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MAXWELL AFB, ALABAMA

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Atlanta Journal-Constitution
Saturday, February 23, 2013

Iran Selects 16 Sites Suitable for Nuclear Plants

By ALI AKBAR DAREINI, Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran has selected 16 locations as suitable for new nuclear power plants it intends to build to boost its energy production over the next 15 years, authorities said on Saturday.

The Islamic republic says it needs 20 large-scale plants to meet its growing electricity needs over the next one-and-a-half decades. It currently operates a 1,000-megawatt nuclear power plant at Bushehr, a coastal town on the Persian Gulf, and is planning to build a 360-megawatt nuclear power plant in the southwestern town of Darkhovin.

"The whole country has been studied in the past years," said Vice President Fereidoun Abbasi, who also heads Iran's atomic energy organization. "Adequate locations, on the basis of global parameters, were probed and 16 locations at various parts of the country were identified," he said in comments published by the semiofficial ISNA news agency.

A statement released by his organization said the sites were chosen in part for their resistance to earthquakes and military air strikes.

"Geologic, demographic, topographic, seismic, meteorological and hydrologic criteria as well as access to power transmission lines ... were given into consideration," it said.

Separately, state TV said the country has discovered new uranium resources in what it characterized as a "big discovery." As U.N. sanctions ban Iran from importing any nuclear material, it has focused on developing domestic uranium reserves.

The U.S. and some of its allies fear that Iran could ultimately be able to develop a nuclear weapon. Iran has denied the charges, saying its nuclear program is geared merely toward peaceful purposes such as generating electricity and producing nuclear medical radioisotopes for medical use — not atomic bombs.

Iran also has a considerable stock of yellowcake uranium, a lightly processed substance it acquired from South Africa in the 1970s under the former U.S.-backed shah's original nuclear program. It also has unspecified quantities of yellowcake obtained from China before U.N. sanctions came into effect.

<http://www.ajc.com/news/ap/defense/iran-selects-16-sites-for-new-nuclear-plants/nWXsB/>

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Jerusalem Post — Israel

Israel Successfully Tests Arrow 3 Missile Defense

New Arrow missile interceptor is designed to shoot down Iranian Shihab 3 missiles, other long-range projectiles.

By YAAKOV LAPPIN

February 25, 2013

The Ministry of Defense carried out its first successful test of the Arrow 3 missile defense interceptor on Monday morning, firing it into space from a coastal military launching pad in central Israel.

Set to become operational in around 2016, the Arrow 3 missile defense system operates in space, traveling at twice the speed of a tank shell to leave the atmosphere. It is designed to seek and destroy Iranian Shihab 3 missiles, as well as other long-range projectiles.

A senior defense source said the interceptor took off at around 8 a.m. on Monday morning over the Mediterranean Sea. "It obtained hypersonic speed, and reached an altitude of 100 kilometers, entering space. It followed various objects, such as stars, and gained further altitude. Its engine stopped after six minutes," the source said.



The test was led by technicians from the Israel Aerospace Industries, together with a team from the US Department of Defense's Missile Defense Agency. The effort is being coordinated by the Ministry of Defense's Israel Missile Defense Organization.

"The Israeli and American teams congratulated one another warmly," the source said.

Defense Minister Ehud Barak congratulated those involved in the test, saying, "This is an important milestone for the state of Israel's multi-layered defense system, which includes Iron Dome, David's Sling, Arrow 2 and Arrow 3."

Once it breaks free of the Earth's atmosphere, the interceptor breaks off from its launching missile, and turns into a space vehicle that carries out several swift maneuvers as it locks on to its target, before lunging directly at the incoming projectile for a head-on collision.

The test was designed to examine the Arrow 3's fly-out capabilities, though no dummy missile was intercepted.

Weighing less half of the Arrow 2 missile, the Arrow 3 creates an additional missile defense layer in space. Together with the Arrow 2 system, Arrow 3 gives the military two to three opportunities to intercept long-range missiles.

The Arrow 3 does not need to know the exact location of the incoming missile when it takes off to intercept it. Once in space, it locates the target rapidly.

US funding assistance is crucial for the development of the project.

The US has earmarked 250 million dollars for four Arrow 3 batteries, and is set to examine a request for four more batteries at a cost of 680 million dollars. Future batteries are expected to hold more interceptors, making them more expensive than the first batch.

The US gave Israel 211 million dollars for development of the Arrow 3 system in 2012, and will transfer 269 million dollars in 2013.

"We are in arms race. We hope to be one step ahead, technologically," a defense source said.

Israel is working to create a multi-layered missile defense shield, consisting of the Arrow 3 at the outer perimeter, followed by Arrow 2, which stops ballistic missiles in the upper atmosphere. Lower down, the David's Sling (also known as Magic Wand) system, still under development, is designed to stop intermediate rockets and missiles, and the Iron Dome is in place to intercept short-range and medium-range rockets.

<http://www.jpost.com/Defense/Article.aspx?id=304431>

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London Daily Telegraph – U.K.

Iran's 'Plan B' for a Nuclear Bomb

Iran is developing a second path to a nuclear weapons capability by operating a plant that could produce plutonium, satellite images show for the first time.

By James Kirkup, David Blair, Holly Watt and Claire Newell

26 February 2013

The Telegraph can disclose details of activity at a heavily-guarded Iranian facility from which international inspectors have been barred for 18 months.

The images, taken earlier this month, show that Iran has activated the Arak heavy-water production plant.

Heavy water is needed to operate a nuclear reactor that can produce plutonium, which could then be used to make a bomb.

The images show signs of activity at the Arak plant, including a cloud of steam that indicates heavy-water production.



Inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency have been unable to visit the facility since August 2011 and Iran has refused repeated requests for information about the site, which is 150 miles south-west of the capital, Tehran.

Western governments and the IAEA have held information about activity at Arak for some time.

But today's exclusive images are the first to put evidence of that activity into the public domain.

The details of Iran's plutonium programme emerged as the world's leading nations resumed talks with Tehran aimed at allaying fears over the country's nuclear ambitions.

The new images also show details of the Fordow complex, which is concealed hundreds of feet beneath a mountain near the holy city of Qom. At talks in Kazakhstan yesterday, world leaders offered to relax sanctions on Iran in exchange for concessions over Fordow, which is heavily protected from aerial attack.

Iran insists that its nuclear facilities are for peaceful use, but Western governments fear that Tehran is seeking a nuclear weapon – or at least the ability to build one.

The striking image of steam over the Arak heavy-water complex is a vivid demonstration that the regime has more than one pathway to a potential nuclear weapon.

Previously, international talks on Iran's nuclear programme have focused on the Islamic Republic's attempts to enrich uranium at plants including Fordow.

But the new images of Arak highlight the progress Iran has made on facilities that could allow it to produce plutonium, potentially giving the country a second option in developing a nuclear weapon.

An Iranian bomb would allow the regime to dissuade any Western challenge and extend its influence in the Middle East.

Israel fears that a nuclear-armed Iran would pose a mortal threat and encourage more attacks on its territory by Hizbollah militants.

Western intelligence agencies have made covert attempts to set back the Iranian nuclear programme through sabotage. Some Israeli politicians want to go further and destroy Iran's nuclear plants from the air before the country can build a bomb.

Other images of the area around Arak show that numerous anti-aircraft missile and artillery sites protect the plant, more than are deployed around any other known nuclear site in the country.

The missile defences are most heavily concentrated to the west of the plant, which would be the most direct line of approach for any aircraft delivering a long-range strike from Israel.

The Arak complex has two parts: the heavy-water plant and a nuclear reactor.

Unlike the heavy-water plant, the reactor has been opened to examination by inspectors from the IAEA. During a visit earlier this month, the inspectors noted that cooling and "moderator circuit" pipes at the reactor were "almost complete".

Iran has told the IAEA that it will begin operating the reactor at Arak in the first three months of 2014.

The country still lacks the technology to reprocess plutonium and use it for a weapon.

But North Korea has successfully developed that technology, and some analysts speculate that Iran could do the same.

Mark Fitzpatrick, a former US State Department official at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, suggested that Arak could be part of a process that might trigger Western strikes on Iran.

One option for the Iranian regime would be to acquire the necessary reprocessing technology from North Korea, he said.



“By then, the option of a military strike on an operating reactor would present enormous complications because of the radiation that would be spread,” he explained.

“Some think Israel’s red line for military action is before Arak comes online.”

Amid growing concerns about the Iranian nuclear programme, The Daily Telegraph commissioned today’s images from commercial satellite operators. The Arak image was recorded on Feb 9.

The IAEA, which is responsible for inspecting Iran’s nuclear sites, says that its inspectors are forced to rely on similar satellite images to monitor Arak.

The Telegraph’s images were analysed by Stuart Ray of McKenzie Intelligence Services, a consultancy firm.

He said: “The steam indicates that the heavy-water plant is operational and the extent of the air defence emplacements around the site make it suspicious.”

Based on its own analysis of satellite images, the IAEA has reached a similar conclusion. In a report distributed to its board last week, the agency reported “ongoing construction” at the Arak site and active heavy water production.

According to the Institute for Science and International Security, a US think tank, if the heavy-water plant reaches full capacity, it would produce about 20lb of plutonium a year.

That could be enough for two nuclear warheads if the plutonium was reprocessed.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iran/9896389/Irans-Plan-B-for-a-nuclear-bomb.html>

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Reuters – U.S.

Iran Upbeat on Nuclear Talks, West Still Wary

By Justyna Pawlak and Fredrik Dahl

Wednesday, February 27, 2013

ALMATY (Reuters) - Iran was upbeat on Wednesday after talks with world powers about its nuclear work ended with an agreement to meet again, but Western officials said it had yet to take concrete steps to ease their fears about its atomic ambitions.

Rapid progress was unlikely with Iran's presidential election, due in June, raising domestic political tensions, diplomats and analysts had said ahead of the February 26-27 meeting in the Kazakh city of Almaty, the first in eight months.

The United States, China, France, Russia, Britain and Germany offered modest sanctions relief in return for Iran curbing its most sensitive nuclear work but made clear that they expected no immediate breakthrough.

In an attempt to make their proposals more palatable to Iran, the six powers appeared to have softened previous demands somewhat, for example regarding their requirement that the Islamic state ship out its stockpile of higher-grade uranium.

Iran's chief nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili said the powers had tried to "get closer to our viewpoint", which he said was positive.

In Paris, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry commented that the talks had been "useful" and that a serious engagement by Iran could lead to a comprehensive deal in a decade-old dispute that has threatened to trigger a new Middle East war.

Iran's foreign minister said in Vienna he was "very confident" an agreement could be reached and Jalili, the chief negotiator, said he believed the Almaty meeting could be a "turning point".



However, one diplomat said Iranian officials at the negotiations appeared to be suggesting that they were opening new avenues, but it was not clear if this was really the case.

Iran expert Dina Esfandiary of the International Institute for Strategic Studies said: "Everyone is saying Iran was more positive and portrayed the talks as a win."

"I reckon the reason for that is that they are saving face internally while buying time with the West until after the elections," she said.

The two sides agreed to hold expert-level talks in Istanbul on March 18 to discuss the powers' proposals, and return to Almaty for political discussions on April 5-6, when Western diplomats made clear they wanted to see a substantive response from Iran.

"Iran knows what it needs to do, the president has made clear his determination to implement his policy that Iran will not have a nuclear weapon," Kerry said.

A senior U.S. official in Almaty said, "What we care about at the end is concrete results."

