarks clearly reflected the fact that US had finally concluded that its direct and indirect military threats and imposing outrageous and illegal sanctions against Iran were failed policies against Iran's determination to achieve peaceful nuclear technology.

Criticizing Obama's recent comments, Zarif said, US President Obama has made the remarks clearly in the form of unacceptable and threatening rhetoric to win the US public opinion and counter the propaganda campaign by Israeli regime's Prime Minister and other radical opposition groups who are against nuclear talks with Iran.

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In an interview with Reuters on Monday, Obama said Iran should commit to a verifiable freeze of at least 10 years, if it seeks a comprehensive final deal over its nuclear program.

Stressing US-Israel common interests, Obama said there was a 'substantial disagreement' between his administration and the Israeli government over how to achieve their shared goal of preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.

"If, in fact, Iran is willing to agree to double-digit years of keeping their program where it is right now and, in fact, rolling back elements of it that currently exist ... if we've got that, and we've got a way of verifying that, there's no other steps we can take that would give us such assurance that they don't have a nuclear weapon," Obama told Reuters.

The US goal is to make sure "there's at least a year between us seeing them try to get a nuclear weapon and them actually being able to obtain one," Obama said.

<http://en.mehrnews.com/detail/News/106177>

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FARS News Agency – Tehran, Iran
Tuesday, March 03, 2015

Basij Commander: Iran Not to Accept Imposed N. Deal

TEHRAN (FNA) - Commander of Iran's Basij (volunteer) Force Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Naqdi reiterated Tehran's opposition to any nuclear agreement with the world powers which doesn't remove all sanctions against the country, cautioning that Washington cannot impose its will on Iran.

"The enemies should know that the Iranian nation will not accept any imposed deal which questions its honor and dignity and doesn't remove all sanctions," Naqdi said, addressing a congress in the Southern province of Khuzestan on Tuesday.

He, meantime, downplayed the US and Israel's threats against Iran, and said if Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei issues a fatwa (religious decree) for Jihad, no weapon, even atomic bombs, can prevent the Islamic Ummah's revenge.

He underlined that the result of the enemies' possible aggression against Iran will be a crushing response and "conquering the Beit al-Moqaddas".

In relevant remarks today, Naqdi said Washington which hires drug trafficker and criminals for fighting in the battleground cannot overcome Tehran in any possible war.

"They (the Americans) have said that no option has been taken off the table, and we tell them that the US can utter such words whenever it can recruit a group of fighters ready to sacrifice themselves for the US," Naqdi told reporters in Khuzestan.

Stressing that the US firms hire drug trafficker and criminals for fighting in the battlefield, he said, "A country, which cannot recruit a group of forces who love defending the US, shouldn't brag like this."

Also today, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, when asked to comment on Kerry's remarks that the US is testing the diplomatic way to prevent military action against Iran, warned that such comments are not helpful to the settlement of the nuclear standoff.

Yesterday, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Brigadier General Massoud Jazayeri played down Kerry's comments against Iran, stressing Tehran's preparedness to give a crushing response to any aggressor.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran will show its real might to the Americans if the US makes any stupid military move," Brigadier General Jazayeri said on Sunday night in reaction to Kerry's recent statements against Iran.

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Kerry in an interview with ABC news said that he could not promise about striking a deal with Iran, but "we are going to test whether or not diplomacy can prevent this weapon from being created, so you don't have to turn to additional measures including the possibility of a military confrontation."

Brigadier General Jazzayeri pointed to Iran's military might and preparedness, and said, "In case of military confrontation, we will act in a way that we will get rid of the US forever."

"Kerry's stupidity is to such an extent that he thinks the Islamic Republic of Iran will relinquish its interests through military threats," Brigadier General Jazzayeri added.

He underlined that Iran's reinforced defense and large-scale and widespread air defense will force the US to exit the strategic region of Western Asia.

In related development on Sunday, Iranian Supreme Leader's top aide Ali Akbar Velayati slammed senior US negotiator Wendy Sherman for her hostile remarks against Tehran amidst the nuclear talks, and said the country will never give up its rights even under harsher sanctions.

"She always makes her statements in such a way that the radical side of the public opinion in the US would not criticize the Obama administration in response; this is while the current US government has also sometimes uttered contradictory words in its positions, but she (Sherman) is person known for her radical and irrational positions," Velayati told reporters after meeting Italian Foreign Minister Paolo Gentiloni in Tehran.

"Therefore, we should tell her and others to know that the Islamic Republic of Iran will continue its honorable life with or without sanctions; it is natural for Iran to try to remove the sanctions, but it will never withdraw from its principled positions due to the cruel sanctions," he added.

His remarks came after US Under Secretary of State, Sherman, said that sanctions against Iran should continue.

She made the remarks as senior officials from Iran and the six world powers will hold more talks in Montreux, Switzerland, on March 5, according to a Saturday announcement by the European Union (EU).

The talks between political directors will be preceded by a series of bilateral meetings between Iran and some of the members of the Group 5+1 (the US, Russia, China, Britain and France plus Germany) starting today.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13931212001124>

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Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) – Tehran, Iran
04 March 2015

Iran Only to Accept Single-Stage Deal: Afkham

Tehran, March 4, IRNA – Iran's Foreign Ministry Spokeswomen Marzieh Afkham said on Wednesday that Iran would not accept a two-stage nuclear agreement with the world powers.

We will accept an agreement in a single-stage manner, all its details should be clear and it should contain no ambiguities, she said in a weekly press conference.

She added that the time for a nuclear deal would be ripe only when all the dimensions of the agreement including level of enrichment, nuclear sites, research and development and removal of sanctions are clarified.

Iran and G5+1 member states are discussing the legal and technical dimensions. The two sides have also political talks to resolve the remaining issues, Afkham noted.

She said that Iran wants removal of all sanctions and it is serious about this demand.

The new round of talks between Iran and US in Montreux comes as representatives from Iran and the United States held three rounds of intense negotiations in the Swiss city of Geneva on February 22-23 to bridge their differences ahead of a key July 1 deadline for reaching a comprehensive deal.

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Iran and the G5+1 countries – Britain, France, China, Russia, and the United States plus Germany – are in talks to narrow their differences on outstanding issues related to Iran's nuclear energy program.

The two sides have missed two deadlines since an interim deal was signed in November 2013. They have set July 1 as the next deadline for the talks.

<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/81528621/>

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Xinhua News – Beijing, China

New Round of US-Iran Nuclear Talks to be Held on March 15: Kerry

(Xinhua)

March 05, 2015

GENEVA, March 4 (Xinhua) -- The next round of ministerial level U.S.-Iran nuclear talks will resume on March 15, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said after a three-day discussion with his Iranian counterpart in the Swiss lakeside resort town of Montreux Wednesday.

He told a press briefing before heading to his next stop in Saudi Arabia that they have made some progress "from where we were," but "there are still significant gaps and important choices that need to be made."

He described the latest talks as "tough" and "intense."

"We will return to these talks on the 15th of March, recognizing that time is of the essence, the days are ticking by," Kerry said, adding that his focus is to reach "a good deal" but not just get "any deal."

