



USAF COUNTERPROLIFERATION CENTER
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MAXWELL AFB, ALABAMA

Issue No. 1071, 23 August 2013

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Tehran Times – Iran

'Iran Has Installed 18,000 Centrifuges'

Political Desk

Sunday, August 18, 2013

TEHRAN -- Iran has installed 18,000 centrifuges at its nuclear facilities, a former nuclear official announced on Saturday.

More than 10,000 centrifuges are currently operating, and 7,000 are ready to start operation, Fereydoun Abbasi, the former director of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, said, referring to first-generation centrifuges, which are known as IR-1.

According to Reuters, a May report from the International Atomic Energy Agency indicated that Iran had by then installed roughly 16,600 IR-1 machines in two separate facilities.

"We also have 1,000 new-generation centrifuge machines (IR-2m) which have been designed and manufactured inside the country and are ready to start operation," Abbasi said during a ceremony in which he handed over his post to Ali Akbar Salehi, who was recently appointed by new Iranian President Hassan Rohani.

The UN nuclear watchdog in its last report in May said Iran had installed a total of 689 IR-2m centrifuges and empty centrifuge casings, according to Reuters.

Abbasi also said, "9,000 centrifuges are enriching uranium to less than 5 percent at the Natanz site, and 700 centrifuges are simultaneously enriching uranium to 20 percent at Natanz and Fordo facilities."

The main bone of contention between Tehran and the West is Iran's uranium enrichment program.

Iran says all its nuclear activities are totally peaceful, and, as an IAEA member and a signatory to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, it has the legal right to produce nuclear fuel for its research reactors and nuclear power plants.

The West claims Iran may be seeking to develop the means to produce nuclear weapons.

<http://tehrantimes.com/politics/110092-iran-has-installed-18000-centrifuges->

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FARS News Agency – Iran

Sunday, August 18, 2013

Ex-Defense Minister Terms Iran Sixth Missile Producer in World

TEHRAN (FNA) - Iran's missile capabilities are currently the first in the Middle East and sixth in the world, a senior military official announced.

Former Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier General Ahmad Vahidi made the announcement in an interview with FNA just before the end of his tenure at the defense ministry.

He underlined that the Islamic Republic is currently the world's sixth power in terms of missile production and capabilities.

"Indigenizing the technology for building solid fuel missiles, designing and manufacturing surface-to-surface long-range Sejil missile, ... increasing precision of medium-range missiles with pinpoint capability like Fateh, designing and manufacturing different marine cruise missiles like Qader, Nasr and Zafar as well as designing and manufacturing various air defense systems, including Ya Zahra, Mersad and Herz 9 are among the efforts which have enabled us to reach to this point," Brigadier General Vahidi said.

Earlier this week, Commander of the Iranian Army Ground Force Brigadier General Ahmad Reza Pourdastan said the personnel and experts under his command have boosted the destruction power of army missiles.

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"Rockets and missiles used by the Army Ground Force have been upgraded in terms of range, power of destruction and precision," Pourdastan told FNA.

Praising the efforts made by Ground Force exports, the General said that different kinds of simulators for training pilots and snipers have also been produced domestically.

"... we have indigenized and produced armored personnel carriers, electronic warfare equipment, Zolfaqar tanks and sniper weapons with a range of three kilometers," he added.

In September, Lieutenant Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Brigadier General Hossein Salami stressed the country's high missile capability, and stated that Iran can target every enemy base with high precision.

"We can simultaneously fire numerous and countless missiles from different spots at one or several targets, which indicates our capability to perform convergent and parallel operations," Salami said.

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Jerusalem Post – Israel

Israeli Officials: Iran Talks Do only One Thing – Give Tehran more Time

EU's Ashton says P5+1 is eager to restart nuclear talks.

By HERB KEINON

18 August 2013

The only thing talks between Iran and the world's powers have achieved until now is buy Tehran more time, Israeli officials said Sunday, following EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton's comment that the P5+1 group is eager to restart the talks.

"We are skeptical in the extreme," one official said of a new round of talks. He said there was no hope the talks would help "unless the Iranians feel the pressure is being upgraded."

Ashton phoned new Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Saturday, just after he was inaugurated in his post, to congratulate him on his appointment. According to a statement put out by her spokesperson, Ashton "underlined her continued determination and commitment to seek a diplomatic solution to the Iranian nuclear issue."

Ashton said that the world powers known as the P5+1 – the US, Russia, China, Germany, France and Britain – were "ready to work with the new Iranian negotiating team as soon as they were appointed."

According to the statement, Ashton "confirmed the need for substantial talks that will lead to concrete results swiftly."

The statement said the two also discussed regional issues and "agreed to meet soon."

The last round of P5+1 talks took place in Astana, Kazakhstan, in April.

Even as the international community is expressing interest in engaging with the new Iranian government led by President Hassan Rouhani, the message Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu stresses with nearly all visitors from abroad is that that Iran must be judged by deeds, not words.

House Majority Leader Eric Cantor (R-Virginia), who met Netanyahu with a delegation of 28 congressmen on Friday, said that even as the situation in Egypt continues to deteriorate, Syria continues to implode, and the talks with the Palestinians have restarted, the prime minister's main message was the need to keep Iran from achieving nuclear weapons. Netanyahu also stressed to the group that Iran had its "tentacles" in much of the instability in the region.

Israel's position since the election of Rouhani in June is that the international pressure must be sustained and even ratcheted up, even though there are those saying Rouhani is a "moderate" who should be given a chance.

Rouhani, meanwhile, made clear Saturday that he would distance himself from the confrontational approach of his

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predecessor Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, saying during Zarif's inauguration that the principles of Iran's foreign policy will remain "consistent and stable," but that the style and method will "undergo major changes."

<http://www.jpost.com/Iranian-Threat/News/Israeli-officials-Iran-talks-do-only-one-thing-give-Teheran-more-time-323526>

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San Francisco Chronicle

U.N. Experts in Syria for Chemical Weapons Probe

Associated Press (AP)

Sunday, August 18, 2013

Damascus, -- Syria - After months of drawn-out negotiations, United Nations experts arrived in Damascus on Sunday to begin their investigation into the purported use of chemical weapons in Syria's civil war.

The rebels, along with the United States and other Western powers, have accused President Bashar Assad's government of carrying out chemical attacks, while Syrian authorities and Russia have blamed the opposition. Nearly six months after the weapons were first allegedly used on the battlefield, definitive proof remains elusive.

The U.N. team that arrived in Damascus on Sunday is tasked with determining whether chemical weapons have been deployed. But the mission's mandate does not extend to establishing who was responsible for an attack, which has led some observers to question the value of the probe.

The 20-member delegation is led by Swedish chemical weapons expert Ake Sellstrom.

The investigators are expected to visit three sites where chemical weapons attacks allegedly occurred: the village of Khan al-Assal, just west of the embattled northern city of Aleppo, and two other locations that have not been disclosed.

Syria is said to have one of the world's largest stockpiles of chemical weapons, including mustard gas and the nerve agent sarin. There are concerns that the Assad forces might use them on a large scale, transfer some of them to the Lebanese militant Hezbollah group or that the chemical agents could fall into the hands of al Qaeda-affiliated militants and other extremists among the rebels.

Ahead of the experts' arrival, Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad said the government will offer the U.N. inspectors its full assistance.

"I assure you, on behalf of the Syrian Arab Republic, that we will fully cooperate with this team and provide it will all information we have and all facilities to reach a rational conclusion," he said.

A spokesman for the Western-backed Syrian opposition's military wing, Loay al-Mikdad, also welcomed the U.N. mission, but was skeptical about how fruitful the investigation will be.

"We hope that this delegation will be able to reach all areas where unconventional weapons have been used," al-Mikdad said. "However, we're absolutely sure that this regime that has done everything from changing signs with the names of areas to fabricating evidence with past delegations will do the same with this one."

In June, the U.S. said it had conclusive evidence that Assad's government used chemical weapons against opposition forces. That crossed what President Obama called a red line, prompting a U.S. decision to begin arming rebel groups, although that has not happened yet.

<http://www.sfgate.com/default/article/U-N-experts-in-Syria-for-chemical-weapons-probe-4742356.php>

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Gulf News – U.A.E.

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Iran May Limit Sensitive Nuclear Stockpile

Diplomats say Iran needs to do more to allay suspicions about its atomic programme

Reuters

August 19, 2013

Vienna: Iran appears to be holding back growth of its most sensitive nuclear stockpile by continuing to convert some of it into reactor fuel, diplomats said on Monday, potentially giving more time for negotiation with world powers.

The stock of medium-enriched uranium gas is closely watched in the West; the Israelis have repeatedly threatened to attack if diplomacy fails to curb Iran's programme and it amasses enough of the material — a short technical step from weapons-grade — to make a bomb.

Iran says its programme is for power generation and medical purposes only, but the election of the relative moderate Hassan Rouhani as president has raised hopes that talks to address the decade-old nuclear dispute could be unblocked.

Since Iran in 2010 began enriching uranium to a 20 per cent concentration of the fissile isotope, it has produced more than the 240-250 kg that would be needed for one weapon.

But it has kept the stockpile low by converting part of the uranium gas into oxide powder in order, it says, to yield fuel for a medical research reactor.

The diplomats, accredited to the United Nations' International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), said Iran might even have stepped up this conversion in recent months.

If this is confirmed in the IAEA's quarterly report, due around August 27-28, the inventory of 20 per cent gas will rise by less than the output, which has been about 15 kg per month.

One of the diplomats suggested the stockpile may show little or even no growth during the last three months, saying: "Everyone expects there to be as much or more conversion." But he and others cautioned against seeing it as a signal by the new Iranian president as the uranium conversion began in late 2011.

<http://gulfnews.com/news/region/iran/iran-may-limit-sensitive-nuclear-stockpile-1.1222130>

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Press TV – Iran

Halting Uranium Enrichment Experience Iran Should Not Repeat: Velayati

Monday, August 19, 2013

A top advisor to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei says halting uranium enrichment failed to yield result in the past and Tehran should not repeat such experiences.

"We stopped any kind of enrichment for two years. What was the result? Nothing. Every day they used to put an extra claim on their former claims. Why must we repeat this experience?" Ali Akbar Velayati said in an exclusive interview with AP on Monday.

He said the election of President Hassan Rouhani could be a test of the goodwill of Western countries. Rouhani's moderate policy, which sticks to the principles, gives an opportunity to the West and they should use it, he added.

Velayati, however, stressed that the Rouhani administration will follow the same trend strategically as the former administration.

"Repeating the same language that we had before, I don't think it is useful. We have to talk with a different language. The same purposes but a different language," he stated.



Velayati also touched on the likelihood of direct Tehran-Washington talks in the future, saying such negotiations would not start unless the United States changed its behavior toward Iran.

The US, Israel and some of their allies falsely claim that Iran is pursuing non-civilian objectives in its nuclear energy program, with Washington and the European Union using the unfounded allegation as a pretext to impose illegal sanctions on Iran.

Tehran strongly rejects the groundless claim over its nuclear activities, maintaining that as a committed signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), it has the right to use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

Meanwhile, numerous inspections of Iran's nuclear facilities by the IAEA have never found any evidence showing that the Iranian nuclear energy program has been diverted toward non-civilian purposes.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/08/19/319550/iran-should-not-stop-uranium-enrichment/>

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Xinhua News – China

Iran to Resume Nuclear Talks after Appointment of Nuclear Negotiator: Spokesman

August 20, 2013

TEHRAN, Aug. 20 (Xinhua) -- Iran is waiting for President Hassan Rouhani to appoint chief nuclear negotiator as the first step for the resumption of talks with the world powers, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman said Tuesday.

After the assignation of the nuclear negotiator and its negotiating team, the next step would be specifying the time to resume the talks, said Abbas Araqchi in his weekly press briefing.

Asked about the possibility of Iran's Foreign Ministry to represent the Islamic republic in the nuclear talks, Araqchi said that "If the Foreign Ministry is tasked with (leading the nuclear) talks, I am sure that the ministry has the required capacity and will do the job well."

Some media reports said here recently that under new administration, it is likely that Iran's Foreign Ministry will take over the responsibility from the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) of the country to lead the nuclear talks with the world powers.

Mohammad-Javad Zarif, who was endorsed as Iran's new foreign minister last week, was a member of Iran's nuclear negotiating team, led by Rouhani, from 2003 to 2005.

On Tuesday, the Iranian spokesman reiterated his country's recent position that "Iran is after purposeful talks with the results followed."

"We are not interested in talks for talks sake," said Araqchi, adding that Iran wants "purposeful" negotiations "within specified timetable."

Zarif had said earlier that his country was ready for "purposeful" nuclear talks within specified timetable.

