



USAF Center for Unconventional Weapons Studies (CUWS) Outreach Journal

Issue No. 1158, 28 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: *“Prevent, Counter, and Respond—A Strategic Plan to Reduce Global Nuclear Threats (FY 2016–FY 2020)”*. A Report to Congress; authored by National Nuclear Security Administration, United States Department of Energy; March 2015, 124 pages.

http://nnsa.energy.gov/sites/default/files/NPCR%20Report_FINAL_%28with%20signatures%29_3-18-15.pdf

The last quarter century has witnessed dramatic shifts in the global nuclear security environment. The Cold War has ended, yet thousands of nuclear weapons and large stockpiles of weapons-useable material remain. Geopolitical instability and sources of potential conflict persist, especially in countries and regions with an active terrorist presence. New technology and manufacturing processes continue to emerge, sometimes without a full understanding of the potential security risks they may involve. Concerns about climate change and rising demand for clean energy have led to growing interest in civil nuclear power and fuel cycle development. Consequently, an increasing number of countries with little to no experience in nuclear technology will be faced with the tasks of safely and securely managing nuclear facilities and protecting nuclear materials, including spent nuclear fuels. In addition, the emergence of additional nuclear-capable or nuclear threshold states, such as North Korea and Iran, is challenging the fundamental principles of the global nuclear nonproliferation regime.

As recommended by the Secretary of Energy Advisory Board's Task Force on Nuclear Nonproliferation, this new report, *Prevent, Counter, and Respond—A Strategic Plan to Reduce Global Nuclear Threats (FY 2016–FY 2020)*, articulates for the first time, in a single document, our programs to reduce the threat of nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism. As such, it serves as a companion piece to our annual *Stockpile Stewardship and Management Plan*, which describes in detail the programs within the NNSA's Weapons Activities appropriation account. We intend to publish both documents each year as the Department continues to assess the evolving threat environment and to adjust our programs to effectively meet emerging challenges.

Outreach Journal Feedback or sign-up request: cpc.admin@maxwell.af.mil

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Defense One – Washington, D.C.

Pentagon Has Done a Bad Job of Defending Nuclear Triad, Air Force General Says

With hundreds of billions of dollars in new nuclear weapons being eyed over the next two decades, Pentagon leaders are pushing the value of the mission.

By Marcus Weisgerber

March 23, 2015

During more than a decade of fighting insurgents in ground wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Pentagon didn't talk much about nuclear weapons or how it views the submarines, bombers and Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles, or ICBMs, that are essential to the deterrence mission.

Now faced with the need for hundreds of billions of dollars in improvements to the current U.S. nuclear stockpile and new nuclear equipment over the next two decades, Pentagon leaders are speaking up.

"We have not gone out to the American people, we have not discussed the continued relevance of the triad and the stability that it brings to us and our allies," said Maj. Gen. Garrett Harencak, Air Force assistant chief of staff for strategic deterrence and nuclear integration. "Because of that, people are not realizing [the] tremendous value that it brings."

The nuclear triad, referenced by Harencak at the Carnegie International Nuclear Policy conference on Monday, is the combination of ICBMs, submarines and strategic bomber aircraft. Outside of the think-tank world or every four years when the Pentagon writes a new Quadrennial Defense Review, leaders rarely talk about the triad.

The structure was developed during the Cold War as the U.S. and Soviet Union built up their nuclear deterrent. Decades later, all of the ICBMs, submarines, bombers — and the weapons themselves — are old and in need of replacement, military officials say.

"The triad works," Harencak said. "The triad is a complementary system that we've had for decades that, across the entire spectrum, covers all the possible threats, the most extensive possible threats to America. It works."

The Air Force is responsible for the Minuteman ICBMs and the bombers, while the Navy oversees the Ohio-Class nuclear submarine mission. The B-52, the oldest bomber in the Air Force's fleet, has been flying since the 1950s. Its youngest bomber, the B-2, has been flying since the 1980s.

Air Force leaders say they need 80 to 100 new bombers to start flying by the mid-2020s in order to keep the bomber leg of the triad effective.

"It's going to take time for the roll out," Air Force Secretary Deborah James said Monday at the conference. "All 100 aren't all going to be there in the mid-2020s."

Right now, the Air Force is secretly evaluating bids submitted by Northrop Grumman and a Boeing-Lockheed Martin team for a new stealth bomber. The Pentagon is expected to announce a winner in the coming months.

For a classified program, Pentagon leaders spend a lot of time talking about the new stealth bomber. The project has seen steady support from senior Air Force and Pentagon leadership in recent years.

The Air Force had started working on a new bomber program last decade, but that project was derailed after an intense debate inside the Pentagon over whether the new planes were needed. When Pentagon leaders reconsidered the expensive project, Air Force brass successfully argued the project back into the Pentagon's long-term plans.



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Harencak says the upcoming aircraft's ability fly deep behind enemy lines, undetected by radar, is a key aspect in future battles. Even if nuclear weapons were abolished tomorrow, the Air Force still needs "a penetrating, persistent bomber," he argues.

The new Air Force bomber will carry nuclear weapons, but not until several years after it is deemed ready for conventional battle.

As Harencak said, "We are talking about an ability to allow no adversary to have sanctuary anywhere in the world."

<http://www.defenseone.com/management/2015/03/pentagon-has-done-bad-job-defending-nuclear-triad-air-force-general-says/108235/>

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Military Times – Tysons Corner, VA

USAF: Nuclear Review Has Led to More Officers Staying in their Jobs

By Brian Everstine, Staff writer

March 23, 2015

The Air Force has been more effective at retaining missile officers since it began initiatives to address morale problems in the community, and is planning to spend more money to build up the amount of airmen in critical fields, service leaders said Monday.

Since launching a "force improvement program" addressed at improving the quality of life and career opportunities for airmen in nuclear communities, more airmen have agreed to stay in their jobs, said Maj. Gen. Garrett Harencak, the Air Force's assistant chief of staff for strategic deterrence and nuclear integration.

"We have development teams ask young officers, 'Do you want to go to something else?' And what we found in these development teams is that the vast majority of our highest performing missileer officers are choosing to stay missiles," Harencak said today at a Carnegie Endowment for International Peace event in Washington, D.C.

The force improvement program, which began last year following the disclosure of a large-scale cheating scandal among missile officers at Malmstrom Air Force Base, Montana, was a bottom-up review of any morale issues or other problems facing the nuclear community. The program has led to dozens of changes, including new equipment, increased incentive pay and new accolades meant to give missileers more pride in their work. The increased pay now means lieutenants in the 13N career field are the highest paid in the Air Force.

The service has budget \$5.6 billion over the next five years to continue investment into the nuclear community, including increasing the manning to 100 percent in eight critical career fields — security forces, aircraft armament systems, nuclear weapon maintenance, missile electronic maintenance, missile systems maintenance, missile facility maintenance, bomber aircraft maintenance and command post controller. This budget, like others in the service, would take a hit if sequestration returns in 2016, Air Force Secretary Deborah Lee James said at the event.

While the service would work to protect its investment into the nuclear community if these budget cuts return, the hit would be about \$2 billion from the \$5.6 billion over five years, James said.

"The impacts would be across the board," she said. "I'm very concerned about it."

The service would try to protect this community because of its important mission, and to reverse the effects of a lack of meaningful investment in previous years on aging aircraft and infrastructure.

"The nuclear mission is No. 1 with us, but of course it's not the only one with us," James said. "We need more focus, a more persistent focus and leadership in the nuclear (field)."

<http://www.militarytimes.com/story/military/pentagon/2015/03/23/air-force-nuclear-missile-officer-retainment/70337334/>

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Sputnik International – Russian Information Agency

Modernization of US Nuclear Triad Imperative to Deterrence - STRATCOM

US Strategic Command Commander Cecil Haney said that the modernization of the US intercontinental ballistic missiles, missile submarines and strategic bombers was highly important to maintain a strong deterrent capability.
24 March 2015

WASHINGTON (Sputnik) — Modernizing the United States' aging nuclear triad of strategic bombers, intercontinental ballistic missiles and nuclear submarines is imperative in order to maintain a strong deterrent capability, US Strategic Command (STRATCOM) Commander Cecil Haney said at a press briefing on Tuesday.

“When you look at the triad — the responsive nature of our intercontinental ballistic missiles, the survivable nature of our ballistic missile submarines, and the flexibility and visibility of our bomber leg — each of those provide unique characteristics that are so important to strategic deterrence in the 21st Century,” Haney said.

Haney's statement came in response to a question regarding whether the United States needs all three nuclear capabilities at a time of budget constraints.

Haney also said that STRATCOM has put off some nuclear modernization programs to focus on other projects in a limited budget environment. But, he added that nuclear modernization could not be postponed longer, pointing to the aging nuclear submarines as an example.

While the maintaining US nuclear capabilities takes up less than 3 percent of the US defense budget, modernization would bring that level of spending to between 5 and 6 percent, he added.

Haney described the investment in nuclear modernization as an insurance policy for deterrence well into the future. He noted that the United States needs to respond to nuclear modernization in Russia and China in order to preserve a safe, secure, effective and credible deterrent in the future.

“The cost of not doing it can be more of a problem than the cost doing it,” the STRATCOM Commander said.

US Congressional Budget Office estimates project that the United States will have to spend approximately \$35 billion annually to achieve the US Barack Obama administration's goals to maintain and upgrade the US nuclear triad. From 2015 through 2024, the total cost would amount to approximately \$348 billion.

The cost of upgrading the US nuclear arsenal will reach \$1 trillion in the next three decades, according to The James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies.

The US Strategic Command is one of nine unified commands in the US Department of Defense that is charged with nuclear command and control, space operations and global strike. The Command is also responsible for critical communications, surveillance and reconnaissance.

<http://sputniknews.com/military/20150324/1019962153.html>

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TASS Russian News Agency – Moscow, Russia

Moscow Demands that US Return Home its Foreign Deployed Non- Strategic Nuclear Weapons

Russian diplomat said US Department of State spokesperson Jen Psaki "openly distorts facts, claiming that the US nuclear weapons in Europe are under US constant control"

March 24, 2015

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MOSCOW, March 24. /TASS/. US must return its foreign deployed non-strategic nuclear weapons home, Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Alexander Lukashevich said Tuesday

The spokesman said US Department of State spokesperson Jen Psaki "openly distorts facts, claiming that the US nuclear weapons in Europe are under US constant control and are never transferred to other countries."

Lukashevich commented on Psaki's recent statement that the deployment of US nuclear armaments on the territory of its European NATO allies and the joint measures with NATO non-nuclear member states to practise the skills of their use corresponded to the Treaty on the Nuclear Weapons Non-Proliferation.

"In actual fact, NATO's so-called 'joint nuclear missions' stipulate the participation of the alliance's non-nuclear member states in joint nuclear planning and the practice of the skills of using nuclear weapons with the involvement of carrier aircraft, their crews, the infrastructure of aerodromes and ground provision services of these states," the Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman said.

<http://tass.ru/en/russia/784555>

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Sputnik International – Russian Information Agency

New Nuclear Sub's Funding to Start on Time Despite Media Reports - US Navy

Earlier in March, media reported that the US Navy and Congress had not managed to find the funds to pay for the procurement of the Ohio Replacement Program, in charge of replacing the aging Ohio-class submarines with 12 more advanced subs.

25 March 2015

MOSCOW (Sputnik), Alexander Mosesov — Procurement funding for the US next-generation strategic nuclear submarine will start in 2017 as expected, despite earlier media reports claiming the funds have not been found yet, a US Navy spokeswoman told Sputnik on Wednesday.

Compared to its predecessor — the third-generation Ohio-class strategic nuclear submarine, which was built from 1976 till 1997 — the fourth-generation replacement submarine is expected to feature fewer launch tubes, state-of-the-art sonar, optical imaging and weapons control systems, a new electric drive and a nuclear fuel core able to power the ship for its entire service life.

"[Advanced] procurement for the Navy's top programmatic priority, the Ohio replacement program, begins... in fiscal year 2017 and leading to the procurement of the first boat construction in fiscal year 2021," Nicole Schwegman told Sputnik.

The first replacement submarine is expected to cost \$12,4 billion, including \$4,8 billion in design and engineering costs and \$7,6 billion in construction costs. The first submarine is expected to enter service in 2031.

As of 2015, Russia is the world's only country with fourth-generation strategic nuclear submarines in service — the Borey-class submarines, which are to become the mainstay of the naval component of Russia's strategic nuclear deterrent.