"We also want an agreement that is sustainable over time, and particularly that achieves the singular goal of proving that Iran's nuclear program is and will remain peaceful," Kerry added.

He stated that it is "certainly possible" the talks will not yield any deal on time.

Kerry arrived in Switzerland on Sunday to attend the 28th Human Rights Council session.

On Monday, he and his Iranian counterpart gathered again in Montreux for a fresh round of talks over Iran's long disputed nuclear program. It was said that the meeting was Kerry's eighth negotiating session with the Iranians this year.

The last round of Iran nuclear talks was held on Feb. 21-23 in Geneva, in which both Kerry and Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammed Javad Zarif participated.

It has been over a year since Iran and the world's major countries agreed to come back to the negotiating table to discuss the Iranian nuclear program.

Under an interim deal between Iran and the P5+1 inked in November 2013, Iran said it would suspend critical nuclear activities in return for limited ease of sanctions, with all sides seeking a comprehensive deal.

After missing twice self-imposed deadlines, the negotiators agreed in November 2014 to extend the deadline for another seven months, hoping to reach a deal.

Iran maintains its nuclear plans are for peaceful purposes while Western nations have suspected its intentions.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-03/05/c_134038286.htm

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Global Times – Beijing, China

Kerry Assures Gulf Countries on Iran's Nuclear Talks

(Xinhua)

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March 6, 2015

US Secretary of State John Kerry asserted to Gulf countries on Thursday that any deal on Iran's nuclear program will strengthen the non-proliferation of atomic weapons.

"We have achieved some progress with Iran, but there are some gaps remaining, while Iran should present specific answers after the re-negotiations," Kerry said at a press conference after meeting foreign ministers of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Oman.

Kerry said his visit to Riyadh was to inform GCC partners of the negotiations with Iran.

Before arriving in Riyadh late on Wednesday, Kerry and Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif held talks in Montreux, Switzerland, which he said had made progress toward a nuclear deal by the end of March.

Gulf countries, mostly Sunni ones, are worried that Shiite Iran's nuclear program would finally develop into weapon capabilities, which Iran has constantly denied, insisting that its nuclear program is purely civilian.

They are also concerned that to reach a nuclear deal between world powers and Iran, international pressure would be eased on Tehran to allow more room for it to intervene in regional issues, like the fight against the Islamic State group.

Before the press conference, Kerry also held talks with Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud on the Iranian nuclear deal and extremists in the region.

The P5+1 group, namely Britain, China, France, Russia, the United States and Germany, is trying to strike an accord that would prevent Tehran from developing a nuclear bomb. In return, the West would ease punishing sanctions on Iran.

<http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/910607.shtml>

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Press TV – Tehran, Iran

Good Nuclear Deal at Hand: EU's Mogherini

Friday, March 6, 2015

The EU foreign policy chief says Iran and the P5+1 group of countries are close to reaching a "good deal" over Tehran's nuclear program.

"I believe a good deal is at hand," said Federica Mogherini in the Latvian capital city of Riga on Friday, adding, "I also believe that there is not going to be any deal if it is not going to be a good deal."

The EU official also stated that the two sides' political will, and not the technical issues, now defines the fate of negotiations.

Earlier in the day, Mogherini gave a positive assessment of the technical talks between the deputy foreign ministers of Iran and the six world powers in the Swiss city of Montreux on Thursday.

"The meetings were constructive and useful. Some progress was made and a better understanding on some of the issues emerged," her office said in a statement.

"The (parties) will continue to work on the remaining gaps and will meet again very soon," the statement added.

On Wednesday, Iran's negotiators also held quadrilateral deputy-level talks with Hans Dieter Lucas from Germany, Simon Gass from Britain and Nicolas de Riviere from France.

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On the same day, Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and his American counterpart, John Kerry, wrapped up intense negotiations in Montreux. Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Ali Akbar Salehi and US Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz also attended the talks.

Iran and the P5+1 countries – Russia, China, Britain, France, and the United States plus Germany – are seeking to seal a comprehensive nuclear deal by July 1. The two sides have already missed two self-imposed deadlines for inking a final agreement since they signed an interim one in the Swiss city of Geneva in November 2013.

<http://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2015/03/06/400531/A-good-nuclear-deal-at-hand-EU>

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FARS News Agency – Tehran, Iran

Friday, March 06, 2015

Iranian FM: Political Difficulties Still Present in N. Talks

TEHRAN (FNA) - Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif underscored that political and not technical difficulties have prevented striking a final agreement with the world powers.

Zarif told the Kyodo News on Thursday that the remaining difficulties in the talks were not technical anymore and were political, urging the West to make a political decision.

“Sanctions and an agreement don’t go together,” he said, adding, “We have a very clear mandate that all sanctions must go.

The Iranian foreign minister stressed the importance of creating a verification mechanism to secure the implementation of the agreement.

“If there is an agreement and our parliament approves, Iran is accepting to abide by even more stringent international controls,” he said.

The Iranian foreign minister was in Montreux, western Switzerland, for three-day nuclear talks through Wednesday with US Secretary of State John Kerry.

His remarks came after representatives of Iran and the Group 5+1 (the US, Russia, China, Britain and France plus Germany) wrapped up deputy-level negotiations over Tehran’s nuclear program in the city of Montreux, Switzerland.

The talks are expected to resume March 15 in Geneva, Switzerland.

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=13931215000733>

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The Economic Times – New Delhi, India

Do Not Forget Dangers Posed by Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons: UK's Ex-Defense Secretary

By Press Trust of India (PTI)

5 March 2015

WASHINGTON: The global community should not forget the dangers posed by Pakistan's nuclear weapons and its two new heavy water plants capable of producing 24 atomic warheads a year, a top former British official has said.

Liam Fox, the former British Defence Secretary, said the international community should not risk to forget Pakistan, which was not a stable country.

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"Here in Washington, with all the focus on Iran at the present time, people seem to have forgotten that Pakistan is sitting on something like 120 nuclear warheads and has recently brought into play two new heavy water plants that will enable them to produce about 24 nuclear warheads a year from now on," he said.

"It is the nuclear problem that nobody seems to want to acknowledge and talk about in detail," he said yesterday.

"This is a worry," Fox said at an event organised by the think-tank Center for Strategic and International Studies.

"We've got to the rise of transnational terrorism. It's nothing new, but it changes its manifestations. And of course, the worry that we have is that this nuclear proliferation in places like Pakistan will find its way into the terrorists' game," he said.

Identifying Pakistan as the risk of being a failed states, the former official noted that he said it "not out of malign intent", but because of sheer instability.

"Most of us politically are used to dealing with our opposite numbers. But in a country like Pakistan, where, frankly, we're never really sure who's in charge, whether it's the politicians, the military, or the ISI, we have to develop a whole range of relationships," said Fox, who currently a Member of British Parliament.