In a telephone conversation with the EU Foreign Policy Chief Catherine Ashton on Saturday, Zarif stressed a "political determination" and "serious will" for resolving Iran's nuclear issue with Iran's nuclear rights recognized.

Both Iran's new government and the world powers have shown interest for resuming nuclear talks after the last round of negotiations, which were held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in April without yielding much practical results.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2013-08/20/c_132646928.htm

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Tehran Times – Iran

Iran Keen to Resume Talks with Major Powers: FM

Political Desk

Tuesday, August 20, 2013

TEHRAN – New Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said that Iran is keen to resume talks with the major powers over its nuclear program.

“In response to Ms. Ashton in a phone conversation, I emphasized that the Islamic Republic of Iran is keen to resume talks,” Zarif told the Mehr News Agency on Monday, in reference to the phone conversation that EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton held with him on Saturday.

Ashton leads diplomatic efforts to resolve the decade-old nuclear dispute on behalf of the six major powers, namely the United States, China, Russia, Britain, France, and Germany, which are known as the P5+1 group.

Zarif said, “I told Ms. Ashton that we want the issue to be resolved, not that negotiations be held for the sake of negotiations.”

According to AFP, a statement from Ashton’s spokesperson said that the EU foreign policy chief “underlined her continued determination and commitment to seek a diplomatic solution to the Iranian nuclear issue” during her conversation with Zarif, who formerly served as Iran’s ambassador to the United Nations.

It added that she said the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany that Ashton represents in the negotiations “were ready to work with the new Iranian negotiating team as soon as they were appointed.”

“She confirmed the need for substantial talks that will lead to concrete results swiftly,” it said, adding that Ashton and Zarif “agreed to meet soon”.

Early this month Ashton called on Iran’s new President Hassan Rohani to agree a fresh round of negotiations as soon as possible.

Rohani has said Iran is ready for “serious” talks on its nuclear program without delay.

He headed Iran’s nuclear negotiating team under reformist president Mohammad Khatami in the early 2000s, and Western leaders have expressed hope his election could herald a more constructive approach in the protracted talks.

But Rohani has said there could be no surrender of the right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy that Iran has under the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/component/content/article/110127>

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Global Post – Boston, MA

U.N. Fails to Bridge Israeli-Arab Divide on Nuclear-Free Region

Reuters

August 20, 2013

VIENNA (Reuters) - U.N. atomic agency chief Yukiya Amano has not been able to narrow Israeli-Arab differences on how to move towards a Middle East free of nuclear weapons, but will keep trying, according to a report by his office.

Discussions with officials from the region have shown that there continues to be a "fundamental difference of views" between Israel and the other Middle East countries, it said.

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The report was prepared by Amano's International Atomic Energy Agency ahead of an annual meeting next month of the IAEA's 159 member states.

Israel is widely believed to possess the Middle East's only nuclear arsenal, drawing frequent Arab and Iranian condemnation. It is the only country in the region outside the global nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Israel and the United States regard Iran as the world's main proliferation threat, accusing it of covertly seeking a nuclear arms capability, something the Islamic state denies.

An Egyptian plan for an international meeting to lay the groundwork for creating a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction - including nuclear arms - was agreed at an NPT review conference in 2010.

But the United States, a co-sponsor along with Britain and Russia, said last year that the conference would not occur as planned in December 2012, and did not make clear when, or whether, it would take place.

U.S. and Israeli officials have said a nuclear arms-free Middle East cannot become reality unless there is broad Arab-Israeli peace and Iran curbs its nuclear program.

As in previous years, the IAEA's 2012 meeting asked Amano to hold consultations with Middle East states on placing all nuclear activities there under the supervision of the agency.

Amano's report ahead of this year's member state gathering, dated August 16, said he had encouraged the development of "relevant new ideas and approaches".

Despite this, he had not been able to make further progress on the application of "comprehensive Agency safeguards covering all nuclear activities in the region of the Middle East" it said, adding that he would continue with his consultations.

Reporting by Fredrik Dahl; Editing by Kevin Liffey.

<http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/thomson-reuters/130820/un-fails-bridge-israeli-arab-divide-nuclear-free-region>

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Arab News – Saudi Arabia

1,300 Killed in Gas Attack near Damascus — Opposition

- *Rebel group gives even higher death toll*
- *Syrian authorities dismiss report as untrue*
- *Assad ally Russia says looks like 'provocation'*
- *Western powers call for UN investigators to visit scene*

By DOMINIC EVANS AND KHALED YACOUB OWEIS, Reuters
Wednesday, 21 August 2013

BEIRUT/AMMAN: Syria's opposition accused President Bashar Assad's forces of gassing many hundreds of people — by one report as many as 1,300 — on Wednesday in what would, if confirmed, be the world's worst chemical weapons attack in decades.

Western and regional countries called for UN chemical weapons investigators — who arrived in Damascus just three days ago — to be urgently dispatched to the scene of one of the deadliest incidents of the two-year-old civil war.

Russia, too, urged a fair and professional investigation but Assad's biggest foreign ally also heaped skepticism on his enemies' claims. A foreign ministry spokesman in Moscow said the release of gas after UN inspectors arrived suggested strongly that it was a "provocation" to discredit Syria's government.

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Images, including some by freelance photographers supplied to Reuters, showed scores of bodies including of small children, laid on the floor of a clinic with no visible signs of injuries.

Reuters was not able to verify the cause of their deaths. The Syrian government denied that it had used chemical arms.

The Russian spokesman said: "This cannot but suggest that once again we are dealing with a pre-planned provocation. This is supported by the fact that the criminal act was committed near Damascus at the very moment when a mission of UN experts had successfully started their work of investigating allegations of the possible use of chemical weapons there."

George Sabra, one of the leading opponents of Assad, said the death toll was 1,300 killed by poison gas released over suburbs east of Damascus.

"Today's crimes are ... not the first time the regime has used chemical weapons. But they constitute a turning point in the regime's operations," he told a news conference in Istanbul. "This time it was for annihilation rather than terror."

An opposition monitoring group, citing figures compiled from medical clinics in the Damascus suburbs, put the death toll at 494 — 90 percent of them killed by gas, the rest by bombing and conventional arms. The rebel Syrian National Coalition said 650 people had been killed.

If the cause of death and the scale of the killing were confirmed, it would be the worst known use of chemical weapons since Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein gassed thousands of Kurds in the town of Halabja in 1988.

Activists said rockets with chemical agents hit the Damascus suburbs of Ain Tarma, Zamalka and Jobar during fierce pre-dawn bombardment by government forces.

The Damascus Media Office monitoring center said 150 bodies were counted in Hammouriya, 100 in Kfar Batna, 67 in Saqba, 61 in Douma, 76 in Mouadamiya and 40 in Irbib.

Residents of the capital said mortars later hit government-held areas in Faris Khoury Street and the Malki district, where Assad has a residence. There were no reports of injuries.

Heavy air strikes continued throughout the day against the rebel suburbs of Mouadamiya and Jobar.

SYMPTOMS

A nurse at Douma Emergency Collection facility, Bayan Baker, earlier told Reuters the death toll collated from medical centers was at least 213.

"Many of the casualties are women and children. They arrived with their pupils constricted, cold limbs and foam in their mouths. The doctors say these are typical symptoms of nerve gas victims," the nurse said. Exposure to sarin gas causes pupils in the eyes to shrink to pinpoint sizes and foaming at the lips.

The UN team is in Syria investigating allegations that both rebels and army forces used chemical weapons in the past, one of the main disputes in international diplomacy over Syria.

The Swedish scientist leading the team, Ake Sellstrom, said the reports should be looked into, but doing so would require a request from a UN member state.

France and Sweden said the mission must be sent to the site to investigate without delay. "They need to immediately get access to this site — it's 15-20 minutes from where they are currently," Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt said.

Turkey and Saudi Arabia made similar calls. Britain said it was deeply concerned and would raise the issue at the UN Security Council, adding the attacks would be "a shocking escalation" if confirmed.

Extensive amateur video and photographs appeared on the Internet showing countless bodies, with victims choking, some of them foaming at the mouth, and no sign of outward injury.



A video purportedly shot in the Kafr Batna neighborhood showed a room filled with more than 90 bodies, many of them children and a few women and elderly men. Most of the bodies appeared ashen or pale but with no visible injuries. About a dozen were wrapped in blankets.

Other footage showed doctors treating people in makeshift clinics. One video showed the bodies of a dozen people lying on the floor of a clinic, with no visible wounds. The narrator in the video said they were all members of a single family. In a corridor outside lay another five bodies.

A Syrian military officer appeared on state television and said the allegations were untrue and a sign of “hysteria and floundering” by Assad’s opponents. Information Minister Omran Zoabi said the allegations were “illogical and fabricated.”

The head of the opposition Syrian National Coalition said Assad’s forces had carried out a massacre: “This is a chance for the (UN inspectors) to see with their own eyes this massacre and know that this regime is a criminal one,” Ahmed Jarba said.

ACCUSATIONS

Syria is one of just a handful of countries that are not parties to the international treaty that bans chemical weapons, and Western nations believe it has caches of undeclared mustard gas, sarin and VX nerve agents.

Assad’s officials have said they would never use poison gas — if they had it — against Syrians. The United States and European allies believe Assad’s forces used small amounts of sarin gas in attacks in the past, which Washington called a “red line” that justified international military aid for the rebels.

Assad’s government has responded in the past by accusing the rebels of using chemical weapons, which they deny. Western countries say they do not believe the rebels have access to poison gas. Assad’s main global ally Moscow says accusations on both sides must be investigated.

Khaled Omar of the opposition Local Council in Ain Tarma said he saw at least 80 bodies at the Hajah Hospital in Ain Tarma and at a makeshift clinic at Tatbiqiya School in the nearby district of Saqba.

“The attack took place at around 3:00 a.m. (0000 GMT). Most of those killed were in their homes,” Omar said. An activist working with Ahrar Al-Sham rebel unit in the Erbin district east of the capital who used the name Abu Nidal said many of those who died were rescuers who were overcome with poison when they arrived at the scene.

“We believe there was a group of initial responders who died or were wounded, because when we went in later, we saw men collapsed on staircases or inside doorways and it looks like they were trying to go in to help the wounded and then were hurt themselves,” he told Reuters by Skype.

“At first none of us knew there were chemical agents because it seemed like just another night of air strikes, and no one was anticipating chemical weapons use, especially with UN monitors in town.”

<http://www.arabnews.com/news/461988>

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The Washington Times

Satellite Images Show Alterations at Iran’s Parchin Nuclear Site

By Cheryl K. Chumley - *The Washington Times*

Thursday, August 22, 2013

A U.S. institute with a mission of tracking Iran’s weaponry and military development claims new satellite images show the country is making nuclear gains.



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Digital Globe satellite officials say new images from Aug. 13 show definitive development at Iran's Parchin facility. The Institute for Science and International Security is about to release the images; The Associated Press was given an advance look at the pictures.

The Parchin site is believed by International Atomic Energy Agency authorities to have been used in the past to test explosive triggers for a nuclear explosion, AP reported. These latest images indicate workers at Parchin may be trying to develop actual nuclear arms, based on the alterations that can be viewed.

Adding to the concern is that Iran consistently has denied IAEA entry to Parchin. The country also denies that asphaltting work at the facility has been conducted as a means of disguising nuclear weapon development.

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2013/aug/22/satellite-images-show-alterations-irans-nuclear-si/>

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NBC News.com

Obama: Syria Allegations of Chemical Weapons 'a Big Event of Grave Concern'

By Elizabeth Chuck, Staff Writer, NBC News
Friday, August 23, 2013

President Barack Obama said reports of a possible chemical weapons attack in Syria this week signal "a big event of grave concern" and said he has shortened the time frame for the U.S. to decide whether it will act to halt the bloodshed in the country.

"We are right now gathering information about this particular event, but I can say that unlike some of the evidence that we were trying to get earlier that led to a U.N. investigator going into Syria, what we've seen indicates that this is clearly a big event of grave concern," Obama said in an exclusive interview with CNN's Chris Cuomo that aired on Friday morning. "And, you know, we are already in communications with the entire international community. We're moving through the U.N. to try to prompt better action from them."

Cuomo asked the president if the U.S. government faced a "more abbreviated timeframe" on key decisions in Syria and Egypt, to which Obama answered yes, but he also said: "We have to think through strategically what's going to be in our long-term national interests."

The interview, which aired on CNN's "New Day," was taped on Thursday evening in Syracuse, N.Y., after Obama delivered a speech in the city promoting policies to lessen the cost of college, and touched on a wide selection of domestic and international issues.

The comments were Obama's first since Wednesday's alleged chemical weapons attack that members of the Syrian opposition claimed killed hundreds of civilians, including many women and children. The president expressed more urgency in the remarks than he has in the past in response to the two-year conflict that has cost more than 100,000 lives.