<http://sputniknews.com/military/20150325/1020001327.html>

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Defense News – Tysons Corner, VA

Russia Warns US against Sending Missile Defense System to South Korea

By Agence France-Presse (AFP)

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March 24, 2015

Moscow — Russia on Tuesday warned the United States against sending a ballistic missile defense system to South Korea, saying it could threaten regional security.

Washington says it wants to deploy the system, known as THAAD, to South Korea as a deterrent to military provocation by North Korea.

"Such a development cannot but cause concern about the destructive influence of the United States' global missile defense on international security," Russia's foreign ministry said in a statement.

"In a region where the situation is already extremely complicated in terms of security, this could serve as another push toward an arms race in northeast Asia and further complicate any resolution of the nuclear issues on the Korean peninsula," the statement said.

China has also already warned that deployment of the system would undermine peace and stability in the region.

Faced with growing isolation from the West over the Ukraine crisis, Russia has moved to bolster ties with former Cold War-ally North Korea.

Moscow and Pyongyang have named 2015 a "year of friendship" between the two countries and the Kremlin says reclusive leader Kim Jong-Un is set to make his first official trip abroad to visit Russia's World War Two victory commemoration in May.

South Korea and the United States will launch a massive landing drill March 28 as the climax of an ongoing joint military exercise which North Korea views as an invasion rehearsal.

<http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/2015/03/24/russia-warns-us-against-sending-missile-defence-system-to-south-korea/70370674/>

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TASS Russian News Agency – Moscow, Russia

US says Ready to Continue Dialogue with Russia on INF Treaty

Washington has started suspecting that Moscow is violating the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces treaty, a US official told a TASS correspondent at the Carnegie International Nuclear Policy Conference

March 24, 2015

WASHINGTON, March 24. /TASS/. Under-Secretary for Arms Control and International Security at the US Department of State Rose Gottemoeller has said Washington is ready to continue the dialogue with Moscow on the observance of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF).

Gottemoeller told a TASS correspondent at the Carnegie International Nuclear Policy Conference in Washington, DC on Monday that the United States seeks to settle the issues related to the treaty, which was signed in 1987.

The diplomat said the goal is to find a mutually acceptable solution to the issues which Washington raised during the consultations with the Russian government. She said the discussions on the issue are ongoing.

Washington has recently started suspecting that Moscow is violating the INF treaty, the US official said. According to the US, Russia is developing a new cruise missile which is banned under the treaty.

The Russian officials say that the US itself violates the treaty. In February, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that the US actions "are in conflict with the spirit and the letter of this document." For instance, the minister said armed drones widely used by the US fall within the treaty's definition of intermediate-range cruise land-based missiles.

"The treaty directly prohibits ABM launchers, which will soon be deployed in Romania and Poland, because they can be used to launch intermediate-range cruise missiles," the minister said.

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"While refusing to acknowledge these facts, our US colleagues assert they have some "substantiated" claims against Russia with respect to the INF Treaty, but diligently avoid specifics," he said.

In comments to Moscow's accusations, Gottemoeller said that in her opinion the Russian colleagues had been provided with "substantial information" on the issue. She also confirmed the US readiness to continue talks in an effort to solve the dispute related to the INF treaty.

<http://tass.ru/en/world/784501>

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International Business (IB) Times (U.S. Edition) – New York, NY

US Successfully Test Fires Intercontinental Ballistic Missile in California

By Kukil Bora

March 24 2015

The United States successfully test fired an intercontinental ballistic missile on Monday from a facility in California, the U.S. Air Force announced in a statement. The unarmed missile was equipped with a "test re-entry vehicle" instead of a live thermonuclear warhead.

The missile, dubbed "Minuteman III," was launched at 3:36 a.m. PDT (6:36 a.m. EDT) from Vandenberg Air Force Base (AFB) in California. Monday's successful testing of the intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) is a "key element" of the security of the United States and its allies, the Air Force said.

"With these launches, we not only verify our processes and the ICBM weapon system, we provide a visual to the world that the Minuteman III is capable of striking pretty much anywhere with extreme precision," Lt. Col. Tytonia Moore of the 90th Missile Wing, based out of the Francis E. Warren AFB in Wyoming, said in the statement.

The Minuteman III missiles are the only land-based ICBM in service in the U.S. The country currently has 450 Minuteman III missiles in missile silos around three missile wing commands, including Malmstrom AFB in Montana, Minot AFB in North Dakota and F.E. Warren AFB, Wyoming, RT.com reported.

According to the U.S. Air Force, the "ICBM test launch program demonstrates the operational credibility of the Minuteman III and ensures the United States' ability to maintain a strong, credible nuclear deterrent as a key element of U.S. national security and the security of U.S. allies and partners."

<http://www.ibtimes.com/us-successfully-test-fires-intercontinental-ballistic-missile-california-1856826>

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Sputnik International – Russian Information Agency

Russia Successfully Test-Fires RS-26 Ballistic Missile

Russia carried out a successful test-firing of an RS-26 Rubezh ballistic missile from its southern Kapustin Yar launch center, a military representative said.

26 March 2015

The missile's dummy warhead hit its target at the Sary Shagan range in Kazakhstan just minutes after takeoff from the Kapustin Yar rocket launch and development site in the southern Astrakhan region on March 18, Kommersant newspaper reported Thursday, citing a Defense Ministry source in Moscow.

The initial test launch of the RS-26 ICBM from the Plesetsk Cosmodrome on September 28, 2011, fell through, with the missile veering off course and landing just eight kilometers from the launch site. All subsequent tests in 2012, 2013 and 2015 proved successful.

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Currently it is unknown whether this missile carries a single warhead or Multiple Independent Re-entry Vehicles (MIRVs). Both configurations were tested in 2013.

Rubezh is more accurate than current ballistic missiles and is capable of penetrating even the most sophisticated missile defenses.

The RS-26 Rubezh is expected to become operational in 2016.

<http://sputniknews.com/russia/20150326/1020029499.html>

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Air Force Global Strike Command – Barksdale, LA
March 27, 2015

Malmstrom Tests Second Minuteman III Missile this Week at Vandenberg

Air Force Global Strike Command Public Affairs

3/27/2015 - VANDENBERG AIR FORCE BASE, Calif. -- A team of Air Force Global Strike Command Airmen launched an unarmed Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile equipped with a test reentry vehicle today at 3:53 a.m. Pacific Daylight Time from Vandenberg Air Force Base, California.

The test reentry vehicle impacted in a pre-established test area in the Pacific Ocean near the island of Guam approximately 40 minutes after launch.

All test launches verify the accuracy and reliability of the ICBM weapon system, providing valuable data to ensure a safe, secure and effective nuclear deterrent. The launch team, under the direction of the 576th Flight Test Squadron, Vandenberg AFB, included Airmen from the 341st Missile Wing at Malmstrom AFB, Montana and was the second test launch of a Minuteman III this week. The 576th Flight Test Squadron and 90th Missile Wing, F.E. Warren AFB, Wyoming, completed the first unarmed Minuteman III launch of the week from Vandenberg AFB March 23.

"An operational test launch requires hard work, months of preparation, and outstanding teamwork between personnel on both bases," said Lt. Col. Daniel Hays, the 341st Missile Wing Task Force Commander. "These launches are a visible reminder to both our adversaries and our allies of the readiness and capability of the Minuteman III weapon system, and without the dedication of the men and women from both the 576th and the 341st, this test could not have happened."

"The two launches from the past week were a full team effort between the 576th, and the 90th and 341st Missile Wings," said Col. Kelvin Townsend, 576th Flight Test Squadron commander. "Launching multiple missiles in close proximity to each other adds an extra amount of realism to the operational test mission we fulfill here. These test launches occur due to the training and strict attention to detail our people have; resulting in a reliable test."

Malmstrom and Warren AFBs are two of three missile bases with crew members standing alert 24-7 year round, overseeing the nation's 450 ICBM alert forces.

The ICBM community, including the Department of Defense, the Department of Energy, and U.S. Strategic Command will use the data collected from this mission for continuing force development evaluation.

The ICBM test launch program demonstrates the operational credibility of the Minuteman III and ensures the United States' ability to maintain a strong, credible nuclear deterrent as a key element of U.S. national security and the security of U.S. allies and partners.

<http://www.afgsc.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123443414>

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Sputnik International – Russian Information Agency

Tensions Impede US-Russia Nuclear Security Cooperation - US Nuclear Body

Worsening relations between the US and Russia are hampering important joint security programs, the US National Nuclear Security Agency (NNSA) said.

23 March 2015

WASHINGTON (Sputnik) — Political tensions between the United States and Russia are impacting the ability of the two countries to cooperate on nuclear security, the US National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) said in a report on Monday.

“Worsening bilateral relations have affected the ability for International Nuclear Security (INS) [program] to continue major cooperative projects in Russia,” the NNSA said.

“Given the size of Russia’s stockpile of Weapons-Usable Nuclear Material, INS will continue to look for partnership opportunities with Russia to address common nuclear security challenges,” it added.

In 2013, Russia ended cooperation with the United States on the protection, control and accounting of nuclear material at weapons sites. Russia ended such cooperation at civilian nuclear sites in 2014.

The INS program, located within the Global Material Security (GMS) Program, supports countries to, protect, control and account for nuclear material, including inspections, regulations training and security upgrades to ensure nuclear material doesn’t fall into the wrong hands through theft or diversion.

The NNDS said political issues with Russia may affect implementation of many key programs designed to properly monitor and dispose of nuclear and radioactive material, including cooperation on cross-border monitoring, theft and disposal.

The US and Russia cooperated closely for nearly two decades on nuclear issues before political tensions over Ukraine and Western sanctions led to a near end in nuclear security cooperation.

NNDS said, however, the United States would try to cooperate with Russia on nuclear security when possible and “with appropriate authorization.”

Following the break-up of the Soviet Union, the United States aided Russia and former Soviet states to securely store, dispose and transport nuclear and radioactive material under a number of bilateral agreements.

<http://sputniknews.com/politics/20150323/1019903486.html>

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TASS Russian News Agency – Moscow, Russia

Moscow Says US Missile Defense to Impair Solution of Nuclear Problem on Korean Peninsula

The US Armed Forces are researching possibilities of deploying THAAD batteries in a number of provinces in South Korea

March 24, 2015

MOSCOW, March 24. /TASS/. Likely deployment of a US missile defense in South Korea might complicate the solution of the Korean peninsula’s nuclear problem, the Russian Foreign Ministry said on Tuesday.

The Foreign Ministry drew attention to the ongoing discussion in Seoul over the possibility the country might host US anti-missile complexes THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense). The discussion is proceeding against the backdrop of research being carried out by the US Armed Forces in the Republic of Korea into the possibility of

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deploying THAAD batteries in a number of provinces. "The possibility of the US global missile defense's further geographic expansion is taking real shape," the Russian Foreign Ministry said.

"The possibility of this march of events cannot but breed alarm in view of the destructive effects of the US global missile defence on international security and global stability," the Russian Foreign Ministry said. "The region where the security situation is a no easy one may see the emergence of one more annoyance capable of triggering an arms race in Northeast Asia and to further complicate the solution of the Korean Peninsula's nuclear problem."

"It is to be hoped that all-round analysis of the effects the emergence of global missile defence components on Korean soil will entail will enable Seoul to carefully evaluate if US interceptor missiles and radars have more cons than pros," the Russian Foreign Ministry said.

<http://tass.ru/en/world/784536>

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Yonhap News Agency – Seoul, South Korea

S. Korean, U.S. Military Chiefs Hold Talks on Security Issues

March 27, 2015

By Oh Seok-min

SEOUL, March 27 (Yonhap) -- The top military officers of South Korea and the United States held talks on bilateral security issues on Friday amid swirling speculation they could discuss the deployment of an advanced U.S. missile-defense system here.

Adm. Choi Yun-hee, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) chairman, and his U.S. counterpart Gen. Martin Dempsey began their 90-minute meeting in Seoul "to deal with a wide range of issues, including how to deal with North Korea's evolving nuclear and missile threats and their preparedness," Seoul's JCS said.

While the JCS and the defense ministry here have stressed that the Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) issue would not be on the agenda, observers said the top military officers could touch upon the issue "at least in an unofficial fashion."

The possible deployment of the missile-defense system has been a hot-button issue facing South Korea amid strong opposition from China, Seoul's largest trading partner.

The U.S. hopes to deploy THAAD in South Korea to counter ballistic missile threats from North Korea and guarantee the safety of about 28,000 U.S. troops stationed here and their families, saying it is a purely defensive system.