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/do-not-forget-dangers-posed-by-pakistans-nuclear-weapons-uks-ex-defense-secretary/articleshow/46465271.cms>

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Real Clear Defense – New York, NY
OPINION/Commentary

NATO's Nuclear Nightmare over Ukraine

By Rebecca Heinrichs
February 27, 2015

While experts and analysts proffer suggestions for how the U.S. should respond to Putin's intractable assault on Ukraine, [like this recent excellent piece by Tom Nichols](#) in RCD or by [this Brookings report](#) (not exactly authored by [hawks](#)), some still wonder why Moscow's actions have anything to do with the U.S. in the first place. Part of the blame for this ignorance is willful, derived from a strong desire to keep the U.S. uninvolved in another conflict. And yet for those who have been listening to President Obama or former Secretary of State Clinton during the "reset" days, we've been led to believe that Russia is a cooperative partner, one that has many more shared interests with the U.S. than disagreements, let alone any that might lead to war. Indeed, the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review declared, "Russia and the United States are no longer adversaries, and prospects for military confrontation have declined dramatically."

Commander of European Command General Breedlove testified before the House Armed Services Committee recently and gave one of the most compelling explanations from a U.S. official as to why Russia's provocation and aggression is indeed a security crisis for the United States.

No doubt appreciating that the Russians would be listening closely, Breedlove began his testimony with a clear defense of the NATO alliance, underscoring its importance to the U.S. In sum, "Maintaining our strategic Alliance with Europe is vital to maintaining U.S. national security and is not to be taken for granted." This is the crux. The stronger the NATO alliance is, the more stable Europe is and the less likely the U.S. will be drawn into a catastrophic war, mainly with Russia. Then, he clearly stated the U.S. commitment to NATO's defense. "Coupled with our visible commitment to maintain capabilities, readiness, responsiveness and our strategic level messaging, our presence demonstrates, to friend and foe alike, our absolute commitment to the sovereignty and security of every Ally."

But this begs the question, why isn't what the General laid out working? Russia's direct aid and support of continued aggression in Ukraine in the middle of a just-agreed ceasefire, once again belie Moscow's willingness to end the conflict and reach a peaceful settlement. But this is no surprise when one considers Ukraine is not what

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Russia's ultimately after. It's after something much bigger. According to General Breedlove, "Since the beginning of 2014 President Putin's Russia has abandoned all pretense of participating in a collaborative security process with its neighbors and the international community." And then, "Russia uses these conflicts to maintain its influence and deny these states' ability to make their own foreign and security policy choices and chart their own futures."

Russia's war with Ukraine is just the tip of the iceberg. What Moscow is really after is the undoing of the NATO alliance, one it has never recognized as legitimate. It sees NATO countries, or those countries who seek to become members of or align themselves with NATO, as part of its sphere of influence, and therefore as a threat to its power and ability to affect and determine the outcomes in the region. And so a growing NATO, either in geography or power, is perceived as a direct threat to Russia. This adversarial stance towards NATO is not mere speculation. In the latest Russian military doctrine released in December of last year, it branded NATO a threat.

As mentioned above, Tom Nichols' piece "Russia Can't Beat NATO—but Putin may Try" explains well why the conventional arms of NATO, along with its recent years of war, have kept its war-fighting prowess current and able to dominate Russian conventional war-fighting ability.

But then, in the most critical section of the piece, Nichols teases out why all of this could mean Russia's employment of nuclear weapons. He writes, "In the end, if Putin orders his forces West, the Russians will lose, and lose badly. At that point, Putin will only have two options: he can sue for peace (something he seems constitutionally incapable of doing) or he can resort to nuclear weapons."

This is where I take a slight but important difference in analysis with Nichols. While it's true the Russians haven't employed nuclear weapons, they are already on the table as a means of coercion. As Dr. Matthew Kroenig of Georgetown University argued in a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing recently, "The ongoing conflict in Ukraine is very much a nuclear crisis." While the U.S. has made great pains to marginalize nuclear weapons in its strategy, over the past two decades Russia has moved nuclear weapons front and center to its national strategy. Not only do Russia's national leaders, including Putin himself, imply or sometimes explicitly threaten to employ nuclear weapons, the military conducts exercises showing just how it would do it. Russian foreign minister Lavrov, even stated that Russia had the "right" to deploy nuclear weapons in Crimea.

The Russians hold to a theory that by employing "tactical nuclear weapons" that is, ones that will incur limited damage, as opposed to total destruction, the enemy (i.e. NATO), would immediately sue for peace, deeming any further conventional fight not worth the cost. Ambassador Robert Joseph explained at a recent conference that, "Russia's doctrine assumes an asymmetry of interests and a lack of willingness on the part of the enemy to risk nuclear war." Moscow may calculate that it wants to put an end to NATO more than the alliance, including the U.S., wants to engage in a retaliatory strike. The Russians are surely wrong about this, and that means a quickly escalating catastrophic war. And to be sure, Russia has a great number more of these lower yield battlefield nuclear weapons than what the U.S. has—some estimate as many as ten times as many. This is why the number and type of nuclear weapons the U.S. possess matters and matters greatly.

Ambassador Joseph continued, "And Russian deterrence thinking is backed by an expansion of nuclear capabilities across the spectrum – heavy and mobile ICBMs, new SSBNs and SLBMs, upgrading of Bear Hs and Backfire bombers, and of course, the maintenance of vastly superior theater nuclear forces. Just days ago the chief of Russia's armed forces (General Gerasimov) -- pointing to a large-scale military modernization plan through the next 5 years--said that "a strong nuclear arsenal will ensure military superiority over the West." "

Russian planners have been thinking, calculating and evaluating how to assert itself in the region, and how to use America's treatment of its nuclear weapons to its advantage. What to do with U.S. nuclear weapons is not a debate relegated to arms control academics and wonky theorists. The U.S. has failed to adequately modernize its force and President Obama remains determined to take the U.S. levels of strategic nuclear weapons down by another third after satisfying the limits of the New START Treaty; a treaty that did not include any limitations on Russian tactical nuclear weapons, which we are now paying a direct price for.

Aside from the obvious need to modernize the force, including delivery platforms, the U.S. should now make it clear that lower-yield nuclear weapons are very much in play, including by assessing the possibility of deploying

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strategic bombers to Eastern Europe. (Dr. Kroenig presented such an option in his appearance before the Congressional Committee and his entire testimony is worth considering.)

Even this won't be enough. In tandem with these deployments President Obama should make unmistakably clear that any nuclear attack against a NATO ally will result in nuclear retaliation. Failing to do this increases the prospects of a nuclear war.

General Breedlove closed with words the current and any future Commander should internalize: "If we do not stand up and take the initiative to set the theater, someone else will. We need credible, enduring capabilities that will assure, deter, and defend while shaping the theater with a coordinated whole of government approach. As long as I have the watch over EUCOM, I will relentlessly pursue a Europe that is whole, free, and at peace."