On Friday, a senior administration official confirmed to NBC News that State Department and intelligence agencies met at the White House for three hours on Thursday to discuss their options in Syria.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said, "We have a range of options available, and we are going to act very deliberately so that we're making decisions consistent with our national interest as well as our assessment of what can advance our objectives in Syria."

The official said on Friday that the options of instituting a no-fly zone or putting soldiers on the ground were not being considered for the moment.

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In the CNN interview with Obama, Cuomo pointed out that it's been almost exactly a year since the president first said the use of chemical weapons in Syria would cross a "red line" and prompt a tough U.S. response.

Obama responded, "If the U.S. goes in and attacks another country without a U.N. mandate and without clear evidence that can be presented, then there are questions in terms of whether international law supports it. Do we have the coalition to make it work? And, you know, those are considerations that we have to take into account."

The commander-in-chief added that the U.S. is still trying to determine conclusively whether chemical weapons were used this week.

On Thursday, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon asked the Syrian government to allow U.N. inspectors to investigate "without delay" the latest alleged chemical attack and asked for access to the site, which is near Damascus. A U.N. team arrived in Syria on Sunday to investigate several previous claims of chemical weapons use, Reuters reported.

Syrian President Assad's government is under growing pressure from Western and Gulf Arab countries and Assad's ally, Russia, to allow access to the rebel-held site of Wednesday's attack. Speaking in Seoul on Friday, Ban said he would press for the full cooperation of the Syrian government.

"I can think of no good reason why any party — either government or opposition forces — would decline this opportunity to get to the truth of the matter," he said, according to Reuters.

Russia urged Syria to comply with U.N. experts, and said Moscow and Washington agree that an objective inquiry is needed into the allegations.

"The Russian side called on the Syrian government to cooperate with the U.N. chemical experts. It is now up to the opposition, which should guarantee safe access for the mission to the alleged place of the incident," the Russian Foreign Ministry said, reported Reuters.

Many have harshly criticized the White House for not acting more swiftly on Syria amid the allegations of the use of chemical weapons, including politicians such as Sen. John McCain, who recently appeared on "New Day" and argued that America's credibility in the Middle East has been damaged by the lack of response in both Syria and Egypt.

"I am sympathetic to Senator McCain's passion for helping people work through what is an extraordinarily difficult and heartbreaking situation, both in Syria and in Egypt, and these two countries are in different situations," Obama told Cuomo in the interview.

"But what I think the American people also expect me to do as president is to think through what we do from the perspective of what is in our long-term national interests."

Obama also pointed to the high costs of other recent American engagements, saying, "We're still spending tens of billions of dollars in Afghanistan."

Besides Syria and Egypt, the interview touched on NSA surveillance, college costs, the school shooting outside of Atlanta earlier this week, and the First Family's new dog, Sunny.

http://usnews.nbcnews.com/_news/2013/08/23/20152271-obama-syria-allegations-of-chemical-weapons-a-big-event-of-grave-concern?lite=

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Yonhap News Agency – South Korea

Recent Inter-Korean Thaw could Help Resume Long-Stalled Disarmament Talks on N. Korean Nukes

August 20, 2013

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SEOUL, Aug. 20 (Yonhap) -- On-going signs of improvement in inter-Korean relations could help efforts to reopen the long-stalled disarmament talks over North Korea's nuclear programs, a high-ranking government official said Tuesday.

"Recent progress in the inter-Korean relations could have a positive impact on the environment for resuming the six-party talks on North Korea's nuclear programs," the official, well-versed in North Korean nuclear issues, said on the condition of anonymity.

The North, having concluded that improving relations with the South is beneficial to its national interest, may move on to think likewise that discarding its nuclear arms can benefit the country, the official said, adding that such a shift can help in resuming the dialogue.

"The North may be feeling some pains and paying some costs" as their past nuclear tests and missile launch had to come at the costs of friendly ties with China and relations with the international community, he said.

Last week, the two Koreas reached a dramatic agreement to reopen their jointly run factory park in the North Korean city of Kaesong. The Kaesong Industrial Park has remained shuttered since April when the countries closed the last symbol of inter-Korean conciliation amid high tensions.

In line with the North's growing intention to engage with neighbors, the member countries are scurrying to revive the six-party talks, designed to persuade the North to discard its nuclear arms, seen as a grave threat to the regional security, in return for food and energy aid as well as other diplomatic incentives.

The six-nation dialogue, involving the two Koreas, the United States, China, Russia and Japan, has been stalled since late 2008 when the North walked out of the talks in protest against the United Nations' condemnation of its satellite activities.

The six-party talks could resume at any time if the countries are sure that progress will be made in disarmament efforts, but without that certainty, their resumption is not likely to take place, the official said.

South Korea will make efforts to study the detailed stance of the North over the six-party talks' resumption, he noted.

Referring to the South Korean nuclear envoy's meeting with the Russian counterpart in Moscow last week, the official said that Russia expressed its strong stance that it will never tolerate North Korea's possession of nuclear arms during the bilateral meeting.

North Korea's point man on nuclear issues, Kim Kye-gwan, visited Russia in early July and rallied Russia's support to resume the disarmament talks.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2013/08/20/37/0401000000AEN20130820004900315F.html>

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The Korea Herald – South Korea

Chinese Official Sees Chance to Reopen Nuclear Talks with N.K.

August 21, 2013

BEIJING (Yonhap News) -- A senior Chinese military official said he sees a chance to resume nuclear talks with North Korea, according to state media on Wednesday, citing recent signs of easing tensions on the Korean Peninsula.

Guan Youfei, the director of the external affairs office of China's defense ministry, made the remarks during a press conference in Washington, D.C. as he accompanied Chinese Defense Minister Chang Wanquan on a visit to the United States this week, Xinhua News Agency reported.

North Korea's nuclear standoff was one of the key topics during this week's talks between U.S. Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel and Chang, Guan said.

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"An opportunity or a window has emerged to open talks on the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue," the report said, with Guan citing "signs of eased tensions" on the Korean Peninsula and North Korea's "willingness to conduct multilateral talks."

After stoking tensions early this year by conducting its third nuclear test, North Korea has recently made overtures toward South Korea and the U.S.

In the latest sign of easing tensions, Seoul and Pyongyang agreed last week to reopen a jointly run industrial complex in the North's border city of Kaesong that was shuttered in April amid high tensions.

The six-party talks aimed at ending the North's nuclear program have been stalled since late 2008. The multilateral forum involves the two Koreas, the U.S., China, Russia and Japan.

South Korea and the U.S. have called on North Korea to demonstrate its seriousness about denuclearization through concrete actions before such talks can take place.

<http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20130821000945>

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The Korea Herald – South Korea

Japan Steps Up Armament Citing Threats from China, North Korea

Experts concerned about a possible arms race in region

By Song Sang-ho

August 22, 2013

Japan is stepping up its rearmament with plans to create a marine unit and acquire longer-range rockets and other offensive weapons systems on the pretext of fending off security threats from China and North Korea.

The moves have once again unnerved South Korea and China — the two major victims of Japan's past militarism — and escalated concerns that they could trigger an arms race in East Asia and further destabilize the regional security landscape.

Tokyo reportedly plans to launch a preparatory unit next year to establish a marine corps, and introduce a series of amphibious landing vehicles and advanced transport aircraft. It also has a schedule to launch the solid-fuel "Epsilon" rocket next Tuesday, which is capable of converting into an intercontinental ballistic missile.

These plans have rekindled a long-simmering debate over whether the archipelago state is reverting to its militaristic national strategy or just pursuing a "normal" state with a full-fledged military to shoulder a greater role for regional peace and stability.

Harboring deep-rooted resentment, Korea and China construe Japan's military buildup as a disturbing revival of its brutal militarism seen a hundred years ago.

They also argue Tokyo's pursuit of offensive military assets such as marines and stealth warplanes signal a shift from its long-held "exclusively defense-oriented" policy. They point to its efforts to institute the right to collective self-defense and alter the war-renouncing constitution in support of their claim.

But some analysts cautioned against an exaggeration of Japan's defense policy, while expressing concerns that Tokyo's military buildup is a destabilizing factor in the region facing power shifts with the rise of China.

"When Japan had its militaristic national strategy, it had warlike military leaders and its neighbors such as China and Korea were weak. But now there is no room for such militarism to come into with stronger neighbors and constraints under the U.S.-Japan alliance," said Park Young-june, Japan expert at Korea National Defense University.

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“What is worrisome, however, is that Japan’s rearmament would be met with China’s reaction, which could cause regional instability. On top of that, it also runs counter to Seoul’s policy to build a strategic partnership with Beijing.”

Whatever Japan’s intentions may be, the most serious problem with Japan is its lack of efforts to garner trust from neighboring states, observers noted.

Japanese politicians including Prime Minister Shinzo Abe have churned out remorseless remarks about its colonial past and refused to take measures to heal the scars of the victims of its war crimes including the sexual enslavement of Asian women.

From Washington’s perspective, Japan’s reemergence as a military power serves its interest to a certain degree as China is becoming increasingly assertive and posing challenges to the U.S.’ protection of so-called global commons such as freedom of navigation in the western Pacific.

Analysts said the U.S. has indeed encouraged Japan to rearm to keep China in check and to maintain the regional balance of power, which Washington thinks has been undermined due to China’s aggressive pursuit of maritime interests.

“In my view, the U.S. appears to think Japan is still far from rearmament and encourages it to contribute to regional peace and security — commensurate with its economic status,” said Lee Choon-kun, security expert at the Korea Economic Research Institute.

“It is part of the reason why Washington supports Japan’s economic revitalization.”

Buoyed by a victory in the upper-house elections, Shinzo Abe’s pursuit of a “strong” Japan has gained traction.

Abe’s conservative nationalist agenda has gained popularity as he has sought to shore up Japan’s national pride sapped by the rise of China, two decades of economic malaise and social anxiety stemming from natural, manmade disasters such as the Fukushima nuclear meltdown in 2011.

Under the so-called Yoshida doctrine, a postwar national strategy centering on economic rehabilitation based on security backing from the U.S., Japan had long refrained from military rearmament.

But as the international community has called for Japan’s greater security contributions since the 1990s, Tokyo has sought to explore a new national identity. With nationalist, unapologetic right-wingers reviving the memories of its past militarism, Tokyo’s moves toward rearmament have nonetheless been met with strong resistance from neighboring states.

By Song Sang-ho Japan is stepping up its rearmament with plans to create a marine unit and acquire longer-range rockets and other offensive weapons systems on the pretext of fending off security threats from China and North Korea.

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These plans have rekindled a long-simmering debate over whether the archipelago state is reverting to its militaristic national strategy or just pursuing a “normal” state with a full-fledged military to shoulder a greater role for regional peace and stability.

Harboring deep-rooted resentment, Korea and China construe Japan’s military buildup as a disturbing revival of its brutal militarism seen a hundred years ago.

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<http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20130822000783>

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

Russian Military Creating Cyber Warfare Branch

20 August 2013

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MOSCOW, August 20 (RIA Novosti) – A separate branch dedicated to cyber warfare is being created in the Russian Armed Forces as the Internet could become a new “theater of war” in the near future, a senior Russian military R&D official said.

“Cyber space is becoming our priority...the decision to create a cyber-security command and a new branch of the armed forces has already been made,” said Andrei Grigoryev, the head of the recently-created Foundation for Advanced Military Research.

“We are working on the overall concept of the program to be developed in this area,” Grigoryev said in an interview with Echo Moskv radio on Monday.

The Foundation for Advanced Military Research, similar in its purpose to America's Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), was set up in October last year to boost the development of advanced weaponry and help streamline the arms procurement process in Russia.

Grigoryev said his agency had singled out three main areas of military R&D – “futuristic weaponry,” “future soldier” gear and “cyber warfare.”

“We have reviewed 700 innovative projects so far,” he said, adding that the agency’s budget for 2013 is 2.3 billion rubles (\$70 million).

http://en.ria.ru/military_news/20130820/182856856/Russian-Military-Creating-Cyber-Warfare-Branch.html

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

US, Russian Officials Discuss Missile Defense

21 August 2013

MOSCOW, August 21 (RIA Novosti) – Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov and US Acting Undersecretary of State Rose Gottemoeller have discussed missile defense and disarmament issues in London, the Russian Foreign Ministry said Wednesday.

Missile defense issues “were considered thoroughly,” the ministry said in a statement. “Special attention was given to the outlook for the continuation of bilateral dialogue on a range of issues related to strategic stability.”

Other issues included US-Russian collaboration on arms control and nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the ministry said.

