



USAF COUNTERPROLIFERATION CENTER
CPC OUTREACH JOURNAL
MAXWELL AFB, ALABAMA

Issue No. 1074, 03 September 2013

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Welcome to the CPC Outreach Journal. As part of USAF Counterproliferation Center's mission to counter weapons of mass destruction through education and research, we're providing our government and civilian community a source for timely counterproliferation information. This information includes articles, papers and other documents addressing issues pertinent to US military response options for dealing with chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) threats and countermeasures. It's our hope this information resource will help enhance your counterproliferation issue awareness.

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FARS News Agency – Iran

Source: Syria's Air Defense Can Intercept Incoming Enemy Missiles 10min before Strike

Sunday, September 01, 2013

TEHRAN (FNA) - Syria's missile defense capability is power enough to intercept any incoming enemy missiles 10 minutes before they reach and strike their targets on Syrian soil, military sources said.

"Syria's surface-to-sea missiles are capable of targeting any object at sea within a range of 600 to 700 kilometers off the Syrian coasts," a Syrian army source told FNA in Damascus on Sunday.

The source pointed to the US preparations for using its Cruise and Tomahawk missiles against Syria in coming days, and said, "The US missiles will be identified, traced and destroyed 10 minutes before they can strike any target (in Syria) which means they will be annihilated before reaching the Syrian soil."

He further reiterated that the Syrian army is fully ready to confront any military attack on Syria.

"The Scud missiles that have been remade and modernized by the Syrian military and missile experts now enjoy a very high precision capability and can target warships or aircraft carriers at sea with pinpoint precision capability..." the source added.

Another Syrian military source told FNA on Saturday that Syria's missile defense capability is powerful enough to respond to any possible US-led attack against the Muslim country.

"Syria's missile defense systems have been developed over the past 20 years and they are powerful and unique covering a specific area each..." the source said.

"The political circles and analysts reckon that the US will begin its military attack by firing (cruise) missiles from its warships (in the Mediterranean Sea) and then British fighter jets will target Syria's military bases," the sources added.

He underlined that the West's infantry forces are unlikely to invade the Syrian soil because in that case the US and the British troops should wait for their full-fledged massacre and heavy losses.

Also, a senior military analyst said earlier this week that Syria's supersonic and anti-ship missiles as well as the Lebanese Hezbollah movement will inflict astonishing damage on any invading force, specially the US Navy's giant warships, adding that the missile capability is working as a deterrent to a US naval attack on Syria.

"The supersonic and long-range anti-ship Yakhont missiles of the Syrian army and the Lebanese Hezbollah (resistance movement) are serious deterrents to a US naval attack by its warships in the Mediterranean Sea," Dr. Mostafa Zahra, a military analyst and strategic studies expert, told FNA on Monday.

He said that Syria's Iskandar high-precision ballistic missiles and its anti-ship Scud missiles will also target the US warships in case of a US naval invasion of Syria, reminding that the American military vessels are not equipped with any weapons system to intercept or divert the Syrian anti-ship missiles.

The P-800 Oniks, also known in export markets as Yakhont (in English means ruby or sapphire), is a Russian/Soviet supersonic anti-ship cruise missile developed by NPO Mashinostroyeniya as a ramjet version of P-80 Zubr. The missile has a range of 300 kilometers.

Development of Yakhont missiles officially started in 1983, and by 2001 allowed the launch of the missile from land, sea, air and submarines. The missile has the NATO reporting codename SS-N-26. It is reportedly a replacement for the P-270 Moskit, but possibly also for the P-700 Granit.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13920610000487>

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Press TV – Iran

New Round of Iran-IAEA Talks Set for Late September: Salehi

Sunday, September 1, 2013

Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Ali Akbar Salehi says a fresh round of talks between Iran and the UN nuclear agency will be held in the Austrian capital, Vienna, in late September.

Speaking to reporters on Sunday, Salehi added that talks between Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have been agreed upon.

He noted that the new round of negotiations will be held between Iran and the Agency in Vienna on September 27.

Salehi stated that the talks would focus on the issue of “alleged studies,” which refers to studies that Western countries claim Iran has conducted on the production of nuclear weapons.

Addressing a high-level international IAEA conference in St Petersburg, Russia, on June 27, director general of the UN nuclear agency, Yukiya Amano, said the body will continue dialog with Iran over the Islamic Republic’s nuclear energy program.

“We’ll continue the dialog with the country and it will be aimed at achieving concrete results,” the IAEA chief added.

The new round of Iran-IAEA talks will be the 11th round of discussions between the two sides since early last year. The two sides last met in Vienna on May 15.

Iran recently appointed Reza Najafi to replace Ali Asghar Soltanieh as its representative at the UN nuclear agency.

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 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/2013/09/01/321621/iraniaea-talks-set-for-late-september/>

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

UN to Speed Up Analysis of Syria Chemical Weapons Data

01 September 2013

MOSCOW, September 1 (RIA Novosti) - The United Nations is ready to do everything possible to speed up the process of analyzing data collected by its chemical weapons inspectors in Syria, the UN secretary-general’s spokesman, Martin Nesirky, said.

“The Secretary-General looks forward to receiving the mission’s findings as soon as possible so he can promptly present the results to Member States and to the Security Council,” Nesirky said Saturday after UN chief Ban Ki-moon’s talks with High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Angela Kane.

Western powers are considering armed intervention in the two-year civil war after hundreds of people were killed on August 21 in the Syrian capital Damascus in an apparent nerve gas attack that the Syrian opposition claimed was

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performed by government forces. The Syrian government quickly denied the allegations and said it had evidence of rebel groups using chemical weapons.

US President Barack Obama on Saturday said that while he is prepared to launch a military strike against the government of Syrian President Bashar Assad, he will first seek authorization to use military force from the US Congress, which is away on a summer break scheduled to last until Sept. 9.

"The Secretary-General has requested that the laboratory process be expedited as much as feasible," Nesirky said.

The United Nations Security Council has so far not authorized any military intervention in the Syrian crisis. Moscow, along with Beijing, has previously vetoed three UN Security Council resolutions condemning Assad's government. Russia has urged all parties to the conflict to use diplomatic means to resolve it.

Russia has been Syria's most important ally during the civil war. Moscow has sent to Damascus some weapons that it said were being supplied under previously agreed deals.

The unrest in Syria began in March 2011 and later escalated into a civil war. More than 100,000 people have been killed in the conflict so far, according to United Nations estimates.

Russian President Vladimir Putin slammed the United States Saturday saying that Washington's allegations about the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons against civilians were "unimaginable nonsense."

The White House released a report Friday blaming Assad's regime for the attack, which cited "human, signals and geospatial intelligence," as well as open source materials such as social media reports and videos of the alleged attack. The report explicitly stated that it omitted certain classified evidence, which was only made available to the US Congress.

Putin said Saturday that Russia denounced the use of chemical weapons and was ready for "consolidated participation in drafting measures to oppose such acts."

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20130901/183091033/UN-to-Speed-Up-Analysis-of-Syria-Chemical-Weapons-Data.html>

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San Francisco Chronicle

Institute: NKorea Expanding Rocket Launch Site

By MATTHEW PENNINGTON, Associated Press (AP)

Friday, August 30, 2013

WASHINGTON (AP) — New satellite imagery shows North Korea is conducting major new construction to expand facilities at a launch site where it fired a rocket into orbit last December, a U.S. research institute said Friday.

The work at the west coast site of Sohae, near the northern border with China, includes what could be a new launch pad for testing mobile ballistic missiles.

The U.S.-Korea Institute at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies stressed that's a preliminary analysis, based on scrutiny of commercial satellite imagery, the latest taken last Sunday. The analysis was provided to The Associated Press ahead of publication on Friday by the institute's website, 38 North.

The construction includes upgrading of roads and other facilities, among them a compound likely used by troops involved in the building work. An 11-car freight train is parked at a siding nearby.

The work began in midyear, and there are unlikely to be rocket launches at Sohae for the next six months while it is underway, the institute said. Its assessment includes analysis by Nick Hansen, a retired intelligence expert who closely monitors developments in the North's weapons programs.

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The construction at Sohae appears to have been continuing even as Pyongyang, with nudging from its ally China, has dialed down its threats against the U.S. and improved relations with South Korea.

Tensions escalated when North Korea in December managed for the first time to launch a satellite into orbit atop a long-range rocket, and then in February conducted an underground nuclear test explosion at a separate location.

Both actions defied U.N. Security Council resolutions and intensified concern that North Korea is moving toward its goal of building a bomb small enough to be fitted on an intercontinental missile.

South Korea's Defense Ministry declined to comment Friday on the reports of construction at Sohae. Wee Yong-sub, deputy spokesman at the Defense Ministry, said it closely monitors the area but cannot give details about intelligence matters.

The imagery shows six different construction activities, the institute says. The most notable feature measures about 65 yards by 40 yards and is located about 100 yards west of the existing launch pad. The institute says it's too early to identify the structure's exact purpose, but it could be a second, smaller launch pad intended for mobile missiles.

"Pyongyang clearly has plans to further develop its long-range rockets in the future," said Joel Wit, a former State Department official and editor of 38 North. "If it is indeed building a new flat launch pad, that would be a significant sign that the North is serious about testing and deploying new mobile missiles, possibly including an intercontinental ballistic missile spotted in recent military parades."