Rebecca Heinrichs is a fellow at the George C. Marshall Institute, writes about security policy, and specializes in nuclear deterrence and missile defense. She is the former manager of the House Missile Defense Caucus.

http://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2015/02/27/natos_nuclear_nightmare_over_ukraine_107670.html

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The Washington Times – Washington, D.C.
OPINION/Commentary

When Iran Goes Nuclear

Failure to protect the nation would amount to dereliction of duty

By R. James Woolsey and Peter Vincent Pry
Monday, March 2, 2015

Our attention these days with regard to security is understandably riveted on the Islamic State, or ISIS, and its hideous decapitations, rapes and live immolations. We must deal with the Islamic State, but it is not the gravest threat we face. The Israelis are right — we should awaken to the fact that the coming of a nuclear Iran holds special dangers and requires particularly urgent attention. There are four driving reasons.

First, the Mideast abounds in clashing religious beliefs, but there is special danger in the Shiite doctrine held by many Iranians, including some of Iran's national leaders: The return of the hidden Imam will bring the war that ends the world and creates heavenly bliss for believers. As America's dean of Mideast studies, Bernard Lewis, puts it: During the Cold War, Mutual Assured Destruction was a deterrent; today it is an inducement.

Second, Iran works very closely with North Korea on its nuclear and missile programs. Consequently, it has the ballistic missile capacity to launch weapons of substantial size and intercontinental range against us, or to orbit satellites above us.

So troubling is this capability — in the hands of either Iran or North Korea — that nine years ago, based on the ability of North Korea's Taepodong missile to carry a nuclear warhead to intercontinental range, the current secretary of defense, Ashton Carter, and a prominent former secretary, William Perry, urged in a 2006 op-ed a pre-emptive strike against the then-new North Korean long-range missiles on their launch pads. As the two secretaries put it then, "Intervening before mortal threats to U.S. security can develop is surely a prudent policy." Their view was that our ballistic missile defense capabilities were unproven and should not be relied upon for such an important task. "Diplomacy has failed," they said, "And we cannot sit by."

Third, Iran now is either very close to being able to field a nuclear weapon or it should be regarded as already having that capability. As William Graham, who served as President Reagan's science adviser, administrator of NASA and chairman of the Congressional EMP Commission, as well as many of his distinguished colleagues, such as Henry Cooper, who was director of the Strategic Defense Initiative, and Fritz Ermarth, former chairman of the National Intelligence Council, have put it:



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"Regardless of intelligence uncertainties and unknowns about Iran's nuclear weapons and missile programs, we know enough now to make a prudent judgment that Iran should be regarded by national security decision makers as a nuclear missile state capable of posing an existential threat to the United States and its allies."

Iran's progress toward having a nuclear weapon that can be orbited or delivered by a long-range missile will not be halted by the concession-rich compromises proposed by the administration's arms control negotiators in Geneva. North Korea already has this capability. As it appears now, Iran will have it before long. What are the consequences for our vulnerability to these two rogue states?

The new factor that makes one or a few nuclear warhead-carrying missiles launched into orbit much more dangerous than during the Cold War is the possibility of an electromagnetic pulse (EMP) attack against the critical infrastructures that are the foundation of modern societies, especially the national electric grid. Electronics are increasingly vulnerable to EMP — more than a million times more vulnerable (and, yes, also much more capable) than they were at the dawn of the age of modern electronics a half-century ago. Moore's Law has not been kind to our electronic vulnerabilities.

Consequently, even one nuclear warhead detonated at orbital altitude over the United States would black out the national electric grid and other life-sustaining critical infrastructures for months or years by means of the electromagnetic pulse it would create. The Congressional EMP Commission assessed that a nationwide blackout lasting one year could kill nine of 10 Americans through starvation and societal collapse. Islamic State-like gangs would rule the streets.

Just such a scenario is described in Iranian military documents.

Thus, once Iran has a nuclear weapon, even a primitive one, with a small number of long-range missiles it can use an EMP attack to threaten our survival as a nation and, indeed, the existence of modern society. If a nuclear Iran decided that we were, literally, (and not just as the target of a Persian religious expletive) "the Great Satan," it might decide that we should meet Satan's fate.

The advice given President George W. Bush by the two secretaries of defense nine years ago with respect to striking North Korea may turn out to be advice to which President Obama should give heed for one or both of these rogue states.

But just on the chance that a pre-emptive attack on Iran's strategic capabilities has somehow not found its way onto the chart of options now being discussed these days in the Oval Office, at a minimum the United States needs to protect, now, its electric grid and other critical infrastructures from EMP by passing the Critical Infrastructure Protection Act and the Shield Act. These would at least let us begin to take some key and affordable steps toward hardening the electric grid.

These bills gathering dust in Congress for years without presidential support or interest, mark a new low in the failure of the White House and Congress to fulfill their security responsibilities to the nation. Their continued failure could be the most fateful government dereliction of duty in history.

R. James Woolsey is a former director of central intelligence and is chairman of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies. Peter Vincent Pry is executive director of the EMP Task Force, and served in the EMP Commission, the Strategic Posture Commission, the House Armed Services Committee and the CIA.

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/mar/2/r-james-woolsey-peter-vincent-pry-when-iran-goes-n/>

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War on the Rocks.com
OPINION/Commentary

More Nukes Not the Answer to Russian Aggression

By Kingston Reif
March 3, 2015

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Russia's aggression against Ukraine has rightly aroused concern in Western capitals about Moscow's commitment to international peace and security and a rules-based international order. These concerns are compounded by troublesome Russian behavior in the nuclear arena, such as its testing of a ground-launched cruise missile in violation of the 1987 Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, aggressive nuclear force modernization program, and assertive pattern of nuclear exercising and posturing.

Russia's belligerence has prompted calls from some in the United States to abandon long-standing bipartisan arms control efforts to reduce the Russian nuclear threat and attempt to increase the credibility of U.S. nuclear forces by augmenting existing capabilities in Europe.

Moscow's challenge to Europe requires a tough and unified Western response, but the challenge can't be effectively resolved with nuclear weapons or the buildup of nuclear capabilities.

The Republican leadership of the House Armed Services Committee has attempted to block U.S. implementation of New START every year since the treaty entered into force in 2011, and is sure to resume its effort this year.

Meanwhile, in a January 22 letter to then Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel and Secretary of State John Kerry, Reps. Mike Rogers (R-AL), Chairman of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Strategic Forces, and Mike Turner (R-OH), Chairman of the Tactical Air and Land Forces Subcommittee, called for the addition of new sites in Eastern Europe for the deployment of U.S. tactical B61 nuclear gravity bombs and their associated short-range dual-capable aircraft.

Heeding these calls would be counterproductive and self-defeating.

First, the current tensions with Russia reinforce the value of arms control agreements such as New START. By verifiably capping U.S. and Russian deployed nuclear forces, the treaty bounds the current tensions between the two countries.

Blocking implementation of New START would be a major propaganda victory for Moscow and could cause it to renege on its own commitments under the treaty. This would remove the caps on Russia's deployed strategic forces and compromise America's ability to verify the size and composition of the Russian nuclear stockpile.

Second, not only would enhancing U.S. nuclear capabilities in Europe be unlikely to deter Russia from continuing to destabilize Ukraine or perhaps pursuing similar tactics against the Baltic States, but it would be provocative, divisive, and expensive.