Ryabkov and Gottemoeller met Tuesday as co-chairs of a working group on arms control and international security at the US-Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission.

Last Wednesday, Russian Deputy Defense Minister Anatoly Antonov said that recent missile defense talks between Russian and NATO military officials had reached an impasse.

Russia and NATO had initially agreed at a Lisbon summit in November 2010 to cooperate over a US-proposed missile defense system in Eastern Europe. But subsequent talks between Russia and the alliance have floundered over NATO’s refusal to grant Russia legal guarantees that the system would not be deployed against Russia’s nuclear deterrent.

<http://en.rian.ru/russia/20130821/182893874/US-Russian-Officials-Discuss-Missile-Defense.html>

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Los Angeles Times

Upgrades Aim to Extend B-52 Bombers' already Long Lives

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Despite the plane's more than half-century of service, the Air Force thinks modifications and overhauls have made the B-52 ageless.

By W.J. Hennigan
August 19, 2013

For Air Force Capt. Daniel "Swoop" Welch, flying a B-52 bomber has become the family business.

His father, retired Lt. Col. Don Welch, was trained to drop nuclear bombs with the aircraft during the height of the Cold War. His grandfather, retired Col. Don Sprague, flew B-52 combat missions in Vietnam.

"It is definitely a testament to the robust design of the B-52," said Welch, 28. "Getting to fly the same aircraft as my father and grandfather has been pretty cool."

Despite the bomber's more than half-century of service, the Air Force believes that modifications and overhauls have made the B-52 ageless. Now engineers and technicians are working on a contract worth up to \$11.9 billion for an array of upgrades to bring the B-52 Stratofortress fleet into the 21st century.

The plane's computers are only as powerful as the original PCs in the early 1980s. Bombing mission information has to be uploaded before a flight. It can't be changed in the air — even if the target on the ground changes.

Now Boeing is expanding on the bombers' limited capabilities by providing an upgraded communications system so aircrews can send and receive information via satellite links. This enables the B-52's five-person crews to change mission plans, re-target weapons in flight and interact better with ground forces and other aircraft.

Nobody can say for sure how many of the government's 76 B-52s — down from 744 in the plane's heyday — will survive three more decades. The most recent variant of the plane, built between 1960 and 1962, has undergone more than 30 major modifications.

Although the revisions have maintained the plane's 185-foot wingspan and a length of nearly 160 feet, the guts of the B-52 have been continually revamped. For example, the World War II-era tail gunner position has been removed and new electronics have been installed, although some planes still have vacuum tubes.

Now the plane, which was designed on the back of a napkin over a weekend in 1948 by three Boeing employees, is getting modern digital display screens, computer network servers and real-time communication uplinks.

"It's like taking your grandmother's old rotary phone and giving her the latest greatest smartphone," said Col. John Johnson, chief of the Air Force Global Strike Command's bomber requirements division.

The B-52 was developed during the Korean War. It carpet-bombed during the Vietnam War. It ran crucial missions in Kosovo and the Middle East, and military strategists aim to keep it flying until at least 2040. It's still a large, lumbering aircraft, but over the years, the fleet has gotten new engines and technology. Built to carry nuclear weapons, it now drops GPS-guided smart bombs and bunker-busting munitions.

No other warplane in U.S. military history has been operational as long as the B-52. Other sophisticated military aircraft have come and gone, but the relatively low-tech B-52 has remained in the U.S. arsenal. It represents nearly half of all bombers in the fleet.

While the Pentagon struggles to rein in spending and battle cost overruns on programs such as the nearly \$400-billion F-35 Joint Strike Fighter now in development, it must rely on proven war horses like the B-52.

Several bombers were developed to replace the B-52 in the last six decades, but not one matched its affordability and versatility. Many of the programs were canceled or cut short because of political pressures and budget concerns.

The B-52 has remained. With its iconic shape and vast power, the bomber has also found its way into pop culture as the name for a Kahlua-infused cocktail, a beehive hairdo for women in the 1960s and a New Wave rock band in the 1970s.

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Although some military industry analysts say the B-52 fleet is so old that there are planes in danger of falling apart, the Air Force has poured billions of dollars into modernizing the fleet, and Boeing says the plane could fly well into its 100th year.

Military makeovers have become common. Boeing, like other military companies that were once focused on churning out new aircraft, has found that researching and developing new advanced parts for aging planes to be a lucrative business. Hundreds of engineers across Southern California are working at places such as Northrop Grumman Corp., Raytheon Co. and Lockheed Martin Corp. on upgrades to aging warplanes.

Michael A. Miller, an analyst with the Congressional Research Service, wrote this year that a potential problem with sustaining a fleet of aging bombers is a shrinking inventory of parts and supplies that are no longer made, difficult to find or costly to remake.

"Without sufficient sustainment and modernization funding, many analysts argue the U.S. bomber fleet will quickly become a decrepit force ill-suited to the potential challenges posed by 21st century adversaries," he said. "A question to be answered is whether the defense industrial base will even be capable of meeting the sustainment requirements of America's legacy bomber force out to 2040."

Because of the wear and tear on the aircraft from the demands of military flight, made worse by 11 years of continuous combat in the Middle East, the aging airframe structures need reinforcement, engines need to be replaced, and computer and electronic components need upgrading, Miller said.

But with all the upgrades, the Pentagon and Boeing insist that the B-52 bombers are more capable than ever. It is the only bomber in U.S. arsenal capable of dropping conventional and nuclear weapons as well as deploying long-range cruise missiles.

The Air Force has 63 B-1 Lancer bombers, which are capable of supersonic and low-level flight, and 20 B-2 Spirits, a stealthy bat-winged bomber that became fully operational in late 2003.

On the drawing board is the Air Force's new proposal for a new "Long-Range Strike Bomber." But even if that program does move forward, flight-testing would not start until the mid-2020s, with initial operational capability near 2030.

Capt. Brandon Fischer, a 30-year-old B-52 pilot stationed at Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana, said that although a new bomber might be coming, the B-52 will still be flying high.

"It's remarkable to think that you're sitting in the same aircraft that was likely carrying nuclear bombs at some point during the Cold War," he said. "With all the improvements that are coming, it'll fly for another 30 years."

<http://www.latimes.com/business/la-fi-ageless-b52-bomber-20130819,0,6642110.story>

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Air Force Times

Unit that Failed Nuclear Missile Inspection Raring for Second Chance

By Brian Everstine and Jeff Schogol, Staff writers

August 19, 2013

The commander of a nuclear missile wing that failed a surety inspection earlier this month likened the results to failing a complex physics problem by being off by a "fraction of a decimal point."

Col. Rob Stanley, commander of the 341st Missile Wing at Malmstrom Air Force Base, Mont., declined to say what part of the inspection the wing failed because doing so would give too much information to adversaries.

"In this case, the thing that we were rated unsatisfactory on, I have every confidence in the world if it were a real-world situation, it would have been flawless, but our standards are so geared toward perfection — as they should be — that in



this simulated environment that we have to put them through to test them, if they fall short even slightly, we have to rate the whole thing as unsatisfactory,” Stanley told Air Force Times.

Global Strike Command announced the failure Aug. 13, but said the failure does not put the nation’s arsenal at risk.

“These inspections are designed to be tough to pass,” said Lt. Gen. Jim Kowalski, Global Strike commander, in the release. “A failure doesn’t mean the wing isn’t able to accomplish its mission.”

The wing, which handles 150 Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missiles, failed because of tactical-level errors during one exercise during the inspection.

As a result, a “very small number of some very young folks” have been decertified and are going through retraining, Stanley said. The process is expected to take a few days. None is facing disciplinary action.

In 90 days, inspectors from the Defense Threat Reduction Agency and Global Strike Command will evaluate the areas that were ruled to be “unsatisfactory.”

“I wish they could come today, as a matter of fact,” Stanley said. “We’re ready for them, and our folks that came up short are ready to get up and fight and prove that they are much better than is being portrayed in the media right now.”

Both the American public and America’s adversaries should be completely confident that the wing could carry out its mission if called upon to employ nuclear weapons, Stanley said.

Still, the inspection failure and other incidents have created an image problem for the Air Force, said Hans Kristensen of the Federation of American Scientists.

“How can you build public trust with an inspection system where nuclear units continue to fail?” Kristensen said in an email. “The leadership should not connote a mindset that failing an inspection is a good thing because it reveals things that should be fixed. Units with responsibility for nuclear weapons should not fail inspections. Period. Flaws should be detected and corrected during training, not during inspections.”

The failed inspection comes about three months after the Air Force sidelined 19 missile officers from the 91st Missile Wing at Minot Air Force Base, N.D., after the wing was rated “marginal” on one aspect of the inspection. The wing passed the overall inspection. That inspection was a consolidated unit inspection, which includes previously independent evaluations, such as operational readiness inspections. The Malmstrom failure was a nuclear surety inspection handled by the Global Strike Command inspector general to evaluate the nuclear mission.

This is the third time in five years the 341st has failed an inspection. Problems with the wing’s maintenance group and its personnel reliability program caused the wing to fail its nuclear surety inspection in 2008. At the time, the missile force operated under Air Forces Space Command, headed by Gen. Robert Kehler, who now leads U.S. Strategic Command. Kehler said then that he believed the right leadership was in place at the 341st. The commander at the time, then-Col. Michael Fortney, was promoted to brigadier general in 2011 and is now director of operations at Global Strike Command.

The 341st Missile Wing, still under Fortney’s command, also failed an inspection in February 2010.

The Air Force stood up Global Strike Command in August 2009 after a string of embarrassments — most notably the revelation that nuclear warhead fuses were mistakenly sent to Taiwan.

The Air Force Inspector General’s office reworked regulations to make it mandatory that all commands inspect their units without any notice. Previously, under Air Force Space Command, units would be notified six months before an inspection, giving nuclear wings ample time to prepare and commanders the ability to cherry-pick their best airmen to work during the inspection, according to officials at the time.

<http://www.airforcetimes.com/article/20130819/NEWS/308190013/Unit-failed-nuclear-missile-inspection-raring-second-chance>



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Billings Gazette – Billings, MT

Air Force Bomber Crashes Near Broadus During Training; Crew Ejects

By Zach Benoit, Ed Kemmick

August 19, 2013

A U.S. Air Force B-1B bomber out of South Dakota crashed Monday morning in southeast Montana.

Rancher Steve Stoddard was on horseback riding with his cattle about 7:30 a.m. when he saw the plane coming from the northwest, trailing fire behind it. Seconds after the bomber came into view, he said, there was a loud explosion and a big ball of fire.

Immediately after the explosion, the engine on the left side of the plane, along with all or a portion of the left wing, sheared off.

“It was coming apart in the air,” Stoddard said.

Stoddard said his ranch is about 35 miles east of Broadus, and the plane crashed about four miles north of his ranch house in Carter County.

A spokeswoman from Ellsworth Air Force Base in Rapid City, S.D., said the crash happened during a routine training mission.

The two pilots and two weapons system officers on board survived the crash after they safely ejected from the plane before it hit the ground, although some of the crew suffered injuries, according to Ellsworth’s public affairs office.

After the explosion, Stoddard said, the main body of the plane went into an arc and plummeted to the ground. Stoddard said he didn’t see the plane hit the ground and he didn’t see the crew members when they ejected from the plane.

The names, ages and conditions of the crew members weren’t immediately available.

Stoddard said he called the Carter County sheriff to report the crash and then rode past the bomber. He said fire and debris were scattered in a line about three miles long. His main concern was fire, he said, but the grass in the area was green enough that the spot fires didn’t spread much.

He then went in search of crewmen, at the request of the sheriff’s office, and came upon them about three miles from where the plane crashed.

One or two other people, also local ranchers, were already on the scene. Stoddard said two crew members were up and walking around, though they had some cuts and were “pretty banged up.”

Of the other two, one appeared to have a broken leg and a concussion and the other had neck injuries. He said he and some others sat with the crewman with an injured neck and shaded him from the hot sun.

“They were pretty rattled boys,” Stoddard said. “It was quite an ordeal.”

By the time two ambulances arrived, one each from Carter and Powder River counties, other ranchers were on hand, as were sheriff’s department representatives from both counties and local game warden Troy Hink.

Stoddard said he was impressed with the crewmen.

“Them fellas were about as polite young guys as you could imagine,” he said. “I’m just damned thankful they all lived.”

Information on the cause of the crash wasn’t available and the Air Force will conduct an investigation into the cause.



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"We are actively working to ensure the safety of the crew members and have sent first responders to secure the scene and work closely with local authorities at the crash site," said Col. Kevin Kennedy, 28th Bomb Wing commander in a news release Monday morning. "Right now all of our thoughts and prayers are with the crews and their families."

Carter County Sheriff Neil Kittelman was at the crash site, along with emergency responders from the area, and was not available for comment.