Associated Press writer Youkyung Lee in Seoul, South Korea, contributed to this report.

<http://www.sfgate.com/default/article/Institute-NKorea-expanding-rocket-launch-site-4775734.php>

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Global Post – Boston, MA

Wit: Denuclearization of N. Korea still Negotiable

By Lee Chi-dong and Roh Hyo-dong, Yonhap News Agency

September 1, 2013

WASHINGTON, Sept. 1 (Yonhap) -- For now, North Korea's Kim Jong-un regime is apparently placing more focus on economic growth than on the development of nuclear weapons, opening room for dialogue, an American expert said.

Joel Wit, who worked at the State Department specializing in North Korea, stressed that the Obama administration should never give up efforts for a nuclear-free Korea.

"I think it's a serious mistake to give up on that goal and indeed as I said, based on what North Korea has said recently, they are willing to have denuclearization as part of our negotiation, and we should seriously pursue that," he said in a recent interview with Yonhap News Agency.

He cited a June statement by the North's National Defense Commission offering high-level talks with the U.S. government.

Wit, currently a visiting scholar at the U.S.-Korea Institute at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies, is known for his insight on North Korea affairs that comes from his long-time experience with the reclusive communist nation and personal connections with some North Koreans.

In August, Wit reportedly had a Track II meeting with a ranking North Korean foreign ministry official in Geneva, Switzerland, which he did not want to talk about during this interview.

Wit refuted the view that denuclearization of North Korea has become a policy corpse for Washington.

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Since Pyongyang conducted its third nuclear test and long-range rocket test earlier this year, the international community has increasingly grown skeptical over the possibility of the communist North abandoning its weapons of mass destruction programs.

The Kim regime also stated its plan for the simultaneous development of nuclear weapons and its economy.

"I don't want to sound naive about this. There are different underlying currents in North Korea, as far as I can tell," he said. "(North Korea) is focused on their economic development. So, I think what I'm trying to say is that we are in another time when the window where it's quite possible there is some seriousness behind (what) they are doing and what they are saying. It's not just for show."

There are new currents that North Koreans feel the need to develop the economy and compromise on some security issues like building nuclear weapons, according to Wit. In fact, the North recently agreed with the South to restart the operation of a joint industrial park in Kaesong and allow the reunions of families separated by the 1950-53 Korean War.

Wit argued the format of dialogue with North Korea and whether involves two, three, four or six parties is not that important.

The six-party talks, which were born 10 years ago, have been stalled since December 2008. The participants are the two Koreas, the U.S., China, Japan and Russia.

Many observers doubt if the six-way talks will resume, despite the host China's efforts to keep the mechanism alive.

Regarding the Obama government's calls for "credible, authentic" negotiations with North Korea, Wit pointed out that it takes two to tango.

"I think there is a difference (between North Korea and the U.S.). It's not a difference that I think is unbridgeable. In order to bridge the gap, both sides have to be willing to do that, and I am not sure that's the case," he said.

The Obama administration does not appear to be interested in having negotiations with North Korea, he said, adding, "The gap can be bridged if there is political will."

<http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/yonhap-news-agency/130901/wit-dencuclearization-n-korea-still-negotiable>

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The Korea Herald – South Korea

September 2, 2013

N. Korea, China Discuss Resumption of Six-Party Talks

The chief nuclear envoys from China and North Korea discussed ways to resume the long-stalled six-party talks on the North's nuclear weapons programs, China's foreign ministry said Monday.

Amid indications Beijing is accelerating its efforts to revive the six-party talks, the Chinese nuclear envoy, Wu Dawei, made a five-day visit to North Korea last week and held talks with his North Korean counterpart, Kim Kye-gwan.

"The two sides exchanged views on the current situation on the Korean Peninsula as well as the six-party talks," China's foreign ministry spokesman Hong Lei told reporters in a press briefing.

"Let me be more specific, the two sides exchanged views on the resumption of the six-party talks," Hong said. The forum, which involves the two Koreas, China, the U.S., Japan and Russia, has been stalled since late 2008.

Hong, however, did not go into details of last week's talks between Kim and Wu.

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.



South Korea and the U.S. have called on North Korea to demonstrate its seriousness about denuclearization through concrete actions before any resumption of the six-party nuclear talks.

North Korea has expressed its willingness to rejoin the six-party talks but has shown no signs of accepting such conditions set by Seoul and Washington. Instead, North Korea has insisted on being recognized as a nuclear power. (Yonhap News)

<http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20130902001073>

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ITAR-TASS News Agency – Russia

2 September 2013

Moscow Rejects Pyongyang's Attempts to Declare Itself Military Nuclear Power

MOSCOW, September 2 (Itar-Tass) - Moscow rejects Pyongyang's attempts to declare itself a military nuclear power unilaterally, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said.

"We do not accept attempts of the North Korean leadership to unilaterally declare itself a military nuclear power de facto and de jure. Peaceful use of nuclear power is not in question. When we resolve the nuclear issue of the Korean Peninsula, North Korea and other countries in the region will enjoy all the benefits of peaceful uses of atomic energy," Lavrov said at a traditional meeting with students and faculty members of the MGIMO Moscow University of International Relations on Monday, September 2.

"We reject all steps that violate the nonproliferation regime, especially the ones that are accompanied by threats to use nuclear weapons," the minister said. "But we also urged other parties to the drama to exercise restraint because we thought that the response declared and taken by the United States, Japan and the Republic of Korea in the form of massive manoeuvres and broader plans to build a missile defence system in that region and redeploy additional troops and materiel there, we thought that this response was disproportionate to the real military risks that come from North Korea," Lavrov said, adding, "This is why China and we urged everyone to exercise restraint."

<http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c154/861558.html>

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The Japan Times – Japan

Japan Looks to Military Guidelines with U.S. to Define Strike Ability

Kyodo

September 3, 2013

Defense Minister Itsunori Onodera indicated Tuesday that revised bilateral security guidelines with the United States could define Japan's capacity to mount attacks on the military bases of hostile nations.

"Japan would like to jointly consider with the United States how (the two countries) can complement each other (regarding the issue of Japan maintaining a capacity to carry out such attacks) and how the issue can be defined in the guidelines," Onodera said in a speech.

Referring to North Korea's nuclear weapons and missile development, Onodera said Tokyo and Washington "need to thoroughly study a possible attack on (hostile bases) in the event of a missile launch clearly targeting Japan," Onodera said.

During a meeting last week in Brunei, Onodera and U.S. Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel agreed to consider the issue, and to start work on revising the Japan-U.S. defense cooperation guidelines.



The guidelines define the role of the Self-Defense Forces and the U.S. military, and the revision is aimed at enabling the two allies to better cope with the changing security environment in the Asia-Pacific region.

On Tuesday, Onodera also called for debate in Japan on whether to lift the self-imposed ban on exercising the right to collective self-defense, or helping to defend an ally that comes under armed attack.

Referring to China's growing maritime activity from the East China Sea to the Pacific, including repeated intrusions into Japanese waters around the Senkaku Islands, Onodera stressed the necessity of introducing unmanned reconnaissance aircraft to monitor Chinese naval movements.

The Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea are controlled by Japan but claimed by China.

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/09/03/national/japan-looks-to-military-guidelines-with-u-s-to-define-strike-ability/>

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Yonhap News Agency – South Korea
September 3, 2013

China Reaffirms 'Clear-Cut' Goal of Denuclearizing N. Korea

BEIJING, Sept. 3 (Yonhap) -- A senior Chinese military official renewed his country's "clear-cut" goal of ending North Korea's nuclear program through dialogue during a meeting with South Korean defense officials last week, China's defense ministry said Tuesday.

Sun Jianguo, the deputy chief of general staff of the Chinese People's Liberation Army, made the remark on Friday when he met a delegation of the Korea Institute for Defense Analyses, which is affiliated with South Korea's defense ministry, in Beijing.

"China's stand on the issue of peninsula security is consistent and clear-cut," Sun said, according to a statement posted on the ministry's website.

"China sticks to the goal of denuclearization of the peninsula, adheres to safeguarding peace and stability of the peninsula, and persists in tackling issues of the peninsula through dialogue, negotiations and consultations," the statement said.

Amid indications Beijing is accelerating its efforts to revive the six-party talks, the chief nuclear envoys from North Korea and China held talks in Pyongyang last week.

Confirming last week's talks in Pyongyang, China's foreign ministry spokesman Hong Lei said Monday that the two sides "exchanged views on the resumption of the six-party talks."

The six-party talks, which involve the two Koreas, China, the U.S., Japan and Russia, have been stalled since late 2008.

Despite signs of easing tensions, a U.S. research institute said late last week, citing recent satellite images, that North Korea has started a major construction project at the facility where it launched a long-range rocket last December.

During a regular press briefing on Tuesday, Hong sidestepped a question by a reporter about the reported works at the North's missile launch site.

Instead, Hong told reporters, "We hope that all relevant parties can take positive actions to ease the tensions and to promote dialogue, and to make positive contributions to peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula."

Meanwhile, the Chinese foreign ministry on Tuesday briefed senior diplomats of South Korea, the U.S., Japan and Russia about the outcome of Wu's visit to North Korea, a diplomatic source in Beijing said.