ISRAELI WARNING

Israel, assumed to be the Middle East's only nuclear-armed power, was watching the talks closely. It has strongly hinted it might attack Iran if diplomacy and sanctions fail to ensure that it cannot build a nuclear weapon. Iran denies any such aim.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said economic sanctions were failing and urged the international community to threaten Iran with military action.

Western officials said the offer presented by the six powers included an easing of a ban on trade in gold and other precious metals, and a relaxation of an import embargo on Iranian petrochemical products. They gave no further details.

In exchange, a senior U.S. official said, Iran would among other things have to suspend uranium enrichment to a fissile concentration of 20 percent at its Fordow underground facility and "constrain the ability to quickly resume operations there".

The official did not describe what was being asked of Iran as a "shutdown" of the plant as Western diplomats had said in previous meetings with Iran last year.

Iran says it has a sovereign right to enrich uranium for peaceful purposes, and wants to fuel nuclear power plants so that it can export more oil.

But 20-percent purity is far higher than that needed for nuclear power, and rings alarm bells abroad because it is only a short technical step away from weapons-grade uranium. Iran says it produces higher-grade uranium to fuel a research reactor.

Iran's growing stockpile of 20-percent-enriched uranium is already more than half-way to a "red line" that Israel has made clear it would consider sufficient for a bomb.

In Vienna on Wednesday, a senior U.N. nuclear agency official told diplomats in a closed-door briefing that Iran was technically ready to sharply increase this higher-grade enrichment, two Western diplomats said.

"Iran can triple 20 percent production in the blink of an eye," one of the diplomats said.

The U.S. official in Almaty said the powers' latest proposal would "significantly restrict the accumulation of near-20-percent enriched uranium in Iran, while enabling the Iranians to produce sufficient fuel" for their Tehran medical reactor.



This appeared to be a softening of a previous demand that Iran ship out its stockpile of higher-grade enriched uranium, which it says it needs to produce medical isotopes.

Iran has often indicated that 20-percent enrichment could be up for negotiation if it received the fuel from abroad instead.

Jalili suggested Iran could discuss the issue, although he appeared to rule out shutting down Fordow. He said the powers had not made that specific demand.

The Iranian rial, which has lost more than half its foreign exchange value in the last year as sanctions bite, rose some 2 percent on Wednesday, currency tracking websites reported.

Additional reporting by Fredrik Dahl and Yeganeh Torbati in Almaty, Georgina Prodhan in Vienna, Zahra Hosseinian in Zurich, Gabriela Baczynska in Moscow, Dan Williams in Jerusalem and Marcus George in Dubai; Writing by Timothy Heritage and Fredrik Dahl; Editing by Louise Ireland.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/02/27/us-iran-nuclear-us-idUSBRE9100J120130227>

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London Daily Telegraph – U.K.

Pictures Show Construction on Sensitive Iranian Military Site

Exclusive: New satellite pictures confirm that Iran has continued to expand a sensitive military site where Tehran is accused of conducting experiments relevant to developing a nuclear weapon.

By Holly Watt, and Claire Newell

27 February 2013

For the last eight years, international inspectors have been excluded from the Parchin military complex, where Iran is believed to have tested rockets and explosives. In particular, Iran is accused of using Parchin to experiment with detonators inside an “explosives containment vessel”.

Any such tests would be “strong indicators of possible nuclear weapon development,” according to the latest report of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Inspectors have not been allowed into Parchin since February 2005. But satellite images obtained by the Daily Telegraph show that construction of new facilities has continued inside the complex.

One picture, taken last October, shows a cluster of three new buildings near the entrance to a tunnel. “This area has the appearance of a research and test facility,” said an analysis from McKenzie Intelligence Services, a consultancy.

“One of the buildings appears to be for the purpose of an activity that requires venting, possibly a test facility or laboratory. The other large building appears to be a control building to monitor activity in the first building,” it said.

The largest building has been constructed in a relatively isolated location, cut into a hillside. “This suggests an activity takes place within which may be volatile enough to warrant protection to the surrounding area should anything go wrong,” added the analysis.

The pictures confirm the IAEA’s report earlier this month that Iran has pressed on with construction inside Parchin. Some of the efforts appear to have been designed to cover up evidence of previous work.

The IAEA noted that “in the light of the extensive activities that have been - and continue to be - undertaken” at Parchin, even if inspectors were allowed to visit, their “ability to conduct effective verification will have been seriously undermined”.

Downing Street said Iran should do more to show that its nuclear programme poses no threat. Asked if Britain believed that Iran’s possible production of plutonium at the Arak plant - highlighted by satellite pictures in the Daily Telegraph



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yesterday - could be wholly civilian and peaceful, the Prime Minister's spokesman said: "The assurances to that fact have not been forthcoming. That is why we have both a diplomatic process but also the process of the track of economic sanctions."

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iran/9898229/Pictures-show-construction-on-sensitive-Iranian-military-site.html>

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Reuters – U.S.

Exclusive: Chinese Trader Accused of Busting Iran Missile Embargo

By William Maclean and Ben Blanchard

Friday, March 1, 2013

(Reuters) - A Chinese businessman indicted in the United States over sales of missile parts to Iran is still making millions of dollars from the trade, say security officials who monitor compliance with Western and U.N. sanctions.

These officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the businessman, Li Fangwei, has earned at least \$10 million from illegal sales to Iran since his indictment by the New York County District Attorney in 2009.

Trade sanctions are at the heart of international efforts to curb Iran's nuclear program for fear it is for military ends - a suspicion Iran rejects. Li's alleged activities may point to Iran's resourcefulness in circumventing those sanctions and turn a spotlight on China's ability to police its own export restrictions.

It is hard to quantify the contribution of foreign firms and individuals to Iran's nuclear and missile programs, but analysts believe some vital components are all but impossible for Tehran to produce at home.

Contacted by Reuters on Feb 4, Li said he continued to get commercial inquiries from Iran but only for legitimate merchandise, such as steel products. Li said his company, LIMMT, had stopped selling to Iran once the United States began sanctioning it several years ago.

He dismissed allegations by the security officials that he had used deception, including changes of company names, to supply Iran with Chinese and foreign-made parts such as high-grade alloys that can be used to enrich uranium and guidance devices suitable for missiles.

"Sure, we did business with Iran, but we did not export the goods they said we did, missiles or whatever," Li said. "We still get inquiries from Iranian clients, but we don't respond to them."

A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman said Beijing was adhering to trade restrictions, including a U.N. ban on helping Iran build missiles that can deliver nuclear warheads.

Officials from Iran, including at firms the security officials said were clients of Li and at the embassy in Beijing, did not respond to requests for comment. A Chinese bank which the security officials said Li used for Iranian business denied it had breached U.N. sanctions.

SERIES OF U.S. MEASURES

In 2006, the U.S. Treasury barred Li from the U.S. financial system for allegedly selling goods with potential military uses to Iran.

Three years later, the New York County District Attorney unsealed a fraud indictment against Li and his metals company LIMMT on suspicion they had used false names to process further payments for sales to Iran through several U.S. banks.

The U.S. banks employed by Li were innocent of any wrongdoing because Li and other suspects had concealed their identities, the then District Attorney, Robert Morgenthau, said.

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United States Air Force Counterproliferation Research & Education | Maxwell AFB, Montgomery AL
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On Feb 4, 2013, Li said that at the time of the indictment he had felt there was no point in saying anything because U.S. courts and prosecutors "don't listen to reason. It's useless."

Three weeks ago, on February 11, the U.S. State Department issued fresh sanctions against Li, saying he had "engaged in missile technology proliferation activities that require the imposition of missile sanctions", and placing additional restrictions on any missile technology trade involving him.

A State Department official said Li had been sanctioned because of his "proliferation to Iran" since his 2009 indictment. Li did not respond to calls seeking comment on the Feb 11 action.

China reacted with irritation to the February 11 measures. Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said the U.S. step "seriously violates the norms of international relations and harms China's interests" and urged the United States to immediately revoke "these irrational sanctions".

China has no extradition treaty with Washington.

ALLOYS, GYROSCOPES

The security officials allege that since the 2009 indictment Li, working in concert with the Iranian embassy in Beijing, had supplied parts to firms that make Iranian missiles, in particular the U.N.-blacklisted Shahid Bakeri Industrial group (SBIG). SBIG did not reply to faxes and emails sent by Reuters for comment.

The goods allegedly supplied included 15 metric tons of high-grade aluminum alloy, more than 20 metric tons of ultra-high strength steel, and 1,700 kg of graphite cylinders.

Li agreed in 2011 to supply 1,500 gyroscopes and accelerometers to SBIG, the security officials alleged, referring to devices that can be used in missile guidance and control systems - a quantity sufficient for about 500 missiles.

Gyroscopes are "controlled items" under the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), an informal and voluntary partnership between 34 mainly Western countries. China is not a party to the MTCR but has similar export controls of its own.

Li also supplied more specialized devices known as fiber-optic gyroscopes, the officials allege; their main uses are in missiles, robots or remotely operated land or sea vehicles.

The officials accuse Li of advising SBIG and other Iranian clients to change details of shipments, including the falsification of the end-user and supplier details in contracts.

Li denies all the allegations.

Between 2010 and 2012, Li took over \$10 million in payments from SBIG alone and travelled often to Iran, the officials allege. He used deception within China to hide his activities not only from the authorities but from Chinese companies as well, the officials added.

In 2012, they said, Li listed a Chinese company as a false end user to obtain repair equipment he intended to send to SBIG in Iran.

A diplomat in Iran's Beijing embassy helped Li, who is aged about 40, to fix meetings with defense officials when he visited Tehran, the security officials allege. In the Iranian capital, the officials said, some contacts knew him only as "The Tailor" to conceal his identity.

CRITICAL COMPONENTS

The officials alleged that some of his clients were not always satisfied with the quality of his goods but kept on using him, perhaps for lack of choice.



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Asked in Beijing whether China knew of Li's purported activities, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua said China's position was "clear and steadfast" on non-proliferation: China had always upheld U.N. Security Council resolutions on non-proliferation. If a Chinese individual or company was doing anything illegal, it would be dealt with.

An internal report for the U.S. Congress in December concluded that sanctions, respected by China, were making it increasingly tough for Tehran to obtain certain critical components and materials for its missiles.

From 2004 to 2007, Chinese arms transfer agreements with Iran totaled about \$300 million at today's prices; between 2008 and 2011 total arms transfer agreements dropped to less than \$50 million, according to the report by the non-partisan Congressional Research Service (CRS) on Iranian missiles.

Li said his company, LIMMT, had stopped selling to Iran once the United States began sanctioning it several years ago. He did not indicate a date, but the U.S. Treasury first sanctioned LIMMT in June 2006, citing its alleged support of and role in the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to Iran.

"We used to export steel, things like that. Nothing to do with missiles," he said.

At two buildings in the northeastern city of Dalian which the security officials said had been used by Li, people either had never heard of him or said he had left some years ago.

Additional reporting by William Maclean, Ben Blanchard and Michael Martina in Beijing and Dalian, Marcus George in Dubai, Dan Williams in Jerusalem, and Mark Hosenball, David Ingram and Anna Yukhananova in Washington; Editing by Janet McBride.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/03/01/us-china-iran-trader-idUSBRE9200BI20130301>

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Channel NewsAsia.com – Singapore

US Official Secretly Visited N.Korea Last Year, Report Claims

February 24, 2013

Agence France-Presse (AFP)

LOS ANGELES — US officials made two secret visits to North Korea last year in an effort to improve relations after the country's leader Kim Jong Un assumed power, according to the Los Angeles Times.

Citing unnamed former US officials familiar with the trips, the newspaper on Saturday said the visits in April and August were aimed at encouraging the new leadership in Pyongyang to moderate its foreign policy.