Moving U.S. tactical nuclear weapons closer to the border with Russia is not a good way to deter the continued use by Moscow of the hybrid warfare strategy it used to annex Crimea or provide additional reassurance to NATO's easternmost members. The strategy involves tactics that are localized, low-intensity, and do not officially involve the Russian military, thereby putting them below the threshold that makes threatening or using nuclear weapons rational or credible.

In fact, the roughly 180 non-strategic B61s already believed to be deployed in five European states (German, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, and Turkey) are of dubious military value. When asked in 2010 if there is a military mission performed by U.S. tactical nuclear weapons in Europe that cannot be performed by either U.S. strategic or conventional forces, Gen. James Cartwright, then-vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, flatly said: "No."

Moreover, if there were an imminent Russian threat against NATO territory, the last place NATO military planners would want to move U.S. nuclear weapons would be closer to that threat.

Widening NATO's nuclear footprint would be highly divisive within the alliance, threatening cohesion at a time when it is vitally important. Many NATO members are skeptical of the continued deployment of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons in Europe – to say nothing about moving these weapons eastward. Dutch Foreign Minister Bert Koenders recently reemphasized that the Netherlands opposes the deployment of nuclear weapons in new NATO member states.

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New tactical deployments would also be extremely provocative. In response, Russia might remove some of its offensive tactical warheads from central storage and mate them with delivery systems closer to NATO borders – for example in the Kaliningrad region bordering Poland or in Crimea.

In addition, building the sites necessary to house, store, and secure B61s and dual-capable aircraft wouldn't be cheap. At a time when U.S. and NATO defense spending is at a premium, every dollar spent on nuclear weapons is a dollar that can't be spent to provide central and eastern NATO allies with the additional conventional military support that is more relevant to their predicament.

Though the urge to respond in kind to Russian nuclear saber-rattling may be understandable, that does mean that it is wise. As Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Brian McKeon put it last week, the United States “need not respond symmetrically to every Russian provocation. In particular, there is currently no need to expand the role for U.S. nuclear weapons, or to change our nuclear posture.”

To deter Russia from considering a Ukraine-style campaign or larger conventional military assault against one of the Baltic States, NATO's top priority must be to ensure that it has adequate in theater conventional forces capable of quickly and proportionally countering the aggression. If Russia is not deterred from climbing the escalation ladder by such conventional forces, backed up by U.S. nuclear forces based in the United States, then it's hard to argue that forward deployed tactical nuclear forces would appreciably change Moscow's calculus.

The Obama administration has already taken many steps to demonstrate the U.S. commitment to NATO's defense, such as increased U.S. troop rotations, air patrols, training exercises, and contingency planning. It is also calling on Congress to support a European Reassurance Initiative of up to \$1 billion to further buttress NATO's eastern defenses. In addition, NATO is in the process of standing up a rapid-reaction force of 5,000 troops capable of quickly deploying to Eastern Europe.

Such steps, combined with greater investments in defense on the part of America's NATO allies, are likely to have a more credible impact than placing greater emphasis on tactical nuclear weapons that are of dubious military value and could fracture the alliance.

Russia's actions in Ukraine should not prompt the United States to take counter-actions that wouldn't be helpful in addressing the problem and could lead to a dangerous escalatory cycle.

Kingston Reif is the Director for Disarmament and Threat Reduction at the Arms Control Association.

<http://warontherocks.com/2015/03/more-nukes-not-the-answer-to-russian-aggression/?singlepage=1>

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Global Times – Beijing, China
OPINION/Editorial

Defense Budget Rise Echoes Nation's Growth

Global Times Editorial

March 05, 2015

Fu Ying, spokeswoman for China's National People's Congress told reporters on Wednesday that China's defense budget will increase by roughly 10 percent.

China's defense budget in 2014 is 808.2 billion yuan (\$128.97 billion), and another rise of 10 percent will see the budget go beyond \$140 billion in 2015. Ranking second after the US on the list of countries by military expenditure, China's defense budget is approximately the sum of the third and the fourth's budgets, but still way behind the US. The US spends more on defense than the next 14 countries combined.

Fu said the Chinese, from lawmakers to ordinary people, are in favor of the military budget rise.

This is true. China's national security faces risks more complicated than before. But as a regional power, China can only rely on itself to safeguard its national security.

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Ascension to becoming the second-largest economy means China is a hot and controversial topic in the international public discourse. China is trying to transform its ways to protect its national security. The more developed China becomes, the more security concerns it will face.

The velocity with which military equipment and technology is updated is far faster than ever before. And the cost has also become exceptionally expensive.

For now, only the US represents the highest standard of military strength. It forces other countries, especially major powers, to either surrender to it or make their own ways to reinforce national defense. As for China, the reality rules out the first option.

Although ranking the second for a few years in a row, China's military spending is not in proportion to its real security situation. It is apparently not the second-safest country. It is not even in the top five.

China's military strength has been exaggerated and hyped up as a "threat" by some Western media for years. But they must have known that China's ever-increasing defense budget does not have that much impact on them as China's second-largest GDP has.

The international community, in fact, is fully aware that Chinese troops need to modernize, a natural result of its growing economic strength. All these concerns that play up China's defense budget increase are nothing but a reflection of their inertia in the face of China-related issues.

The proportion of the Chinese defense budget to GDP is less than 2 percent, while that of the US is 3.8 percent. It demonstrates that China is not developing the military at any cost. The rapid increase can only account for one simple fact: China's defense budget started at a very low level.

Active defense has been China's principle in developing its armed forces. China has been committed to being a contributor to regional stability and world peace. Such a commitment is in line with what the international community expects from China.

China has not been involved in war for about 30 years, and could be the most peaceful major power. China's national defense building only aims at sustaining this peacefulness and helping other countries benefit from China's development.

<http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/910283.shtml>

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Foreign Policy – Washington, D.C.

OPINION/Report

How to Dismantle an Atomic Bomb? With a Money Crunch.

The Pentagon is unsure where it will find the money to upgrade its nukes, as costs are expected to double.

By Kate Brannen

March 5, 2015

The United States, the only country to have used nuclear weapons in war, hasn't dropped an atomic bomb since 1945, when it debuted its devastating arsenal with twin attacks on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, immediately killing a combined estimated 120,000 people. And not since 1992 has the United States conducted a nuclear weapons test explosion.

Yet U.S. spending on nuclear weapons is set to double over the next 10 years — and not because such warheads are expected to play a bigger role in military strategy. If anything, there is a growing consensus among national security leaders, including a former commander of U.S. nuclear forces, that the U.S. inventory of nuclear weapons is too big, a relic of the Cold War. They argue that today's nuclear arsenal could be further scaled back and still provide a strong nuclear deterrent.

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So why is the Defense Department about to pour money into upgrades and replacements for the warheads — and the bombers, subs, and missiles that carry them? Because, officials say, U.S. nukes are getting old and need to be modernized if they're going to stay safe and reliable in America's arsenal.