But China has repeatedly voiced its opposition to the possible deployment of a THAAD battery on South Korean soil, suspecting it is part of U.S. attempts to contain an increasingly assertive China.

Heading for Japan, the first leg of his Asian tour, Dempsey said Tuesday that building an integrated air and missile-defense system will be a key topic of discussions when he meets with South Korean officials.

Noting that Washington is making progress on building the integrated defense umbrella, the general said Seoul and Tokyo have "made some commitments in procurements on their side to make us more interoperable."

As an integral part of the U.S.-led air defense system for the region, the THAAD is designed to intercept short-, medium- and intermediate-range ballistic missiles at high altitudes in their terminal phase.

Dempsey arrived here on Thursday for a three-day trip. It is considered a return visit before he leaves office at the end of September, according to the JCS, noting that Choi traveled to the U.S. in July.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2015/03/27/95/0301000000AEN20150327001500315F.html>

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Sputnik International – Russian Information Agency

Russian Envoy Warns Denmark Not to Join NATO Missile Shield

The Russian Ambassador to Denmark has warned that Copenhagen will face grave consequences if it joins the NATO missile defense shield.

21 March 2015

Danish warships may become targets for Russian nuclear missiles if Denmark decided to join the NATO missile defense shield, Russian Ambassador to Denmark Mikhail Vanin said, according to the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten.

"I do not think that the Danes are fully aware of the consequences if Denmark joins the US-led missile defense shield. If that happens, Danish warships become targets for Russian nuclear missiles," Vanin said.

He added that Denmark would become "part of the threat to Russia and [its] relations with Russia will be damaged."

Vanin also cautioned that joining NATO's defense shield would be "Denmark's decision", and that the country would "lose both money and security."

Danish Foreign Minister Martin Lidegaard reacted angrily to what he described as "unacceptable" remarks.

"Russia knows very well that NATO's missile defense system is defensive. We disagree with Russia on many important things, but it is important that the tone between us remains as positive as possible," Lidegaard said.

NATO has been building up a missile defense system in the Mediterranean Sea and in several European NATO member states since 2002; it is something that is seen as one of the main stumbling blocks in relations between the alliance and Russia.

<http://sputniknews.com/europe/20150321/1019826213.html>

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The Japan Times – Tokyo, Japan

Putin's Massive Military Drills Intended to Send Message to West on Ukraine

By Anna Smolchenko, Agence France-Presse (AFP)-JIJI
March 22, 2015

MOSCOW – Mammoth Russian military drills ordered by President Vladimir Putin from the Pacific to the Black Sea are designed to send a message to the West: keep your distance and don't overplay your hand on Ukraine, observers say.

Since the start of the Ukraine crisis more than a year ago, Russia has flexed its muscles with a series of war games but the scale of the latest military exercises — including sending nuclear bombers to Crimea and ballistic missiles to Kaliningrad in central Europe — has triggered a series of new questions.

Experts say whatever the purpose of the latest maneuvers involving tens of thousands of troops, the intent is clear: to show Putin's Russia will stop at nothing to protect its interests.

Military analyst Pavel Felgenhauer said Russia was pursuing a two-pronged strategy: using "nuclear blackmail" to try to press the West into making concessions amid sanctions over Ukraine while making sure its forces are ready for any full-scale military confrontation.

"This is brinkmanship, balancing on the brink of war," he said, adding that in the current atmosphere of shattered ties with the West the Kremlin is not ruling out any scenarios.

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“These are preparations for a possible nuclear conflict, for a big war with Europe and for a global nuclear war with America.”

In a bombastic statement many saw as emblematic of the Kremlin’s willingness to go all out, Putin said he was ready to put Russia’s nuclear forces on alert during the annexation of Crimea a year ago.

But others dismissed it as little more than posturing.

“Putin is talking about nuclear weapons but no one is afraid of us,” wrote Yulia Latynina, a columnist for Novaya Gazeta newspaper.

She called the “grandiose bluff” a warning to the West not to escalate the Ukraine crisis.

The tactics have worked to a degree. Washington is sending troops on a training mission to Ukraine next month but is holding off on supplying Kiev with lethal weaponry.

Russia’s seizure of Crimea, support for Ukrainian separatists and drills across Russia have caused unease in Eastern Europe and galvanized NATO, which is boosting defenses on Europe’s eastern flank.

This month European Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker went so far as to call for the creation of an EU army.

Russia insists the only purpose of its drills is to keep its armed forces battle ready.

“This is neither the rumbling of caterpillar tracks, nor saber-rattling nor muscle flexing,” Deputy Defense Minister Anatoly Antonov said. “We are not like some countries who cockily stage a show of force by moving their troops, arms and equipment to foreign territories.”

He said foreign attaches were to be briefed on the drills at the military’s top secret National Defense Management Centre over weekend.

The countrywide exercises have involved nearly every unit: from paratroopers to anti-submarine and air forces and from special operation units to communications personnel.

The Northern Fleet has been put on full combat alert and on Friday, Russia launched military exercises on the Kuril Islands, a chain of Pacific islands claimed by Japan.

Moscow is also sending nuclear capable Iskander missiles to the exclave Kaliningrad region bordering EU members Poland and Lithuania.

Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė slammed the deployment, saying the missiles “can reach nearly half of European capitals, it can reach Berlin.”

But U.S. commanders have professed grudging admiration for Russia’s ability to move troops quickly.

“I’ve been watching the Russian exercises . . . what I cared about is they can get 30,000 people and 1,000 tanks in a place really fast,” Lt. Gen. Ben Hodges, the U.S. Army’s most senior commander in Europe, told reporters. “Damn, that was impressive.”

Putin has made reviving the army one of the top priorities of his 15-year rule.

After years of post-Soviet neglect, the armed forces received new aircraft, tanks and missiles; opened new bases in the Arctic and resumed Cold War-style strategic bomber patrols.

Many analysts say Russia cannot afford an overt invasion of Ukraine or a broader conflict with Europe amid the economic crisis and the threat of more Western sanctions.

But Yevgeny Buzhinsky, a senior military analyst at the PIR Center, said nothing could be ruled out.

“It is impossible to look at war from the point of view of a business plan, especially in Russia,” said Buzhinsky, who retired from the armed forces in 2009 with the rank of lieutenant general.

Russia has a long history of mobilizing its resources for war, he said.

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"The Russians are no strangers to mobilization, historically and genetically."

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/03/22/world/putins-massive-military-drills-intended-to-send-message-to-west-on-ukraine/#.VRMeeSxARDx>

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The Copenhagen Post – Copenhagen, Denmark

NATO Condemns Russian Nuclear Threat against Denmark

Spokesperson warns that NATO will defend its allies"

By Ray Weaver

March 22, 2015

Recent statements by Russian ambassador Mikhail Vanin that Danish warships could become the target of Russian nukes, should the country participate in NATO's missile defence, have drawn a sharp reaction from NATO.

"Denmark is a staunch NATO ally and NATO will defend all allies against any threat," NATO spokesperson Oana Lungescu told BT. "We have made it clear that NATO's missile defence is not directed against Russia or other countries, but is intended as defence against missile threats."

Disturbing the peace

Lungescu said the tone and content of Vanin's comments "erode confidence in Russia" and that besides being provocative, Vanin's comments seemed ill-timed and somewhat confusing.

"The decision about the missile defence was made a long time ago, so we are surprised by the timing, tone and content of the opinion of Russia's ambassador to Denmark," said Lungescu. "Such statements do not contribute to predictability, peace or stability."

The Russian government has repeatedly pointed to the construction of the NATO missile shield as being a threat to Russia. NATO maintains that the the shield is not directed against Russia.

<http://cphpost.dk/news/nato-condemns-russian-nuclear-threat-against-denmark.13112.html>

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TASS Russian News Agency – Moscow, Russia

Denmark Unlikely to Join NATO's Missile Shield — Expert

The European Missile Defense System and its further deployment as an integral part of the US ballistic missile defense poses a threat to Russia's strategic nuclear forces

March 23, 2015

MOSCOW, March 23. /TASS/. Denmark is unlikely to join NATO's missile defense program, otherwise its ships will become a potential target for the Russian Armed Forces, Editor-in-Chief of the National Defense magazine Igor Korotchenko said on Monday.

Earlier, Latvian Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkevics voiced concern over an article by Russian Ambassador to Denmark Mikhail Vanin published by the Jyllands-Posten newspaper, in which the diplomat dwells on the possible negative effects of the move.

"I believe the Danish political and military leadership will weigh all potential risks and will eventually not join the programs that have a destabilizing effect on the international strategic stability," Korotchenko told TASS.

The expert noted that, if Denmark deployed the Aegis naval system as a component of the European missile defense shield, "it could be absolutely sure that its ships would become a potential target for the Russian precision weapons."



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"Any NATO member country that has joined the European Missile Defense System by deploying on its territory ground infrastructures (command centers, interceptor sites, radar), and also having vessels equipped with the Aegis system should be aware that these facilities will be viewed as potential targets for the Russian Armed Forces," Korotchenko said.

According to him, this is due to the fact that the European Missile Defense System and its further deployment as an integral part of the US ballistic missile defense poses a threat to Russia's strategic nuclear forces.

<http://tass.ru/en/world/784466>

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USA TODAY – Tysons Corner, VA

Expert: ISIL 'Highly Likely' to Launch Gas Attack in London

Lizzie Dearden, *The Independent*

March 23, 2015

Islamic State militants returning to the United Kingdom could launch a chlorine gas attack on trains, the London Underground or at a football match, according to a chemical weapons expert.

Hamish de Bretton-Gordon, a former commanding officer at the Joint Chemical Biological Radiological Nuclear Regiment, said the last two weeks in Syria and Iraq have seen the "most concentrated and deadly use of chemical weapons" since the 1980s Iran-Iraq War.

"It is very evident that ISIL are putting much time and effort into training its jihadis in the use of chlorine as a terror weapon and in particular in IEDs (improvised explosive devices)," he wrote on 2Paragraphs.

"Virtually every foreign jihadi who returns to the U.S. or U.K. will have been exposed to training of this sort and will have a reasonable idea on how to use chlorine and other toxic chemicals as a terror weapon. In the U.K., up to 90 tons of chlorine can be purchased without any licenses," he wrote.

After returning from advising security forces in Baghdad last week, de Bretton-Gordon told the *Daily Mirror* that he feared a chlorine gas attack was "highly likely," adding: "This could happen on a train or tube or even at a big football match."

De Bretton-Gordon examined the likelihood of such an atrocity on the 20-year anniversary of the Tokyo subway sarin attack, which killed 12 people and injured more than 1,000 more, causing chaos in the Japanese capital.

The Aum Shinrikyo movement used packets of the nerve agent, which they punctured with umbrella tips on the Tokyo subway during morning rush hour.

But de Bretton-Gordon said less complicated methods would be needed for a deadly chlorine attack.

"The method of delivery of chlorine at the second Battle of Ypres in April 1915, 100 years ago, would be effective on the subway today," he wrote.

"That is, take the top off a chlorine canister and let it 'vaporize' aka 'weaponize.'"

The expert, who has recently worked with U.K.-based charity Syria Relief advising civilians on what to do in a chlorine gas attack, founded chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) defense firm SecureBio and is a director at gas mask manufacturers Avon Protection.

His 23 years in the British Army included service as commanding officer of the U.K.'s CBRN Regiment and NATO's Rapid Reaction CBRN Battalion.

De Bretton-Gordon said that ISIL had planted "hundreds" of chlorine IEDs in the defense of Tikrit and detonated chemical bombs north of Mosul against the Kurdish Peshmerga.

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During the advance of the ISIL last year, militants gained control of a huge chlorine factory near Mosul as well as the Muthanna complex near Baghdad, where Saddam Hussein manufactured chemical weapons using mustard gas, sarin and VX.

The United Nations said 2,500 remaining rockets filled with nerve agents were degraded and could not be used to make working chemical weapons.

De Bretton-Gordon said that even if returning ISIL jihadists attempted to launch a chlorine attack in Britain, the effect "should be minimal" if security services are forewarned.

"Chlorine is not very toxic and the green and yellow clouds are easy to see and avoid, and it is very non-persistent only lasting for a few minutes," he added.

"Undoubtedly, and hopefully, the CIA, FBI, MI 5 and 6 etc. will be taking a very close look at returning jihadis and in particular anybody buying toxic chemicals."

Earlier this month, ISIL allegedly attacked Iraqi soldiers with roadside bombs containing chlorine gas as allied forces continued a huge assault against the group in Tikrit.

Footage captured by an Iraqi bomb disposal team showed plumes of thick orange gas emerging from a detonated IED.