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At the closed-door briefing session, China delivered the North's latest stance on its nuclear programs to diplomats from the four nations and reasserted the need to resume the six-party talks, the source said on the condition of anonymity.

The source did not elaborate on whether North Korea may accept a set of pre-conditions set by Seoul, Washington and Tokyo to pave the way for the resumption of the talks. They include a moratorium of its nuclear and missile tests and a return of international nuclear inspectors to the country.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/search1/2603000000.html?cid=AEN20130903008300315>

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Xinhua News Agency – China

DPRK Capable of Weaponizing Nuclear Program: S. Korean Defense Ministry

September 3, 2013

SEOUL, Sept. 3 (Xinhua) -- South Korea's defense ministry said Tuesday that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) has made headway in its capability to weaponize nuclear program.

"(The DPRK's nuclear program) was at a developmental and experimental stage till 2010, but it has developed into a real threat in 2013 that can actually be weaponized and used at any time," the Defense Ministry said in a report to the parliamentary defense committee.

A week earlier, South Korean President Park Geun-hye urged the DPRK to give up its nuclear weapons program, denouncing that Pyongyang was still adhering to the nuclear weapons development despite oppositions from international communities in unison.

The DPRK said in March that it would restart operations at the Yongbyon nuclear complex by refurbishing and re-operating the five- megawatt graphite moderated reactor that had been mothballed and disabled since October 2007 under an agreement reached at the six- party talks.

The Washington-based Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS) said last month that the roof size of the building in Yongbyong, which houses centrifuges for uranium enrichment, has doubled since March, hinting at an expansion of Pyongyang's nuclear capability.

Pyongyang test-fired a long-range rocket last December and conducted its third nuclear test in February, escalating tensions on the Korean Peninsula. The actions caused additional sanctions by the U.N. Security Council against the DPRK.

As the DPRK has strengthened its nuclear and missile capacity, Pyongyang would more likely misjudge Seoul's defense capability if Seoul regains its wartime operational control from Washington in Dec. 2015 as planned, the defense ministry said.

South Korea and the U.S. have been reportedly discussing whether to reschedule the wartime operations control transition. Seoul handed over its operational control to the U.S.-led U.N. troops during the 1950-53 Korean War, but it regained its peacetime operational control in 1994.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2013-09/03/c_132688230.htm

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The Economic Times – India

Pakistan says it Has Robust Control System for Nuclear Arsenal

By Press Trust of India (PTI)

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3 September 2013

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan today reacted to a report on US concerns about its nuclear arsenal by saying it has extensive protection measures and a robust control system for its atomic weapons that are aimed at maintaining stability in South Asia.

The remarks by Pakistan's Foreign Office came in response to a report in The Washington Post that said the US spends billions monitoring adversaries like Al Qaeda and Iran but has an "equally intense focus" on its "purported ally" Pakistan and has ramped up surveillance of its nuclear arms.

"Pakistan is fully committed to the objectives of disarmament and non-proliferation. As a nuclear weapons state, Pakistan's policy is characterised by restraint and responsibility," Foreign Office spokesman Aizaz Chaudhry said.

He further said Pakistan's "nuclear deterrence capability is aimed at maintaining regional stability in South Asia".

Islamabad has established "extensive physical protection measures, robust command and control institutions under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister, comprehensive and effective export control regulatory regimes to ensure safety and security of nuclear installations and materials", he said.

"We follow best international practices and standards set by the International Atomic Energy Agency," Chaudhry said in a statement.

Pakistan is also fully engaged with the world community on nuclear safety and security issues. The efficacy of its strategic export controls have been acknowledged by experts from international export control regimes during interactions on various occasions, he said.

The country is a party to both the Chemical Weapons Convention and Biological Weapons Convention and is fully implementing the two regimes, Chaudhry said.

Citing a 178-page summary of the American intelligence community's "black budget", The Washington Post reported the US had ramped up its surveillance of Pakistan's nuclear arms and was concerned about its biological and chemical arms sites.

The daily said the classified document was provided to it by former National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden, who leaked some of America's most closely guarded secrets.

Pakistan is believed to have about 120 nuclear warheads.

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/pakistan-says-it-has-robust-control-system-for-nuclear-arsenal/articleshow/22257872.cms>

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The Hindu – India

Pakistan Showcases First Domestically Built Warship

Deutsche Presse-Agentur (DPA)

September 3, 2013

Islamabad -- Pakistan on Tuesday added its first domestically built warship to the naval fleet amid mounting border tensions with rival India, officials said.

The Aslat Frigate is capable of carrying both conventional and nuclear weapons, an official said.

"It can hit targets at the sea surface and in the air." The ship was built by Pakistani naval engineers with technical assistance from China.

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The official told *DPA* it was to counter Indian defence deals with the United States, France, Britain and other European countries.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif called the occasion “truly a historic day not only for the ship construction yards of the two countries but also for Pakistan and China.”

“The government is fully cognizant of the needs of Pakistan Navy and the maritime sector and I assure you that it will explore all avenues to enhance their capabilities,” Mr. Sharif said.

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/south-asia/pakistan-showcases-first-domestically-built-warship/article5089239.ece>

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

Putin: Allegations Against Assad ‘Provocation’

31 August 2013

MOSCOW, August 31 (RIA Novosti) – Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Saturday that allegations about the Syrian government using chemical weapons against civilians were a “provocation.”

“I am sure this was no more than a provocation by those looking to drag other countries [into the conflict] and obtain support of powerful international player, particularly the United States,” Putin said about the chemical attack that reportedly killed hundreds last week.

The United States said that the forces of Syrian President Bashar Assad were behind the attack, but these claims require solid proof, Putin said, marking the first time he weighed in on the topic.

“If they say that the [Syrian] governmental forces used weapons of mass destruction...and that they have proof of it, let them present it to the UN inspectors and the [UN] Security Council,” Putin said about the United States.

“Claims that the proof exists, but is classified and cannot be presented to anybody are below criticism. This is plain disrespect for their partners,” Putin said during a trip to the far eastern city of Vladivostok.

The White House released on Friday a report blaming Assad’s regime for the attack, which cited “human, signals and geospatial intelligence,” as well as open source materials such as social media reports and videos of the alleged attack. The report explicitly stated that it omitted certain classified evidence, which was only made available to the US Congress.

Putin said Saturday that Russia denounced the use of chemical weapons and was ready for “consolidated participation in drafting measures to oppose such acts.”

He also denied discussing possible US military strikes on Syrian targets with his US counterpart Barack Obama on the phone.

But Putin said he was hoping to take up the Syrian issue with Obama during the upcoming G20 summit in Russia’s St. Petersburg on September 5-6.

Obama has explicitly blamed Assad for the attack and threatened missile and bomb strikes against selected Syrian targets in retribution for using weapons of mass destructions. He denied plans for a ground invasion of Syria or Assad’s overthrow.

Official Damascus has called the attacks a provocation by rebels it is battling since 2011.

A UN investigative team was dispatched on the site of the attack and is expected to present its findings by mid-September, but its mandate is limited to establishing whether the attack took place, not naming the guilty parties.

Issue No. 1074, 03 September 2013

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The British parliament ruled Thursday against supporting a possible US military operation in Syria. Putin said Saturday he was "astonished" by the move, which, he added, was made by people "motivated by nation's interests and common sense."

More than 100,000 died in internal strife in Syria since the conflict's outbreak, according to UN figures.

<http://en.rian.ru/russia/20130831/183078780/Putin-Allegations-Against-Assad-Provocation.html>

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The Moscow Times – Russia

Lavrov Says U.S. Proof of Sarin Attack in Syria 'Unconvincing'

02 September 2013 | Issue 5204

By Natalya Krainova

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Monday joined the chorus of Russian officials challenging Washington's argument for military intervention in Syria, saying the evidence provided by the U.S. to show the Syrian government's involvement in an alleged chemical attack on civilians was unconvincing.

"It is very strange to hear that speaking recently on this issue my good friend U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry declared that the American party had provided Russians with irrefutable evidence that the regime used chemical weapons but that Russians consciously refused to admit this fact," Lavrov said, Interfax reported.

Lavrov was referring to Kerry's interview on U.S. television channel ABC on Sunday, during which he said the U.S. had "sent people over to Russia who provided evidence" of the Syrian government's involvement in the Aug. 21 attack that was "going to be overwhelming."

"And they [Russians] chose — I literally mean chose — not to believe it or to at least acknowledge publicly," Kerry said. "If the President of Russia chooses yet again to ignore it, that's his choice."

The verbal spat between Russian and U.S. officials is only the latest in an escalating debate over a possible military strike on Syria as Russia warns the U.S. to use diplomatic means rather than force to avoid more civilian fatalities.

After several days of reports of an imminent strike by the U.S., President Barack Obama over the weekend announced a decision to seek congressional approval before launching an attack.

As for the "overwhelming" proof of Syria's involvement in the attack that killed 1,429 people, Lavrov said the U.S. did provide some findings, but they were not specific and did not include geographic coordinates, names or "proof that the tests were carried out by professionals," and therefore were "absolutely unconvincing," AP reported.