The April trip was led by Joseph DeTrani, who at the time headed the National Counterproliferation Center in the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, the report said.

It was unclear who led the August trip, the paper noted.

The Times quotes the officials as saying that Sydney Seiler, a veteran CIA analyst, who speaks fluent Korean and is in charge of Korea policy at the National Security Council, went on both trips.

DeTrani left the government last year and now heads the Intelligence and National Security Alliance, an industry group, the newspaper noted.

"There are certain things I just won't talk about, and this is one subject I really feel it's not appropriate for me to comment on," the report quotes him as saying in a telephone interview.

DeTrani said he and other US experts initially saw signs that Kim Jong Un might behave less rigidly than his father, including putting moderate figures in key government positions.

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Without confirming the 2012 trips, he added that it "makes eminent sense" for the United States to conduct talks with North Korean officials after Kim Jong Il's death, the paper noted.

US officials have visited North Korea in the past. Former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright paid an official state visit to the country in 2000.

The last official US visit took place in 2009 when special envoy Stephen Bosworth sought to restart stalled six-party negotiations on North Korea's nuclear program.

http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/afp_asiapacific/view/1256133/1/.html

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RT (Russia Today) – Russia

N. Korea: Our Nuke Missiles Can Hit Mainland US

February 27, 2013

North Korean nuclear-equipped long-range missiles can now reach the US mainland, an editorial at a state news and propaganda website claimed. The UN Security Council has leveled further sanctions against the rogue nation over its recent nuclear test.

The article at the Uriminzokkiri website claimed that Pyongyang is a "*fully independent rocket and nuclear weapons state*," warning that the US was no longer safe by being on the other side of the Pacific Ocean.

"*The United States should be acutely aware that the US mainland is now well within the range of our strategic rockets and nuclear weapons*," the editorial said. The piece was signed by a member of the Korean National Peace Committee, a state propaganda body.

Most military experts believe that North Korea has a long way to go before it can develop a nuclear warhead small enough to fit on its long-range Taepodong-2 missile. But North Korea's third nuclear test last month reportedly involved a smaller device than the previous two, raising concerns that Pyongyang may soon reach the technological breakthrough.

However, Pyongyang must also develop atmospheric re-entry vehicle technology, which is an engineering challenge in itself. Without it, even a small nuclear device would not survive an intercontinental ballistic delivery system.

The Taepodong rocket is also far from perfect, as its only test in 2006 failed. North Korea did see success with its space program rocket Unha, which delivered a satellite into orbit in December 2012. The launch, which some countries claimed was a clandestine test for long-range missile technology, was deemed to be a violation of UN Security Council resolutions, despite Pyongyang's claims to the contrary.

Uriminzokkiri has made headlines before over its controversial propaganda stunts. Earlier this month, it circulated an Internet video showing a Korean's dream: a spaceship launch, and New York City in flames. YouTube later took the clip down after videogame publisher Activision complained of copyright violation, saying the video used clips from its best-seller 'Call of Duty.'

The news comes as members of the UN Security Council are discussing a resolution to impose new sanctions on Pyongyang over its latest nuclear test. While all of the Security Council's members condemned the test, there is disagreement over the exact wording of the resolution.

China, North Korea's sole benefactor, has insisted that the document does not include a reference to Chapter 7 of the UN Charter, which empowers the Security Council to take military action to restore international peace and security. Some countries, including South Korea and Japan, were lobbying to include such wording, which would potentially open the door for a military attack on North Korea.

<http://rt.com/news/north-korea-nuclear-missile-us-526/>

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

Medvedev Paints Gloomy Picture of US Missile Defense Dispute

23 February 2013

HAVANA, February 23 (RIA Novosti) – Despite the general progress in Russian-US relations, Russia and the West could face a serious crisis if the sides fail to resolve the standoff over the deployment of a US missile shield in Europe, Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev said.

In an interview with the Cuban media, published on Saturday, Medvedev said he was satisfied in general with the development of Russian-US relations in the past few years as Moscow and Washington signed a number of important agreements, including the new START arms reduction deal, and “American colleagues” actively backed Russia’s accession to the World Trade Organization.

“Frankly, I feel rather comfortable in a dialogue with the US administration and I am sure that my colleague Vladimir Putin feels the same way, but we [Russia and the United States] still have disagreements on several vital issues, including missile defense,” Medvedev said.

The prime minister reiterated that Washington and its NATO allies refuse to accept Moscow’s arguments that the European missile shield in its proposed shape essentially targets Russia and its nuclear potential.

“We have voiced our concerns but the situation has not changed, and the time to find a solution is running out with each passing month,” Medvedev stressed, adding that the crisis could be looming by the end of this decade.

“If we fail to reach an agreement, the consequences for international relations could be very unpleasant because we will be forced to take retaliatory action,” he said. “Any Russian government, any Russian leader will have to take these retaliatory measures simply because our strategic interests demand so.”

Russia and NATO initially agreed to cooperate on the so-called European missile defense system at the Lisbon summit in November 2010.

However, further talks between Russia and the alliance have floundered over NATO’s refusal to grant Russia legal guarantees that the system would not be aimed against Russia’s strategic nuclear deterrent.

NATO and the United States insist the shield is designed to defend NATO members against missiles from North Korea and Iran, and would not be directed at Russia.

The alliance has vowed to continue developing and deploying its missile defenses, regardless of the status of missile defense cooperation with Russia, which remains stalled.

The final phase of the so-called European Phased Adaptive Approach envisions the deployment of US the SM-3 Block IIB interceptors by 2020 “to help better cope with medium- and intermediate-range missiles and the potential future ICBM threat to the United States.”

Russia has threatened to launch a range of countermeasures to tackle NATO's missile defenses, including forward deployments of tactical nuclear missiles to its Baltic exclave of Kaliningrad and improvements to its strategic nuclear missile arsenal.

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20130223/179638300/Medvedev-Paints-Gloomy-Picture-of-US-Missile-Defense-Dispute.html>

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

Strategic Balance Being Disrupted - Putin

Issue No. 1047, 01 March 2013



27 February 2013

MOSCOW, February 27 (RIA Novosti) - Systematic attempts are being made to undermine the existing strategic balance of forces, Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Wednesday at a meeting with senior military staff at the Russian Defense Ministry.

“Systematic attempts are being made from the outside to disrupt the strategic balance in this or that manner. In fact, the second stage of the US global missile defense system is being launched, and the possibilities for further NATO eastward expansion are being explored,” Putin said.

“The danger of the militarization of the Arctic also persists,” he added.

Those challenges affect Russia’s national interests and determine the priorities of its foreign policy, Putin said.

Those priorities include Eurasian integration, expanding the single economic space and possibly turning it into an economic union, strengthening ties with Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) partners and the BRICS group of emerging economies, and boosting the military capabilities of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).

Moscow has consistently opposed NATO's US-led missile defense program for Europe, claiming it undermines Russia's nuclear deterrent. NATO maintains the program is aimed at emerging nuclear weapon states such as Iran and North Korea.

<http://en.rian.ru/russia/20130227/179712595/Strategic-Balance-Being-Disrupted---Putin.html>

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London Daily Telegraph – U.K.

Trident Spending to Account for One Third of Defence Budget Within a Decade

Spending on the successor to Britain’s Trident nuclear deterrent will take up to a third of the defence budget within the next decade, defence experts are warning.

By Christopher Hope, Senior Political Correspondent

27 February 2013

The Royal United Services Institute forecast “submarine and deterrent spending” is set to account for around 35 per cent of the total core procurement budget by 2021/22.

In the paper, *Mid-Term Blues? Defence and the 2013 Spending Review*, Prof Malcolm Chalmers, RUSI’s research director, said there was “no prospect of the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats agreeing before the next general election” on the successor to Trident which will need to be decommissioned in 2024.

He said that from 2016/17 onwards – when a final decision on Trident will be taken - spending on the successor to Trident will rise sharply.

This level is due to rise further, as successor submarine production gathers pace, and is likely to sustain this level through to the end of the 2020s.

Prof Chalmers, said the current Spending Review, due to conclude by June 2013, is also “widely expected to lead to further reductions in the budget for 2015/16”.

He said that “procurement spending on combat air, air support, helicopters and surface ships is due to fall significantly after 2015/16”.

He said: “Nevertheless, if the 2013 Spending Review leads to further defence spending cuts, the extent of the prospective gap between planned spending and available resources could still be significant.



“The MoD may need to find around £11 billion in savings over ten years as a result of the decisions taken in Autumn Statement 2012 and Spending Review 2013.”

Prof Chalmers added that if the 2015 spending review makes a further 2.5 per cent cut in the MoD resource budget “the requirement for ten-year savings (in the decade up to 2025/26) could increase to around £17 billion”.

Last month defence secretary Philip Hammond claimed to have balanced the budget for defence equipment over the ten years to 2022, outlining plans to spend almost £160 billion on new vehicles and kit.

The programme includes £35.8 billion for submarines, including a replacement for the Trident nuclear system; £18.5 billion on warplanes and drones; and £17.4 billion for surface ships, including new aircraft carriers.

Another £8 billion has been left unallocated to cover the risks of cost overruns. The programme meant that “for the first time in a generation the Armed Forces will have a sustainable equipment plan,” Mr. Hammond said.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/industry/defence/9895708/Trident-spending-to-account-for-one-third-of-defence-budget-within-a-decade.html>

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Bloomberg Businessweek

Raytheon Will Test Anti-Missile Blimps Over Washington

By Susan Berfield

February 28, 2013

Blimps were supposed to be the military’s Next Big Thing. Not the German military circa 1933, but the U.S. military in the 21st century. Defense contractors have spent the last decade designing football field-long, helium-filled balloons with radar that can track planes, trains, automobiles—and especially missiles. Yet one by one, the projects have floated away, victims of missed budgets and deadlines. One of the few left goes by the catchy title Joint Land Attack Cruise Missile Defense Elevated Netted Sensor System, which its manufacturer, Raytheon (RTW), calls JLENS for short.

In 2007 the plan was to develop the surveillance technology and produce 32 of the blimps for about \$6 billion. Five years and \$1.9 billion later, the U.S. Army had four it could test. A January report by the Pentagon’s director of equipment testing cited early problems with the blimps’ “friendly aircraft identification capabilities” and “noncooperative target recognition.” Translation: They had trouble reliably spotting certain friends and foes.

Production of new JLENS blimps has been halted; budget cuts is the stated reason. But the military is going to give two sets—they usually operate in pairs—a last chance to prove their worth. The plan is to leash them for three years at the Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland, practically under the nose of Congress. “Being close to D.C. wasn’t the intent, but it’s icing on the cake,” says Dean Barten, the Army’s product manager for JLENS. Adds Mark Rose, Raytheon’s program director: “JLENS is an extremely reliable system, and Raytheon looks forward to proving this” at Aberdeen. “They couldn’t have found a more difficult environment,” he says. “It’s the mid-Atlantic, there’s a huge number of aircraft, commercial and private, to test the system.” In the past tests, Rose says, the blimps have “performed flawlessly.”

Chet Nagle, a former CIA agent and a JLENS booster, thinks the Persian Gulf or North Korea would have been better spots to demonstrate the system’s capabilities. “But if you want to look good, you put it next to Washington, D.C. You make Congress feel safe,” he says.

Blimps have been used by the military for centuries. In the 1790s, France launched balloons for reconnaissance in its war against Austria. During the Civil War, the Union Army sent a balloon above Arlington, Va., to spy on Confederate troops. The Germans had their zeppelins in World War I, and the Japanese used hydrogen-powered balloons to carry bombs across the Pacific in World War II. Then the threats changed, and it became more common to use planes and satellites for spying. For years, the best-known blimp was Goodyear’s.