Iraqi Kurds also claim to have evidence that ISIL used chemical weapons against their fighters in January this year.

The use of chlorine, a choking agent that dates back to the First World War, is banned under the 1997 Chemical Weapons Convention, which prohibits the use of toxic agents in warfare.

Chlorine and other chemical weapons have been used "systematically" in the ongoing civil war in Syria, according to monitors, who accuse all parties of atrocities.

Bashar al-Assad's forces allegedly used sarin in the 2013 Ghouta chemical attack that killed hundreds of Syrian civilians outside of Damascus and have reportedly dropped chlorine barrel bombs in recent weeks.

Iraqi Kurds were victims of the deadliest chemical attack in recent history when Hussein's air force bombed the town of Halabja, where up to 5,000 people were gassed to death in 1988.

The article originally appeared on the website of The Independent. Its content was created separately to USA TODAY.

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2015/03/23/islamic-state-chlorine-attack-london-tube-underground/25214597/>

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TASS Russian News Agency – Moscow, Russia

Moscow Suspects US of Planning to Deploy Nuclear-Capable Frontline Aviation near Russia

Joint NATO drills in Estonia will start the functioning of a US Air Force training center at Amari air base close to the Russian border

March 26, 2015

MOSCOW, March 26 /TASS/. The US and NATO may be planning to deploy frontline aviation capable of carrying nuclear weapons on Estonia's border with Russia, Russian Foreign Ministry said on Thursday.

"We are particularly concerned with the fact that the Estonian Defense Ministry believes that these exercises [Atlantic Resolve] will start the functioning of a US Air Force training center at Amari air base," Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Alexander Lukashevich said.

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According to him, that could signal that separate NATO countries had plans to permanently deploy frontline aviation capable of carrying nuclear weapons on the border with Russia.

"The gradual buildup of US combat potential on Russian frontiers as part of NATO plans to increase its military presence and develop infrastructure on the so-called eastern flank, in the wake of decisions adopted at the NATO summit in Wales, are not only provoking tensions in a region, which has been the most stable region in Europe for decades, but is fraught with long-term negative consequences," Lukashевич stressed.

<http://tass.ru/en/russia/785151>

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The Moscow Times – Moscow, Russia

Putin Urges FSB: Harder, Faster, Stronger

By Ivan Nechepurenko

March 26, 2015

Western governments will attempt to discredit and destabilize Russia, but their efforts will be futile, President Vladimir Putin told Russia's top security officials Thursday.

"We have always had and always will have a proper response to all internal and external threats to national security," Putin told senior officers of the Federal Security Service, a successor agency to the Soviet KGB, during a board meeting.

Putin, himself a previous director of the FSB, listed as external threats the expansion of NATO infrastructure to Russia's borders, the establishment of European and Asian segments of the U.S. missile defense system and the development of new weapons as part of the U.S. Prompt Global Strike program, which aims to create a conventional weapon system that can reach any target in the world within one hour.

Primary internal threats are terrorism, extremism, espionage and attempts to use public and nongovernmental organizations to discredit the Russian government and destabilize the country, the president said.

"Western special services continue their attempts at using public, nongovernmental and politicized organizations to pursue their own objectives, primarily to discredit the authorities and destabilize the internal situation in Russia. They are already planning their actions for the upcoming election campaigns of 2016-18," Putin said in his speech.

Russia will hold elections for the State Duma in 2016, which will be followed by presidential elections in 2018 in which Putin is eligible to run.

"We are ready for dialogue with the opposition and will continue our partnership with civil society in the broadest sense of the word," Putin said.

"But it is pointless entering into a discussion with those who are operating on orders from the outside in the interests of some other country rather than their own," he said.

In 2012, Russia adopted a law that labels every NGO that is engaged in loosely defined political activities and receives any financial support from abroad as a "foreign agent."

Putin promised that the state would continue to "pay attention to nongovernmental organizations that have foreign funding sources; we will compare their stated goals with their actual activities and terminate any violations."

In addition to the "foreign agents" law, Russia has passed a series of other laws in recent years that aim to limit foreign influence on its political life. In October, the Duma passed a law limiting foreign media ownership in Russian media assets to 20 percent. The following month, Putin signed a law outlawing foreign sponsorship of Russian political organizations.

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Overall, the counter-espionage agencies have thwarted the activities of 290 agents and 52 officers of foreign intelligence services in the past year, Putin said.

Putin said that terrorist activity is declining in Russia, with 2.6 times fewer terrorist attacks in 2014 than the year before. The overall number is nine times smaller than it was five years ago, he said.

He warned, however, that the FSB would have to work even harder to bring about positive change than it did last year, which was marked by a growing crisis in the Middle East and a violent conflict in Ukraine that Putin described as a civil war provoked by a "coup d'etat."

"The situation cannot remain like this forever. It will change, for the better I hope, including the situation around this country," Putin told the audience.

"However, it will not change for the better if we succumb, yield and pander to people at every step. It will only change for the better if we become stronger," he said.

<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/news/article/putin-urges-fsb-harder-faster-stronger/518104.html>

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TASS Russian News Agency – Moscow, Russia

Russia Capable of Responding to US Missile Shield Deployment Plans **— Diplomat**

Russia has all the necessary means to counter deployment of the US missile shield elements in the interests of the strategic balance maintenance

March 26, 2015

MOSCOW, March 26. /TASS/. Moscow warns the countries intending to permit deployment of the US missile shield elements on their territories that Russia has all the necessary means to counter the threat, Alexander Lukashевич, a spokesman for the Russian Foreign Ministry, said on Thursday.

"Russia has been for years drawing attention to the fact that the missile defense architecture built by the United States with the involvement of its NATO allies may in perspective pose a threat to Russian strategic containment forces and eventually result in parity disruption, which in turn would require responsive measures aimed at the restoration of the strategic balance," Lukashевич said.

"We have the necessary means to counter this system in the interests of the strategic balance maintenance, but we do not want and do not intend to resort to them without any need," Lukashевич said. "However, participants in this system should bear in mind that Russia has all the necessary means to neutralize such threats."

The Russian diplomat said it was regretful that insistent arguments of Moscow against the formation of this destabilizing system in Europe were not heard.

"At the same time attempts to launch equal cooperation and dialogue in the missile defense sector have hit a wall of misunderstanding," Lukashевич said.

The Russian diplomat also said that NATO recently "blatantly curtailed a dialogue on the missile defense issues in a move that does not yield improvements to the situation."

Lukashевич said that "in line with Russia's current military doctrine the country reserves the right to use nuclear weapons in response to the use of nuclear weapons against Russia and its allies as well as in case of aggression against Russia that threatens the existence of the country."

"We consider it inadmissible to misinterpret our fundamental [doctrine's] provisions concerning nuclear security," Lukashевич said.

He also urged an end to "malevolent speculations on this issue, which were circulated in NATO circles recently."

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"The United States should have long ago abandoned the habit of making detrimental unilateral steps in the sphere of missile defense so that there eventually would be no need of taking care of their consequences," Lukashovich added.

Russia and US-led NATO have been in a long dispute over US missile shield plans in Europe, which the United States said was aimed to defend its allies from possible missile threats emerging from Iran and North Korea.

Russia viewed the deployment of the missile shield near its borders as a threat to its national security and in 2011 then-President Dmitry Medvedev announced a set of measures to counter the US-proposed missile defense system in Europe. The measures particularly included the construction of new air-defense radar systems and deployment of Iskander missiles in Russia's Kaliningrad Region, which borders on Europe.

<http://tass.ru/en/russia/785123>

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Sputnik International – Russian Information Agency

Crimea Ready to Deploy Nuclear Weapons Systems on Russian President's Order

Crimean head Sergei Aksenov said that Crimea will welcome the deployment of nuclear weapons in the republic if Russian President Vladimir Putin deems it necessary.

27 March 2015

SIMFEROPOL (Sputnik) – Crimea will welcome the deployment of nuclear weapons in the republic if Russian President Vladimir Putin deems it necessary, Crimean head Sergei Aksenov told Sputnik.

"If there is such an order from the supreme commander, we would support it," Aksenov said.

On Wednesday, the chair of Russian State Duma Defense Committee, Vladimir Komoyedov, said that needed, Russia was ready to place nuclear weapons in Crimea.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov dismissed on Wednesday speculations by US billionaire Donald Trump and the Western media of "nuclear rhetoric" in Putin's remarks in a documentary on Crimea's reunification with Russia that was aired last week. The media claimed that Putin had said in the documentary that Russia was ready to put its nuclear forces on alert to protect Crimea and the Crimeans against potential aggression.

Crimea rejoined Russia in March 2014, after 96 percent of the peninsula's population voted in favor of a reunification deal.

In a speech following the referendum, Russian President Putin pointed out that it was held in full compliance with democratic procedure and international rule of law.

The West has refused to recognize the results of the vote, labeling Crimea's secession an "annexation," and have introduced several rounds of economic sanctions against Moscow.

<http://sputniknews.com/russia/20150327/1020078568.html>

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Tasnim News Agency – Tehran, Iran

Ayatollah Khamenei: US in Dire Need of Talks with Iran

March 21, 2015

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – The US is the one that really needs dialog with Iran, Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei said, stressing that no one in Iran is opposed to settlement of the nuclear issue through diplomacy, unlike what the US president has claimed.

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"They (Americans) need negotiation. The US is in dire need of negotiations, and the disagreements between the Americans do not mean that they don't need the talks," Ayatollah Khamenei said in an annual address in the northeastern city of Mashhad on the first day of the new Iranian year on Saturday.

Pointing to the US president's recent message to Iranian people, Ayatollah Khamenei said Obama's message contained "dishonest remarks" about the nuclear talks between Iran and six world powers.

In a Thursday video message directed at Iranians celebrating the new year festival of Nowruz, Obama said there are people in the US, in Iran and beyond who "oppose a diplomatic resolution" of the nuclear talks.

In reply, Imam Khamenei said, "There is no one in Iran who opposes settlement of the nuclear issue. What the Iranian nation rejects is giving in to the US bullying and imposition (of will)."

The Leader underlined that the Iranian nation, officials and negotiators will never accept the US bullying.

Elsewhere in his speech, Ayatollah Khamenei reiterated that talks with the US revolve only around the nuclear issues and nothing else, arguing that Washington is on a different wavelength from Tehran.

"We do not negotiate (with the US) on the regional issues, because their objectives are in contrast to ours. We call for domination of nations and calm, (whereas) they (Americans) seek insecurity."

"We have no talks at all (with the US) either on the internal issues, military weapons or the regional cases," the Leader pointed out.

Imam Khamenei further warned against a "US ploy" that requires Iran to sign a deal first, and entails the conditional removal of anti-Iran sanctions at a later stage.

"The removal of sanctions is part of the subject of negotiations, not of its results... Our officials have made it clear that removal of sanctions should occur without any delay when an agreement is reached," the Supreme Leader underscored.

Ayatollah Khamenei also dismissed a notion raised by the US that a possible deal should make Iran's decisions and concessions irreversible.

The Leader further highlighted the futility of threats and war rhetoric against Iran, stressing that the Iranian nation is not intimidated by the military threats or tougher sanctions.

Iran and the Group 5+1 (Russia, China, the US, Britain, France and Germany) are in talks to hammer out a comprehensive accord that would end more than a decade of impasse over Tehran's civilian nuclear activities.

<http://www.tasnimnews.com/english/Home/Single/692320>

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

Araqchi: Iran is Not to Give Concessions

Tehran, March 22, IRNA – Senior nuclear negotiator Abbas Araqchi said Iran is not to give away any concessions in talks with the 5+1.

He described the present phase of talks as "sensitive" and said it was natural for certain people to make some remarks to influence the process of negotiations.

However, Araqchi said, Iran is not to grant any concessions.

Commenting on the recent remarks of the US President Barack Obama who said Iran has not provided enough concessions yet, he said the American president is making the remarks to affect negotiations.

He said none of the parties is expected to offer concessions especially Iran.

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The senior nuclear negotiator said what Iran is doing now is to try to build the confidence needed about the peaceful nature of its nuclear program.

In return, he said, the other parties are expected to respect Iran's right to a peaceful nuclear program and remove the sanctions they are unjustly imposing on Iran.

This is the ultimate target of the negotiations, Araqchi added.

The most important point at the present juncture was to develop coordination among all involved parties to enable them to come to a common view in the talks.

He said it was evident during the latest round of talks that the other parties lacked such a harmony.

That was why they arranged a meeting in Lausanne to develop a common standing, he added.

He said Iran believed an agreement would be easy to get if such a harmony existed along with political will.