A Federal Aviation Administration map of temporary flight restrictions (TFR) initially showed a very large restricted area encompassing corners of Montana, Wyoming and North and South Dakota. The closed airspace, which was at first 240 miles in diameter, has been reduced to a small area in southeastern Montana and extends to an altitude of 23,000 feet. The site says the TFR is in effect until further notice.

The B-1 entered service in 1986 as a successor to the B-52 bomber and is designed to fly at high speeds and low levels in order to avoid radar detection. It is a variable-sweep wing strategic bomber. Only 100 were produced, with 67 still in service.

The bomber is 146 feet long and has a wingspan of 137 feet with the wings extended or 79 feet swept back.

Ellsworth's 28th Bomb Wing includes 28 of the B1-B Lancers.

In 1997, all four crew members on a B-1B bomber out of Ellsworth died when it slammed into the ground near Alzada in Carter County.

The Rapid City Journal also contributed to this report.

http://billingsgazette.com/news/state-and-regional/montana/air-force-bomber-crashes-near-broadus-during-training-crew-ejects/article_ae05c864-4364-5b36-adb4-5dce07ffdd23.html

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Nextgov.com

Pentagon Weighs Enlarging Nuclear Surveillance Program

By Aliya Sternstein

August 20, 2013

The Defense Department is mulling an expansion of a system that essentially eavesdrops on the environment for indications of foreign nuclear tests.

The Air Force Technical Applications Center's atomic monitoring system digests seismic, infrasonic, and hydroacoustic data to help verify blasts. A potential new contract would "provide the platform for future system growth and enhancements," according to an industry solicitation issued on Wednesday.

The system, housed at Patrick Air Force Base in Florida, was launched in 1999 to check international compliance with nuclear test ban treaties.

The impetus for the proposed enlargement of the program could be nuclear threats from "Iran and North Korea, technological opportunity, an agency wanting to improve its capabilities, or all three," speculated Jeffrey Richelson, senior fellow with George Washington University's National Security Archive.

The goals outlined in last week's proposal suggest a desire for big data analysis features that can identify more subtle signs of nuclear activity.

The focus of the effort is "to fine-tune the current system by optimization of software algorithms through scientific and engineering studies," the solicitation states. The upgrades are aimed at improving "data acquisition, detection, association, location, magnitude/yield estimation, event identification, event reporting, data distribution, and data archiving capabilities to meet current and future treaty monitoring needs."

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Past nuclear surveillance reports generated by the Florida Air Force center have triggered both false alarms and valid alerts.

In 1997, the Clinton administration drew criticism for leaking to the press what turned out to be erroneous assessments indicating a Russian nuclear test. Shortly after the gaffe, Columbia University seismologist Lynn R. Sykes, who served on the Air Force center's advisory panel in the 1970s, urged more careful scrutiny before accusations are prematurely shared with the media. "A few key people within the government were responsible for leaking misleading and outdated information to the press about the event," Sykes wrote in a review of the episode. Further analysis determined that the Aug. 16, 1997, event was an earthquake and not a clandestine nuclear explosion.

In October 2006, the center detected an event thought to be associated with a purported North Korean nuclear test, and later confirmed that the incident, in fact, was nuclear in nature, **according to** Air Force officials. The current system is designed to speed Top Secret assessments to the relevant national security agencies once a foreign nuclear test is pinpointed.

<http://www.nextgov.com/defense/2013/08/pentagon-weighs-enlarging-nuclear-surveillance-program/68963/>

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BusinessDay – Lagos, Nigeria

U.S. Arrests Man from Sierra Leone in Iran Uranium Sting

August 23, 2013

U.S. prosecutors charged a man from Sierra Leone with trying to sell undercover agents 1,000 tons of yellowcake uranium he thought would be shipped to Iran, after he was arrested in New York with a sample of the toxic material hidden in his luggage.

Patrick Campbell, 33, of Freetown, was arrested at John F. Kennedy International Airport on Wednesday after he arrived from Sierra Leone with the sample of uranium concealed in the soles of shoes in his luggage, according to a criminal complaint filed in a Florida federal court on Thursday.

He allegedly responded to an ad in May 2012 on the website Alibaba.com seeking to purchase uranium that was placed by an undercover U.S. agent posing as an American broker representing persons in Iran, according to an affidavit by Homeland Security Investigations agent Louise Miller.

Campbell agreed to travel to Miami to meet the supposed buyer, who could then analyse the purity of the uranium, Reuters reports.

Campbell made an initial court appearance in New York on Thursday. He faces up to 20 years in prison and a \$1 million fine if he is found guilty of violating U.S. sanctions against Iran as well as the International Emergency Economic Powers Act.

The United States and its Western allies are pressing Iran to curb its uranium enrichment programme, which they say is aimed at developing a nuclear weapons capability. Iran says its nuclear activity is for purely peaceful purposes.

Campbell said he was affiliated with a company engaged in mining and selling of uranium, gold, and diamonds for export and communicated via telephone, Skype and email that he was seeking to buy processed uranium 308, also known as yellowcake, to be delivered to Iran, Miller stated.

Yellowcake uranium, when enriched, can be used in the manufacture of nuclear fuel and weapons.

The uranium was to be disguised in a mix with other types of ore. The shipment for delivery to the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas was to yield 1,000 tons of yellowcake, according to the criminal complaint.

After his arrest, Campbell admitted to agents that he had engaged in talks for "a contract for the sale of uranium to be delivered to Iran," the complaint said.



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When confronted, he also admitted that he had brought a sample of the raw uranium ore with him concealed in his luggage.

“Campbell assisted the agents in removing the Uranium from beneath the inside soles of his shoes and plastic bags containing Uranium were recovered from two of Campbell’s shoes,” according to the complaint.

A contract for the sale and delivery of the uranium was also found on a portable thumb drive in Campbell’s possession.

<http://businessdayonline.com/2013/08/u-s-arrests-man-from-sierra-leone-in-iran-uranium-sting/>

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Houston Chronicle – Houston, TX

Departing FBI Chief Worries about Airborne Terror

By PETE YOST, Associated Press (AP)

August 23, 2013

WASHINGTON (AP) — The nature of terrorism has changed in Robert Mueller’s dozen years as FBI director, but his concerns for the future are much the same as when terrorists struck on Sept. 11, 2001, merely a week after he’d taken over the bureau. As he wraps up his FBI tenure, Mueller worries that terrorists will once again target planes or finally pull off an attack using a weapon of mass destruction.

Mueller sees terrorism as a shifting landscape, evolving from Osama bin Laden’s global brand in the aftermath of the Sept. 11 attacks to the splintering threats arising in the fallout from the Arab Spring across the Middle East.

“Every one of these countries now has cadres of individuals who you would put in the category of extremists, violent extremists, and that will present threats down the road,” Mueller said.

Mueller, the architect of the bureau’s transformation into a terrorism-fighting agency, spoke to reporters at FBI headquarters this week.

The director’s last day on the job is Sept. 4. His successor, former Justice Department official James Comey, will be on hand next week for the transition.

During Mueller’s tenure, terrorists were thwarted in their efforts to bring down a trans-Atlantic flight in 2001, a Detroit-bound jetliner on Christmas in 2009 and U.S.-bound cargo planes carrying printer cartridge bombs. But the Boston Marathon bombings that killed three people and injured hundreds in April and the 2009 shooting that killed 13 and injured more than 30 at Fort Hood, Texas, are powerful reminders that the protective net against terrorism is not infallible.

“I always say my biggest worry is ... an attack on a plane,” Mueller said. “And secondly, it’s a weapon of mass destruction in the hands of a terrorist and that includes a cyber-capability that trumps the defenses that we have.”

He also sees the risk of a cyberattack on a financial institution or on a sector such as energy “where we do not have sufficient barricades or preventive capabilities.”

Mueller’s initial foray into the world of counter-terrorism came more than two decades ago with the attack on Pan Am Flight 103, which was blown up over Scotland in 1988.

“I spent lot of time on that investigation over at the Department of Justice” and “still spend time with the survivors of that horrible, horrible disaster,” said the director.

As he has in recent congressional testimony, Mueller defended the National Security Agency’s classified surveillance programs.

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"I am fairly comfortable and confident that we are doing things the way the American public would expect us to," said Mueller. He said the NSA programs are "tremendously important to the protection, not only from terrorist attacks, but from other threats to the United States."

Regarding the disclosures of classified information by former NSA systems analyst Edward Snowden, Mueller said "they have impacted" criminal investigations and are "in the process of impacting capabilities around the world." He declined to give any details.

Mueller made the comments the same day that a new round of revelations about the surveillance showed that the NSA scooped up as many as 56,000 emails and other communications annually over three years by Americans not connected to terrorism. He spoke to reporters before those details were made public.

In the interview, he declined to comment on prospects that Congress might restrict the surveillance programs or require greater disclosure about the details of the programs.

Looking back, Mueller says he didn't expect to be focused on terrorism when he took the job that has consumed the past 12 years of his life in law enforcement.

Mueller says he thought he would be overseeing the kinds of cases he had worked on as a federal prosecutor — organized crime, narcotics, public corruption and white-collar crime.

"I had in my own mind some ideas about where the bureau needed to go and then a week later we had Sept. 11," Mueller said. "I did not expect I would be spending my time preventing terrorist attacks." For the FBI, "it's not what we want to do, or like doing, it's what the American public expects us to do."

The FBI often succeeded in that goal but not always.

"I would say you feel the most pain from what happened at some place like Fort Hood or what happened up in Boston," Mueller said. "That's not to say that you could have prevented it, that's speculation. But the fact of the matter is, you sit down with victims' families, you see the pain they go through and you always wonder whether there isn't something more" that could have been done.

<http://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/politics/article/Departing-FBI-chief-worries-about-airborne-terror-4754936.php>

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The Frederick News-Post – Frederick, MD

USAMRIID Scientists Closer to Cure for Ebola Virus, New Study Says

By Courtney Mabeus, News-Post Staff

Thursday, August 22, 2013

A treatment grown in tobacco plants in Kentucky cured three out of seven monkeys infected in an Army lab with Ebola virus within five days, according to a new study published Wednesday.

In a study led by the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute for Infectious Diseases and published in *Science Translational Medicine*, 43 percent, or three out of seven infected monkeys, recovered in 104 to 120 hours after intravenous treatment. The study also included the use of a USAMRIID-developed method used to diagnose Ebola infection. A diagnostic tool is typically required by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration as part of its approval process for therapeutics, said Dr. Gene Olinger, a USAMRIID virologist who helped lead the study.

The study follows a one completed last year that showed the treatment — called MB-003 — protected 100 percent of the animals when given one hour after exposure. Two-thirds of the animals survived when treated 48 hours after exposure.

In the more recent study, scientists said they wanted to wait until the infected animal showed disease symptoms.

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"In a real outbreak, folks don't know if they're infected and we would have to wait for them to show up in a clinic to see if they were infected," Olinger said.

Scientists say the work shows promise for future development of treatments for the virus. Ebola causes hemorrhagic fever and is up to 90 percent fatal in humans.

"It is a big step," Olinger said.

No vaccines or treatments are approved for Ebola virus in humans. It remains an increasing global health concern and is considered a biological threat. Recent outbreaks in Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, beginning in summer 2012, have led to 34 documented cases and 22 deaths, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The virus has a short incubation period and is highly contagious.

Development of MB-003 has taken about a decade and included collaboration with private industry. Government agencies, including the Department of Defense and the National Institutes of Health, helped fund the study.

MB-003 is made through an effort with San Diego-based Mapp Biopharmaceutical and manufactured using tobacco plants grown under artificial light in Kentucky. The tobacco plants are dipped into a bacteria that allows for the introduction of Ebola antibodies into its biology for growth. The leaves are ground and synthesized about a week later.

The idea is that a quick, easy-to-grow plant can lead to a faster, more cost-effective treatment.

USAMRIID continues to work with Mapp Biopharmaceutical and will also collaborate with Health Canada to further develop the product.

Olinger said MB-003 could receive approval for limited use in laboratory settings, including for use following a potential exposure, within six months to a year. But full FDA approval for use as a widespread treatment in humans is still five to 10 years off, he said.

MB-003 is part of a "portfolio of products, diagnostics, vaccines, therapies and post-exposure treatments," Olinger said.

http://www.fredericknews.com/news/health/diseases/article_9f7a0fd2-560e-574b-8e20-9fec879f3b2c.html

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Forbes

OPINION/Commentary

Anyone Can Write a Story about Nuclear Terrorism

By James Conca, Contributor

August 17, 2013

Anti-nukes were downright gleeful this week after a graduate student in Public Affairs at the University of Texas, claimed in a report that nuclear plants are vulnerable to terrorist attacks and the plants must be able to defend against them independently, by themselves.