But it's unclear whether there will be enough money to pay for the current plan.

The United States maintains what's called a nuclear triad, or three different ways to carry nuclear weapons: intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarine-launched ballistic missiles, and bomber aircraft that can drop nuclear warheads. Currently, the United States plans to replace or upgrade all of these over the next 10 to 15 years.

However, the Pentagon's top weapons buyer told lawmakers this week that the United States is going to have trouble in about six years with coming up with the money to do so.

Appearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee's subcommittee on strategic forces, Frank Kendall said that starting in 2021, it's going to be a challenge to identify money within the defense budget to pay for the military's nuclear modernization plans.

"We're going to have an affordability problem that we'll have to deal with," he said in testimony on Wednesday, March 4.

Meanwhile, the Department of Energy, which shares the nuclear weapons budget with the Pentagon, is planning life-extension programs for the warheads. It is also planning major upgrades to the uranium processing facility located at the Y-12 National Security Complex in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, and a similar facility for plutonium processing at Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico.

Just how much money this is all going to take is still being worked out as the Pentagon and the Energy Department weigh what they want to buy against what they can afford.

Last week, during a House Armed Services Subcommittee on Strategic Forces hearing, a rather startling estimate was made public. Rep. Rick Larsen (D-Wash.) held up a September letter from Navy Adm. Cecil Haney, head of U.S. Strategic Command. The letter said that nearly 10 percent of the Pentagon's overall budget, for "a period of time," is necessary to complete the planned nuclear modernization activities.

It's impossible to predict how much the United States will spend on defense in the future, but Todd Harrison, a defense budget expert at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, says it could reach \$625 billion in 2025. That assumes the spending caps mandated by the Budget Control Act remain in place and the budget grows with inflation after that.

According to Haney's estimate last September, the Pentagon would need to spend almost \$63 billion on nuclear weapons alone in 2025, around when nuclear modernization activities would begin to peak. He argued the spending would be worth it.

"The cost of losing a credible deterrent capability would likely be much greater not only in dollars, but potentially in freedom and sovereignty," Haney wrote then.

When confronted with the letter last week, Haney backpedaled on his 10 percent estimate. Citing a January study from the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), Haney told the House panel that it would likely be closer to 5 to 6 percent of overall annual defense spending. This is still somewhere between \$31 billion and \$38 billion.

In its study, the CBO estimated that the Pentagon would spend \$348 billion on nuclear weapons between 2015 and 2024, which would represent roughly 6 percent of overall defense spending during that decade.

But the really big nuclear modernization costs aren't scheduled to hit for another 15 to 20 years. So the 5 to 6 percent figures likely underestimate the true costs, according to Kingston Reif, director for disarmament and threat reduction policy at the Arms Control Association.

"If we continue to move ahead with the current course, we're going to encounter a budgetary train wreck," Reif said.

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Today, nuclear weapons represent a little more than 2.5 percent of overall defense spending. In 2015, the Pentagon requested roughly \$15 billion, and the Energy Department requested an additional \$8.5 billion, for a government-wide total of about \$24 billion.

The nuclear weapons spending is scheduled to peak as big Pentagon bills need to be paid, creating a funding crunch.

The Air Force will be ramping up production on the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, the Pentagon's most expensive weapons program to date, as well as a number of other aircraft. The Navy's shipbuilding program to buy more destroyers, attack submarines, and aircraft carriers will also be fighting for the same pot of money.

These fiscal pressures will likely reinvigorate the debate surrounding the nuclear triad and whether all three parts of it are necessary — or whether it's wiser to cut spending across the board.

The country's land-based missiles, or ICBMs, are considered the cheapest to modernize, but their usefulness is also hotly debated. To reach targets in Asia and the Middle East, the missiles would have to fly over Russia. That runs the risk of spooking Moscow, which might mistake their flight as an American attack on Russian territory and retaliate. Outside of attacking Russia, the ICBMs are virtually unusable, some have argued. Meanwhile, a host of morale problems have plagued the airmen tasked with this mission.

The Air Force is also building a replacement for its B-1 and B-52 bombers, which can carry nuclear bombs. Because the new plane, known as the Long-Range Strike Bomber, will be useful for both nuclear missions and more traditional bombing flights, this leg of the triad faces less financial pressure from budget cutters than the ICBM force.

Working against the new plane is its own cost. The Air Force estimates each plane — and it is planning to buy between 80 and 100 — will cost \$550 million, a target price that will likely be surpassed. The B-2 bomber, for example, cost roughly \$2 billion a plane, and no one expects the new one to be any less capable or to be built more cheaply.

Finally, the Navy's plan to replace its ballistic missile submarines is considered the highest priority of the nuclear recapitalization programs. The cost of this program threatens to crowd out large portions of the rest of the Navy's shipbuilding budget. It's expected to be a \$100 billion design and construction effort.

"There's no solution to that problem at this point," Reif said.

Kate Brannen is a senior reporter covering the Pentagon and the U.S. military. Prior to joining FP, Kate was a defense reporter for Politico. She's also worked at Defense News, where she covered Congress and the U.S. Army.

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/03/05/nuclear-weapons-pentagon-modernization-money/>

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Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists – Chicago, IL
OPINION/Columnist

The Fiscal Threat to Nuclear Strategy

By Adam Mount
March 05, 2015

In the year since the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies estimated that the cost of modernizing the US nuclear arsenal could reach \$1 trillion over 30 years, the budgetary problem has grown worse rather than better. As the military services gear up to rebuild nearly every aircraft, submarine, missile, and warhead in the arsenal, acute fiscal pressures are causing irresponsible behavior in Washington. The White House's 2016 budget request to Congress asks for increased spending on the arsenal across the board, even as the House Budget Committee is moving towards capping defense spending at levels much lower than requested. This means that cuts are likely.

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But unlike the late Cold War, when the US nuclear arsenal was so large that significant cuts did not require major changes to nuclear strategy, cuts to the US modernization programs will limit the options that the military can offer to the president in a crisis. If the administration does not review nuclear spending and put in place an affordable strategy for the coming decades, nuclear strategy will be set by bureaucratic struggles and congressional politics. This is not strategy; it is an accident waiting to happen.

The new budget requests increased funding on all nuclear fronts. In addition to expected increases for new submarines and bombers, this year's budget request dramatically increases funding to explore an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) replacement and accelerates the program for a new air-launched cruise missile by two years. The expensive and unnecessary life extension program for the handful of B61 nuclear gravity bombs remaining in the US arsenal also receives increased funding for design work. Overall, the budget request from the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA)—an autonomous part of the Energy Department responsible for nuclear weapons production and upkeep—is up 10 percent from last year, including a \$667 million increase in weapons spending.

Across the Potomac at the Pentagon, the military services are also moving further from a workable fiscal solution to nuclear arsenal refurbishment. For instance, the Air Force seems to be leaning toward a relatively expensive option for modernizing the ICBM force. Though the RAND Corporation found that the cheapest option by far would be to refurbish the existing Minuteman IIIs in their silos, the Air Force has requested that contractors develop options for building a missile that would be entirely new, save for the reentry vehicles that carry warheads. By asking for a more expensive option, the Air Force may hope to come out ahead in the likely event of a cut to ICBM procurement accounts. Yet the strategy could have the opposite effect: A large price tag up front could provoke a wider conversation about the need to maintain an ICBM force at all.