U.S. defense contractors have pitched blimps as a low-budget threat detector. They can remain in the air longer than planes, and there's no need for expensive fuel or pilots. (Unfortunately for Congress, that means no rides.) "It's a very affordable and cost-effective solution for surveillance," says Raytheon's Rose. The JLENS variety is designed to float at 10,000 feet and come down every 30 days to have the helium topped off. They're moored to the ground with Kevlar cables. One is meant for wide, 360-degree surveillance that can reach 340 miles, and the other for precision tracking. Each is 243 feet long.

That may sound like an easy target, but Raytheon isn't concerned about an enemy trying to take one down. "We've shot missiles through it, and they make holes," says Rose. Although helium escapes, it does so gradually, he adds. "It's not like a party balloon that goes 'pop.'"

It will be at least 18 months before the blimps go up. The Army is requesting \$60 million from Congress to set up the test site and operate the craft for the first year. The fate of the second pair is still up in the air. "There's discussion about continued testing in the U.S.," says Rose. "Or they could be deployed to a location that might be more confrontational."

The bottom line: Next year a pair of massive blimps tethered to the ground by Kevlar cables will be on the lookout for missiles near Washington.

<http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2013-02-28/raytheon-will-test-anti-missile-blimps-over-washington>

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Washington Times

Al Qaeda Calls for Jihadists to Kill Ex-Leaders Clinton, Bush, Blair

By Shaun Waterman, Washington Times

Friday, March 1, 2013

The latest edition of al Qaeda's English-language online magazine Inspire urges readers to become "lone wolf" jihadists focused on assassinating current and former leaders of Western countries.

"It is easy," an al Qaeda "consultant" writes of killing the U.S. or French president.

"These people have many weak points, especially during parties, ceremonies and election campaigns."

In the article titled "You ask, we answer," the consultant says that "individual mujahids" or holy warriors, who are daunted by the task of killing current world leaders should consider murdering their predecessors.

"If you think you are unable," the consultant writes "then you have easy targets like [former U.S. Presidents George W.] Bush [and] Bill Clinton, [and former U.S. Secretaries of State] Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice, ... [as well as former French President Nicholas] Sarkozy and [former British Prime Minister] Tony Blair.

"It is now easy to reach these guys, especially since they aren't in office anymore."

The 64-page edition of Inspire, the first since May 2012, is the tenth released by the terror group's Yemen-based affiliate, al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).

A copy was made available to The Washington Times by the Middle East Media Research Institute or MEMRI, a non-profit founded by a former Mossad official that monitors and translates Islamic extremist messaging.

Like previous editions, this one focuses on individual or "lone wolf" jihadists, urging them to commit minor acts of terror that more closely resemble simple vandalism, like setting fire to parked cars.

The new edition also includes material from two American-born al Qaeda jihadists. There are excerpts from what is touted as an "exclusive interview" with Adam Gadahn, believed by U.S. officials to be with al Qaeda's central command on the Afghan-Pakistan border.



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The article deals with the Arab spring, and there is no information given about where or when the it was conducted. However, Mr. Gadahn makes no reference to the attack on the U.S. diplomatic post in Benghazi, Libya, last Sept. 11, and refers to events in that country as an “uprising” not a “revolution.” This strongly suggests that it predates at least last September’s attack, and possibly even the 2011 toppling of Libyan strongman Col. Muammar Gadhafi.

Mr. Gadahn, a teenage convert to Islam raised on a goat farm in California, warns Western governments against “meddling” in the wave of popular revolts known as the Arab spring, and urges readers, “Let’s continue to bleed the head of unbelief dry,” by attacking and undermining the economies of the Western powers.

The magazine also features a letter said to be written by Samir Khan, the magazine’s founder and principal AQAP propagandist, before he was killed in Yemen in September 2011 in a U.S. drone strike.

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2013/mar/1/al-qaeda-mag-calls-jihadists-kill-bush-clinton/>

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USA TODAY

CDC Bioterror Labs Cited for Security Flaws in Audits

Laboratories at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have been repeatedly cited in private government audits for failing to properly secure bioterror agents.

By Alison Young, USA TODAY

February 26, 2013

Laboratories at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have been repeatedly cited in private government audits for failing to properly secure potential bioterror agents such as anthrax and plague, and not training employees who work with them, according to "restricted" government watchdog reports obtained by USA TODAY.

"These weaknesses could have compromised [CDC's] ability to safeguard select agents from accidental or intentional loss and to ensure the safety of individuals," according to a 2010 report by the Department of Health and Human Services' inspector general.

The IG probed federal lab security after a scientist at an Army lab was implicated in the anthrax attacks in 2001. The IG also noted problems with CDC lab security in reports from 2009 and 2008.

The reports — which are prompting concern among some key members of Congress — offer a rare window into the CDC's performance on safety and security issues when working with the world's most dangerous pathogens.

The CDC is the main federal agency that oversees government and private bioterror lab safety involving agents dangerous to people, but it refuses to release copies of its lab inspection reports. The IG's office released its reports to USA TODAY in response to a Freedom of Information Act request.

CDC officials said nobody was endangered because their labs have redundant layers of safety and security to protect employees and the public. When issues arise, they are fixed immediately, said Joseph Henderson, director of the CDC's Office of Safety, Security and Asset Management. "We always take it seriously," he said. "We strive for perfection."

The issues cited in the IG reports are "troubling," said U.S. Rep. Fred Upton, chairman of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce. His committee has been examining federal regulation of bioterror labs in the wake of USA TODAY reports last summer about incidents at CDC labs in Atlanta of security doors left unlocked and issues with airflow systems that help prevent the release of infectious agents. The newspaper's earlier reports, which involved incidents in 2009-2012, were based on leaked internal e-mails and other records.

The IG reports were heavily redacted by government officials because they contain "restricted, sensitive information." Still Upton, R-Mich., said they "show the need for better scrutiny over the handling of select agents ... and we intend to immediately look into the issues raised."

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The reports also concerned U.S. Rep. Henry Waxman of California, the ranking Democrat on the committee. He said, "There appears to be long-standing and recurring problems at CDC's labs which underscore the need to increase oversight and to ensure that appropriate action is taken to correct these problems permanently."

The issues cited in the IG's audits include:

- Failing to ensure the physical security of bioterror agents or restrict access to approved individuals. The 2009 report cites coding on electronic cards that allowed overly broad access to approved workers, allowing them wide access to all bioterror research areas, rather than just the specific areas or specimen freezers for their projects. Most of the details in the 2010 report were redacted.
- Failing to ensure that those working with and around potential bioterror agents have received required training. The 2010 report says auditors couldn't verify that 10 of 30 employees sampled had the required training. The 2009 report says the labs "did not provide biosafety and security training to 88 of 168 approved individuals" before they were given access to work areas for bioterror agents.
- Not ensuring that only approved individuals accepted packages containing potential bioterror agents arriving from other outside labs. The 2010 audit identified six unapproved people — five from a delivery contractor and one security guard — who received and signed for the packages. The 2008 report, which focused on security of arriving packages, also identified issues.

In 2008, the FBI implicated a microbiologist working at an Army biodefense lab as being responsible for the anthrax letter attacks, which killed five and sickened 17. The scientist, Bruce Ivins, took a fatal overdose of Tylenol while under scrutiny.

It is not clear which germs or toxins, known as "select agents" in federal regulations, were involved in the CDC incidents that occurred from 2005 to 2009. Select agents are all dangerous pathogens and include the ebola virus, monkeypox virus, the toxin that causes botulism and ricin, a deadly poison that made headlines in 2003 after a potential London terror attack was foiled.

Although the locations of the CDC labs examined by the IG's auditors were redacted from the reports, Henderson said the 2010 and 2008 audits involved labs on the CDC's main campus in Atlanta, and the 2009 audit was of the agency's labs in Fort Collins, Colo.

Rutgers university biosafety expert Richard Ebright, who reviewed the IG reports at USA TODAY's request, said the issues cited are significant and repeated. "There is no evidence of improvement. Some of the same kinds of violations occurred repeatedly over the three-year review period," he said. "It is ironic that the institution that sets U.S. standards for safety and security of work with human pathogens fails to meet its own standards."

In the wake of USA TODAY's reports last June and concerns about the CDC policing itself, the CDC agreed last August to have its labs inspected by bioterror lab experts from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The USDA has inspected CDC labs twice, said CDC spokesman Tom Skinner, and inspections will occur every 12 to 18 months.

The CDC would not share copies of its most recent inspection reports, saying it is agency policy not to release them for security reasons. Yet to document that CDC had corrected airflow issues at its Emerging Infectious Diseases Laboratory in Atlanta, the agency on Friday provided USA TODAY a copy of an external lab safety review done at the CDC's request by biosafety experts from Canada's public health agency. The Canadian review at the \$214 million 11-story lab complex known as Building 18, says it found no issues of "non-compliance" that pose health and safety risks.

The CDC has not responded to USA TODAY's FOIA requests filed eight months ago for copies of its inspection reports for Building 18's labs, nor has it responded to requests for documents about the building's lab security and airflow incidents.

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2013/02/25/cdc-bioterror-labs-cited-for-security-failures-in-audits/1945933/>

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KSWT.com – Yuma, AZ

New Bioterrorism Vaccine Gets First Test in Humans

February 26, 2013

GAITHERSBURG, Md., Feb. 26, 2013 /PRNewswire/ -- Integrated BioTherapeutics (IBT) announces the initiation of a Phase 1 clinical trial testing the safety and immunogenicity of its staphylococcal enterotoxin B vaccine "STEBVAX" in healthy adults.

This trial, marking the first time a superantigen vaccine has been administered to humans, is designed to enroll 28 individuals. STEBVax is a proprietary, rationally designed and attenuated form of Staphylococcal Enterotoxin B (SEB), a member of a group of toxins called superantigens due to the ability to cause a massive inflammatory response leading to toxic shock.

"SEB is a biowarfare threat to the US and the superantigens can be critical factors affecting the outcome of *Staphylococcus aureus* infections," said Dr. M. Javad Aman, IBT President and Chief Scientific Officer. "This clinical study advances our vaccine programs designed to protect military and civilian populations against the threat of SEB and our long-term goal of developing vaccines and therapeutics for *Staphylococcus aureus*."

The National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), have sponsored the clinical trial. The trial is being conducted at the Center for Vaccine Development at the University of Maryland in Baltimore, which is one of NIAID's Vaccine and Treatment Evaluation Units (VTEUs).

"We are extremely pleased to see a decade-long research and development effort, which was heavily supported by the government, reach this critical milestone," Aman said. "Safety evaluation of STEBVax is significant as it is the first time a vaccine for such a potent toxin is being tested in humans."

IBT, a biotechnology company developing medical countermeasures for biodefense and emerging infectious diseases, is dedicated to the development of vaccines, immunotherapeutics and discovery of small molecules targeting emerging infectious agents.

<http://www.kswt.com/story/21355739/new-bioterrorism-vaccine-gets-first-test-in-humans>

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The Hill – Washington, D.C.

Intel Chairwoman: Report on China's Cyber War Unit 'Essentially Correct'

By Brendan Sasso and Daniel Strauss

February 25, 2013

The chairwoman of the Senate Intelligence Committee on Monday said a bombshell report of cyber spying by the Chinese government is "essentially correct."

Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) said classified intelligence documents support the recent claim by security firm Mandiant that an elite military unit of Chinese hackers is continuously attacking U.S. government and private computer networks.