China and Syria on Monday also spoke out against a U.S. military strike on Syria, with Syria asking the UN to prevent military intervention.

<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/lavrov-says-us-proof-of-sarin-attack-in-syria-unconvincing/485398.html>

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

Russia Begins 'Open Skies' Flights Over US

02 September 2013

MOSCOW, September 2 (RIA Novosti) – Russian military inspectors will begin a series of monitoring flights over the United States Monday under the international Open Skies Treaty, a Russian Defense Ministry official said.

Issue No. 1074, 03 September 2013

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Experts from Russia will conduct two flights on board a Tupolev Tu-154M-LK-1 plane between September 2 and 16, said Ruslan Shishin, acting head of the ministry's National Nuclear Risk Reduction Center.

The flights will be carried out from the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, and the Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska, along agreed flight routes with the maximum range of 4,900 kilometers (3,044 miles) and 3,700 kilometers (2,300 miles) respectively.

The Open Skies Treaty, which entered into force on January 1, 2002, established a regime of unarmed aerial observation flights over the territories of its 34 member states to promote openness and the transparency of military forces and activities. Russia ratified the treaty in May 2001.

These will be the 28th and 29th observation flights conducted by Russian military inspectors over the territories of the treaty member-states in 2013.

Each aircraft flying under the Open Skies program is fitted with optical, infra-red and radar sensors to gather imagery, which can be shared among all signatories to support the monitoring of compliance with arms control treaties.

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20130902/183111488/Russia-Begins-Open-Skies-Flights-Over-US.html>

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Boston Herald

Russia May Send Lawmakers to US to Discuss Syria

By LAURA MILLS, Associated Press

September 2, 2013

President Vladimir Putin proposed on Monday to send a delegation of Russian lawmakers to the United States to discuss the situation in Syria with members of Congress.

Two top Russian legislators suggested that to Putin, saying polls have shown little support among Americans for armed intervention in Syria to punish its regime for an alleged chemical weapons attack.

Russian television showed Putin meeting on Monday with Valentina Matvienko, the speaker of the upper house, and Sergei Naryshkin, the lower house speaker, at his residence outside Moscow.

The lawmakers said maybe U.S. legislators can be persuaded to take a "balanced stance" on the issue. Putin supported the initiative, which would require formal approval by the Foreign Ministry.

Russia has sent legislators to the U.S. before to try to persuade Congress about pending legislation. But sending a delegation to Washington to discuss Syria's civil war could be seen as a publicity stunt, given the strong positions Moscow already has taken as a key ally of Syrian President Bashar Assad's regime. The U.S. has accused Russia of providing military support to Assad that has allowed him to cling to power during Syria's civil war.

On Monday, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov dismissed evidence of the alleged chemical weapons use by the Syrian regime as "absolutely unconvincing."

He said the evidence presented by the U.S. to Moscow showed "there was nothing specific there, no geographic coordinates, no names, no proof that the tests were carried out by the professionals." He did not describe the tests further.

The U.S. said it has proof that Assad's regime is behind attacks that Washington claims killed at least 1,429 people, including more than 400 children in a suburb of the Syrian capital of Damascus on Aug. 21. Syrian officials have denied the allegations, blaming rebel fighters.

Lavrov has brushed aside Western assertions of an alleged Syrian regime role. Russia, along with China and Iran, has staunchly backed Assad throughout the conflict.

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"What our American, British and French partners showed us in the past and have showed just recently is absolutely unconvincing," Lavrov said at Russia's top diplomatic school. "And when you ask for more detailed proof, they say all of this is classified so we cannot show this to you."

On Saturday Putin spoke out against the prospect of U.S. military intervention in Syria, calling such a move "foolish nonsense" that "defies all logic."

The Russian legislators plan to head to the U.S. just as President Barack Obama seeks congressional approval for a military strike on Assad's forces. Putin said a dialogue between legislators of the two countries was an essential part of reviving Russian-American relations.

In July 2012, a delegation of Russian legislators travelled to Washington in an unsuccessful bid to prevent Congress from passing sanctions against 18 Russians as part of a law named after Sergei Magnitsky. The whistleblowing Russian lawyer was arrested in 2008 for tax evasion after accusing Russian police officials of stealing \$230 million in tax rebates.

That visit by legislators from Russia's parliament — which often rubber-stamps Putin's edicts — was later justified as the private initiative of a handful of Russian legislators, not an official government delegation.

AP correspondent Nataliya Vasilyeva in Moscow contributed.

http://bostonherald.com/news_opinion/international/europe/2013/09/russia_may_send_lawmakers_to_us_to_discuss_syria

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The Warren Sentinel – Cheyenne, WY

AF Releases Nuclear Enterprise's Future Plan

Posted: Thursday, August 29th, 2013

By Staff Sgt. David Salanitri, Secretary of the Air Force Public Affairs

WASHINGTON (AFNS) -- The Air Force recently announced a long-term vision for the service's nuclear enterprise.

The plan, signed by the chief of staff and secretary of the Air Force and approved by the 4-star-level Nuclear Oversight Board, provides a framework for advancing and monitoring the overall health of the Air Force nuclear enterprise, supporting infrastructure and processes.

The plan is organized into three main sections. The first explains the Air Force's perspective on 21st century deterrence and assurance, and how that differs from the Cold-War era.

The second section outlines five strategic vectors for the nuclear enterprise, and the final segment explains how the plan will be used to monitor and advance progress across the enterprise.

"All Airmen should understand the basics of the deterrence mission and its importance to our Air Force and the nation," said Maj. Gen. Garrett Harencak, the Air Force's assistant chief of staff for Strategic Deterrence and Nuclear Integration.

To promote understanding of the mission, the first part of the plan explains how Airmen across the Air Force contribute to national security by providing nuclear capabilities that deter potential adversaries, and assure our allies and partners.

The section concludes by describing the capabilities across the Air Force that contribute to effective deterrence and outlines the Air Force's commitment to sustain and modernize capabilities to meet the changing demands of the 21st century.

Section two of the plan identifies the "five vectors designed to advance and monitor the overall health of the nuclear enterprise and further develop our Airmen, organizations, processes, capabilities and strategic thinking," Harencak said.

By outlining a vector for each of these areas, the general said the Air Force will be able to implement a continuous improvement process to assess, develop action plans for improvements, and track the progress in each area.

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Finally, the plan outlines how the Nuclear Oversight Board and Nuclear Issues Resolution and Integration Board will oversee efforts to meet plan objectives.

Though it is not intended to supplement any programming guidance, nor outline specific force structures, the plan may be used by planners, programmers and others to inform their efforts, Harencak said.

"We encourage commanders and Airmen at all levels to use the flight plan as a starting point for discussion and debate about deterrence in the changing 21st century environment, and the Air Force role in meeting those challenges," Harencak added.

http://www.warrensentinel.com/v2_news_articles.php?heading=0&page=83&story_id=4118

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Omaha World-Herald – Omaha, NE

White House Makes Case for Strikes on Syria to Skeptical Congress

MCCLATCHY NEWSPAPERS

September 2, 2013

WASHINGTON — The Obama administration pressed Congress on Sunday for an expansive green light to attack Syria but faced Capitol Hill skepticism from both the right and left.

Secretary of State John Kerry appeared on five television networks Sunday to make the case for military action against the Syrian government for what he said was the use of sarin gas on civilians.

"We have learned through samples that were provided to the United States and that have now been tested from first responders in east Damascus (that) hair samples and blood samples have tested positive for signatures of sarin," Kerry said on NBC's "Meet the Press." "So this case is building and this case will build."

While Kerry worked to convince Congress that the intelligence is accurate about the use of chemical weapons, lawmakers expressed more skepticism about the wisdom of potential airstrikes, as well as the language of the war powers authorization being sought by the White House. A round of briefings and press sessions Sunday led only to congressional promises to rewrite President Barack Obama's proposal and a reiteration of concerns.

"What I'm troubled by is after the strike, the Assad regime is still there," said Rep. Scott Rigell, R-Va. "Let's say we attack two air force bases. Certainly it would result in loss of life of young Syrian conscripts who have absolutely nothing to do with the (chemical attack), yet the Assad regime is still in place."

Though the administration on Friday released an intelligence summary declaring with a "high degree of confidence" that Syria had used chemical weapons, Kerry's statements Sunday were the first to identify the specific chemical allegedly used.

"Bashar al-Assad now joins a list of Adolf Hitler and Saddam Hussein who have used these weapons in time of war," Kerry said on NBC. "This is of great consequence to Israel, to Jordan, to Turkey, to the region and to all of us who care about enforcing the international norm with respect to chemical weapons."

Obama's proposed language for congressional approval would authorize the president to use force "as he determines to be necessary and appropriate" in order to "prevent or deter the use or proliferation" of chemical or biological weapons, as well as other "weapons of mass destruction."

Barring some action by Syria that would force Obama's hand, what the United States decides to do now rests in part on the administration's ability to persuade Congress to approve military action.

"Part of it will depend on internal Republican politics," said Julian Zelizer, a historian at Princeton University in New Jersey. "Part of it will depend on Obama, though. These last few days and 24 hours were not the best way to handle it politically. He has to make an aggressive push, an aggressive case, to both parties."

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The Senate Foreign Relations Committee plans to hold a hearing Tuesday on Syria. The House is sticking to its planned summer schedule and will return next week.