The Air Force's behavior is hardly surprising; because the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review did not mandate major changes to the nuclear force structure, the services are in effect under orders to replicate or improve the capabilities of existing systems. Yet, other priorities intrude. Though the military services knew they would have to modernize nuclear delivery vehicles—many of the current missiles and bombers are decades old—they chose not to moderate their plans for conventional shipbuilding or aircraft procurement to budget for the expense of nuclear refurbishment. Now that military accounts have insufficient funds to support both types of projects in full, the Air Force and the Navy have contrived a gimmick: They have asked Congress to establish new accounts to fund the new stealth bomber and new ballistic missile submarines as "national assets."

Because the nuclear force is likely to be funded at moderate levels in any event, the new accounts are intended to protect the conventional procurement programs by drawing funds for nuclear modernization from elsewhere—namely, from the Army. In this way, nuclear weapons are helping to turn the Pentagon against itself, just as it is struggling to plan for austerity.

The White House should understand that while the services will behave strategically to meet their requirements, Congress may not. Facing a budget request that asks for everything, many Congressmen are moving to fund extraneous projects like the B61 conversion to a guided weapon, the new cruise missile, and a doomed plan to get rid of excess military plutonium by making it into fuel for commercial nuclear power plants, when the funds would be better spent on the new submarine fleet. In search of scarce funds for nonessentials, Congress is likely to move money from more important programs—including the NNSA's nonproliferation programs around the world—and into its weapons accounts.

Even more important, the overwhelming trend in major defense acquisition programs in recent years has been to plan for large numbers of advanced weapons systems, only to have the purchases cut back precipitously. This was the experience of the Seawolf submarine, the Zumwalt destroyer, and the F-22 fighter, all of which have been fielded at small fractions of their expected numbers. The dynamic has also shaped the current nuclear force: Of a planned 132 B-2 bombers, the Air Force currently operates only 20; of 24 planned Ohio-class submarines, 14 now serve as part of the nuclear arsenal. In a time of acute fiscal austerity, Congress is even more likely to curtail the planned purchase quantities of nuclear delivery platforms.

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Today, cuts of this magnitude would affect the ability of the nuclear force to carry out nuclear strategy as it is now written. A quarter century after the end of the Cold War, the US nuclear arsenal is actually quite slim: Where the Russians spread their warheads across a dizzying constellation of tactical and strategic systems, the United States maintains few redundant capabilities. And since real savings can only be realized by dramatically lowering the quantities of a system, by eliminating a platform, or by cutting infrastructure, the way forward will entail changes to how the Pentagon conducts deterrence, assurance, and force planning.

It is possible, even likely, that the nuclear force could adapt to summary cuts without sacrificing deterrence or assurance. Nuclear forces have always operated in a politically fraught and fiscally uncertain environment, and resourceful commanders will do the best they can with the tools provided for them. A senior nuclear planner recently told me that “there obviously is a risk” in cutting nuclear systems and the country should be intellectually honest in having a debate about whether to accept that risk. If the decision is made, he said, the services “will do our best.” Yet, allowing congressional infighting or blind budget sequestration to set nuclear strategy is not an optimal solution. The services are owed guidance, consistency, and forewarning of major challenges.

At minimum, the president will have to authorize changes in patrol requirements for the nuclear missile submarine force (to lower the numbers of boats required) as well as in nuclear warfighting plans (to decrease their emphasis on aircraft). For example, if the new cruise missile is cut to save money, the Air Force may opt to prioritize nuclear certification of its new penetrating stealth bomber and retire the B-52H ahead of the current schedule. If instead the administration opts to delay the new bomber until the B-52H’s are forced to retire in the 2040s, the Air Force can plan its operations in the interim.

In short, budgetary pressures will require changes to nuclear employment guidance that only the president can authorize. The changes can be prudently planned in advance, or they can be put in place hastily as a result of congressional caprice. Taking steps now to decide what systems best match the country’s future deterrence needs will allow the Pentagon to plan to operate a slimmer arsenal, to communicate and discuss the changes with allies, to alleviate inter-service rivalry, and to take compensatory steps as necessary. The White House must act to put in place a sensible nuclear strategy for the next decades. It can start by ensuring that its review of nuclear modernization spending is a comprehensive look at how the nation’s strategic needs can be met affordably. The review should order changes to the current modernization plans and instruct the military to begin planning for operations with a slimmer arsenal.

In the next years, the United States will make decisions that shape its nuclear arsenal for the next century. In his final years in office, the president must decide whether he leaves his successor an unstable nuclear force or one that is fiscally sustainable and strategically prudent. There are several steps the president might take to responsibly temper the modernization plans, none of which would require the United States to abandon its triad or exceed the pace of reductions under New START. The specific package of changes can be chosen in consultation with the military services, but the sheer scale of the budgetary problem means that the changes must be extensive. A cosmetic review that condones irresponsible behavior would be worse than no review at all. Delaying the review will diminish the savings that can be obtained from the modernization plans, limit options in the future, and divide the services further. And because a review is likely to be politically contentious and the next president likely to have other priorities, it may be now or never for the country to adopt a responsible and affordable plan for its nuclear forces.

Adam Mount is a Stanton Nuclear Security Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, where he is writing a profile of nuclear disarmament in the United States. Previously, he worked on nuclear elimination contingencies at the RAND Corporation.

<http://thebulletin.org/fiscal-threat-nuclear-strategy8080>

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The Diplomat – Tokyo, Japan
OPINION/Feature

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Will South Korea Have to Bomb the North, Eventually?

As North Korea expands its nuclear arsenal, will Seoul have to consider targeting missile sites at some point?

By Robert E. Kelly for *The Diplomat*

March 06, 2015

As North Korea continues to develop both nuclear weapons and the missile technology to carry them, pressure on South Korea to take preemptive military action will gradually rise. At some point, North Korea may have so many missiles and warheads that South Korea considers that capability to be an existential threat to its security. This is the greatest long-term risk to security and stability in Korea, arguably more destabilizing than a North Korean collapse. If North Korea does not arrest its nuclear and missile programs at a reasonably small, defensively-minded deterrent, then Southern elites will increasingly see those weapons as threats to Southern survival, not just tools of defense or gangsterish blackmail.

During the Cold War, the extraordinary speed and power of nuclear missiles created a bizarre and frightening “balance of terror.” Both the Americans and Soviets had these weapons, but they were enormously vulnerable to a first strike. Under the logic “use them or lose them,” there were enormous incentives to launch first: If A did not get its missiles out of the silos quickly enough, they might be destroyed by B’s first strike. One superpower could then hold the other’s cities hostage to nuclear annihilation and demand concessions. This countervailing, “city busting” temptation was eventually alleviated by “assured second strike” technologies, particularly submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM). SLBMs ensured the survivability of nuclear forces; hard-to-find submarines could ride out an enemy first strike and still retaliate. So the military value of launching first declined dramatically. By the 1970s, both the U.S. and the Soviet Union had achieved enough survivability through various “hardening” efforts that nuclear bipolarity was relatively stable despite the huge number of weapons in the arms race.