"I read the Mandiant report. I've also read other reports, classified out of Intelligence, and I think the Mandiant report, which is now unclassified, it's public, is essentially correct," Feinstein said on MSNBC.

The Mandiant report, which was released last week, traced a series of cyberattacks to a 12-story building in Shanghai. The private security analysts concluded that the building, which likely holds hundreds or even thousands of employees, is almost certainly the headquarters of China's secretive cyber war division, the People's Liberation Army Unit 61398.

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Mandiant wrote that since 2006, the Chinese hackers have stolen data from at least 141 companies across 20 major industries, including critical infrastructure sectors like energy and telecommunications. At least 115 of the companies were in the United States.

China has denied the accusations.

The Obama administration has said that many cyberattacks are coming from China, but has yet to explicitly accuse the Chinese government of carrying out the attacks.

"Chinese actors are the world's most active and persistent perpetrators of economic espionage," the White House wrote in a recent report on trade secret theft. "U.S. private sector firms and cybersecurity specialists have reported an onslaught of computer network intrusions that have originated in China, but the [intelligence community] cannot confirm who was responsible."

Asked about the Mandiant report last week, White House press secretary Jay Carney said the administration has repeatedly raised its concerns "at the highest levels about cyber theft with senior Chinese officials, including in the military, and we will continue to do so."

Feinstein said she is "very concerned" about cyber espionage and urged the Chinese government to acknowledge the program.

"I think China has to face up to it. I think our government needs to sit down with China forthwith, present the evidence to China, ask China for its investigation, and press, press, press," she said. "This is going to no good end unless there is some agreement between our two nations and the world community for an agreement which is enforceable. One of these days there is going to be a huge cyberattack somewhere, and we must prevent that from happening."

Last week, the White House unveiled a strategy aimed at fighting the theft of trade secrets. Among other steps, the administration said it will use "trade policy tools" to pressure other countries to stop hacking U.S. companies and to enforce intellectual property laws.

Feinstein and other lawmakers back legislation aimed at improving U.S. cybersecurity practices.

<http://thehill.com/blogs/global-affairs/terrorism/284721-intel-chairwoman-report-on-chinas-cyber-war-unit-essentially-correct>

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The London Guardian – U.K.

China Claims most Cyber-Attacks on Its Military Websites Have US Origin

Beijing says defence ministry and another site subjected to 1.7m attacks last year, two-thirds of which came from within America

Reuters in Beijing

Thursday, 28 February 2013

Two Chinese military websites were subject to about 144,000 hacking attacks a month last year, almost two-thirds of which came from the US, China's defence ministry has said.

Earlier this month a US computer security company said a Chinese military unit was probably behind a series of hacking attacks mostly targeting America, triggering a war of words between Washington and Beijing. China denied the allegations and said it was the victim.

Beijing has now provided some details for the first time of the alleged attacks from the US. "The defence ministry and China military online websites have faced a serious threat from hacking attacks since they were established, and the number of hacks has risen steadily in recent years," said a ministry spokesman, Geng Yansheng, on Thursday.



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"According to the IP addresses, the websites were, in 2012, hacked on average from overseas 144,000 times a month, of which attacks from the US accounted for 62.9%."

The comments were made at a monthly news conference, which foreign reporters are not allowed to attend, and posted on the ministry's website.

Geng said he had noted reports that the US planned to expand its cyberwarfare capability but that they were unhelpful to increasing international co-operation towards fighting hacking.

"We hope that the US side can explain and clarify this," he added.

The US security company, Mandiant, identified the Shanghai-based Unit 61398 of the Chinese army as the most likely culprits behind the hacking targeting America. Mandiant said it believed the unit had carried out "sustained" attacks on a wide range of industries.

The hacking dispute adds to diplomatic tension between China and the US, already strained by Chinese suspicion about Washington's motives in Asia and arguments over issues from trade to human rights.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/feb/28/china-cyber-attacks-military-website-us>

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Washington Times

Inside the Ring: Chinese Pressure Points

By Bill Gertz, Washington Times
Thursday, February 28, 2013

China's military fears a major cyberattack against its strategic forces, and communist leaders also worry about cyberstrikes against infrastructure, according to Michael Pillsbury, a former Reagan administration defense-planning chief.

A devastating cyberattack on its military or civilian infrastructure is one of Beijing's 16 strategic fears, according to Mr. Pillsbury, writing in a recent issue of the bimonthly journal "Survival."

The analysis is the first public account on Chinese strategic thinking.

Defense and intelligence officials say the list of China's fears represents potential pressure points for the United States to exploit in targeting China, if Beijing continues its current aggressive behavior. That troubling behavior includes increased coercion and threats against most Asian nations and notably large-scale cyberattacks of its own.

A report by security company Mandiant Corp., made public last week, revealed that a Chinese military unit in Shanghai appears to have been engaged for years in a massive cyberespionage campaign against U.S. government and private-sector networks. The report said China has obtained large amounts of valuable information from the cyberspying operations.

China's military denounced the report, and its military newspapers said the Pentagon wants to control the world through cyberspace power.

The U.S. government reportedly was behind several cyberattacks on Iran's nuclear program, including the Stuxnet virus that disrupted centrifuges used by Iran to enrich uranium in violation of U.N. sanctions.

Mr. Pillsbury, a Pentagon consultant now with the Hudson Institute, stated that the Chinese believe their information networks — the cornerstone of Beijing's large-scale, high-tech military buildup — are vulnerable to attack.

The study is based on Chinese military writings that reveal numerous risks to Chinese networks, including the danger of information leaks and the inability to protect networks.

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The Chinese are concerned about the vulnerabilities of their strategic nuclear forces that could be attacked by special-operations commandos, electronic jamming or precision missile strikes.

“The fears of the 2nd Artillery Corps, China’s strategic missile force, are revealed in reports published by China’s Rocket Force News that training exercises have emphasized strategies to counter air attacks, attacks by special forces, electromagnetic jamming, live-troop reconnaissance, and network attacks using hackers and computer viruses,” Mr. Pillsbury said.

China’s strategic missile forces in 2006 conducted a training exercise involving enemy forces using electronic jamming against a command post.

As reported by Inside the Ring in August, the commander of the U.S. Strategic Command, Air Force Gen. C. Robert Kehler, suggested that U.S. military forces are prepared to engage in offensive cyberattacks against foreign nuclear capabilities.

Such attacks — whether in North Korea, China, Russia or a future nuclear-armed Iran — remain a high-priority target, defense sources have said.

The communist government also fears the Internet.

“Chinese authorities are concerned that the Internet could turn the population against them and consequently feel a need to protect ‘China’s psychological space,’” Mr. Pillsbury stated.

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2013/feb/28/inside-the-ring-chinese-pressure-points/>

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New York Times
OPINION/Editorial

The Nuclear Agenda

February 24, 2013

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President Obama set an ambitious goal in his first term when he endorsed the vision of an eventual world without nuclear weapons. After some early achievements, namely the New Start treaty mandating cuts in deployed strategic weapons, the effort stalled for two years until he picked up the theme again in the State of the Union address this month. Now he needs to follow through with a more sustained commitment.

To reduce reliance on nuclear weapons and halt the spread of nuclear technology, Mr. Obama has said he would engage Russia on further reductions in both countries’ arsenals. He has also vowed to take “firm action” in response to North Korean nuclear threats and do what is necessary to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon.

Long after the cold war, the United States and Russia still have thousands of weapons they cannot afford and do not need, especially when the threats are militant groups and states like Iran and North Korea. For months, Mr. Obama has dragged his feet on a recommendation from his advisers to cut the number of deployed strategic nuclear warheads by at least a third, from 1,550 allowed under the 2010 New Start treaty to about 1,000.

Gen. James Cartwright, the retired vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and a former nuclear forces commander, has argued that deterrence could be guaranteed with 900 warheads, with half deployed at any time. Still, moving to 1,000 deployed warheads would be significant. The usual course would be to negotiate a new treaty on reductions, and President Obama plans to send his national security adviser, Tom Donilon, to Moscow soon for talks. But the Russians are demanding that any treaty include restrictions on NATO and American missile defense systems in Europe. Meanwhile, Senate Republicans, who still nurture cold war obsessions, have already begun to react hysterically to talk of new weapons reductions.



Given these complications, Mr. Obama is wise to be considering an informal agreement with Russia that would provide a framework for deeper mutual cuts in the nuclear stockpiles without needing Senate ratification. Republicans no doubt will accuse him of overstepping his power, but previous presidents, including both Presidents Bush, have taken action on the nuclear issue on their own, and Mr. Obama should not rule out that possibility.

At a minimum, he could accelerate the New Start cuts to bring the number of American warheads, now about 1,700, down to 1,550 ahead of the 2018 deadline. Any further reductions beyond that must include, for the first time, warheads held in reserve and short-range nuclear weapons, as well as the deployed strategic warheads.

Mr. Obama should also try again to win Senate ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, which has been ratified by 159 nations but was rejected by the United States Senate in 1999, and to persuade Pakistan to stop blocking international action in the Geneva-based Conference on Disarmament on a treaty banning the production of fissile material. To lessen the chances of miscalculation or accident, he should at least remove from alert status some of the hundreds of nuclear weapons that are poised to launch within minutes.

Weapons cuts will make the world safer and strengthen America's hand as it exhorts Iran and North Korea to halt their programs. More than that, if the administration and Congress are serious about the fiscal crisis, they cannot continue to throw money at a bloated nuclear arsenal. Washington is set to spend more than \$600 billion on nuclear weapons over the next decade and will soon make decisions on modernizing the arsenal that could waste billions more. As Mr. Obama said in a 2009 arms control speech in Prague, "We must ignore the voices who tell us that the world cannot change." He has limited time to lead the way.

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/24/opinion/sunday/the-nuclear-agenda.html?_r=1&

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Bloomberg News
OPINION/Bloomberg View

North Korea Shows Dangers of Half-Deal with Iran

By Gary Milhollin
February 24, 2013

Negotiators from the world's major powers sit down with Iran this week for more talks on its nuclear program, just weeks after North Korea tested another nuclear weapon.

If the connection between these two events isn't obvious, it should be: North Korea's nuclear saga is a cautionary tale for anyone attempting to bargain with the Islamic Republic.

Back in the 1980s, when suspicions were first raised about North Korea's nuclear ambitions, the country's leadership was keen to distract attention with a show of clean hands. It joined the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, promised not to make the bomb and said it would report the whereabouts of all its nuclear material to international inspectors.

Iran has been hiding nuclear work and sites since about the same time, although it was one of the treaty's original signatories. Like Iran, North Korea was soon suspected of hiding things after that initial show of clean hands. It stiffed inspectors and made lame excuses for doing so. And, like Iran, North Korea built plants that generated fissile material that was useful for making bombs, but unnecessary for producing civilian nuclear power.

By 1994, matters had come to a head. North Korea's lies were bolder, and the pace of its nuclear program had accelerated. Its scientists, rounding the last turn, could see the finish line. The U.S. and other world powers had to decide how to stop them: Would it be United Nations resolutions, or economic sanctions, or war?

Interim Deal

The response was to negotiate a deal. The U.S. agreed to send North Korea much-needed shipments of heavy oil and to endorse the building of a new nuclear-power reactor, for which South Korea would be the lead supplier. In return,



North Korea agreed to stop producing nuclear material, on the condition that it could keep its nuclear sites, plus the fuel it had already made. This deal was to be a first step only. North Korea would later give up all of its nuclear material and dismantle its sites, at which point the U.S. would drop sanctions and restore normal relations.