Referring to the demand by the US President that there should be a fact-finding process about Iran's nuclear program, he said both parties will be required to undergo such a procedure if there is an agreement.

The peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program is a fact already well-proven, he said.

He stressed that the Non-Alignment Movement members as well as the majority of the international community agreed with the point while the International Atomic Energy Agency too have nothing against Iran to prove the otherwise.

In a recent interview, President Obama said that "Iran has so far not conceded enough in multi-lateral negotiations over its nuclear program for the US to reach a final deal with the country by summer."

The remarks came as Secretary of State John Kerry said Saturday that negotiators had made 'genuine progress' toward a deal with Iran.

Obama acknowledged in the Huffington Post interview that his administration would need to prove that it could ensure Iran would not obtain a nuclear weapon and it had limited the timeframe for Iran to potentially develop one.

'That's an argument that we are going to have to make, if we have a deal. But we've still got some more to do,' Obama said.

<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/81549264/>

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TASS Russian News Agency – Moscow, Russia

Obama Says No Concessions yet from Iran Needed for Nuclear Deal

Our goal is to get this done in a matter of weeks, not months, President said

March 22, 2015

NEW YORK, March 22. /TASS/. Iran has not yet made enough concessions needed to reach an agreement on its nuclear programme, US President Barack Obama has said.

"Frankly, they have not yet made the kind of concessions that are I think going to be needed for a final deal to get done. But they have moved, and so there's the possibility," Obama said in an interview with the Huffington Post published Saturday on its website.

Obama said it is early to say whether the sides have reached any preliminary agreement. "Our goal is to get this done in a matter of weeks, not months," he added.

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Tehran and Washington are holding a dialogue as part of the negotiation process between Iran and the six world powers (five permanent UN Security Council member-states plus Germany) on reaching a comprehensive agreement on the future of Iran's nuclear programme.

At a meeting in Vienna in late November 2014, the P5+1 and Tehran agreed to extend the deadline for an agreement in the talks on Iran's nuclear programme to late June 2015. The main political decisions are expected to be reached by late March.

The talks on Iran's nuclear programme will resume on March 25 and are to be held in Lausanne or Geneva, in Switzerland.

<http://tass.ru/en/world/784222>

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Channel NewsAsia – Singapore

US Can Prevent Iran Developing Nuclear Bomb: CIA Director

The United States is confident it can prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons even if the Islamic republic pulls out of talks, CIA Director John Brennan said in remarks broadcast on Sunday.

23 March 2015

WASHINGTON: The United States is confident it can prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons even if the Islamic republic pulls out of talks, CIA Director John Brennan said in remarks broadcast on Sunday (Mar 22).

Speaking on Fox News, Brennan said America has multiple measures at its disposal to ensure Iran doesn't become a nuclear power. "There are a number of things that the United States has available to it to prevent Iran from getting a bomb," the director of the Central Intelligence Agency said.

Iran and six world powers are in negotiations to clinch a landmark deal that would have the country scale back its disputed nuclear programme in return for relief from sanctions.

"President Obama has made it very clear that we are going to prevent Iran from having that type of nuclear weapon that they were ... going on the track to obtain," Brennan added. "So, if they decide to go down that route, they know that they will do so at their peril."

In response to a question about America's track record in monitoring Iran's nuclear programme, Brennan acknowledged that US intelligence had historically been less than ideal on the issue.

"I think we've gone to school on some of those developments over the last decade or so," he said. "We can now have a better plan and opportunity to verify some of the things that they are saying they are going to do and not do."

Asked about reports of an underground nuclear site near Tehran, Brennan said: "I am confident that we have a good understanding of what the Iranian nuclear programme entails."

When asked if he was concerned about the possibility of a regional arms race, Brennan said partners in the Gulf, including Saudi Arabia, are confident the United States can act as a regional security guarantor. "We are going to keep close communication, I'm confident the Saudis will be a responsible partner and player in the region," Brennan said.

- AFP/de

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/world/us-can-prevent-iran/1733238.html>

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Iran Urges “Balanced” Nuclear Deal with Equally-Reversible Commitments

March 23, 2015

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – A top Iranian negotiator stressed that a possible final nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers should be balanced in such a way that any commitment, either reversible or irreversible, would apply to both parties equally.

“Any agreement to be reached, should be certainly balanced,” Abbas Araqchi, also Iran’s deputy foreign minister, said on Sunday of a long-awaited nuclear accord between Tehran and the Group 5+1 (Russia, China, the US, Britain, France and Germany).

“Any measure that the two sides would take (under a deal) should be reversible in an equal manner, or if irreversible, it should be so for the both sides. We have observed such principle in the talks,” the Iranian diplomat explained.

Asked about US President Barack Obama’s call for a verifiable way to ensure that Iran’s nuclear program is peaceful, Araqchi said, “If we nail down a deal, the verification ability should be preserved for both sides, meaning that the commitments made by us or the other side should be both verifiable or provable.”

“Naturally, the programs that Iran agrees to will be verified by the (International Atomic Energy) Agency, and the commitments that the other side makes to lift the sanctions should be proved practically,” he added.

The comments came after Iran and the six powers wrapped up six days of negotiations on Tehran’s peaceful nuclear program in the Swiss city of Lausanne on Friday and agreed to resume the talks on March 25.

Iran and the Group 5+1 (also known as the P5+1 or E3+3) are in talks to hammer out a comprehensive accord by a June 30 deadline that would end more than a decade of impasse over Tehran’s civilian nuclear activities.

<http://www.tasnimnews.com/english/Home/Single/693058>

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The Daily Telegraph – London, U.K.

Iran Hardliners Accuse Foreign Minister of Falling into a 'Trap' over Nuclear Deal

Critics take aim at Mohammad Javad Zarif's negotiating strategy, accusing him of implicitly conceding that Iran's nuclear ambitions threaten world peace

By David Blair, Chief Foreign Correspondent
23 March 2015

Iran’s hardliners have voiced their opposition to a deal over the country’s nuclear programme, accusing the foreign minister of walking into a “trap”.

As the clock ticks towards the deadline of next Tuesday for a final agreement to settle the confrontation over Iran’s nuclear ambitions, hardliners in Iran increasingly share the unease of Republicans in the US Congress. Both sides fear that their respective negotiators are giving too much away.

Just as John Kerry, the US secretary of state, has endured criticism from Republican Senators, so Iran’s foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, is being denounced by conservatives in his country’s parliament.

Kayhan, the leading hardline newspaper, launched a frontal assault on a central pillar of Mr Zarif’s negotiating strategy.

The foreign minister has insisted that any nuclear agreement should be given legal force by a new United Nations Resolution passed under Chapter VII of the Charter. But Chapter VII deals solely with “threats to peace”. By asking

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for a Resolution of this kind, critics point out that Mr Zarif is implicitly conceding what Iran has always denied, namely that its nuclear programme does indeed threaten world peace.

"Chapter VII Resolution is not a guarantee - it is a trap," read the headline of a front page story in Kayhan. The paper added: "If only Zarif had taken advice before delivering his statements."

Kayhan's editor, Hossein Shariatmadari, was appointed by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the supreme leader of Iran, and the newspaper usually reflects the Ayatollah's views. This particular criticism of Mr Zarif suggests that he failed to take instructions from his superior.

Ahmad Ariyanejad, a member of the "Majlis" or parliament, was quoted as saying: "Some members of the negotiating team should consult about the issues with the office of the supreme leader - or with the people - before they make them public, so that they do not put the interests of the state into question."

General Mohammad Reza Naqdi, the commander of the Basij militia of the Revolutionary Guard Corps, pointed out that asking for a Chapter VII Resolution "would mean accepting the idea of non-peaceful purposes of the Iranian nuclear programme".

Talks between Iran and America – along with five other world powers – are expected to resume in the Swiss town of Lausanne when Mr Kerry and Mr Zarif arrive on Thursday. The two sides are believed to have reached a provisional agreement over the size of Iran's capacity to enrich uranium, previously the toughest bone of contention.

Under the possible compromise, Iran would accept a limit of 6,000 operational centrifuges and export almost all of its 7.9 tonnes of low-enriched uranium. These two steps would ensure that its scientists would be at least one year away from producing enough weapons-grade uranium for one nuclear bomb.

But the two sides are still deadlocked over how rapidly sanctions on Iran would be lifted under a final agreement. They also disagree over how much access international inspectors should be given to Iran's nuclear plants.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iran/11489724/Iran-hardliners-accuse-foreign-minister-of-falling-into-a-trap-over-nuclear-deal.html>

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Tasnim News Agency – Tehran, Iran

Nuclear Talks in Final Stages: Iranian Negotiator

March 25, 2015

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – A senior Iranian diplomat involved in the talks with six world powers over Tehran's peaceful nuclear program said that the negotiations are in final stages and that a deal is at hand.

Speaking to reporters in Tehran on Wednesday, the Iranian Foreign Ministry's Director General for the Political and International Affairs Hamid Baeidinejad said the nuclear negotiations with the Group 5+1 (Russia, China, the US, Britain, France and Germany) are in the final stages as the other side has retreated from its previous stances.

"Otherwise, we wouldn't have reached this point," he stressed.

Baeidinejad also said there will surely be an agreement in the current Iranian year (which began on March 21), adding that there has been good progress in the talks and "we hope the remaining issues will be resolved."

Meanwhile, Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi, who is also involved in the nuclear talks, said the country is following a policy to reach a "dignified and honorable deal" in a win-win situation.

Iran and the six powers wrapped up six days of negotiations on Tehran's peaceful nuclear program in the Swiss city of Lausanne on Friday and agreed to resume the talks on March 25.



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Iran and the Group 5+1 (also known as the P5+1 or E3+3) are in talks to hammer out a comprehensive accord by a June 30 deadline that would end more than a decade of impasse over Tehran's civilian nuclear activities.

<http://www.tasnimnews.com/english/Home/Single/694326>

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Sputnik International – Russian Information Agency

Iran to Test Intercontinental Ballistic Missile in 2015 - US Defense Agency

The US Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) has assessed that Iran will be capable of testing an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) this year, US Missile Defense Agency Director James Syring said.

26 March 2015

WASHINGTON (Sputnik) — The US ground-based interceptors based in Fort Greely, Alaska and Vandenberg Air Force Base in California are sufficient to protect the United States homeland against “the future Iranian ICBM threat should it emerge,” Syring stated.

“The DIA’s assessment is that Iran is capable of flight-testing an ICBM in 2015,” Syring told members of the US Senate Armed Services Committee on Wednesday.

“There’s not a likelihood expressed with that assessment,” Syring said, adding that the DIA will further evaluate the likelihood of an Iranian flight test in an assessment it will conduct later in 2015.

The United States has 30 ground-based interceptors deployed on its West Coast, and will be adding an additional 14 by 2017.

The United States also has 33 Aegis warships with mobile ballistic missile defense capabilities, and will upgrade to 35 ships by the end of 2016, according to the Missile Defense Agency.

<http://sputniknews.com/military/20150326/1020017359.html>

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Seattle Post Intelligencer – Seattle, WA

AP Exclusive: Iran May Run Centrifuges at Fortified Site

By GEORGE JAHN and MATTHEW LEE, Associated Press

March 26, 2015

LAUSANNE, Switzerland (AP) — The United States is considering letting Tehran run hundreds of centrifuges at a once-secret, fortified underground bunker in exchange for limits on centrifuge work and research and development at other sites, officials have told The Associated Press.

The trade-off would allow Iran to run several hundred of the devices at its Fordo facility, although the Iranians would not be allowed to do work that could lead to an atomic bomb and the site would be subject to international inspections, according to Western officials familiar with details of negotiations now underway. In return, Iran would be required to scale back the number of centrifuges it runs at its Natanz facility and accept other restrictions on nuclear-related work.

Instead of uranium, which can be enriched to be the fissile core of a nuclear weapon, any centrifuges permitted at Fordo would be fed elements such as zinc, xenon or germanium for separating out isotopes used in medicine, industry or science, the officials said. The number of centrifuges would not be enough to produce the amount of uranium needed to produce a weapon within a year — the minimum time-frame that Washington and its negotiating partners demand.

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The officials spoke only on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss details of the sensitive negotiations as the latest round of talks began between U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammed Javad Zarif. The negotiators are racing to meet an end-of-March deadline to reach an outline of an agreement that would grant Iran relief from international sanctions in exchange for curbing its nuclear program. The deadline for a final agreement is June 30.

One senior U.S. official declined to comment on the specific proposal but said the goal since the beginning of the talks has been "to have Fordo converted so it's not being used to enrich uranium." That official would not say more.