Take that, you pesky scientists! I can yell 'terrorist' in a crowded theater if I want to.

Those of us who have actually worked within the nuclear complex can tell you this study is grossly flawed. You need only read the limited source materials the author used in making her case and the absence of any references that contradict her thesis. And the lack of any expert review.

But if you read the press on this report, it sounds like it was actually commissioned by the "Office of the Secretary of Defense, which provided financial support for the research". Inquiries to DoD say the report was not requested by the department. DoD just funds the program as a whole at the University and has no knowledge what's coming out, until it's out. We all know how this works.

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There was no expert peer review, and the report only represents speculations of the student and her advisor. Even the cartoon on the front page is childish. The authors confuse nuclear weapons with nuclear energy, and have no first-hand knowledge of the security aspects of these facilities, since they have no access to such highly classified information.

But hey, just wing it! What could go wrong?

What's stranger yet is that UT has an amazing number of nuclear experts, any one of whom could have reviewed this report, if asked. UT even has Dale Klein, former NRC chairman and nuclear security expert at the Pentagon (March 5, 2010 Speech). Why was he purposefully ignored?

The fact is, nuclear plants are the best-defended places in the country outside of a military base. They use physical security, access deterrents and cyber defenses to make them the most secure of all industrial facilities. Just ask the FBI and DHS (U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation; U.S. Department of Homeland Security; background information).

In a recent NRC report to Congress and the entire intelligence community, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission laid this issue to rest. We've all been thinking about this a lot since 9/11, and even the terrorists know nuclear plants are lousy targets. They're about as military-hardened as you can get. A 747 crashing into one would do little, except to the passengers. It would take a bunker buster to breach it, and even then, it wouldn't go critical.

And why does anyone think you can steal spent fuel? Or that if you did, you could use it to make a weapon? Don't they know the first thing about nuclear energy? Or nuclear weapons? Or science? Even a School of Public Affairs knows when to ask experts in a field outside their own expertise.

This was a good old-fashioned ideological hit job on nuclear. If I didn't know better, I'd say they were trying to hype a book or something...

The report also implied that nuclear power plants should be able to repel invading armies. Isn't that the job of the military? I guess over 9,000 extremely well-armed and highly trained security officers, mostly ex-military and law enforcement, at 62 reactor sites aren't enough. Only Iron Man will do.

Why does the word *nuclear* seem to make otherwise rational people go bonkers? That's a more interesting and complex discussion than this silly report, and is rooted in old mythology, the beginnings of the industrial revolution, and World War One (Why Are We So Afraid of Nuclear?).

I expect better from the University of Texas.

James Conca has been a scientist in the field of the earth and environmental sciences for 31 years, specializing in geologic disposal of nuclear waste, energy-related research, subsurface transport and environmental clean-up of heavy metals.

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/jamesconca/2013/08/17/anyone-can-write-a-story-about-nuclear-terrorism/>

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The Japan Times – Japan
OPINION/Commentary

Global Threat of Nuclear Deterrence

By Ramesh Thakur

August 18, 2013

BEIJING – Nuclear weapons are uniquely destructive and hence uniquely threatening to all our security. There is a compelling need to challenge and overcome the reigning complacency on the nuclear risks and dangers, and to sensitize policy communities to the urgency and gravity of the nuclear threats and the availability of nonnuclear alternatives as anchors of national and international security orders.

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The transformation of anti-nuclear movements into coalitions of change requires a shift from street protest to engagement with politics and policy.

A nuclear catastrophe could destroy us anytime. Because we have learned to live with nuclear weapons for 68 years, we have become desensitized to the gravity and immediacy of the threat.

The tyranny of complacency could yet exact a fearful price if we sleepwalk our way into a nuclear Armageddon. It really is long past time to lift the shroud of the mushroom cloud from the international body politic.

Witnessing the first successful atomic test on July 16, 1945, Robert Oppenheimer, director of the Manhattan Project, which developed the A-bomb, recalled the sacred Hindu text the Bhagvad Gita: "If the radiance of a thousand suns were to burst at once into the sky, that would be like the splendor of the mighty one."

Birth and death are symbiotically linked in the Hindu cycle of life. So Oppenheimer recalled too the matching verse from the Gita: "Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds."

Let me put seven propositions regarding the role of nuclear weapons for defense and deterrence:

(1) The normative taboo against this most indiscriminately inhumane weapon ever invented is so comprehensive and robust that under no conceivable circumstances will its use against a nonnuclear state compensate for the political costs. We know this from the fact that nuclear powers have accepted defeat at the hands of nonnuclear states rather than escalate armed conflict to the nuclear level.

(2) Against nuclear-armed rivals, they cannot be used for defense. The mutual vulnerability of such rivals to second-strike retaliatory capability is so robust for the foreseeable future that any escalation through the nuclear threshold really would amount to mutual national suicide. Their only purpose and role is mutual deterrence.

(3) However, here too national security strategists face a fundamental and unresolvable paradox. In order to deter a conventional attack by a more powerful nuclear adversary, each nuclear-armed state must convince its stronger opponent of the ability and will to use nuclear weapons if attacked.

But if the attack does occur, escalating to nuclear weapons will worsen the scale of military devastation even for the side initiating nuclear strikes.

Because the stronger party believes this, the existence of nuclear weapons may add an extra element or two of caution, but does not guarantee complete and indefinite immunity for the weaker party.

If, for example, Mumbai or Delhi was hit by another major terrorist attack that the Indian government believed had Pakistan connections, the pressure for some form of retaliation across the border might well prove stronger than the caution about Pakistan having nuclear weapons.

(4) The role of nuclear weapons in having preserved the long peace among the major powers during the Cold War is debatable. How do we assess the relative weight and potency of nuclear weapons, West European integration and West European democratization as explanatory variables in that long peace?

Nor has there been any evidence produced to show that either side had the intention to attack the other at any time during the Cold War, but was deterred from doing so because of nuclear weapons held by the other side.

What is beyond dispute is that the Soviet Union's dramatic territorial expansion across Eastern and Central Europe behind Red Army lines took place in the years of U.S. atomic monopoly, 1945-49; and that the Soviet Union imploded after, but not because of, gaining strategic parity. Therefore, the putative security benefits of nuclear deterrence have to be assessed against the real risks, costs and constraints, including human and system error.

(5) To those who nonetheless profess faith in the essential logic of nuclear deterrence, let me pose a simple question: Would they prove their faith by supporting the acquisition of nuclear weapons by Iran in order to contribute to the peace and stability of the Middle East which at present has only one nuclear-armed state?



The late professor Kenneth Waltz was one of the very few who had the courage of his intellectual conviction to argue that because nuclear weapons contribute to the stability of deterrence, a world of more nuclear-weapon states would be a generally safer world.

(6) It is equally contestable that nuclear weapons buy immunity for small states against attack by the powerful.

It seems highly plausible to postulate that the biggest elements of caution in attacking North Korea — that is, if anyone has such intention in the first place — lies in uncertainty and anxiety about how China would respond, followed by worries about North Korea's conventional capability to hit Seoul and other parts of South Korea. Pyongyang's current arsenal of nuclear weapons and the capacity to deploy and use them credibly is a distant third factor in the deterrence calculus.

(7) Against the contestable claims of utility, there is considerable historical evidence that we averted a nuclear catastrophe during the Cold War as much owing to good luck as to wise management, with the 1962 Cuban missile crisis being the most starkly graphic example of all.

Moreover, compared to the sophistication and reliability of the command and control systems of the two Cold War rivals, those of some of the contemporary nuclear-armed states are dangerously frail and brittle.

Almost half a century after the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty was signed, the world is still perched precariously on the edge of the nuclear precipice.

As long as anyone has nuclear weapons, others will want them; as long as nuclear weapons exist, they will be used again some day by design, accident, miscalculation or rogue launch; any nuclear exchange anywhere would have catastrophic consequences for the whole world.

We need authoritative road maps to walk us back from the nuclear cliff to the relative safety of a less heavily nuclearized, and eventually a denuclearized, world.

Ramesh Thakur is director of the Center for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, Australian National University. This is based on a paper delivered at the "Arms Control and Strategic Stability" conference in Beijing.

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2013/08/18/commentary/global-threat-of-nuclear-deterrence/#.UhU6E4Ao5Dx>

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Pittsburgh Tribune-Review – Pittsburgh, PA
OPINION/Editorial

Missile Defense: Our Dangerous Lag

By Tribune-Review
Sunday, August 18, 2013

The Obama administration is getting a much-needed wake-up call about its budget cuts leaving missile defense lagging behind ever-rising missile threats.

U.S. Rep. Mike Rogers, R-Ala., chairman of the House Armed Services subcommittee on strategic forces, told the Space and Missile Defense Symposium in Huntsville, Ala., that the administration has continued cutting missile defense funding since its first budget, reducing previously planned spending by 16 percent over four fiscal years, The Washington Free Beacon reports.

Mr. Rogers blamed those cuts for a missile defense interceptor not being tested for five years, then failing in a July 5 test. He called for another test this year; more resources to resume development of space-based and airborne sensors, an airborne laser and next-generation Aegis missiles and interceptor "kill vehicles;" and construction of an East Coast ground-based missile-defense system like those in Alaska and California.



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He also warned that without more funding in the next two years, the administration's new European missile defense plan could become the third to be altered.

“(W)e have lost time” while adversaries' missile threats have grown, “and in missile defense, time is defense,” he said.

With missile development advancing in Iran and North Korea while China and Russia build up missile defense, the cost of robust U.S. missile defense is bargain-priced insurance against losses far greater than money can quantify.

<http://triblive.com/opinion/editorials/4531557-74/missile-defense-administration#axzz2cStmhYQC>

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Forbes

OPINION/Article

North Korean-Syrian Chemistry: The Weapons Connections

By Claudia Rosett, Contributor

August 19, 2013

Is North Korea complicit in the use of chemical weapons in Syria? For a host of reasons, this question ought to be high priority for the United Nations chemical weapons experts who finally arrived in Syria this past weekend to investigate allegations of chemical weapons use in the conflict raging there for more than two years now.

The reasons to factor North Korea into this inquiry range from recent press reports — unconfirmed, but plausible — of direct North Korean involvement in the alleged chemical attacks themselves; to seizures in years past of North Korean goods evidently destined for Syria's chemical weapons programs; to a fat record of North Korean-Syrian partnership in the internationally taboo proliferation of weapons of mass murder — not only chemical, but nuclear.

Unfortunately, the U.N. team, led by Swedish arms expert Ake Sellstrom, has arrived in Syria with a mandate so limited as to effectively invite them to ignore most of the juiciest leads.

That was not how U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon framed the task when he announced in March that the U.N. would conduct an investigation into reports of chemical weapons use in Syria. Ban stressed that “Anyone responsible must be held accountable.” But to get investigators into Syria, the U.N. had to first spend months haggling with the Syrian regime over the “modalities” of the mission. By the time the investigators finally arrived in Damascus, their official goals had been watered down to the point where it appears the U.N. has no interest in assigning responsibility. According to a U.N. spokesman, queried about the scope of the U.N. inquiry, “The mandate for this mission is simply to determine whether chemical weapons have been used. It is not going to determine who used those weapons.”

That's a huge omission, leaving U.N. investigators to address even fewer basic questions than those which U.S. authorities, by their own account, have already pretty much answered. As explained by Deputy National Security Adviser Ben Rhodes, in a June 13 White House press briefing, the U.S. intelligence community believes with “high confidence” that “the Assad regime has used chemical weapons, including the nerve agent sarin, on a small scale against the opposition multiple times in the last year.” By this account, at least “100 to 150 people have died from detected chemical weapons attacks in Syria,” and it is the Assad regime, not the opposition, which “maintains control of chemical weapons on Syria.”

Rhodes noted that while the actual loss of life due to chemical weapons was just a fraction of the more 90,000 deaths as of June, “the use of chemical weapons violates international norms and crosses red lines that have existed in the international community for decades. He also said that while U.S. authorities believe the U.N. investigation should go forward, “we are going to continue with our own investigation, along with friends and allies.” Rhodes made no mention, however, of North Korea.

If the U.N.'s Sellstrom cannot find a way to slip some focus on North Korea into his report, it would be more than timely for the U.S. to start filling in the blanks. If there are good reasons to rule out North Korean involvement, let's hear them.

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Otherwise, it's time for all these investigators to explain why North Korea keeps turning up in accounts of Syria's chemical weapons projects.