The deal fell apart in 2002, when a U.S. diplomat accused North Korea of secretly building a facility to enrich uranium. Oil shipments stopped, and the promised nuclear reactor wasn't built. Then, as everyone now knows, North Korea used its material and its sites to make nuclear bombs. The tremors from weapon testing arrived in 2006.

What should this experience teach us about the talks with Iran? Last year, the U.S. and its negotiating partners in the so-called P5+1 -- China, France, Germany, Russia, the U.K. and the U.S. -- offered an interim deal for limited economic and technical aid. In exchange, Iran would lower (but not stop) its production of nuclear fuel, and would send a portion of its stock out of the country.

Most important under the proposed agreement was that Iran would be able to keep its nuclear sites and all of the low-enriched uranium it had already made. It would ship out only its much smaller stock of medium-grade fuel. CNN reported last week that a similar deal will be on the table again at the talks in Kazakhstan.

This initial agreement with Iran would be just the first step in a process. Later, the parties would move to a comprehensive arrangement in which Iran would, perhaps (the details are still vague), get rid of its enriched uranium and limit -- to a token, face-saving level -- its ability to make more of it. The U.S. would, perhaps, drop most of its sanctions and move toward normal relations.

Same Deal

Sound familiar? It should. The North Korea and Iran deals are essentially the same. After the agreement with North Korea, the country's leaders were left with enough plutonium in the form of spent reactor fuel to make about six nuclear weapons, after further processing. The deal being floated for Iran would leave it with sufficient enriched uranium to make about six nuclear weapons, after further processing.

Of course, North Korea did the processing and made the bombs. What we have to ask ourselves is this: Why won't Iran? Is there any reason to believe that this time the outcome would be different?

The mistake in the North Korea talks was not to insist from the outset that all nuclear fuel should be shipped out of the country, and all nuclear sites should be dismantled. The U.S. made a deal that lowered the diplomatic pressure on Supreme Leader Kim Jong-Il, but left the danger in place. North Korea got an agreement with the U.S. without giving up its ability to make nuclear weapons. It was in a position to restart the program at any time.

If Iran accepts the interim deal being floated this week, it will do even better. Iran will not have to stop producing nuclear fuel and will only have to cut its production back by a small percentage, while keeping enough to produce a small arsenal. Nor will it have to dismantle its production sites. Like North Korea, it will be able to restart production at any time.

The lesson from North Korea is that an interim agreement of this kind won't work. In addition to leaving too much fuel in place that can be enriched to weapons grade, the proposed agreement inevitably renders legitimate what it doesn't prohibit. If nuclear fuel, production or equipment is permitted, then it becomes Iran's right.

Once such a notion is accepted, the interim deal becomes the only one, because it dissipates the crisis atmosphere. The public starts thinking that things are safe, or at least safe enough, though they aren't. The effect is to diminish the support for sanctions that was so difficult to win, and to make it almost impossible to reinstate these measures once it becomes clear that Iran is not taking the next steps, which -- just as with North Korea -- it won't.

Before making any halfway deal, U.S. and European diplomats should insist that Iran remove itself from the path that North Korea so easily followed. If Iran wants to convince the world that it has no desire to acquire nuclear weapons, then it should be willing to give up the means to make them. When the talks resume this week, let's hope history isn't forgotten.



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Gary Milhollin is executive editor of *Iranwatch.org*, a website on Iranian weapons programs that is published by the Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control.

The opinions expressed are his own.

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-02-24/north-korea-shows-dangers-of-half-deal-with-iran.html>

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The Independent – U.K.

OPINION/Independent Voices

Discarding Trident Would Not Aid Global Nuclear Disarmament; It Would only Imperil UK Security

It is imperative that discussions on the nuclear deterrent be driven by national security needs, not short-term political considerations

By Lord West

Tuesday, 26 February 2013

A debate is emerging within the Labour Party over its position on the nuclear deterrent. It is imperative that such discussions should be driven by national security needs and not short-term political considerations. Recent nuclear tests in North Korea, Iran's nuclear programme and its implications for proliferation in the region and the upgrading by China and Russia of their nuclear systems demonstrate why Labour is right to reject unilateralism. Fears over global proliferation are increasing, and there is no indication that the UK's admirable world lead in cutting numbers of nuclear systems as well as warheads has had any impact on the behaviour of other nuclear and would be nuclear weapon states. Indeed I think it fair to say that independently discarding our own deterrent would imperil UK security and not accelerate global disarmament.

The renewal of Trident was a decision for this Parliament. Instead, for political reasons, we await the result of a [Liberal Democrat-led] "alternatives review" cynically embarked on to delay the clash between Conservatives and Lib Dems over the future of our Nation's deterrent.

The focus of the debate has rested on what form our deterrent should take and it is important that it is based on fact and evidence. Numerous studies over the past 40 years have reaffirmed that a submarine based ballistic missile system is the best option if UK is to remain a nuclear weapon state. Having looked at other options in detail it is quite clear that none of them are as cheap or practical as their supporters claim. Labour must not lapse into the belief that an alternative to Trident is better at all costs. I firmly believe that any alternative would undermine our national security.

The options of land or air-based systems need hardly be taken seriously.

The options of land or air-based systems need hardly be taken seriously. Both are highly vulnerable to pre-emptive strike and would entail massive infrastructure and platform, delivery and weapons development costs. Similar concerns over cost and vulnerability make a surface ship-based system another thing of foolish fantasy.

The most-often cited 'alternative' is Astute submarines carrying cruise missiles, but no such missile exists. The UK would have to develop, test and bring into service a new weapon. Even allowing for the triumph of optimism, such a programme would be complex, fraught with risk (we have not developed such a missile before) and extremely expensive. Cruise missiles have crashed and been shot down; for deterrence to work we need to show we can fire with a guarantee of success. We would have to embark on a new warhead development programme. This would be hugely expensive and could even breach the terms of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. The new missiles and weapon system would have to be regularly and rigorously tested on all measures of performance. At present the US provides all the facilities for Trident test firings, so all of this would be a further cost to our exchequer.

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How many Astute class submarines and missiles would be required and should every submarine carry nuclear missiles? Furthermore, cruise missiles will inevitably have less range than ballistic missiles, thus submarines carrying cruise missiles would need to get closer to a target, with consequent risk of detection and destruction. Nuclear-tipped cruise missiles would constitute a growth in our stockpile of weapons ready to fire and could be seen as a reversal of our steady downward pressure on weapon holdings. It may also contravene the Non Proliferation Treaty. If an Astute class submarine fired a cruise missile, how would an enemy know that it was not a nuclear variant? Would he wait to find out?

The answers to these questions have implications for cost and capability which have not been thought through.

The review will challenge [Trident's] continuous at sea deterrence. This makes little sense. It saves the UK next-to-nothing financially, and having no ballistic missile submarine permanently at sea would make us vulnerable to a pre-emptive strike. What is more, having to take the decision to arm and deploy our deterrent to sea in a period of tension would risk escalation at the critical moment. Such a decision would also impact immediately on our current deterrent force.

Crucially, the "alternatives review" must identify a clear way forward. To present alternatives 'for debate' is unsatisfactory. We are dealing with our nation's ultimate safeguard in a highly dangerous and chaotic world. The British people will never forgive us if we get this wrong and they expect our guidance. What seems a seductive plan for Labour with a post-2015 coalition in mind is in fact highly dangerous. Nuclear deterrence is too important to get wrong. Trident has been underwritten by the US until 2042 and provides the most effective, affordable option for the UK's nuclear deterrent capability. The sooner the Labour Party agrees the better.

Lord West of Spithead is a former Chief of the Naval Staff and Minister for Security and Counter Terrorism.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/discarding-trident-would-not-aid-global-nuclear-disarmament-it-would-only-imperil-uk-security-8512027.html>

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Wall Street Journal
OPINION/Commentary
February 26, 2013

'Nuclear Zero' Offers Nothing Worth Having

The president not only wants to cut missiles, he also is neglecting a promised modernization program.

By BOB CORKER and JIM INHOFE

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President Obama has repeatedly identified nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism as key dangers to the United States and its allies. His analysis is correct, but that cannot be said about the centerpiece of his response: declaring America's commitment to eliminate its own nuclear weapons on the way to a world of "nuclear zero." Meanwhile, he has neglected to modernize the weapons that are essential to American security.

The president's approach is mistaken. Nothing demonstrates the hollowness of the disarmament dream as clearly as the international community's inability to keep regimes such as North Korea—and soon Iran—from acquiring nuclear weapons. The recent North Korean nuclear test clearly and dangerously demonstrated how little regard rogue states hold for a nuclear-armed U.S. Why would they be more intimidated, much less moved to disarm themselves, by an America that was whittling away its own nuclear superiority?

If anything, reducing the American arsenal is likely to cause the very instability that the U.S. seeks to avoid. Without an American commitment to a strong nuclear deterrent, the country's friends and allies could develop doubts about where the U.S. stands and what it would do to safeguard its own interests and theirs.



Many other nations depend on U.S. nuclear-security assurances and could come to question whether further reductions in the U.S. nuclear arsenal—and an American political leadership that prizes disarmament posturing over the hard work of counter-proliferation—can credibly protect them against proliferators and other threats.

If these friends doubt U.S. capability and resolve, they may feel the need to develop their own nuclear weapons. Moreover, some potential adversaries, as America rushes to disarm, may be encouraged to acquire or expand nuclear arsenals, seeking to become nuclear "peers."

The commitment to modernizing America's nuclear deterrent appeared to be well established before the vote on the New Start Treaty with Russia in December 2010. In fact, the president's own 2010 Nuclear Posture Review states clearly that nuclear reductions depend on a modernized and responsive nuclear infrastructure. The president assured the Senate of his intent to modernize or replace the strategic "nuclear triad" (intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarine-launched ballistic missiles and nuclear-armed bombers), while specific funding targets, over 10 years, were established to rebuild a nuclear infrastructure that dates back to the dawn of the nuclear age. Regrettably, that commitment seems to have dissipated.

Funding for the nuclear weapons complex is now \$770 million short of what was promised to date. A vital plutonium-handling facility—deemed essential even by the president until last year and to be built at Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico—has been deferred by at least five years, which probably means never.

It's likely that additional cutbacks will appear in the fiscal-year 2014 budget request. Indeed, virtually all nuclear-modernization programs are now delayed by at least two years or, in the case of a new ICBM, have yet to be announced.

Putting aside the many recent setbacks to the U.S. relationship with Russia, it seems unlikely that Moscow will agree to any further nuclear reductions without concomitant limitations on American missile-defense capabilities—a demand that will be a clear nonstarter for the U.S. Senate. As a result, such negotiations are likely to increase friction between the two countries. A far better approach would be to move beyond the obsession with numerical reductions and instead focus on improving nuclear transparency and on ensuring stability during crises—and not just for the U.S. and Russia, but for all nuclear powers.

To be clear, until the U.S. has a modern and responsive nuclear infrastructure—one capable of responding to any future challenges to the country's strategic interests—no arms-control treaty is likely even to get a vote in the Senate. A presidential attempt to circumvent Congress by pursuing reductions unilaterally would be counter to the advice of the secretary of defense and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and would be met with stiff resistance on Capitol Hill.

The president has a choice: running into a likely stalemate on nuclear disarmament or working with Congress on practical and realistic steps to stop nuclear proliferation and improve nuclear security.