The officials stressed that the potential compromise on Fordo is just one of several options on a menu of highly technical equations being discussed in the talks. All of the options are designed to keep Iran at least a year away from producing an atomic weapon for the life of the agreement, which will run for at least 10 years. U.S. Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz has joined the last several rounds as the negotiations have gotten more technical.

Experts say the compromise for Fordo could still be problematic. They note it would allow Iran to keep intact technology that could be quickly repurposed for uranium enrichment at a sensitive facility that the U.S. and its allies originally wanted stripped of all such machines — centrifuges that can spin uranium gas into uses ranging from reactor fuel to weapons-grade material.

And the issue of inspector access and verification is key. Iran has resisted "snap inspections" in the past. Even as the nuclear talks have made progress, Iran has yet to satisfy questions about its past possible nuclear-related military activity. The fact that questions about such activity, known as Possible Military Dimensions, or PMDs, remain unresolved is a serious concern for the U.N. atomic watchdog.

In addition, the site at Fordo is a particular concern because it is hardened and dug deeply into a mountainside making it resistant — possibly impervious — to air attack. Such an attack is an option that neither Israel nor the U.S. has ruled out in case the talks fail.

And while too few to be used for proliferation by themselves, even a few hundred extra centrifuges at Fordo would be a concern when looked at in the context of total numbers.

As negotiations stand, the number of centrifuges would grow to more than 6,000, when the other site is included. Olli Heinonen, who was in charge of the Iran nuclear file as a deputy director general of the U.N.'s International Atomic Energy Agency until 2010, says even 6,000 operating centrifuges would be "a big number."

Asked of the significance of hundreds more at Fordo, he said, "Every machine counts."

Iran reported the site to the IAEA six years ago in what Washington says was an attempt to pre-empt President Barack Obama and the prime ministers of Britain and France going public with its existence a few days later. Tehran later used the site to enrich uranium to a level just a technical step away from weapons-grade until late 2013, when it froze its nuclear program under a temporary arrangement that remains in effect as the sides negotiate.

Twice extended, the negotiations have turned into a U.S.-Iran tug-of-war over how many of the machines Iran would be allowed to operate since the talks resumed over two years ago. Tehran denies nuclear weapons ambitions, saying it wants to enrich only for energy, scientific and medical purposes.

Washington has taken the main negotiating role with Tehran in talks that formally remain between Iran and six world powers, and officials told the AP at last week's round that the two sides were zeroing in on a cap of 6,000 centrifuges at Natanz, Iran's main enrichment site.

That's fewer than the nearly 10,000 Tehran now runs at Natanz, yet substantially more than the 500 to 1,500 that Washington originally wanted as a ceiling. Only a year ago, U.S. officials floated 4,000 as a possible compromise.

One of the officials said discussions focus on an extra 480 centrifuges at Fordo. That would potentially bring the total number of machines to close to 6,500.

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David Albright of Washington's Institute for Security and International Security says a few hundred centrifuges operated by the Iranians would not be a huge threat — if they were anywhere else but the sensitive Fordo site.

Beyond its symbolic significance, "it keeps the infrastructure in place and keeps a leg up, if they want to restart (uranium) enrichment operations," said Albright, who is a go-to person on the Iran nuclear issue for the U.S. government.

<http://www.seattlepi.com/news/politics/article/AP-Exclusive-Iran-may-run-centrifuges-at-6160753.php>

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FARS News Agency – Tehran, Iran

Friday, March 27, 2015

Iran, Powers Reach Common Understanding on Majority of Technical Issues

TEHRAN (FNA) - Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Ali Akbar Salehi announced on Friday that Tehran and the world powers have developed a common understanding over a major part of the technical issues in their nuclear talks in Lausanne.

"We have reached a common understanding on a considerable section of the issues," Salehi told reporters after his meeting with US Secretary of Energy in the Swiss city of Lausanne, where a new round of nuclear talks between Tehran and the Group 5+1 (the US, Russia, China, Britain and France plus Germany) is underway.

Yet, he underlined that no agreement has been struck yet.

Salehi underlined that there are one or two technical issues that are still under discussion by Iran and the six world powers.

Salehi did not elaborate on the technical differences, and said, "We are trying to reach a common understanding; there are difficult issues which should be resolved."

But, Iran's deputy lead negotiators Seyed Abbas Araqchi said a few hours later that nuclear research and development as well as removal of sanctions are still the main bones of contention.

On Thursday, Salehi announced that Iran and the G5+1 have reached a common understanding on the technical issues related to Iran's nuclear program.

"We have reached a common understanding in the technical issues and this can help reaching the main agreement in the future," he said.

He said it is difficult to foresee the results of the talks, but expressed the hope that the meetings today would clear the path for a discussion of the remaining bones of contention.

"I have always been optimistic and I am now too," Salehi said.

The Iranian nuclear negotiators arrived in Lausanne, Switzerland, Wednesday for the next round of nuclear talks with the world powers.

Deputies of the Iranian Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araqchi and Majid Takht Ravanchi held talks with their US counterpart Wendy Sherman on Thursday morning.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif also had a meeting with his US counterpart John Kerry in the presence of their deputies, Salehi, US Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz, EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini and her deputy Helga Schmidt in Lausanne on Thursday.

The last round of talks between the Iranian and US nuclear negotiators ended in Lausanne last Friday afternoon in the presence of Zarif, Kerry, their deputies, Salehi, Moniz, EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini and her

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deputy Helga Schmidt. The Iranian negotiators returned to Tehran on Saturday to participate in ceremonies celebrating the Iranian new year (which started on March 21), while the western powers had internal talks to coordinate their stances.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13940107000604>

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CNN (U.S. Edition) – Atlanta, GA

Saudi Ambassador to U.S. Won't Rule Out Building Nukes

By Alexandra Jaffe, CNN

Friday, March 27, 2015

Washington (CNN) The Saudi Ambassador to the United States would not rule out the possibility of the Saudis creating their own nuclear bomb to counterbalance a nuclear-armed Iran in an interview with CNN's Wolf Blitzer on Thursday.

"This is not something we would discuss publicly," Ambassador Adel Al-Jubeir said on "The Situation Room." Later, when pressed, he said, "This is not something that I can comment on, nor would I comment on."

"But the kingdom of Saudi Arabia will take whatever measures are necessary in order to protect its security," he added. "There are two things over which we do not negotiate: Our faith and our security."

Al-Jubeir said, however, the details disclosed by the Obama administration to the Saudis about the developing nuclear deal with Iran were "positive."

"I can't say that we like it, because we don't know the details," he said. "The assurances we have received from the administration have been positive but we want to see the details before we can make a judgment."

The Saudi ambassador said other countries in the Middle East are "concerned" about Iran potentially gaining nuclear weapons, but that the Obama administration has assured them "all paths leading to a nuclear weapon by Iran will be cut off" and there will be "very intrusive inspections" that will prevent such an outcome.

The Saudis, supported by allied forces, launched an air campaign on Thursday against rebel forces in Yemen that Saudis see as aligned with Iran. In an implicit reference to that conflict, which is rapidly escalating into what some see as a proxy war between the Saudis and Iran, Al-Jubeir said his nation is concerned about Iran's "interference in the affairs of other countries in the region."

"We believe Iran's behavior ... is not reassuring to people in the region," he said.

<http://www.cnn.com/2015/03/26/politics/saudi-open-to-nuclear-bomb/index.html>

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The Express Tribune – Karachi, Pakistan

'Pakistan Needs Short-Range "Tactical" Nuclear Weapons to Deter India'

Adviser to National Command Authority Khalid Kidwai says nuclear deterrence had helped prevent war in South Asia

By Web Desk

March 24, 2015

WASHINGTON: The Adviser to the National Command Authority Khalid Kidwai said Pakistan needs short-range "tactical" nuclear weapons to deter arch-rival India, *Associated Press reported* on Tuesday.

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“Having tactical weapons would make war less likely,” Kidwai said at a conference on nuclear security organized by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington.

Kidwai said nuclear deterrence had helped prevent war in South Asia. Pakistan’s development of tactical weapons — in the form of the Nasr missile, which has a 60-kilometer range — was, according to Kidwai, in response to concerns that India’s larger military could still wage a conventional war against the country, thinking Pakistan would not risk retaliation with a bigger nuclear weapon.

Kidwai has led the administration of Pakistan’s nuclear and missile weapons program for 15 years.

During the conference, Kidwai rejected concerns over the security of Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal, insisting that adequate safeguards are in place to protect what analysts have described as the world’s fastest-growing atomic arsenal.

On the sidelines of the conference, former Indian special envoy for disarmament and nonproliferation Rakesh Sood said it was “extremely destabilizing for any country to develop tactical nuclear weapons” and that India has no plans to. He contended that Pakistan’s nuclear doctrine is “cloaked in ambiguity” which undermines confidence between the two countries.

Pakistan’s development of smaller warheads built for use on battlefields, in addition to longer-range weapons, has increased international concerns that they could get into rogue hands because of the pervasive threat of militants in the country.

Pakistan and India have held on-off peace talks over the years but are involved in a nuclear and missile arms race that shows no sign of abating.

Neither side discloses the size of its arsenal. But a recent report by the Council on Foreign Relations think tank estimated that Pakistan has enough fissile material to produce between 110 and 120 nuclear weapons, and India enough for 90 to 110 weapons.

Kidwai said given the strength of the rest of Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal, the fear of “mutually assured destruction” of the South Asian rivals would ensure that “sanity prevails.”

At the other end of Pakistan’s missile inventory is the Shaheen-III missile that it test-fired this month. It has a range of 1,700 miles (2,750 kilometers), giving it the capability to reach every part of India — but also potentially to reach into the Middle East, including Israel.

Kidwai added that Pakistan wanted a missile of that range because it suspected India was developing strategic bases on its Andaman and Nicobar islands in the Bay of Bengal. He said the nuclear and missile program was “India-specific” and not aimed at other countries.

This article originally appeared on AP.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/858106/pakistan-needs-short-range-tactical-nuclear-weapons-to-deter-india/>

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TASS Russian News Agency – Moscow, Russia

India Wants to Lease another Russian Nuclear Submarine — Source

The project 971 Kashalot-class submarine may become the second submarine that Russia transfers to India for lease

March 24, 2015

MOSCOW, March 24. /TASS/. India has asked Russia to transfer another nuclear submarine for lease, a high-placed source in the system of Russia’s military and technical cooperation with foreign countries said on Tuesday.

The project 971 Kashalot-class submarine may become the second submarine that Russia transfers to India for lease, the source said.

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"In January this year, the Indian side suggested transferring the second project 971 multipurpose nuclear submarine Kashalot for lease," the source said, adding "the Russian side is studying the issue."

"The procedure will most likely be similar to the procedure, which was used for transferring the first submarine called Nerpa (dubbed Charka by India) to the Indian side," the source said.

A representative of Russia's ship-building industry also told TASS that "the Indian side is requesting to transfer this submarine to it for lease."

TASS has not yet received any official confirmation of this information.

The project 971 Nerpa nuclear submarine joined the Indian Navy in the spring of 2012. The submarine was laid down back in 1991 and Russia finished its construction after it received financing from the Indian side.

The Nerpa was leased from Russia for a term of ten years. The Times of India reported late last year that India wanted to lease the second Russian nuclear submarine.

<http://tass.ru/en/world/784537>

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Real Clear Defense – New York, NY

OPINION/Article

March 21, 2015

Why China Fears THAAD

By Harry Kazianis

Well, it seems we might want to hold off on all the predictions of Seoul and Beijing joining hands and riding off into the sunset as Asia's new power couple--at least for now.

China is quite upset at the prospect of South Korea acquiring America's latest missile defense platform, Terminal High Altitude Area Defense, or THAAD for short. However, Xi Jinping might want to redirect his anger at the real problem and why President Park Geun-hye might be considering THAAD in the first place: North Korea.

But before we get to the heart of the matter, it seems appropriate to understand what THAAD is, what it can do, and why its important.

Back in November, I spoke to Dan Sauter of Business Development for Terminal High Altitude Area Defense at Lockheed Martin to get a better understanding of the system and its capabilities. Sauter explained that THAAD is "a key element of the U.S. Ballistic Missile Defense System (BMDS) and is designed to defend U.S. troops, allied forces, population centers and critical infrastructure against short-thru-medium-range ballistic missiles." He went on to explain that THAAD "has a unique capability to destroy threats in both the endo- and exo-atmosphere using proven hit-to-kill (kinetic energy) lethality. THAAD is effective against all types of ballistic-missile warheads, especially including Weapons of Mass Destruction (chemical, nuclear or biological) payloads. THAAD was specifically designed to counter mass raids with its high firepower (up to 72 Interceptors per battery), capable organic radar and powerful battle manager/fire control capability."