Lawmakers appeared divided into several groups. Some want to strike hard and fast, some want to stay out of Syria altogether, and a good number want to hear more from both the administration and their constituents.

"If the vote were held today, it would probably be a 'no' vote," Rep. Peter King, R-N.Y., the former chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee, said on "Fox News Sunday." "It is going to be difficult to get the vote through in Congress, especially when there is going to be time during the next nine days for opposition to build up to it."

Several key Republican senators strongly indicated Sunday that they will not vote to give Obama authorization for a missile attack on Syria unless the White House first lays out "a strategy and a plan" to stop the Assad regime from ever again using chemical weapons.

The senators, led by John McCain of Arizona, also signaled that they will use Obama's offer to seek congressional approval before any attack on Syria to press the administration and the Pentagon to make sure that a U.S. reprisal is a clear warning to Assad that he risks losing his hold over the war-torn country if any more chemical attacks are unleashed upon the Syrian people.

"We need to have a strategy and a plan," McCain said on the CBS program "Face the Nation." "In our view, the best way to eliminate the threat of Bashar Assad's continued use of chemical weapons would be the threat of his removal from power. And that, I believe, has to be part of what we tell the American people."

Obama may face some resistance from members of his own party. Democrats as well as Republicans left a classified briefing on Capitol Hill expressing reservations about giving the president authority for a strike, although they said they were persuaded that chemical weapons were used.

"There's a great deal of skepticism that even a limited strike is likely to be effective," Rep. Jim Himes, D-Conn., said as he exited the briefing, which was attended by more than 100 lawmakers from the House and Senate.

The authorization being discussed is open-ended with "no limitations in either time or scope of activity," Himes said. "I've got a long way to go personally before I can be supportive of this."

Some conservatives and liberals are united for disparate reasons in saying the United States should simply steer clear of Syria altogether. The senior Republican on the Senate Armed Services Committee, Republican Sen. James Inhofe of Oklahoma, said Sunday on "Fox News Sunday" that he doesn't think Congress will approve the authorization.

"Another thing we want to know, and my constituents ask over and over, is what is the relationship to the United States?" said Rep. Elijah Cummings, D-Md. "In other words, is there a threat?"

Republican Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky commended Obama for asking for congressional authorization but predicted that passage on Capitol Hill would be a break-even proposition.

"Absolutely, if Congress votes this down, we should not be involved in the Syrian war," Paul said on NBC's "Meet the Press." "And I think it's at least 50/50 whether the House will vote down involvement in the civil war."

Kerry expressed confidence that Congress ultimately would back the president. Failure to do so would amount to the U.S. turning its back on Israel, other allies in the region and the Syrian people, he said.

"I can't contemplate that the Congress would turn its back on all of that responsibility," Kerry said on Fox. He said Obama was making a "courageous decision" by seeking congressional approval.

Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va., said he was confident that Congress will grant the president military authorization.

"We are strong when we act together," he told CBS. "But if the president were to do something without congressional support, it's just not fair to the men and women we ask to fight our battles to send them in not knowing whether the American public or Congress backs them up."



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This report includes material from the Tribune Washington Bureau and Bloomberg News.

<http://www.omaha.com/article/20130831/NEWS/130839763/1685>

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Huffington Post

What Is Sarin? A Lethal Nerve Gas That Kills In Minutes

By Agence France Presse (AFP)

September 01, 2013

Sarin, the deadly nerve gas which the United States says was unleashed last month by the Syrian regime in a Damascus suburb, was developed by Nazi scientists in 1938.

Originally conceived as a pesticide, sarin was used by Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein's regime to gas thousands of Kurds in the northern town of Halabja in 1988.

A cult also used the odorless, paralyzing agent in two attacks in Japan in the 1990s.

US Secretary of State John Kerry on Sunday said tests on hair and blood samples taken from the emergency workers who rushed to the scene of the Damascus attack on August 21 had shown indications of sarin.

He said the samples had been given to the US independently, outside of an outgoing UN probe.

Washington has squarely blamed the Syrian regime of President Bashar al-Assad for the attack, which it says killed more than 1,400 people including hundreds of children.

Inhaled or absorbed through the skin, the gas kills by crippling the respiratory center of the central nervous system and paralyzes the muscles around the lungs.

The combination results in death by suffocation, and sarin can contaminate food or water supplies, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which notes that antidotes exist.

"Sarin is 26 times more deadly than cyanide gas. Just a pinprick-sized droplet will kill a human," according to the World Health Organization.

Exposure symptoms include nausea and violent headaches, blurred vision, drooling, muscle convulsions, respiratory arrest and loss of consciousness, the CDC says.

Nerve agents are generally quick-acting and require only simple chemical techniques and inexpensive, readily available ingredients to manufacture.

Inhalation of a high dose -- say 200 milligrams of sarin -- may cause death "within a couple of minutes," with no time even for symptoms to develop, according to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

Exposure through the skin takes longer to kill and the first symptoms may not occur for half an hour, followed by a quick progression.

Even when it does not kill, sarin's effects can cause permanent harm -- damaging a victim's lungs, eyes and central nervous system.

Heavier than air, the gas can linger in an area for up to six hours, depending on weather conditions.

UN inspectors, who have been in Syria investigating allegations of the regime's use of chemical weapons, left the country on Saturday. The analysis of their samples could take up to three weeks, UN experts have said.

Issue No. 1074, 03 September 2013

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The most notorious sarin attack occurred in March 1988 in Halabja when as many as 5,000 Kurds were killed and 65,000 injured when the Iraqi military used a combination of chemical agents that included sarin, mustard gas and possibly VX, a nerve agent 10 times more powerful than sarin.

It is thought to have been the worst-ever gas attack targeting civilians.

Sarin killed 13 people and injured 6,000 others when the Aum Supreme Truth cult released it in the Tokyo subway in March 1995. The cult also used the nerve agent in an attack the year before in the Japanese city of Matsumoto, killing seven.

The Syrian regime is believed to control hundreds of tonnes of various chemical agents.

In addition to blister agents known as vesicants such as mustard gas (yperite), Damascus is thought to possess sarin and possibly VX.

The Syrian regime also has the means to deliver its chemical agents, with Scud missiles, artillery shells and aerial bombs, according to defense analysts.

The name sarin comes from the chemists who discovered it by chance: Schrader, Ambros, Ruediger et Van der Linde. The scientists had been trying to create stronger pesticides but the formula was then taken up by the Nazi military for chemical weapons.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/09/01/what-is-sarin_n_3853044.html?ir=World

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Bloomberg Businessweek

Cost Makes Chemicals WMD of Choice for Shrinking Group of Rogues

By Simeon Bennett and Mehul Srivastava

September 02, 2013

Syria, accused of launching a chemical attack against its own people last month, is one of a shrinking group of nations to retain a form of weaponry that the rest of the world abandoned over the past 20 years.

Syria is one of only five countries not to have signed the 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention, which bans the development, stockpiling, transfer and use of chemical arms. The others are Egypt, North Korea, South Sudan and Angola. Israel and Myanmar have signed the convention but not ratified it. Libya became a party to the convention in 2004 and Iraq in 2009.

One reason for the appeal of chemical weapons is cost. Because they are relatively easy to make, chemical agents cost a fraction of the investment needed to develop nuclear arms, said Gunnar Jeremias, head of the Research Group for Biological Arms Control at the Center for Science and Peace Research in Hamburg. And compared with biological weapons, chemical agents are easier to control, he said.

“Many biological agents cause contagious diseases,” Jeremias said in a telephone interview. “If you use them close by your own territory, you could never be sure that the effects would not come back to you. That’s not the case with chemical weapons.”

The use of chlorine gas by German forces at Ypres, Belgium, in 1915 led to the development of the Geneva Protocol of 1925, the first international agreement to ban the use of chemical weapons. Syria signed the protocol in 1968, while the U.S. didn’t ratify it until 1975. Still, the pact didn’t prevent countries from developing, producing or possessing such weapons, or from using them in retaliation.

Issue No. 1074, 03 September 2013

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Weapons' Allure

That created an environment for global superpowers such as the U.S. and Russia to stockpile them, said Jeanne Guillemain, a senior adviser at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Security Studies Program.

"The allure of chemical weapons, like that of nuclear ones, was that the major powers possessed them," she said in an e-mail.

While chemical weapons aren't that difficult or expensive to amass, dispersing them is far more complicated. In one method, called the unitary method, the liquid sarin is kept isolated within an artillery shell by a diaphragm that is pierced right before or during flight. In the second method, the components are kept isolated from each other and mixed in-flight, and released when the shell or canisters land.

'Vast Quantities'

"It is much, much more difficult to aerosolize and disperse and use these chemical weapons than people understand," said David Roberts, the Qatar-based director of the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies. "From what we understand, for this kind of attack, you would have needed vast quantities of this sort of chemical."

The complexities of aerosolizing and dispersing chemical weapons confounded the Aum Shinrikyo sect, which on two separate incidents killed fewer than 20 people in Japan, despite having access to hundreds of liters of sarin. In the 1995 attack on separate lines of the Tokyo subway, cult members carried the liquid on board trains in plastic bags or lunch boxes, and punctured them using sharp umbrellas before getting off the train, according to a Japanese government investigation of the incident.