Sen. Corker (R., Tenn.) is the ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Sen. Inhofe (R., Okla.) is the ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

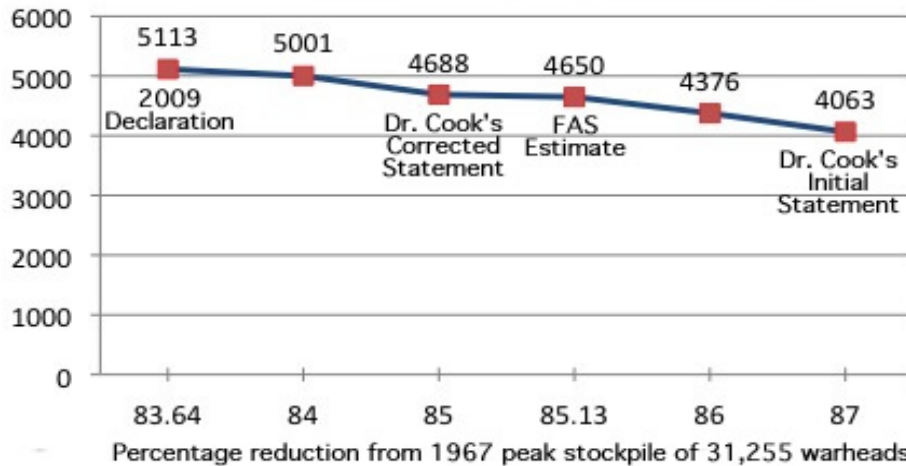
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Federation of American Scientist (FAS)
OPINION/FAS Strategic Security Blog

(Still) Secret US Nuclear Weapons Stockpile Reduced

February 26, 2013



The United States has unilaterally reduced the size of its nuclear weapons stockpile by nearly 500 warheads since 2009.

By Hans M. Kristensen

The United States has quietly reduced its nuclear weapons stockpile by nearly 500 warheads since 2009. The current stockpile size represents an approximate 85-percent reduction compared with the peak size in 1967, according to information provided to FAS by the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA).

The reduction is unilateral and not required by any arms control treaty. It apparently includes retirement of warheads for the last non-strategic naval nuclear weapon, the nuclear Tomahawk land-attack cruise missile (TLAM/N).

85 Versus 87

One of the interesting moments at the Deterrence Summit last week came when Dr. Donald Cook, who is NNSA's administrator for defense programs, talked about the size of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile.

At one point, Dr. Cook said that there are "roughly 5,000" warheads in the stockpile today. And then he added: "Today it's, I'll just say it's a bit under about 5,000...about an 87 percent reduction" compared with the peak in 1967. (The 87 percent statements occurs 2:52:25 into the CSPAN recording).

Since the peak size of the stockpile has been declassified (31,255 warheads in 1967), an 87 percent reduction would in fact be quite a bit under 5,000 – a stockpile of 4,063 warheads, to be precise. If so, the stockpile would have shrunk by 1,050 warheads since September 2009 when the stockpile contained 5,113 warheads.

The number didn't fit the stockpile estimate that Norris and I currently have (4,650 warheads), so I contacted Dr. Cook to double check if he meant to say 87 percent. He told me that it was an error and that the correct figure was "approximately 85% reduction." That corresponds to a stockpile of roughly 4,688 warheads (depending on how many digits "approximately" implies), or about 38 warheads off our estimate of 4,650 warheads.

The warheads retired since 2009 apparently include the W80-0 warhead previously used on the nuclear Tomahawk land-attack cruise missile (TLAM/N). The 2010 Nuclear Posture Review decided the weapon was no longer needed, and "a very substantial number of W80-0" warheads already have been dismantled, Dr. Cook told Congress last week.

Implications

Why is the size of the stockpile an issue? Well, first, because the Obama administration in 2010 declassified the 64-year history of the stockpile from 1945 through September 2009 because, as the Pentagon explained at the time, increasing transparency is important for U.S. nonproliferation efforts and additional arms reductions beyond the New START treaty. In his briefing, Dr. Cook also pointed to the importance of transparency.



Second, the size of the stockpile is important because although the administration has declassified 64 years of its history, its current size is – yes, you guessed it – still a secret. In fact, officials have told us that the 2010 disclosure was a one-time decision, not something that would be updated each year. So all stockpile numbers after September 2009 are still secret. Deep in the dark corridors of the Pentagon there are still people who believe this is necessary for national security.

Third, the unilateral retirement of roughly 500 warheads from the stockpile since 2009 – an inventory comparable to the total stockpiles of China and Britain combined – is political dynamite (no pun intended) because conservative Cold Warriors in Congress (and elsewhere) vehemently oppose unilateral reductions of U.S. nuclear weapons. Their argument is (as best I can gauge) that Russia and China are modernizing their nuclear weapons, and North Korea has just conducted a nuclear test. Therefore, so the thinking goes, it would somehow be detrimental to U.S. national security to unilaterally reduce its nuclear weapons.

The argument is, of course, deeply flawed because the reductions that Dr. Cook describe are warheads that the military has decided it no longer needs to meet presidential guidance for maintaining a strong nuclear deterrent in support of national security and reassurance of allies. Similar unilateral adjustments of the stockpile have been made by both Republican and Democratic administrations in the past.

The saga about stockpile classification and declassification is also important because it exemplifies a deeply schizophrenic policy. On the one hand, the administration has declassified decades worth of formerly secret stockpile information, emphasizes the continued importance of nuclear weapons transparency to support nonproliferation and arms control efforts, and urges other nuclear weapons states to be more open about their arsenals. At the same time, the administration continues to keep secret the current size of the stockpile, which, among other effects, forces officials such as Dr. Cook to be unnecessarily vague about the extent to which the United States continues to make progress on reducing nuclear weapons in compliance with its obligations under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Recommendations

If the administration believes that nuclear transparency is important, then it must continue to disclose stockpile numbers and avoid drifting back into automatic nuclear secrecy. It should also declassify how many weapons are dismantled each year and how many retired warheads are in storage awaiting dismantlement.

The Pentagon said in 2010 that it was looking at declassifying the number of weapons awaiting dismantlement, but so far nothing has happened.

The Nuclear Posture Review stated in 2010: “Today, there are several thousand nuclear warheads awaiting dismantlement, and this number will increase as weapons are removed from the stockpile under New START.” Actually, the New START Treaty does not require that nuclear warheads be removed from the stockpile, but the military will nonetheless probably retire the roughly 500 warheads assigned to the 48 SLBMs and 50 ICBMs that will be retired under the treaty.

We estimate that “several thousand” currently means about 3,000 retired warheads, and that 300-400 warheads are dismantled each year.

Declassification of the back-end (dismantlement numbers) of the nuclear posture goes hand in hand with declassification of the front-end (stockpile size) because dismantlement numbers prove that the United States is actually getting rid of the weapons and not just putting them in storage. That is the key message that unnecessary secrecy prevents U.S. officials from being able to convey to the international nonproliferation community.

Hans M. Kristensen is director of the Nuclear Information Project at the Federation of American Scientists where he provides the public with analysis and background information about the status of nuclear forces and the role of nuclear weapons.

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<http://www.fas.org/blog/ssp/2013/02/stockpilereduction.php>

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U.S. News & World Report
OPINION

Why Did Obama Scrap Nuclear Disarmament in the State of the Union?

By G. Philip Hughes
February 26, 2013

On Sunday, February 10, the *New York Times* reported prominently that President Obama's State of the Union address would feature a renewed drive by the president for nuclear weapons reduction toward his avowed goal of a nuclear-weapons-free world. There were ample details: U.S. nuclear forces to be cut by one third, taking our arsenal of actively deployed weapons down to a level of 1,000—well below the New START goal, ratified in 2009, of 1,550 such weapons by 2018.

There was a quote: Obama "believes that we can make pretty radical reductions—and save a lot of money—without compromising American security in the second term. And the Joint Chiefs have signed off on that concept."

A game-plan was outlined: Obama would reach "an informal agreement" with Russia's Vladimir Putin for mutual reductions within the New START framework. Ratification would be unnecessary. No need for the Senate to get involved.

National security adviser Tom Donilon would travel next month to Moscow, following on Vice President Joe Biden's recent confab with Russian leaders attending a security conference in southern Germany, all to pave the way for a pair of Obama-Putin summit meetings this summer.

That was quite a wind-up. And then came the pitch: "At the same time, we will engage Russia to seek further reductions in our nuclear arsenals, and continue leading the global effort to secure nuclear materials that might fall into the wrong hands ..."

That's it?! That's all President Obama had to say about his cherished goal of world-wide nuclear disarmament—the commitment that, largely, won him a Nobel Peace Prize—in his first State of the Union address after his historic re-election? What happened? How could the venerable *Times* have gotten the story so wrong?

Well, what happened is North Korea! Evidently its new dictator, Kim Jong-Un, doesn't read the *New York Times*. Or perhaps he just has a timetable of his own. Because on the morning of the president's speech, news reports around the world headlined North Korea's third nuclear weapons test.

Well, that certainly must have "put the cat among the pigeons" in the White House preparations for the president's address that same night. As a veteran of past administrations' State of the Union "drill", I can readily imagine the paragraphs of visionary, high-minded, man-of-peace prose, prefigured by advance reports like the *Times*'s, being ripped out and tossed on the cutting room floor overnight before Obama's speech. You can just hear the White House advisers muttering, "We can't have the president looking so out-of-step with reality." Even if he is.

North Korea's blast underscored exquisitely the most fundamental contradiction of Obama's nuclear disarmament ambitions. Its cornerstone rationale is to minimize and reverse the incentives for nuclear proliferation by the world's 'wannabe' nuclear powers—mainly rogue states like Iran and North Korea implacably hostile to the United States and the West.

It just wouldn't do to have the president announce his next down-payment on this idealistic goal right on the heels of North Korea, the biggest Non-Proliferation Treaty violator, taking another unmistakable step closer toward nuclear weapons capability, complete with bellicose threats against the United States and South Korea. To boot, eight weeks earlier North Korea launched a long-range missile, ostensibly a space launch, obviously intended to eventually threaten

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the United States with nuclear attack. Against this backdrop a big play on nuclear weapons reduction in the State of the Union address, justified as heading off precisely what had just happened, risked making Obama look dangerously naïve.

As it happens, the over-80 percent reduction in U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals since their Cold War peak in 1986—and the 50 percent reduction in U.S. deployed and nondeployed nuclear weapons ordered by President George W. Bush after the 2002 Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty—have had no impact on Iran and North Korea. But that's not the only contradiction in Obama's nuclear policy.

The rationale for further nuclear reductions rests heavily on the end of the Cold War—but Obama's approach to nuclear arms reductions is completely rooted *in* the Cold War. It remains an entirely bilateral exercise between the United States and Russia, just like in the Cold War days. Other "lesser" nuclear powers—China, India, Pakistan, whose arsenals become more significant with each round of U.S.-Russian cuts—get to "sit this one out." And there's no pretense of trying to bring rogue proliferators like Iran and North Korea—the principal dangers—into any kind of multilateral bargain exchanging U.S.-Russian reductions for the unwinding of their nuclear programs.

The Obama team holds out the prospect that U.S. nuclear deterrence will protect our friends and allies abroad in case North Korea and Iran ultimately fulfill their manifest ambitions to deploy offensive nuclear arms. But how is this supposed to work when, at the same time, Obama's policies continue to whittle down and weaken that deterrent force?

So, will Obama temper his quest for still further nuclear arms cuts in the face of North Korea's latest provocation? Surely not. This is among the highest priorities of his national security strategy. But with the Senate losing its most knowledgeable and articulate voice on these issues as a result of Sen. Jon Kyl's retirement, and with Obama's nomination of former senator Chuck Hagel—co-author of a "Global Zero" report advocating unilateral reduction of the U.S. nuclear deterrent—to be secretary of defense, the question is: Will anyone emerge in the Senate willing or able to apply the brakes?