THAAD also has one nice feature that is sure to get Beijing's panties in a bunch--interoperability.

Sauter told *The National Interest* that THAAD is "interoperable with other BMDS elements, working in concert with Patriot/PAC-3, Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense, forward based sensors, and C2BMC (Command and Control, Battle Management, and Communications System) to maximize integrated air and missile defense capabilities. THAAD is mobile and rapidly deployable, which provides warfighters with greater flexibility to adapt to changing threat situations around the globe."

Now that we understand a little about what THAAD is and what it can do, why should China care?

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It seems Beijing is concerned that THAAD could blunt at least some of their military capabilities--going so far as to utilize Chinese hackers to steal at least some aspects of its design according to various reports.

Here is why Pyongyang matters and could drive a THAAD deployment close to Beijing's borders. With North Korea constantly rattling the saber and developing various types of long range missiles the United States and its allies are looking for ways to defend themselves--and THAAD could certainly be part of that mix. However, as Beijing knows all too well--and why they are so upset--such weapons could be used as a shield against Chinese missiles as well.

Over the last several decades China has been building a massive arsenal of cruise and ballistic missiles. This would be a big part of any anti-access/area-denial strategy it would use against Japan and/or the United States. China's nuclear weapons arsenal would be launched atop ballistic missiles as well. THAAD, if it were to be deployed to South Korea (which is far from a done deal, by the way), could at least in theory blunt some of the offensive firepower China is trying to deploy on both the conventional and nuclear side--double trouble for sure.

But while China might be upset at the prospects of more U.S. missile defense systems near its borders, this is a problem it should have seen coming. Back in 2013, during the last big North Korea showdown, the United States moved THAAD to defend Guam from a possible North Korean missile attack.

The threat to China is quite clear. If North Korea were once again to create another crisis where the United States once more had to move additional missile defenses back to the Pacific and increase Aegis patrols as was done in 2013, Washington may just leave such defensive platforms in place. Back in 2013 when the crisis with North Korea was at its peak, I laid out the case for such a U.S. move and the repercussions in further detail:

"North Korea may just provide the strategic rationale the United States needs to drop the veiled nature of the military and geostrategic components of its pivot to Asia...American military planners may decide to keep ever increasing amounts of ballistic missile defense systems forward deployed in East Asia for the next time North Korea threatens the region.

U.S. allies could also follow suit. For example, with Tokyo already actively considering moving away from its more defensive military posture, the North Korea threat may provide the final impetus Tokyo needs to justify sustaining higher defense budgets beyond this year's increase. Tokyo could also decide Pyongyang's missile capabilities require it to further bolster its cooperation with the U.S. on missile defense. Just as important, the clear and present danger North Korea poses to South Korea could lead the latter to more actively participate in triangular security arrangements with the U.S. and Japan.

All of this has ramifications for Beijing. Ever increasing amounts of missile defense systems will certainly erode China's growing anti-access capabilities. While it is hard to make solid predictions, it is clear that missile defenses utilized for the protection of U.S. bases and allies in the region also have the potential of being used and/or enhanced to defend against Chinese missiles in the event -- however remote -- of some sort of conflict. While no one knows for certain how effective China's new capabilities would be in a crisis, nor how effectively American and allied missile defenses would prove against such missiles, there is certainly the potential that the potency of China's asymmetric capabilities would be degraded."

Considering tensions between Washington and Beijing over multiple issues ranging from the Senkaku Islands, Taiwan, the South China Sea and so on, America might just conclude a little extra insurance policy against two potential problems might just be a really smart idea. Such a move would be purely defensive, strengthen cooperation with critical U.S. allies like South Korea and Japan, and could lead to a more regional outlook among this grouping when it comes to missile defense while nudging Seoul and Japan a little closer together. What is not to like?

For China, the next move should be very clear: it is time to rein in its allies in Pyongyang and make sure North Korea halts any further missile tests that could drive a U.S. deployment of THAAD or any other missile defenses. In the event of another crisis or a missile test that were to show some sort of North Korean ICBM capability, Washington would certainly rethink its commitments to missile defense in the Asia-Pacific. Any move to increase

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its capabilities and that of its allies would certainly negate Beijing's missile capabilities and A2/AD capabilities. Does China really want to take such a chance? I don't think so.

Harry J. Kazianis serves as Editor of RealClearDefense, a member of the RealClearPolitics family of websites. Mr. Kazianis is also a Senior Fellow for Defense Policy at the Center for the National Interest (non-resident) and a Senior Fellow at the China Policy Institute (non-resident). He is the former Executive Editor of The National Interest and former Editor of The Diplomat.

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http://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2015/03/21/why_china_fears_thaad_107784.html

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The Moscow Times – Moscow, Russia

OPINION/Commentary

Why Russia's War Games Should Scare Nobody

By Alexander Golts

March 23, 2015

Russia's armed forces conducted major military maneuvers last week, but they were only war games, thank God, and not the real thing. Ships from its Northern Fleet hunted down submarines of an imaginary enemy and garrisons of polar troops fought off simulated air strikes.

Part of the Black Sea Fleet also attacked an imaginary enemy in the southwestern region of the Black Sea. According to media reports, Russia deployed Iskander tactical missiles to the Kaliningrad region and Tu-22 aerial bombers to Crimea as part of the maneuvers. It was all presented as part of a snap inspection that President Vladimir Putin announced on March 16.

In fact, Russia simulated a so-called "large-scale war." That's military jargon for global warfare — the type of conflict that would inevitably end with the destruction of all life on this planet. It is logical to assume that this snap inspection would continue with the launch of strategic missiles because that is how such conflicts escalate.

If Russia does not send up those missiles, it will indicate that these really were previously unplanned maneuvers. After all, Moscow is obligated to notify Washington of such moves in advance.

Putin most likely issued that order in retaliation for NATO's decision to conduct military maneuvers in the Baltic and Black seas after Russia annexed Crimea and deployed troops and equipment to the war in southeast Ukraine.

Obviously, Putin ordered the snap inspection to demonstrate Russia's greatly increased military power to his own people and to the world, and for that reason the maneuvers were probably planned in a rush.

In fact, the General Staff faced conflicting goals in carrying out the order. On the one hand, they had to stage as massive a show of force as possible to create the desired impression. On the other hand, the Vienna Document on confidence and security-building measures in Europe places strict limits on the concentration of troops: A state holding a snap inspection of troops can involve no more than 38,000 soldiers, and the maneuvers can last no more than 72 hours.

However, Russia wanted to stage a greater show of force than those limits permitted, so the Kremlin began manipulating the terms of the Vienna Document. It began by announcing a snap inspection of Western Military District and Airborne troops, long-range aviation and the Northern Fleet. The maneuvers were ostensibly meant to check control systems at the recently established Arctic Command.

However, that scale proved too small, so the top brass announced additional military exercises spanning all of Russia. In this way, officials hoped to thoroughly confuse Western states if they should suddenly demand that Russia comply with Vienna Document restrictions. However, in the resulting confusion, even the General Staff lost track of which units were in maneuvers where.

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And in the final briefing for foreign military attaches, General Staff Main Operations Directorate head Lieutenant General Andrei Kartopolov announced, without even batting an eye, that Russia actually staged snap inspections in all of its military districts.

Meanwhile, Deputy Defense Minister Anatoly Antonov attempted to deflect blame by leveling accusations at the foreign military attaches. "You are just scaring yourselves with the horror stories you create," he told them. "I am here to tell you today that we are not going to attack anyone. We simply have no need for that," Antonov said.

Of course, it remains to be seen whether Ukraine — from whom Russia just seized a major chunk of territory — would agree with that claim.

And what exactly did Moscow manage to demonstrate with its snap inspections? Russia's military brass has been talking for years about beefing up its defenses in the Arctic. To this end, Moscow deployed two Arctic brigades consisting of several dozen people charged with building an airfield on the New Siberian Islands.

The obvious question here is how two or three "Arctic brigades" could possibly defend Russia's gigantic northern coastline stretching from Murmansk to Vladivostok. Equally interesting is how Russia plans to deliver the thousands of tons of airplane fuel to the air base so as to supply the aircraft that would patrol that vast area.

The snap inspection of "Arctic forces" should have answered those questions. Instead, it only demonstrated that it is impossible to carry out the illusory task of defending Russia's Arctic coastline with the troops currently stationed in the region.

The General Staff could not come up with any better task for these maneuvers than to pull pages from the old Cold War playbook — that is, search and destroy enemy subs and aircraft carrier groups. And as for protecting Russia's northern coast, a company of paratroopers — that had to fly all the way from central Russia — was supposed to secure the threatened areas.

The so-called "Arctic brigades" were instructed to neutralize several subversive groups that just happened to appear in the middle of that vast wasteland right in their own backyard. In fact, this snap inspection only confirmed that Russia's placement of troops in the Arctic has no practical purpose.

In the event of a real military threat, Moscow would have to deploy troops there from central Russia. What's more, it is worse than naive to imagine that the insidious enemy would land its invasion forces precisely where Russia has stationed its Arctic brigades — or even as close as 200 kilometers from their locations.

Meanwhile, Russia's senior military officials unwittingly contradicted one another. Deputy Defense Minister Antonov avowed that Russia was not threatening anyone, even as Kartopolov of the General Staff candidly announced that "naval aircraft of the Black Sea Fleet struck enemy air and sea forces in the southwestern part of the Black Sea and simulated the destruction of Black Hawk-type drones."

Kartopolov effectively named the potential aggressor in these games because only the United States possesses such drones.

Thus, Moscow has returned to the strategic paradigm of the 1980s: direct military confrontation with the West. The only difference is that Russia no longer has an army of 5 million men. Kartopolov was candid on this point as well. "Considering Russia's vast territory and the negligible size of its armed forces," he said, "we must be prepared to respond appropriately."

Apparently, the General Staff has concluded that it must compensate for the "negligible size" of its armed forces with threatening statements and provocative actions.

Alexander Golts is deputy editor of the online newspaper Yezhednevny Zhurnal.

<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/opinion/article/russias-war-games-should-scare-nobody/517898.html>

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OPINION/Commentary

Not Crossing a Red Line: Chlorine Barrel Bombs In Context

By Al Mauroni

March 24, 2015

The use of chlorine improvised explosive devices against Syrian civilians, as a weapon of war, seems to be a subject of heated commentary. Although the United States successfully led an effort to destroy Syria's existing chemical warfare agents and associated production facilities, Assad's field commanders are now allegedly using chlorine tanks inside of "barrel bombs" to kill and panic the Syrian people. The State Department has expressed its dismay at this behavior, stating that, if verified, such a violation would have consequences. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the implementing body of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), believes that chlorine was "systematically and repeatedly" used as a weapon in northern Syria, without blaming the government directly for those actions. However, as the victims have tended to be Syrian civilians and not government forces, and the mode of delivery has been by helicopter, the list of probable suspects is pretty short.

As a result of four years of civil war, Syrian deaths have climbed to more than 200,000. Of those, perhaps one percent has been caused by chemical weapons. Nonetheless, in 2013, the Obama administration felt compelled to act against Syria when its forces used several rockets filled with sarin nerve agent to kill almost 1,500 people, viewing this violation of international norms as something that required immediate redress. Sabers were dutifully rattled, and Washington gathered forces for an attack. The Syrian government admitted to producing chemical weapons and acceded to the terms of the Chemical Weapons Convention that same year, forestalling a U.S. military reaction. Disposal of its chemical warfare agents and dismantlement of its production facilities quickly followed. So given this fact, why are these cases of chlorine attacks happening? More importantly, is U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Powers right when she said, "the use of chlorine weapons [is] no less evil than that of chemical weapons?" The short answer is emphatically *no*.

Let's start with a few basics. Chlorine is not named in the Chemical Weapons Convention as an inspectable chemical because it is so prevalent in industry as a basic precursor for other materials, used on the order of tens of millions of tons every year. Water treatment plants across the globe depend on chlorine to provide clean, drinkable water. It is used in the production of most pharmaceutical drugs. People across the world swim in water treated with chlorine. But it can also be toxic and even deadly. When chlorine was used by military forces during World War I, it was as an act of improvisation, and it worked – for a short while. Once troops were provided simple gas masks, they could protect themselves when they saw the telltale greenish-yellow fog slowly floating toward them. Chlorine was not a very effective chemical weapon, and that's why no nation after 1917 ever used it as a munition on the battlefield.