Nuclear Arsenals

Chemical weapons became less strategically important for the U.S. and Soviet Union in the 1970s as the two nations developed their nuclear arsenals, said Ralf Trapp, a disarmament consultant and former scientific adviser at the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in The Hague.

The end of the Cold War brought about "a climate where it became possible to ban them," Trapp said by phone. That led to the inauguration of the convention in 1993, under which most countries committed to destroying their stockpiles.

As of December 2011, a total of 51,505 metric tons, or 72 percent of all declared chemical weapons globally, had been destroyed, according to the OPCW, which was set up to implement the 1993 convention.

Only Russia, the U.S., Libya and Iraq have declared chemical weapons that are yet to be destroyed, according to the OPCW. The U.S. has destroyed 90 percent of its stockpiles, Russia has destroyed 60 percent, and Libya 54 percent, according to the OPCW. The group conducted inspections in Iraq for the first time in 2011, though the nation hadn't yet started destroying its stockpiles.

Somalia became the most recent party to the convention in June.

Egypt, Angola

Among the countries that either haven't signed or ratified the pact, both Egypt and Angola have held informal talks with the OPCW, while political changes in Myanmar have raised hopes that the nation will join the convention in future, Trapp said.

"Israel is the one country in the Middle East that could join without any strategic loss, Trapp said. "They don't want to be seen as weak or someone who gives in."

That leaves Syria and North Korea as the only two remaining countries to pose a serious chemical weapons threat, Trapp said.

A spokesman for Syria's foreign ministry, Jihad Makdissi, said at a news conference in July 2012 that its chemical weapons would not be used against civilians "under any circumstances, no matter how the crisis would evolve."



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“All the stocks of these weapons that the Syrian Arab Republic possesses are monitored and guarded by the Syrian Army,” Makdissi said. “These weapons are meant to be used only and strictly and in the event of external aggression against the Syrian Arab Republic.” Makdissi later defected, he said in a posting on Twitter.

Ghouta Attack

United Nations investigators spent last week looking for evidence of the alleged chemical weapon attack in Ghouta, near Damascus. Doctors Without Borders said three hospitals it supports in Damascus had treated about 3,600 patients with neurotoxic symptoms in less than three hours on Aug. 21, and 355 died.

Syria’s opposition accused President Bashar Al-Assad of the attack, while Assad, backed by Russia and Iran, has dismissed the accusations as “nonsense” and said rebel fighters were behind the assault.

Video footage of the aftermath showed people with symptoms such as narrowing of the pupils, excessive salivation and convulsions that point to exposure to sarin or another nerve agent, Trapp said.

Seeking Support

U.S. President Barack Obama is trying to rally congressional support for a military strike to punish Syria for the alleged use of chemical weapons. His decision Aug. 31 to seek Congress’s backing slowed the march toward war at least until Sept. 9, when lawmakers reconvene. Secretary of State John Kerry on Sept. 1 said hair and blood samples indicated the use of sarin gas by Assad’s forces.

Sarin, developed by German scientists as a pesticide in the 1930s, works by lowering the human body’s ability to regulate nerve impulses, according to the Federation of American Scientists. Victims suffer convulsions, lose control of their body and become comatose if exposed to a large enough amount.

It is relatively simple to make, especially for trained industrial chemists, since most of the ingredients are available commercially, and formulas have been in the public domain for decades.

Syria has also tried to gain nuclear weapons, according to Israel. In 2007 Israel bombed a suspected nuclear reactor in the Dair Alzour region of Syria that Assad’s government said was a non-nuclear military installation. The International Atomic Energy Agency said in 2011 that the site was “very likely a nuclear reactor” that “could not have served the purpose claimed by Syria.”

<http://www.businessweek.com/news/2013-09-02/cost-makes-chemicals-wmd-of-choice-for-shrinking-group-of-rogues>

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The Diplomat – Japan
OPINION/The Naval Diplomat

Chemical Weapons are NOT WMDs

By James R. Holmes
August 31, 2013

You wear lots of hats as a naval officer. Daily job, watchstanding, battle stations, miscellaneous collateral duties. One hat that adorned the Naval Diplomat's not-yet-balding pate was fire marshal, in charge of preparing the ship's repair parties to combat fires, flooding, battle damage ... and attacks involving chemical, biological, or radiological (CBR), weapons. I later ended up teaching CBR defense, among other things, at a naval training command in dear old Newport. Good times were had by all, I assure you. Cheery subject matter does that for a class.

One weird thing about this brand of warfare was the inconsistent vocabulary used to describe it. Various armed services, government agencies, and international bodies applied a variety of nomenclatures to unconventional arms. There was CBR, and CBRN, and NBC, you name it.

Issue No. 1074, 03 September 2013

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One acronym I have never cared for is "WMD," shorthand for "weapons of mass destruction." Why? The fine folks at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, who publish the authoritative guide to *Deadly Arsenals* periodically, put it best when they issued the 2005 edition. The coauthors disavowed WMD because the term, though convenient, conflates very different types of weaponry entailing very different characteristics, effects, and moral implications.

In particular, they fretted that merging chemical with biological with nuclear weapons in the public mind had distorted the debate over how to handle Saddam Hussein's unconventional arsenal. WMD implied nuclear for the untutored, demanding major military action to prevent an arms race in the Gulf region. But the suspected Iraqi mass-destruction arsenal was made up of chemical arms and perhaps biotoxins, whose properties resemble those of chemical agents. This was a threat of a lesser order. While Saddam hoped to resume his atomic quest at some point, it was a remote prospect a decade ago. Lesser instruments of war may have warranted lesser countermeasures.

More precise language, argued the Carnegie team, begets more prudent deliberations. If so, disaggregating these munitions for analytical purposes helps restore precision to debates over nonproliferation and counterproliferation. *Deadly Arsenals* maintains that nuclear weapons are the only true weapons of mass destruction. I agree.

Think about it. Teaching shipboard nuclear defense always elicited gallows humor from navy students. It demanded that mariners assume a lot: if you survive the blast, *and* the heat, *and* the electromagnetic pulse, *and* the initial radiation, *and* the radioactive fallout that accumulates on exposed surfaces, *then* you can take certain measures to recover and fight the ship. Well, OK, then.

Biological weapons? Less mass-destructive, but more insidious. Biological agents are living organisms that have a nasty habit of spreading from host to host. They're the gift that keeps on giving. Plus, symptoms take time to manifest. Pestilence may have spread before anyone's aware an attack has occurred. Think the Black Death in medieval Europe and you get the idea. Detecting an attack, determining that it *is* an attack, and figuring out how to respond defies the medical expertise of crews on the scene.

In my day, in fact, your shipmate was the best detector for a biological assault. He was the canary in the coal mine. You knew something was up when he started exhibiting symptoms or acting goofy. (Insert your favorite joke at the Naval Diplomat's expense here.) Classifying an agent often demands laboratory analysis, which says something about your capacity to take defensive measures and decontaminate affected surfaces. In short, timely countermeasures were elusive.

Chemical weapons were the one type of unconventional weapon with which crews could cope. Ships were outfitted with automatic detectors, albeit not terribly reliable ones. Various kits let repair parties classify an agent, remove it with some degree of effectiveness, and get back to the serious business of warfighting. Chemical arms, in short, were a routine part of the threat environment, no more worrisome than conventional hazards like land-based bomber raids, supersonic antiship missiles, or wake-homing torpedoes.

You probably see where I'm going with this macabre trip down memory lane. Merging all unconventional weapons under one umbrella term like WMD may skew decision-making relating to the Syrian civil war or other contingencies involving chemical, biological, or nuclear arms — impelling Western governments to overreact, or underreact, diplomatically and militarily in times of crisis.

Having been on the receiving end of antiship missiles and sea mines, it's not intuitively obvious to me that being gassed constitutes a worse way to die — and thus a more grievous offense to civilized sensibilities — than being blown up, incinerated, or drowned. In the 18th century, Dr. Johnson likened Royal Navy service to prison with the possibility of being drowned. Modern threats would have boggled even his expansive mind. I doubt gas attacks would have struck Johnson as uniquely grotesque.

Biological and nuclear attacks may differ in nature from chemical use owing to the vast scale of nuclear destruction, or because both biological and nuclear arms have long-lasting effects — fallout from nuclear explosions, disease from infectious agents. Such differences are worth pondering carefully the next time our leaders consider sketching redlines,

Issue No. 1074, 03 September 2013

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and thereby committing themselves to actions that may prove imprudent or do little to help the afflicted. Best to keep a free hand in times of strife.

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<http://thediplomat.com/the-naval-diplomat/2013/08/31/chemical-weapons-are-not-a-wmd/>

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The Sacramento Bee – Sacramento, CA
OPINION/Editorial

Editorial: Congress must Step Up on Syria Crisis

By the Editorial Board
Saturday, August 31, 2013

As commander-in-chief, Barack Obama has decided to take military action against Syria for what he describes as “the worst chemical weapons attack of the 21st century.”

But as president of the world’s oldest constitutional democracy, Obama declared Saturday that he will ask Congress for authorization to use force. “Our power is rooted not just in our military might, but in our example as a government of the people, by the people and for the people,” the president said.