Recent months have brought a rash of press reports alleging that not only has North Korea played a vital part in providing Syria's Assad regime with chemical weapons, but also that North Korea has abetted their use. For instance, in June South Korea's *Chosun Ilbo* quoted an unnamed "diplomatic source" saying that not only had North Korea transferred to Syria the technology for producing chemical warheads, but that North Korea has been continuously providing Syrian chemical weapons facilities with "after-sales services." From Lebanon, *The Daily Star* recently reported that "After decades of covert military assistance, North Koreans are believed to be providing increased ground support to the Syrian regime." The *Star* said there were accounts of North Korean officers helping the Syrian army near Aleppo — one of the sites of the alleged chemical attacks — with "logistics and operational plans."

Such reports could perhaps be dismissed as rank speculation, with pivotal information attributed to unnamed sources. But then there are the reports submitted in 2010 and 2012 by the U.N.'s own Panel of Experts on North Korea sanctions. In their 2012 report, these U.N. sanctions experts included a fascinating section on the seizure by Greece, in November, 2009, of four shipping containers bound for Syria, originating in North Korea, and stuffed with such military gear as 13,000 protective coats, "reported to have military use for chemical protection," as well as 23,600 gas indicator ampoules "to detect specific chemical substances."

Those North Korean chemical protective coats, according to the U.N. panel, were "identical" to a previous batch, also shipped out by North Korea, also bound for Syria. That batch of coats was in the process of being transshipped from North Korea via China, and thence aboard a Panamanian-flagged ship via the South Korean port of Busan, when they were seized by South Korean authorities.

For both these confiscated chemical-weapons related shipments, the declared recipient was the Environmental Study Centre in the Syrian Arab Republic. If that sounds innocent, it is not. The U.N. experts, in their 2012 report, said that this Syrian environmental study center "appears to be linked with the Higher Institute of Applied Sciences and Technology, an educational institution which provides training to Scientific Studies and Research Centre Engineers." The report notes that both those outfits have been blacklisted by Japan "as entities of proliferation concern," and the SSRC has been designated by the U.S. for its suspected involvement in Syria's programs for weapons of mass destruction.

In view of that daisy chain of Syrian links between "environmental" studies and weapons of mass murder, it also bears noting that last November, in Pyongyang, North Korea and Syria signed a set of agreements. According to North Korea's state news organ, the Korean Central News Agency, these included a memorandum of understanding "in the field of the environment"; or, as Syria's state news service, the Syrian Arab News Agency, described it, "environmental protection."

Was this a deal for two rogue states, both notorious for beggaring and murdering their own people, to collaborate as ecologically sensitive stewards of the planet? Or was it some arrangement for continuing traffic in sustainable chemical weapons?

Neither of the two rogue states released any details of just how they propose to jointly protect the environment. But for a sample of how Syrian-North Korean scientific deals have worked in the past, there's the scientific cooperation agreement the two governments signed together in 2002. According to congressional testimony this past March by former State Department counter-terrorism official David Asher, that deal served as the "keystone" for proceeding with construction of a clandestine nuclear reactor in Syria, built with North Korean help as a copy of North Korea's Yongbyon reactor.

So helpful to Syria were the North Koreans that one of Pyongyang's former envoys to the U.N.'s International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna, Yun Ho-jin, used a company now under U.S. sanctions, Namchongang Trading, to help with international procurement of material for the illicit Syrian reactor. When Israel destroyed the nearly complete reactor with an air strike, in 2007, the North Koreans — despite having lost some of their own personnel when the reactor was hit — did not simply wash their hands of the project. According to an April, 2008 press briefing by a senior U.S.



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intelligence official of the Bush administration, North Korea “assisted Syria’s covert nuclear activities both before and after the reactor was destroyed” — sending in experts to help the Syrian government cover up the nature of the debris.

All that might go some distance to underscore the depth, and ruthlessness, of North Korea’s partnership in proliferation with Damascus. North Korea is widely believed to have its own chemical weapons program and stockpile. In 2009, the International Crisis Group reported that while unclassified estimates of North Korea’s chemical weapons arsenal were imprecise, “the consensus is that the Korean People’s army (KPA) possesses 2,500-5,000 tons, including mustard, phosgene blood agents, sarin, tabun and V-agents (persistent nerve agents).”

According to political scientist and former U.S. senior defense intelligence analyst Bruce Bechtol, “There has been a significant uptick in North Korea’s supply of important weapons to the Syrians in the past year.” Bechtol says that in years past, North Korea built at least two chemical weapons facilities in Syria for the Assad regime, and that there have been recent reports both from journalists and non-governmental organizations operating inside Syria of “North Koreans spotted close to the battlefield.” Bechtol speculates that in order to use chemical weapons, the Syrian regime would quite likely turn to the North Koreans, both for expertise, and re-supply.

Does all this add up to proof that North Korea is intimately involved in the use of chemical weapons in Syria? No. But it certainly does it suggest that all the various investigators, from the U.N., the U.S. and beyond, ought to be seriously looking into the possibility. To do otherwise would send North Korea the message that no one wants to inquire too deeply into its proliferation traffic with the hub of Middle East terror that is the Syrian-Iranian-Hezbollah axis. That would invite far worse trouble ahead, especially if, as seems likely, the allegations of North Korean complicity in Syria’s chemical weapons use happen to be correct.

Claudia Rosett is a journalist-in-residence with the Washington-based Foundation for Defense of Democracies, heading the FDD’s Investigative Reporting Project.

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/claudiarosett/2013/08/19/north-korean-syrian-chemistry-the-weapons-connections/>

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Foreign Policy
OPINION/Report

The Fog of Chemical War

After eight months of allegations, why do we know so little about Syria’s nerve gas attacks?

BY NOAH SHACHTMAN AND COLUM LYNCH

August 19, 2013

Since this story was published, there have been allegations of a major new chemical attack in East Ghouta, not far from Damascus. Hundreds of people are dead, according to the Syrian opposition. If the reports are even remotely accurate, this would be the biggest chemical weapons strike in decades. A preliminary examination of the footage by American intelligence officials and outside experts leads them to believe that chemical weapons were involved in the attack. But piecing together exactly what happened in Ghouta won’t be easy; the Assad regime has taken deliberate steps to hide its chemical tracks, as the story below shows.

All of the major players in Syria -- and all of their major backers -- now agree that chemical weapons have been used during the civil war there. But the mysteries surrounding a string of alleged nerve gas assaults over the spring have, in some ways, only grown thicker. The motivations and tactics behind the unconventional strikes continue to puzzle U.S. intelligence analysts. And the arrival in Damascus of United Nations weapons inspectors holds little promise of solving the riddles.

Independent tests of environmental samples by both Russian and American spy services indicate that the deadly nerve agent sarin was used during a March 19 battle in Khan al-Assal, for example. Beyond that basic fact, there’s little

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agreement. The Russians blame the Syrian rebels for launching that unconventional strike on the Aleppo suburb, while the Americans say it was a case of chemical friendly fire.

U.S. intelligence officials tell *Foreign Policy* that they're continuing to investigate claims of new chemical weapon attacks in Syria, including an alleged strike earlier this month in the town of Adra that left men foaming at the mouth and dogs twitching in the street. They're continuing to see supplies shuffled around some of Syria's biggest chemical weapons arsenals, such as the notorious Khan Abu Shamat depot.

But the number of reports of unconventional attacks has dropped sharply since early June, these same officials say. That's right around the time when forces loyal to dictator Bashar al-Assad took over the strategic town of Qusair and gained the upper hand in Syria's horrific civil war. The decline provides to American spy services another indication that it was Assad's forces who launched the chemical attacks; there's little need to gas people when you're winning.

There was a time when such determinations appeared to hold geopolitical significance. The Obama administration repeatedly called the use of chemical weapons a "red line." But that line has now been crossed repeatedly, with little consequence. And that's led U.S. intelligence officials to confront another question: How massive would the chemical strike have to be in order to prompt America and its allies to intervene in Syria in a major way?

"As long as they keep body count at a certain level, we won't do anything," an American intelligence official admits.

The U.N. inspection team arrived in Damascus on Sunday to test claims by Syria, Britain, France, and the United States that chemical weapons have been used in the country's two and a half year-long civil war. Ake Sellstrom, a Swedish scientist who is leading the U.N. mission, plans to spend at least 14 days in the country and to visit at least three sites where chemical agents have allegedly been used.

The team's arrival will mark the culmination of nearly five months of often-acrimonious negotiations over the U.N. team's terms of access. It comes just weeks after Sellstrom and the U.N.'s undersecretary general for disarmament, Angela Kane, struck an agreement with top officials in Damascus on the terms of the inspections.

In advance of the visit, the United Nations has sought to dampen expectations that the team will blame one side or the other for using chemical agents. The mission's mandate, U.N. officials have repeatedly insisted, is simply to determine whether chemical weapons have been used, not to establish who ordered the attacks.

Rumors of chemical weapons use have been making the rounds since late last December, when reports surfaced indicating that chemical agent may have been used in a government offensive in Homs. But the accusations began to grow more numerous and more believable in March. It was Syria that first asked the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to conduct an investigation into the alleged use of chemical weapons on March 19 in Khan al-Assal, near Aleppo.

Syria's U.N. ambassador, Bashar al-Jaafari, alleged that Syrian rebels had attacked Syrian authorities with chemical weapons. He said the government has compiled medical reports, blood samples, and victim testimony supporting its claim, and invited the U.N. to send a team to Syria to evaluate the evidence. British and French officials believe that Syrian authorities may have indeed been exposed to chemical agent, but that they were the victims of a "friendly fire" attack conducted by Syrian forces.

But Syria balked after Ban agreed to a request by Britain and France to expand the investigation to sites where Syrian rebels claimed the government had used chemical weapons. Today, the U.N. has received a total of 13 allegations of chemical weapons use, mostly claims by the rebels that the Syrian government used chemical weapons.

Back in April, Ban said that a credible investigation would require the inspection team be granted "unfettered" access to all sites where chemical weapons have allegedly been used. But Security Council diplomats say that the U.N. has since backed down. Sellstrom believes that most of the cases of alleged chemical weapons use are too thin, or the evidence too old, to merit full-fledged investigations. He has honed in on three cases where, he believes, the trail is fresher and the evidence stronger. The U.N. has acknowledged that it will investigate the March 19 incident near Aleppo, but it has not revealed the location of the two other sites.



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Syrian opposition leaders have expressed concern about the limited scope of the investigation. On Aug. 1, the Syrian National Coalition wrote Ban, saying the opposition "stand ready to cooperate fully with representatives of the mission and welcome UN investigators into all territories under its control." But the group remains concerned that the United Nations may be walking into a propaganda trap. "If the scope of the mission is restricted to only three sites, the coalition is worried that an important opportunity will be missed to establish authoritatively the extent to which chemical weapons have been used," said Najib Ghadbian, the coalition's U.N. representative. "There is an urgent need for the UN to conduct a comprehensive investigation into all credible allegations of chemical weapons uses."

Ghadbian urged the U.N. to visit all of the sites where such weapons may have been used, including during the latest incidents in Adra and Douma. That's not likely to happen. Not only are these highly contentious war zones. But the chemical claims are often questionable. Take the attack in Adra earlier this month. A YouTube video shows victims complaining of a sulfur smell; the Assad regime's chemical weapon of choice, sarin, is generally odorless. The clip also shows victims foaming at the mouth; sarin doesn't ordinarily produce such an effect.

U.S. analysts speculate that some of these atypical effects may be the result of Assad's military using an atypical mix of chemical arms, so-called "riot control agents," and conventional munitions on the battlefield. In December, one former chemist for the Syrian regime told Al Jazeera that this blending of weapons was done, in part, to create a confusing blend of symptoms -- and mask their source.

Traditionally, militaries launch chemical attacks separately from ordinary ones. Not so in Syria. In a single bombing run near Aleppo last May, for instance, U.S. intelligence believes that a single Syrian warplane dropped bombs loaded with tear gas, sarin, and conventional explosives.

"When we first started hearing about this, we didn't understand. Why one sarin bomb in the middle of a major bombardment?" asks one U.S. intelligence official. Perhaps it's a way to cover up the use of chemical weapons, as the chemist suggested. Perhaps it was to force potential enemies out into the open. Perhaps it's a way to further terrorize the targets of the bombing runs. "We think it's strange, but whatever the Syrians have been doing, it's been very effective," the official adds. After all, the government appears, for now, to be winning the war.

Contributing to confusion is the long-standing suspicion that Assad's forces are brewing up their unconventional weapons in unconventional ways. One of sarin's two main precursors is isopropanol -- rubbing alcohol, basically. But the material used for chemical attacks can't be purchased in any drug store. While the commercial stuff typically is 70 percent water, the weapons-grade isopropanol is highly concentrated, with less than 1 percent water. That makes it extremely hard to obtain. Some outside observers believe the Syrians are using less isopropanol than usual in their sarin in order to preserve their precious stockpile of the precursor. (It would also produce milder-than-normal effects in a victim.) If the dilution theory is true, it could be an indication that Assad intends to hold on to his chemical arsenal for a long, long time -- and unleash it only when his rule is once again under threat.