The Syrian government did not declare its stocks of chlorine gas as a chemical weapon when it acceded to the CWC in 2013. And it did not need to. Still, the wording of the treaty's first article makes it clear that signatories are not to use chemical weapons or engage in any military preparations to use chemical weapons. The second article defines a chemical weapon as any munition or device specifically designed to cause death or harm through the properties of a toxic chemical. Clearly, the design and use of a chlorine barrel bomb fits that description.

To a layperson, it might seem clear that the Syrian government has broken faith as a signatory of this treaty. However, this is an area best left to diplomats, since the evidence presented publicly has been circumstantial. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons has fact-finding missions in Syria but has still been very careful not to accuse the Syrian government of orchestrating the chlorine attacks. Despite videos of victims of gas attacks, the U.S. government has not acted against Syria. The Chemical Weapons Convention is an agreement between nation-states. Syria has not attacked any nation-states with chemical weapons. At best, this is a UN Security Council issue, and as the UN Security Council addresses this, there are some countries that do not believe that the United Nations should sanction a nation for dealing harshly with cases of civil unrest – even to this extent.

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Resolution 2209, which passed the UN Security Council on March 6, 2015, states “that those individuals responsible for the use of chemicals as weapons, including chlorine or any other toxic chemical, must be held accountable” and that it will remain “actively seized of the matter.” It does not, as reporter Josh Rogin states in his article, call on the Syrian regime to cease dropping chlorine barrel bombs on civilians. It reminds Syria of its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention but does not accuse them of any perfidy. So that’s where the UN Security Council stands. This is the realm of diplomacy.

Given these facts, what is Assad’s angle? Why would the Syrian military use chlorine barrel bombs in its attacks against the Syrian insurgents, given close international scrutiny and the relative lack of effectiveness of chlorine as a casualty-causer? There could be a number of reasons. First, it could be that Assad wants to interpret the Convention language more loosely. He’s given up the production, storage, and use of militarily designed chemical warfare agents. He could blame his field commanders for using chlorine in improvised chemical weapons under their own discretion. Certainly Assad doesn’t need these improvised chemical weapons to retain power – his conventional military forces and its actions are doing the overwhelming majority of killing and taking ground. At best, the use of chlorine barrel bombs represents an attempt to intimidate and terrorize the populace. At least, it represents Assad thumbing his nose at the West, asserting his dominance as a state leader to control events within his borders.

Chlorine is a minor league hazard compared to nerve agents, despite the liberal and careless use of the broad term “chemical weapons” seen in the press. The U.S. military is very busy supporting Iraqi military forces against the Islamic State, which coincidentally is an enemy of Assad’s government. So given Syria’s compliance with the dismantling of its formal chemical weapons program, does it make sense for Western nations to use military forces to deter Assad’s forces from using chlorine gas against the populace when (a) that action could aid the Islamic State in retaining or gaining ground in Syria; (b) the chlorine attacks have not significantly helped Assad nor disproportionately killed civilians; and (c) there is no international consensus – even among America’s closest allies – on how to deal with the direction of Assad’s civil war?

We will still hear outcries from the arms control community and the Responsibility to Protect crowd that we need to “do something.” And here’s my concern. Many diplomats and arms control specialists see no difference between the small-scale use of improvised chemical munitions and heavy use of Scud ballistic missiles with VX-filled warheads. They see no difference in threat between Iran and North Korea’s nuclear weapons programs and China and Russia’s nuclear weapons stockpiles. This is a very black and white Cold War view, one that removes the nuances from discussions on unconventional weapons and does not help us address contemporary security challenges. The fact is, nonproliferation regimes are not well-suited to address chemical terrorism or the state use of chemical weapons during internal civil unrest.

Ridiculous news titles such as “The Spector of Chemical Warfare Returns to the Middle East” unnecessarily elevate these cases of improvised chemical weapons to the status of chemical weapons’ use in the Iran-Iraq conflict in the 1980s, Saddam Hussein’s use of nerve gas against his own population, or Yemen’s civil war in the 1960s. This comparison isn’t accurate or helpful. Egypt caused perhaps 3,000 chemical casualties in Yemeni villages over a period of years, while Iran’s military suffered more than 50,000 casualties from Iraqi chemical weapons. Assad is a violent and ruthless leader, and he intends to retain power by all means possible. But he is the leader of a nation-state that is also in a very volatile part of the world, and there are rules for dealing with national leaders. These incidents of using improvised chemical munitions are unfortunate, but in the end, what Assad is doing with his conventional forces is the real war crime.

When people hear the name of the city Halabjah, they think of the thousands of Kurds killed by Saddam Hussein’s military, which also used chemical weapons against unprotected civilians. They overly fixate on the “horrors” of chemical warfare, not recognizing perhaps that the real crime was the organized and systematic use of conventional military forces to cause mass casualties among noncombatants. Similarly, we should not get so focused on the occasional use of chlorine barrel bombs that we overlook the real tragedy – the thousands of Syrians being killed in this brutal conflict.

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Al Mauroni is the Director of the U.S. Air Force Center for Unconventional Weapons Studies. The opinions, conclusions, and recommendations expressed or implied within are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Air University, U.S. Air Force, or Department of Defense.

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The Hill – Washington, D.C.

OPINION/Congress Blog

The Costs of Nuclear Disarmament

By Matthew R. Costlow

March 26, 2015

Nuclear disarmament advocates are having a tough year so far.

President Obama, who they thought would aggressively pursue nuclear reductions, is presenting a modernization plan for the three legs of the U.S. nuclear triad, nuclear bombers, sea-launched and land-based missiles.

Out-going Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, who endorsed the goal of nuclear disarmament before coming the Pentagon, has since repeatedly affirmed U.S. nuclear modernization as the Department of Defense's "highest priority mission."

Russia's nuclear threats against NATO allies and China's development of a new ICBM with multiple warheads have undermined nuclear disarmers' assurances that further deep U.S. nuclear reductions would be prudent.

The final hope nuclear disarmers have is to convince the American people that the Obama administration's nuclear modernization plans are "unaffordable and unsustainable." Sen. Ed Markey (D-Mass.) and Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.) hold similar views as they recently proposed the Smarter Approach to Nuclear Expenditures (SANE) Act, which they believe would save \$100 billion over the next decade by cutting U.S. nuclear forces.

They support this claim by citing reports like the National Defense Panel which estimated the cost of modernization to be between \$600 billion and \$1 trillion over the next thirty years, averaging about \$20 - \$33 billion per year.

What nuclear disarmers fail to mention, however, is that spending on nuclear weapons in the defense budget has been essentially flat for the past two decades, its lowest point in over 50 years.

As the Pentagon's former top weapons procurement official, Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter knows well that nuclear weapons and their supporting systems cost about \$16 billion per year, or only three percent of the annual defense budget. Spending only three percent on the nuclear arsenal is historically below average; and modernization plans would just bring expenses to their historical norm.

Nuclear disarmers claim that cutting the number of nuclear weapons and delivery systems will save the taxpayer a lot of money, but as Secretary Carter has said, nuclear reductions are "not the answer to our budget problem. They're just not that expensive."

In fact, the policy of nuclear disarmament may end up costing the United States more in the long run than if it continues current modernization plans.

U.S. nuclear weapons play a very important and cost-effective role in the current strategic environment by assuring our NATO allies in the face of Russian aggression and permitting allies such as South Korea and Japan, who fear Chinese and North Korean threats, to remain non-nuclear.

Cutting the U.S. nuclear arsenal further would likely embolden Russia and China, damage relations with allies, and drive allies to examine obtaining nuclear weapons themselves. These are costly possibilities indeed.

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Also, the nuclear delivery systems we are investing in retain enormous value as a hedge against an uncertain and unknowable future. Some of the systems the United States is developing will be expected to operate effectively into the 2080s, 65 years from now.

By claiming that the United States should make further deep and “irreversible” cuts in the U.S. nuclear arsenal, nuclear disarmers show they are willing to hamstring U.S. capabilities for decades on the assumption of a benign future they cannot possibly foresee accurately.

Threats against the United States change frequently both in scope and severity, and often unexpectedly. If the United States were to make further deep cuts, it could be ill-equipped at best when new threats emerge. Modifying existing nuclear systems to meet new threats would take a good deal of time and be enormously expensive.

If modifying existing systems proves unworkable, purchasing whole new systems rapidly as a supplement to meet a future threat would likely be infeasible or, again, extremely costly. As anyone in the defense acquisition business knows, timelines of major defense projects are often measured not in years, but in decades.

Unfortunately world events often unfold much faster than the defense community can anticipate or plan for.

As such, it is prudent for the United States to invest in nuclear capabilities that are flexible and resilient in a fluid threat environment. That is precisely what the administration is requesting.

This is where the greatest value of a modernized U.S. nuclear arsenal lies. It would adapt as necessary to shifting threats. And if built with an eye toward the future, U.S. nuclear forces may be able to integrate the new technology that will inevitably arrive in the next 65 years.

By continuing to invest in nuclear weapons and their delivery systems, the United States is demonstrating a clear understanding of the value they provide in both deterring enemies and assuring allies in an unpredictable, dangerous world.

In a time of restricted budgets and scarce resources, Congress should prioritize those programs that provide the greatest value in the defense of the United States against the most serious threats, now and in the future. A modernized U.S. nuclear arsenal meets those requirements and is worth the very small portion of the Defense budget required.

Costlow is a policy analyst at the National Institute for Public Policy in Fairfax, Virginia.

<http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/homeland-security/236940-the-costs-of-nuclear-disarmament>

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USA TODAY – Tysons Corner, VA
OPINION/Column

U.S. Always Wrong on Nuclear Proliferation: Column

We can't be sure when Iran is a year away from atom bomb.

By James S. Robbins

March 26, 2015

What if we only know for sure Iran is cheating on a nuclear weapons agreement when it tests an atom bomb? If history is a guide, that is exactly how we will find out.

The administration is keeping a close hold on the specifics of negotiations with Iran over its nuclear program. But Secretary of State John Kerry has shared one detail, the U.S. goal to slow Iran's program to the point where "we know we have a breakout time of a minimum of a year."

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The Obama administration wants the security of knowing that even if Iran decided to abandon the deal, the Shiite nation would still be a year out from actually having a nuclear weapon. The thinking goes that this would be ample time for renewed diplomacy and sanctions to stop Iran in its tracks.

However, the United States has an abysmal record at predicting when countries will go nuclear. U.S. experts have gotten it wrong every time. On Aug. 24, 1949, the CIA's Office of Reports and Estimates predicted that "the most probable date" for a Soviet nuclear test was four years off. Moscow detonated its first atomic bomb five days later. We haven't gotten any better at it. In August 1964, the CIA observed that China was preparing for a nuclear test but lacked the fissionable material to undertake it — kind of like what the U.S. is saying about Iran. Two months later, China proved it had more than enough processed uranium to get the job done by testing a weapon. India's 1974 nuclear test came as a surprise too, as did Pakistan's in 1998 and North Korea's in 2006.

Today, we are not even sure what capabilities Iran has. For all we know, it could already be a screwdriver turn away from having the bomb. This week, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) faulted Iran for refusing to share information about the military dimensions of its nuclear program. Absent full disclosure from Iran before the deal is signed, how can anyone be certain that the guarantees in the agreement make any sense?

Even if we knew Iran was a year away from a nuclear weapon, in diplomatic terms, a year might as well be a day.

The current talks were supposed to have lasted eight months but have been going on for more than a year. A year-long buffer against Iranian cheating would quickly be eaten up by debates, calls for inspections, Iranian resistance to the inspections, negotiation about the inspections, the inspections themselves, debates about the results of the inspections, calls for further inspections and so forth. That's all before new sanctions to punish Iran would even be voted on. By then, an Iranian mushroom cloud could be blossoming at a nuclear testing facility.

If Tehran is not allowing United Nations watchdogs to do their jobs today, blocking inspections and not revealing the full extent of Iranian military nuclear technology, there is no baseline for estimating its true breakout capacity. It makes no sense signing an agreement in which the mullahs promise not to do what they might already have done. The breakout timeline could be the turn of a screw.

James S. Robbins writes weekly for USA TODAY and is the author of [The Real Custer: From Boy General to Tragic Hero](#).

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2015/03/26/nuclear-weapon-iran-cheating-column/70441458/>

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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.

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

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Phone: 334.953.7538 | Fax: 334.953.7226



USAF Center for Unconventional Weapons Studies
CUWS Outreach Journal

Maxwell AFB, Alabama

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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