It is a historic decision, and the right one for our country.

Even as he claimed the authority to act without permission from Congress and without a mandate from the United Nations Security Council, he knows that broader support strengthens his hand and gives him some cover if things go awry.

But Obama is also taking a huge risk.

If Congress refuses to go along, Obama’s hands could be tied. His credibility after drawing the “red line” over the use of chemical weapons could be in tatters, his presidency could be damaged and, most importantly, the global leadership of the United States could be weakened.

Obama need look no further than British Prime Minister David Cameron to see the potential downside after the Parliament on Thursday rejected Cameron’s call to take part on a limited strike on the regime of Bashar Assad.

In his most forceful remarks so far on Syria, Obama made a strong case Saturday that striking Assad’s regime is not only a moral imperative, but in America’s national security interests.

If an attack like this goes unpunished, it could lead to escalating use of chemical weapons, the president said. It could undermine fundamental international rules that are the bulwark against nuclear proliferation, the use of biological weapons and even genocide.

“In a world with many dangers,” Obama said, “this menace must be confronted.”

Clearly, however, he must do far more convincing of skeptical members of Congress and of the American people.

On Friday, the White House released an intelligence assessment that concluded that Assad’s military planned and executed the Aug. 21 attack in a Damascus suburb in which nerve gas killed more than 1,400 people, including more than 400 children. Obama needs to disclose as much additional evidence as possible backing that conclusion.

He acknowledged the obvious – that Americans are weary of war after Iraq and Afghanistan. Polls show little support for another intervention. Even as he spoke from the Rose Garden, anti-war protestors were outside the White House.

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While Congress is not scheduled to return from its recess until Sept. 9, an earlier special session may be in the offing.

Obama said Pentagon leaders have assured him that they are ready to strike at any time. He promised again that any action would be limited both in scope and duration and that there would be no “boots on the ground.”

But Obama also said the United States “cannot and must not turn a blind eye to what happened in Damascus.” Just threatening military action may have already deterred Assad from further attacks.

“I’m ready to act in the face of this outrage,” the president said. “Today, I’m asking Congress to send a message to the world that we are ready to move forward together as one nation.”

Now, it’s up to Congress to overcome petty partisanship, rise to the occasion and have a debate worthy of this momentous decision.

<http://www.sacbee.com/2013/08/31/5697515/editorial-congress-must-step-up.html>

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The Diplomat – Japan
OPINION/Flashpoints

Nuclear Weapon Stockpiles: Past and Present

By Zachary Keck
September 2, 2013

Two decades after the end of the Cold War there are still some 17,000 intact nuclear warheads around the world, according to a study published in the new issue of the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*.

The study, which was done by the Federation of American Scientists’ Hans M. Kristensen and Robert S. Norris, estimates that the nine nuclear weapons states—the U.S., Russia, the UK, France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel, and North Korea—have approximately 10,000 nuclear warheads remaining in their stockpiles. In addition, the U.S. and Russia are estimated to have around 7,000 nuclear warheads still intact but awaiting dismantlement.

According to the article, Washington and Moscow’s nuclear arsenals still account for over 90 percent of the global total.

More troubling, nearly half (4,400) of the 10,000 nuclear warheads in existing military stockpiles are deployed on missiles or at bases with operational launchers present, the authors estimate. In fact, Kristensen and Norris believe that the U.S. and Russia maintain 1,800 nuclear warheads on ballistic missiles that are kept at high alert, meaning that they can be launched 5 to 15 minutes after the order is given.

Even still, global nuclear stockpiles have dropped considerably since peaking in 1986 when there were almost 64,500 nuclear warheads in existence. Most of the reductions in global nuclear stockpiles can be attributed to the U.S. and Russia, although the UK and France have also eliminated some of their stockpiles.

According to Kristensen and Norris, since the dawn of the nuclear age 125,000 nuclear warheads have been built, 97 percent of them by the U.S. and Russia/Soviet Union. The other seven nuclear states—presumably including South Africa’s briefly held arsenal—account for the remaining three percent.

The U.S. has historically built about 66,500 warheads, or 53 percent of the global total. 59,000 of these have been disassembled since. Russia and its predecessor, the Soviet Union, have produced some 55,000 nuclear warheads since first exploding a nuclear device in 1949. Of these, 8,500 remain intact although 4,000 of them have been retired and are awaiting dismantlement.

While the UK and France are also reducing their much smaller arsenals, the rest of the nuclear weapon states are believed to be expanding their stockpiles. Indeed, the authors estimate that China has now surpassed the UK in holding the fourth largest nuclear stockpile in the world, and could surpass France as the third largest nuclear power by the end of the decade. The authors also expect both India and Pakistan to surpass the UK by the middle of the next decade.

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Currently, the UK has 225 nuclear warheads, all of which would have to be delivered using its Trident-II submarine launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), which are deployed on its Vanguard-class nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines (SSBN). It is currently contemplating building a new class of SSBNs, although there is much debate about the wisdom of this in the U.K. at the moment.

London plans to reduce its arsenal to 180 by the mid-2020s, and already the English government claims that only 160 of its nuclear warheads are operationally ready, with one SSBN on patrol at all times carrying at least 48 nuclear warheads on board.

France has about 300 nuclear warheads and plans to reduce this slightly over the coming years. Its delivery systems are a variant of its M51 SLBM, as well as the SMP-A (Air-Sol Moyenne Portee-A) cruise missile, which it launches from its Mirage 2000N and Rafale fighter-bombers.

China currently has an arsenal of about 250 warheads, Kristensen and Norris estimate. They note that Beijing is in the process of producing new mobile solid-fueled missiles in order to phase out its stock of liquid-fueled missiles. Currently, China—which maintains a new first use nuclear doctrine—does not keep its warheads in the same facilities as its ballistic missiles. This could potentially—though not necessarily—change with the induction of solid-fueled ballistic missiles.

The authors also estimate that China likely has the capability to deliver nuclear weapons by air, and believe that “production is probably under way of new warheads for missiles intended to arm the new Jin-class submarine.” As *The Diplomat* previously reported, U.S. intelligence sources expect the JL-2 SLBM to begin sea trials next year. The JL-2 is expected to be deployed on the Type-094 (Jin-Class) SSBN. Just this week, *WantChinaTimes* quoted a PLA general as saying the JL-3 SLBM has also been completed.

Kristensen and Norris note that far less information is available about India and Pakistan, as well as other nuclear weapon states like Israel and North Korea. Indeed, compared to the U.S., Russia, the UK, and France, the authors point out that China, India, Pakistan, Israel, and North Korea are much less transparent about their nuclear stockpiles. Israel for instance, has never publicly acknowledged having a nuclear weapon arsenal while Pakistan and China have often defended their lack of transparency on the need to maintain secrecy in order to protect their smaller arsenals from an adversary conducting a first strike that completely eliminates their entire stockpiles.

Nonetheless, the authors estimate that Pakistan has between 100-120 nuclear warheads with the fissile material to continue enhancing the size of its arsenal in the future. India, by contrast, has between 90 and 110 nuclear warheads, by Kristensen and Norris’s account.

Perhaps of most concern, both South Asian nuclear powers are enhancing and diversifying their delivery systems. Islamabad, for instance, is believed to be seeking tactical nuclear weapons that it could deploy along its border with India to prevent Delhi from pursuing its Cold Start military doctrine. Kristensen and Norris attach special concern to Indian claims that it is seeking to equip its ballistic missiles with multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles (MIRVs), which allows a single missile to carry multiple nuclear warheads and disperse them to different targets. The authors fear that such a development, coupled with the U.S. enhancing its theater missile defense in the region, could push China to MIRV its own missiles.

Such a development would likely spur India and China to significantly enhance the size of their arsenals, much as it did for the U.S. and Soviet Union. If this fate is avoided, however, Kristensen and Norris estimate that none of the nuclear weapon states will reach parity with the U.S. or Russia for decades, even if the former Cold War adversaries continue to sign further arms reduction treaties.

Zachary Keck is Associate Editor of The Diplomat. He has previously served as a Deputy Editor for E-IR and as an Editorial Assistant for The Diplomat. Zach has published in various outlets such as Foreign Policy, The National Interest, The Atlantic, Foreign Affairs, and World Politics Review.

<http://thediplomat.com/flashpoints-blog/2013/09/02/nuclear-weapon-stockpiles-past-and-present/>



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The S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies – Singapore
OPINION/Commentary #163

China's (Secret) Civil-Military Megaprojects – Analysis

By Michael Raska
2 September 2013

Synopsis

China's emerging weapons systems, including recently deployed anti-ship ballistic missiles (DF-21D) and fighter jet prototypes (J-20, J-31), have drawn considerable interest. The country's future military-technological aspirations are evolving further in select science & technology megaprojects.

Commentary

CHINA HAS aimed to overcome deficiencies in areas critical to its national security ever since it initiated the National High Technology Programme ("863") in March 1986 – the most important civilian-military R&D programme next to the "Two Weapons, and One Satellite" science and technology development plan of 1956-67.