The Korean nuclear race does not have this stability and is unlikely to ever achieve it. Nuclear Korea today is more like the Cold War of the 1950s, when nuclear weapons were new and destabilizing, than in the 1970s when they had been strategically integrated, and bipolarity was mature. Specifically, North Korea will never be able to harden its locations well enough to achieve assured second strike. North Korea is too small to pursue the geographic dispersion strategies the Soviets tried, and too poor to build a reliable SLBM force or effective air defense. Moreover, U.S. satellite coverage makes very hard for the North to conceal anything of great importance. North Korea’s nuclear weapons will always be highly vulnerable. So North Korea will always face the “use it or lose it” logic that incentives a first strike.

On the Southern side, its small size and extreme demographic concentration in a few large cities makes the Republic of Korea an easy target for a nuclear strike. More than half of South Korea’s population lives in greater Seoul alone (more than 20 million people), and Seoul’s suburbs begin just thirty miles from the demilitarized zone. This again raises the temptation value of a Northern strike. Both the Soviet Union and the United States were so large, that only a massive first strike would have led to national collapse. In South Korea by contrast, nuking only about five large cities would likely be enough to push South Korea toward national-constitutional breakdown. Given its extreme urbanization and centralization, South Korea is extremely vulnerable to a WMD and/or decapitation strike.

While large-scale North Korean offensive action is highly unlikely – Pyongyang’s elites most likely just want to survive to enjoy their gangster high life – nuclear weapons do offer a conceivable route to Northern military victory for the first time in decades: a first-strike mix of counterforce detonations to throw the Southern military into disarray; limited counter-value city strikes to spur social and constitutional break-down in the South; followed by an invasion and occupation before the U.S. military could arrive in force; and a standing threat to nuke Japan or the United States as well should they intervene. Again, this is unlikely, and I still strongly believe an Allied victory is likely even if the North were to use nuclear weapons. But the more nukes the North builds, the more this threat, and the “use it or lose it” first strike incentives, grow.

It is for this reason that the U.S. has pushed South Korea so hard on missile defense. Not only would missile defense save lives, but it would dramatically improve Southern national-constitutional survivability.

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(Decentralization would also help enormously, and I have argued for that repeatedly in conferences in Korea, but it is unlikely.) A missile shield would lessen the military-offensive value of North Korea's nuclear weapons, so reducing both first-strike temptations in Pyongyang and preemptive air-strike pressure in Seoul. Unfortunately South Korea is not hardened meaningfully to ride-out Northern nuclear strikes. Missile defense in South Korea has become politicized as a U.S. plot to dominate South Korean foreign policy (yes, really) and provoke China. (Although opinion may, at last, be changing on this.) Air drills are routinely ignored. And no one I know in South Korea knows where their shelters are or what to do in case of nuclear strike.

Ideally North Korea would de-nuclearize. And we should always keep talking to North Korea. Pyongyang is so dangerous that freezing it out is a bad idea. Talking does not mean we must be taken advantage of by the North's regular bargaining gimmicks. But we must admit that North Korea seems unlikely to give up its nuclear weapons. The program goes back decades, to the 1960s. Rumor has it that Pyongyang has devoted more than 5 percent of GDP in the last two decades to developing these weapons. The program continued through the 1990s, even as more than a million North Koreans starved to death in a famine resulting from post-Cold War economic breakdown. The North has repeatedly lied and flimflammed to outsiders like the ROK government and the IAEA to keep its programs alive clandestinely. Recently Kim Jong Un has referred to nuclear weapons as the "nation's life."

We could even go a step further and admit that *a few* Northern nuclear missiles are tolerable. If we put ourselves in Pyongyang's shoes, a limited nuclear deterrent makes sense. Conventionally, North Korea is falling further and further behind. No matter how big the North Korean army gets quantitatively, it is an increasingly weak shield against high-tech opponents. U.S. regime change in the Middle East has clearly incentivized despots everywhere in the world to consider the ultimate security which nuclear weapons provide. The North Koreans have openly said that nuclear weapons ensure their post-9/11 regime security. As distasteful as it may be to us, there is a logic to that. A small, defensive-minded deterrent – say five to ten warhead-tipped missiles that could threaten limited retaliation against Southern cities – would be an objectively rational hedge against offensive action by the U.S. or South Korea. Indeed, this is almost certainly what Pyongyang says to Beijing to defend its program to its unhappy patron.

But this is the *absolute limit* of responsible Northern nuclear deployment and it is probably where the DPRK is right now. Further nuclear and missile development would exceed even the most expansive definition of North Korean security and takes us into the realm of nuclear blackmail, highly dangerous proliferation, and an offensive first-strike capability. Pyongyang does not need, for example, the ICBM it is supposedly working on.

In this context, my greatest fear for Korean security in the next two decades is North Korean nuclearization continuing apace, generating dozens, perhaps hundreds of missiles and warheads, coupled to rising South Korean paranoia and pressure to preemptively strike. There is no possible national security rationale for Pyongyang to keep deploying beyond what it has now, and if it does, expect South Korean planners to increasingly consider preemptive airstrikes. North Korea with five or ten missiles (some of which would fail or be destroyed in combat) is a terrible humanitarian threat, but not an existential one to South Korea (and Japan). South Korea could ride out, perhaps, five urban strikes, and Japan even more.

But a North Korea with dozens of nuclear missiles, possibly one hundred, some of them on submarines, would constitute a state- and society-breaking, constitutional threat to South Korea and Japan in the event of conflict. That in turn will incentivize pre-emptive airstrikes. Of course, China and the United States might be able to restrain such South Korean action. Unlike the Soviets and Americans in the Cold War, Seoul is uniquely tied to U.S. "permission" to act. In 2010, after two North Korean actions against the South, the then-South Korean president did want to retaliate, but the Americans talked him out of it. Similarly, offensive action against the North that potentially provokes a war – as airstrikes certainly might – would unnerve China, and China's opposition to South Korean missile defense has already altered that discussion in Seoul. But a nuclear capability of one-hundred missiles is a whole new level of existential threat to the South (and Japan). I find it hard to believe, in lieu of very robust missile defense, that South Korean planners would tolerate this in the long-term. Airstrikes against North Korea have been considered before (1994 and 2010 especially), and this pressure will grow again.

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This spiral of paranoia between North Korea nuclearization, and pressure on Seoul (or even Tokyo) to preemptively defang North Korea before it can threaten state-destruction, is entirely predictable – and the reason why everyone, even China and Russia, wants North Korea to stop building. Let's hope they listen.

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<http://thediomat.com/2015/03/will-south-korea-have-to-bomb-the-north-eventually/>

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ABOUT THE USAF CUWS

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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