Noah Shachtman is the executive editor for news at Foreign Policy. Colum Lynch writes Foreign Policy's Turtle Bay blog.

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/08/19/syria_chemical_weapons_attacks_united_nations?page=full

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The Washington Times
OPINION/Commentary

RABIN AND WALLER: Nuclear Terrorism and Einstein's Arc of History

Science is soon to deploy measures to prevent a long-predicted catastrophe

By Stuart J. Rabin and David B. Waller

Tuesday, August 20, 2013

Albert Einstein's historic August 1939 letter to President Franklin D. Roosevelt warned that Nazi Germany was likely to exploit scientific discoveries that could initiate "a nuclear chain reaction in a large mass of uranium, by which vast

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amounts of power” would be generated. Einstein ominously warned of “extremely powerful bombs” that might be “carried by a boat and exploded in a port” and that could “destroy the whole port together with some of the surrounding territory.” His call for urgent action led, of course, to the Manhattan Project, the creation of the Los Alamos National Laboratory, and development of the atomic bomb.

Now, more than seven decades on — in this age of terrorism by rogue and non-state actors — we have no less cause for alarm.

Nuclear terrorism — by the detonation of a nuclear device smuggled into our country — is widely recognized to be not only plausible, but also probable. Security experts warn that there is more than sufficient unaccounted for fissile material to construct numerous devices. Presidents Obama and George W. Bush both have warned of the attempts by terrorist groups to acquire nuclear components.

The consequences of even a single act of radiological or nuclear terrorism in a major American city could be far worse than predicted in Einstein’s prescient letter. Consider the crushing impact had the Tsarnaev brothers utilized not a pressure cooker as an explosive device, but instead a radiation-dispersal device (“dirty bomb”). Moreover, last fall’s Superstorm Sandy so vividly reminded us of the massive destruction that can be dealt — even under circumstances where the threat is well-anticipated and tracked, and responsible citizenry, together with relevant federal, state and local authorities have taken extensive precautionary measures. A terrorist detonation of a nuclear weapon, in stark contrast, would likely come without warning and with no opportunity to prepare or evacuate. The loss of life, incalculable human suffering, sense of vulnerability, economic devastation and breakdown in social order would be nothing short of catastrophic. It could make the Boston Marathon bombing and even Sandy’s devastation look like child’s play.

Ironically, our greatest vulnerability to these threats remains through the same maritime shipping ports of which Einstein wrote — through which millions of cargo containers or other conveyances enter our nation each year. As three members of Congress wrote: “Cargo containers arriving on ships from foreign ports offer terrorists a Trojan horse for a devastating attack on the United States.” Quoting Harvard University national-security analyst Graham Allison, they noted that a nuclear attack “is far more likely to arrive in a cargo container than on the tip of a missile.” Underscoring this threat, Vice President Joe Biden warned this year’s graduates of the Coast Guard Academy — the newly minted protectors of our shores — that they enter a world filled with stateless actors harboring a desire “to smuggle weapons of terror into American ports in the belly of cargo containers to do our people great harm.”

Responding to the 9/11 Commission’s grave concerns regarding such threats, a federal law passed six years ago mandated that before being loaded onto ships, all cargo bound for the United States be scanned. Unfortunately, the 2012 deadline for enforcement of this directive was not met, and was deferred for two years by the Department of Homeland Security. The stated reason was the absence of technology that could — without slowing the flow of commerce or raising health concerns — accurately and economically detect heavily shielded, as well as unshielded, nuclear material.

But, in fact, a solution is now at hand. Seventy-four years after Einstein’s letter, transformational American technology is now capable of providing a much-needed safeguard against misuse of the forces our forebears unleashed. With striking historical symmetry, research initiated by modern-day physicists at the Los Alamos National Laboratory and further developed by private industry has resulted in a passive detection system that meets all the requirements of safety, reliability, speed and cost. Moreover, it has now been independently tested, operationally deployed, and successfully demonstrated at a major port. This revolutionary system, based on muon tomography — the tracking of naturally existing, harmless cosmic particles — can finally bring us closer to the end of the arc of history initiated by Einstein.

Our government’s most fundamental responsibility is, of course, to protect its citizens, our freedom and our way of life. Given the threat of the illicit use of radiological materials and nuclear weapons, our leaders must redouble efforts to aggressively embrace and facilitate the deployment of all available preventative measures — at maritime ports, border crossings and other critical infrastructure. We must take all reasonable steps to address the 9/11 Commission’s

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concerns, to meet the existing federal mandate, and thereby avoid what Mr. Allison has called the “ultimate preventable catastrophe.” Time is not on our side.

Stuart J. Rabin is chairman of Decision Sciences International Corp. David B. Waller was deputy director general and head of management of the International Atomic Energy Agency from 1993 through 2011.

<http://p.washingtontimes.com/news/2013/aug/20/rabin-and-waller-nuclear-terrorism-and-einsteins-a/>

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Eurasia Review – Spain

OPINION/Analysis

INS Arihant and Regional Stability – Analysis

By Mobeen Tariq

August 21, 2013

India has made another step in seemingly inexorable military rise on the technological crutches provided by the Russians in nuclear submarine technology. This deployment of the nuclear-powered submarines can have serious consequences for the strategic stability of the region.

As India is the world’s top importer of major conventional weapons and plans to spend over USD 100 billion in this sector in next 5-10 years. For year 2013-2014, there has been a 5.3% increase in the Indian defense budget. Previously, an increase of more than 17% in the defense budget (year 2012-2013) has been recorded with an allocation of USD 40.44 billion in this sector.

This prevalent economic equation obviously facilitates India to shift the balance of power in its favor thereby not only provoking Pakistan to respond in kind but would also start affecting the threat calculus of other nuclear powers.

With the induction of the nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine (SSBN) INS Arihant and future plans of adding three more indigenously-built SSBNs to India’s naval forces by 2025, New Delhi is posturing to instigate a strategic shift in the Indian Ocean and even beyond.

The induction of the Arihant would be destabilizing because it will increase its tendency to pre-empt a nuclear attack. Though India has a so-called nuclear first use pledge, it does not take similar Chinese policy as credible.

Likewise, its strategy of fighting a conventional war under nuclear overhang is tantamount to provoke Pakistan to nuclear response and negates the essence of NFU policy that New Delhi tries to sell. Its ballistic missile defense plan would also increase its proclivity to risk taking because India will have this false sense of security against ballistic missiles that it may feel ‘confident’ to destroy in their flight path.

Indian Navy’s long term acquisition plans include three SSBN and six SSN submarines will affect the strategic equilibrium between India and Pakistan. Indian Navy is on a massive surge plan to construct a blue water flotilla. Its massive development plans include the acquirement of both indigenous and leased nuclear powered submarines and various other platforms capable of launching nuclear weapons i.e. delivering nuclear weapons from the air, surface and sub-surface thus confirming its second strike capability.

The Indian Navys other acquisitions include the aircraft carrier Admiral Gorshkov, renamed as INS Vikramaditya with 16 MiG-29K/KUBs and 6 to 8 Ka-31 AEW helicopters. India is also constructing 3 Indigenous Aircraft Carriers for the IN. It also plans to construct 3 destroyers of Kolkata class and Guided Missile Frigate’s, four ASW Corvettes, four Saryu class Operational Patrol Vessels, four Landing Platform Docks, and acquire two Osprey Class Mine Hunters and eight P8-I Long Range Maritime Patrol Aircraft from USA, besides developing additional strategic naval bases. These developments will further destabilize the strategic stability of the region.

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The Wall Street Journal
OPINION/Op-Ed
August 22, 2013

Why the U.S. Still Needs Nuclear Weapons Superiority

I saw firsthand what happened when the Allies thought the Soviets had the strategic advantage.

By WILLIAM LLOYD STEARMAN

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In a speech in June at Berlin's Brandenburg Gate, President Obama reiterated a vision he has championed since he was an undergraduate: a world without nuclear weapons. "We may no longer live in fear of global annihilation, but so long as nuclear weapons exist, we are not truly safe," the president said, outlining a proposal to reduce U.S. nuclear forces by up to one-third, to about 1,000 deployed strategic warheads. Ideally, the Russians would similarly reduce their stockpile. But Mr. Obama didn't rule out a unilateral U.S. reduction.

Could the U.S. afford to reduce its warheads to 1,000 without jeopardizing its security? U.S. Strategic Command Gen. Kevin Chilton doesn't think so. In congressional testimony on the 2010 New Start Treaty, he stated that 1,550 warheads—the number the U.S. and Russia mutually agreed upon—was the lowest the U.S. could go.

Others argue that the number of warheads the U.S. has is irrelevant, since it is unimaginable that any would be used. As a Foreign Service officer stationed in West Germany during the Cold War, I sometimes thought the same thing. Since a mutual nuclear exchange could have devastated both the Soviet Union and the U.S., a strike seemed unimaginable.

It wasn't until the Geneva Foreign Ministers Conference in 1959 that I discovered the real reason the U.S. must maintain superiority in its strategic nuclear weapons.

On Oct. 4, 1957, the Soviet Union launched its Sputnik satellite. This was a game-changer because it meant the Soviets had a rocket that could easily be converted to an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) that could reach the U.S. Overnight, Sputnik gave Americans a national inferiority complex. (It also resulted in a major campaign to promote science and math in our schools.)

Sputnik's success so emboldened Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev that he sent notes on Nov. 27, 1957, to the three Allies involved with Germany—the U.S., Great Britain and France—demanding dramatic changes in Berlin's status. Specifically, he demanded that the Allies end their occupation of Berlin and that they sever their ties with West Germany, leaving the whole city open to East German control.

Soviet moves against West Berlin long posed the greatest potential for turning the Cold War into a hot one. In response to Khrushchev's demands, the shaken Allies proposed to the Soviets that they meet in Geneva to address Berlin's status. The conference began on May 11, 1959.

During the negotiations, the Western side came up with a compromise version of the Soviets' proposal. Among other things, the compromise proposal posed a threat to access to Berlin; restricted Allied activities, such as radio broadcasts, in West Berlin; and generally undermined the Allies' position and legal basis in the city. Though it was set to expire after five years, it would have dangerously weakened the West.

I asked one of the most senior members of the U.S. delegation, of which I was a member, why we were prepared to make these dangerous concessions. He told me that we were negotiating from a position of weakness because of the "missile gap" created by Soviet possession of ICBMs, which we did not have. The reason for the five-year limit on our proposal, he said, was because the U.S. estimated that it would take us five years to close this gap.

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This was the moment when I first realized that strategic nuclear weapons are the "blue chips" in poker games of serious diplomacy.

Fortunately the Soviets didn't take up the Allies' weak offer. President Eisenhower had invited Khrushchev to the U.S., and the Soviet leader believed he could cut an even better deal with him. When the Soviet leader came to the U.S. in September 1959, he confirmed through Eisenhower's public statements that the president's position on Berlin was weak and could be exploited at a summit conference the following year, scheduled for May 14, 1960, in Paris.

But by mid-January 1960, the U.S. intelligence community—based mostly on U-2 flights over the U.S.S.R.—discovered that the Soviets were not producing the ICBMs they were capable of producing. There was not much of a missile gap, and no deterrent gap.

Once the U.S. realized this, its position on Berlin shifted dramatically. America strongly defended the status quo in public statements by top U.S. officials. This change confirmed what I had realized in Geneva. When this newly toughened position was also publicly confirmed by Eisenhower on Apr. 27, 1960, Khrushchev must have realized that he would come home from the Paris conference empty-handed.

Then, on May 1, 1960, an American U-2 plane was shot down over the Soviet Union. This gave Khrushchev a pretext for blowing up the conference once everyone had assembled in Paris. He had clearly decided to wait to see what he could get from the next U.S. president, who would be elected in November.

Khrushchev subsequently repeated his Berlin threat to President Kennedy in a disastrous summit meeting in Vienna on June 3-4, 1961. The president's response to this threat was no doubt regarded by Khrushchev as weak. Kennedy was visibly shaken by the experience.

Though times and players have changed significantly, I believe it is still imperative that the U.S. maintain any "blue chip" advantage it might have. We should continue, as we have so far, to heed the declaration President Kennedy made in Berlin 50 years ago: America should maintain a nuclear capability "second to none." Reducing our warheads to dangerously low levels—or unilaterally disarming—would be foolish.

Dr. Stearman, the author of "An American Adventure" (Naval Institute Press, 2012), served on the National Security Council staff from 1971-1976 and 1981-1993.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887323829104578624573904812736.html>

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