The 863 Programme featured a concurrent development of dual-use technologies applicable in both civilian and military domains. The programme had initially focused on developing seven strategic priority areas: laser technology, space, biotechnology, information technology, automation and manufacturing technology, energy, and advanced materials. In the mid-1990s, China expanded these areas in size, scope, and importance, shifting its trajectory toward cutting-edge technological products and processes. The 863 Programme is ongoing, funding projects such as the Tianhe-1A supercomputer.

Three secret national megaprojects

More importantly, the 863 Programme has paved the way for China's current "indigenous innovation" strategy, embedded in the 2006 National Medium to Long-term Plan (MLP) for the Development of Science and Technology (2005-2020). The MLP became China's most ambitious comprehensive national science and technology plan with special long-term total funding estimated at Rmb 500 bn (US\$75bn).

Central to the MLP are 16 National Megaprojects – vanguard S&T programmes – "priorities of priorities" – designed to transform China's science & technology capabilities in areas such as electronics, semiconductors, telecommunications, aerospace, manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, clean energy, and oil and gas exploration. The megaprojects include both civilian and military areas, with 13 listed and three "unannounced" areas classified.

The 16 Megaprojects have been a source of considerable controversy and debates both in China and abroad, given the continuing structural, technological, and manufacturing challenges that inhibit disruptive innovation in Chinese defence science & technology system. The debate has also focused on the three classified megaprojects. Prof. Tai Ming Cheung, leading scholar on China's defence industries at the Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation at the University of California San Diego, suggested three prime candidates for the military megaprojects:

Shengguang Laser Project for Inertial Confinement Fusion:

The Shengguang (Divine Light) laser project explores the inertial confinement fusion (ICF) as an alternative approach to attain inertial fusion energy (IFE) – a controllable, sustained nuclear fusion reaction aided by an array of high-powered lasers. The lasers essentially heat and compress pellet-sized targets typically containing two hydrogen isotopes deuterium and tritium, sending shock waves into the centre and releasing energy that heats the surrounding fuel, which may also undergo fusion. Shengguang aims to achieve such "burn" – fusion ignition and plasma burning by 2020, while advancing research in solving the complex technological challenges associated with controlling the nuclear reaction.

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Shenguang's target physics, theory and experimentation, began as early as 1993. By 2012, China completed the Shenguang 3 (Divine Light 3) a high-powered super laser facility based in the Research Centre of Laser Fusion at the China Academy of Engineering Physics – the research and manufacturing centre of China's nuclear weapons located in Mianyang. In this context, Shenguang has two strategic implications: it may accelerate China's next-generation thermo-nuclear weapons development, and advance China's directed-energy laser weapons programs.

Second Generation Beidou Satellite Navigation System:

The second prime candidate for China's 'unlisted' megaprojects is likely the Beidou-2 Satellite System (BDS), formerly known as the Compass Navigation Satellite System (CNSS). According to Jane's, by the end of 2012, China had 16 operational Beidou satellites in orbit – six geostationary satellites, five Medium Earth Orbit spacecraft, and five satellites in Inclined GeoStationary Orbits covering the Asia-Pacific region. By 2020, Beidou 2 envisions a full-scale system of at least five geostationary and 30 non-geostationary satellites providing a global coverage in two modes: free "open" services available to commercial customers with 10-metre location-tracking accuracy, and restricted "authorised" services providing positioning, velocity and timing communications estimated at 10 centimetre accuracy for the Chinese government and military.

Beidou 2 satellites, developed by the China Academy of Space Technology, are also designed with effective protection against electromagnetic interference and attack. Notwithstanding its wide commercial utility, the BDS will enable the PLA to significantly enhance its global navigation, tracking, targeting capabilities, providing guidance for military vehicles, ballistic and cruise missiles, precision-guided munitions, as well as unmanned aerial vehicles. Most importantly, the BDS eliminates China's dependency on the US GPS and Russia's GLONASS satellite navigation systems that could be deactivated in select areas in times of conflict.

Hypersonic Vehicle Technology Project:

While data on China's hypersonic research remains scarce, there are signs that China is developing conceptual and experimental hypersonic flight vehicle technologies such as hypersonic cruise vehicles (HCV) capable of manoeuvring at Mach 5 speeds (6,150+ km/h), and flying in near-space altitudes. Andrew Erickson, Associate Professor at the US Naval War College, analysed China's Shenlong (Divine Dragon) spaceplane project, including its apparent test flight in 2011 and noted subsequent profusion of Chinese research articles on the subject.

Similarly, Mark Stokes from the Project2049 Institute identified new research institutes focusing exclusively on the design and development of hypersonic test flight vehicles, including the 10th Research Institute also known as the Near Space Flight Vehicle Research Institute, under the China Academy of Launch Technology (CALT) – China's largest entity involved in the development and manufacturing of space launch vehicles and related ballistic missile systems. The Qian Xuesen National Engineering Science Experiment Base in Beijing's Huairou district is also one of China's key HCV research centres.

Global competition

Taken together, China's long-term strategic military programmes are deeply embedded in China's advancing civilian science and technology base, which in turn is increasingly linked to global commercial and scientific networks.

Technology transfers, foreign R&D investment, and training of Chinese scientists and engineers at research institutes and corporations overseas are part of China's "indigenous innovation" drive to identify, digest, absorb, and reinvent select technological capabilities, both in civil and military domains.

In the process, China is benchmarking emerging technologies and similar high-tech defence-related programmes in the U.S., Russia, India, Japan, Israel and other countries. China's key challenge, however, remains internal – translating its scientific potential and technological advances into operational capabilities.

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<http://www.rsis.edu.sg/publications/Perspective/RSIS1632013.pdf>

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The Moscow Times – Russia
OPINION/Commentary

Russia's Gas Warfare History

03 September 2013 | Issue 5205

By James Brooke

Russian politicians and analysts are working hard this week to create a cloud of doubt around the Aug. 21 chemical attack outside Damascus.

On Friday, the White House report drew on extensive intelligence information to present this picture: Syrian forces carried out chemical weapons attacks on sleeping Damascus suburbs, killing 1,429 civilians, including 426 children.

On Saturday, President Vladimir Putin told reporters that because the Syrian government is on the offensive it would be "utter nonsense" for it to use chemical weapons.

One century ago, Russia's elites were better educated on the realities of poison gas as a military weapon.

In World War I, officers drew on Old Testament analogies to warn their soldiers of "Dyma Kaina" (The Smoke of Cain).

The mustard gas of Ypres on the Western Front is better known today, but the first massive use of gas as a war weapon took place against Russian soldiers in January 1915. German units fired 18,000 artillery shells filled with liquid xylyl bromide tear gas on Russian positions west of Warsaw during the Battle of the Bolimov.

By the time World War I ended, the biggest victim of poison gas attacks was Russia.

Russia lost 56,000 soldiers to gas in World War I — 63 percent of the war's gas fatalities. Russia recorded 419,340 soldiers injured by gas, 34 percent of the total recorded by all nations.

However, during World War I, the Western Front had better painters than the Eastern Front.

Ninety-five years to the day before the Damascus attack, on Aug. 21, 1918, the American painter John Singer Sargent was with British soldiers when German units barraged them with mustard gas. From sketches and notes, he painted "Gassed." This nearly life-size oil painting was voted picture of the year by the Royal Academy of Arts in 1919.

Of equal impact on public opinion were Britain's war poets Siegfried Sassoon and his friend, Wilfred Owen.

In 1917, while recovering from war wounds, Owen wrote "Dulce et Decorum Est." He called it "a gas poem."

Here is an excerpt:

"Gas! GAS! Quick, boys! — An ecstasy of fumbling, / Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time;/ But someone still was yelling out and stumbling/ And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime . . . / Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light,/ As under a green sea, I saw him drowning. / In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,/ He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning."

International revulsion over the use of gas in warfare prompted governments to meet in Geneva to draw up one of the world's first arms control agreements. Known as the Geneva Protocol, the agreement went into effect in February 1928. It carried this title: Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare.

Two months later, the protocol was signed by the Soviet Union — the successor state to Tsarist Russia, World War I's largest victim of poison gas.

Issue No. 1074, 03 September 2013

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Forty years later, in 1968, the Geneva Protocol was signed by Syria. Syria's defense minister at the time was Hafez Assad, father to Syria's current president, Bashar Assad.

As president during the 1980s, the elder Assad, apparently with Soviet assistance, built up a powerful chemical weapons arsenal.

In the last two years, his son Bashar has steadily escalated attacks on his political opponents — from beating demonstrators to shooting them, from shelling residential neighborhoods to dropping bombs from warplanes.

In recent weeks, Bashar Assad's forces apparently carried out limited chemical weapons attacks. The response from the West was muted. Russia's state-controlled TV and think tanks suggested that opposition forces were gassing themselves in order to win international support.

Now, Assad has taken the next step in his ruthless logic, checking the wind and then gassing sleeping residents on the eastern edge of his capital.

If Washington undertakes punitive strikes against Assad's military, the Russian chattering class might do well to step back and take a break from attacking the United States. Instead, as Russia stands one year away from the 100th anniversary of its August 1914 entry into World War I, Russians might find it interesting to contemplate the fact that their own soldiers were the first victims of modern gas warfare.

In that case, the "fog of war" was real — and deadly.

James Brooke, based in Moscow, is the Russia/CIS bureau chief for Voice of America.

<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/opinion/article/russias-gas-warfare-history/485484.html>

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