G. Philip Hughes, former ambassador and White House national security aide for Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush, is a senior director of the White House Writers Group, a Washington D.C. policy communications firm.

<http://www.usnews.com/opinion/blogs/g-philip-hughes/2013/02/26/obama-is-out-of-touch-on-nuclear-weapons-and-north-korea>

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The Moscow Times – Russia

Missile Defense Hits a Brick Wall

28 February 2013, Issue 5079

By Vladimir Kozin

First, The Associated Press reported that secret studies by the U.S. Department of Defense have questioned the capability of the U.S. missile defense system to be deployed in Europe to protect the country from Iranian ballistic missiles. Apparently, the report was based on data presented recently at a secret briefing of the U.S. Government Accountability Office.

Second, The New York Times, quoting an anonymous source within the Obama administration, said Washington would call on Russia to jointly reduce further strategic offensive weapons.

The missile defense report is only partially plausible. Indeed, the U.S. government has been conducting studies to determine the advisability of deploying a European and global missile defense system for quite some time. U.S. operational missile defense systems to be deployed in Romania and Poland in 2015 and 2018, respectively, are not designed to intercept potential ballistic missiles launched by Iran — the reason that the U.S. gave for introducing the missile shield. This is the task of the missile defense systems of the United States and its allies deployed in the Gulf

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region. The only purpose of the U.S. missile defense equipment deployed in Europe is to destroy Russian intercontinental ballistic missiles.

The fact that our country is never mentioned in the missile shield program as a potential participant proves that it is aimed at Russia. Russia is missing from both the NATO Missile Defense Action Plan and the U.S. and alliance's "rules of engagement" concerning the use of anti-ballistic missiles, endorsed shortly after the NATO Chicago summit last year.

As for the Times report on a further reduction of strategic offensive weapons, it was denied almost immediately by a White House spokesman, who said he was not expecting any new announcements in Obama's speech. Indeed, Obama only said Washington was ready to involve Russia in a "nuclear weapons reduction," without giving any quantitative parameters.

Obama's address failed to answer a principle question for our country: Will the U.S. reduce or build up its missile defense structure in Europe? Russia would also like to know in what maritime areas the U.S. plans to base long-range interceptors. Around 30 U.S. ships have already been equipped with such equipment, and each ship could carry 30 to 40 missiles. Will the U.S. ground-based anti-ballistic missiles, to be deployed at the Deveselu base in Romania and near the Polish town of Redzikovo, be replaced with more capable ones, thus augmenting their capability to cancel out Russian nuclear deterrence forces?

Other questions arise as well. Why do these "new" ideas on strategic weapons reduction put forward by Washington still not mention whether the U.S. will withdraw its tactical nuclear weapons from Europe, as Russia did more than 18 years ago? Does Washington plan to retain weapons of this type on the continent for several more decades, especially as the Pentagon has already announced their future upgrade by 2030? Why has the U.S. Air Force completed building new underground warehouses at 13 air bases in six NATO member countries to store precision nuclear air bombs designed to destroy hard targets? Why do the U.S. and its NATO allies insist on counting the number of Russian tactical nuclear weapons and determining their location and state of readiness before the official discussions on them begin?

Finally, in light of the two news reports, one could ask: Why were they published, and why isn't there any additional information?

Here, it seems, everything is simple. It's obvious that the U.S. intends to go down the road of selectively reducing nuclear weapons, focusing only on a further reduction of strategic offensive weapons. But at the same time, the Americans completely exclude from the negotiations such important non-nuclear weapons as anti-missile systems, anti-satellite weapons and high-precision capabilities that could perform lightning strikes in any part of the world. On top of this, Obama said in his speech that he was willing to "strengthen the missile defense system" during his second term.

This means that the U.S. is floating new arms-control proposals to obscure its far-reaching plans to deploy tactical nuclear weapons and the missile defense shield, destabilizing the global political and military environment and undermining the fragile strategic and military balance between Moscow and Washington that took several decades to establish. For instance, building up combat and data-collection missile defense equipment while reducing strategic offensive weapons could lead to a dangerous situation described by U.S. leaders back in the 1960s and '70s as the nuclear missiles and anti-ballistic missiles arms race. Such an imbalance could tempt the U.S. to launch a first nuclear strike.

This is why, no matter how White House proposals are presented, Russia's defense interests will not be served by a further reduction of its strategic offensive weapons against the background of a U.S. buildup of missile defense capabilities around the world. Russia's updated foreign policy, issued in mid-February, says our country has consistently supported constructive cooperation with the U.S. in the area of arms control, including taking into consideration the unbreakable link between strategic offensive and defensive capabilities and the urgency of making the nuclear disarmament process multilateral. It also assumes that negotiations on a further reduction of offensive nuclear weapons are possible "only taking into consideration all the factors affecting global strategic stability, without any exceptions."



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Moscow and Washington should agree once and for all not to use nuclear weapons first against each other and not to deploy their missile defense systems near the borders of the other country. Russia has repeatedly declared its willingness to show restraint in the area of missile defense. A refusal by both sides to use nuclear weapons in a first strike would make the deployment of American missile defense systems at the "forward lines" illogical and set an example of real cooperation for other nuclear states.

Obviously, Russia and the U.S. would maintain their right to deploy and upgrade their infrastructure for the interception of ballistic missiles on their territories.

But Washington should renounce its plans to implement not only the fourth but all the other phases of its current missile defense program. This means calling off the second phase, which has already started, and canceling the third as well. If Washington stops implementation of the fourth phase only, it will not meet the national security interests of Russia. In this case, the U.S. and NATO missile defense system will be deployed anyway.

Quite frankly, instead of thinking how to encircle Russia with nuclear and missile defense weapons, the American side should think about how it can work together with us and other interested parties to prevent meteorites from raining down on our planet.

Vladimir Kozin is a member of an interagency working group attached to the Russian presidential administration discussing missile defense issues with NATO, and is a leading researcher with the Russian Institute of Strategic Studies.

<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/opinion/article/missile-defense-hits-a-brick-wall/476213.html>

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Pravda – Russia
OPINION/Interview

Russia Must Always Keep America at Gunpoint

28 February 2013

Interviewer: Inna Novikova, Pravda.Ru

"Tactical nuclear weapons that are constantly threatening the United States must become the factor that will deter large-scale aggression. Holding it at gunpoint - this is the deterrent," General Colonel in reserve, MGIMO (Moscow State Institute of International Relations) Professor, Leonid Ivashov, said in an interview with Pravda.Ru editor-in-chief Inna Novikova.

"Mr. Ivashov, your forecasts of what is going on with Russia's defensive ability, and generally your views of Russia's current position in the world are very pessimistic and critical. You said that Russia has lost all allies during the recent years. Who are our allies, except for our army and navy?"

"You know, when we talk about allies, we do not necessarily have only the military component in mind. When it goes about allies, it goes about, above all, the geopolitical levelAllies support our foreign and domestic policies. Previously, there was not only the Warsaw Pact, but also the so-called Non-Aligned Movement - more than 100 countries in the world with the vast majority of the world's population. They were, in fact, supporters of our foreign policy. Wasn't the Islamic world our ally before December 1979? China as a socialist state was our ideological ally.

"The situation with China is difficult, because, on the one hand, you say that China is our ally..."

"A geopolitical ally."

"Yes. On the other hand, China is very interested in our territory. Why does China sometimes with America make decisions behind Russia's back?"

" ... You know, China has its own geopolitical project, America and Europe have their own projects too. Everyone has their own geopolitical doctrines. What does Russia have? Does it have its own project, its own vision of the world? In

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general, what role does Russia want to play? There is no project. We rush between North America, Europe and China. They are three leading centers, they form global historical processes. And in essence, they struggle with each other."

"What do they struggle for?"

"The Americans in their national security strategy identified three main objects, for which they struggle. They are key regions of the world, usually at the crossroads of civilizations, marketing communications and global resources, especially energy resources. And if Russia takes the position of a seller of raw materials and does not aspire to anything else, then it is only Russia that drove itself into this corner."

"Well, Russia had to take this position. At first we destroyed everything, let Americans in everywhere."

"By the mid-90s, we rolled down to the status of a raw power, but now we are a raw colony. Here is the degradation of our geopolitical status. And, therefore, we do not enjoy anyone's respect because there is nothing to respect us for, except for past achievements. Because we ape: We buy arms in the West, then in Israel and so on. We play the ape."

"Mr. Ivashov, everything turns out to be so fine when you say it. There used to be a fair socialist society and a brutal capitalist one. They used to scare us with stories of homeless sleeping in the streets. When there was the Iron Curtain, we were more or less ok, we lived the way we lived. And then it turned out that in that violent society there was delicious food, all kinds of music, clothes and other great things that we never had. When the curtain fell, there was so much visual appeal that we just cried, we wanted to be like them. But we are talking about geopolitics and military matters right now. Do we have a military doctrine today? Have our potential adversaries been defined?"

"The last doctrine, signed by Mr. Medvedev, - God forbid ... Yes, there is a doctrine, but it does not have such words as "strategy", "operation", "offensive". Therefore, we have no offensive or defensive operations. There is only terrorism left there. It is all very uncertain ...

"Uncertainty about what? About a terrorist threat, a nuclear threat, a climate threat?"

"No. There is no certainty at all. What is going to happen, for example, by the middle of the 21st century - what the world will be like, what the economy will be like, what the international security system will be like? It does not say whether anyone can guarantee safe development to the country. Nothing."

"What has recently changed in the American military doctrine?"

"In America, it is all vice versa. On October 18, 2003, Bush signed a directive on the concept of Prompt Global Strike. A priority was not a first massive nuclear strike, but a strike with the use of high precision technologies. Glide bombs then finish it off and a country is presented with an ultimatum. If this country does not agree, it will repeat all over again. It is clear that the first target for this potential attack is Russia. But Russia - accidentally or not - may launch its strategic nuclear arsenal. To avoid this, nuclear facilities need to be destroyed first. In 2011-2012, the concept was amended."

"But is it justified? Americans, their policies are based on the fact that they are very far to reach."

"To attack China or Russia, cruise missiles will be used. A third of them come with nuclear warheads. Nowadays, four-class "Ohio" submarines, the largest American subs, that had 24 intercontinental ballistic missiles on board, are being reequipped. They remove the ICBMs and replace them with 158 cruise missiles on each sub. The same thing happens to "Virginia" subs. They develop a strategic cruise missile, the range of which will be not less than 5,000 kilometers. Its speed will be equal to two sonic speeds. It will be the type of arms that no one will be able to destroy - neither Russia, nor China or anyone else."

"Let's go back to our military doctrines. In the past, during the Soviet era, there was a military doctrine, our potential adversaries were identified. Do we now have a general understanding of our place?"

"I'll offer the new defense minister to abandon the nuclear deterrence factor. Relying on strategic nuclear forces no longer meets reality. Yes, strategic nuclear forces played the role of a deterrent factor when we had equal potentials of

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conventional arms with Americans. Today we lag behind them, therefore, to deter large-scale aggression, tactical nuclear weapons will have to play the role of the deterrent. These weapons should constantly be aimed at the United States, because it is the most vulnerable territory in the world. Keeping this territory at gunpoint - this will be a deterrent."

"But is it real to do it now?"

"It's quite possible."

"Do we have to rebuild it all in Cuba or anywhere else?"

"There are places, yes. Above all, we need our own geopolitical doctrine. Whatever we may think of ourselves today, we are a potential victim for both the West and the East if we act alone. We need to reformat the world so that we once again have our place in this world. Nowadays, the West, the East, Latin America and Africa realize that one cannot live like this. No one will offer another way to live and develop. We, Russian thinkers, our Academy of Geopolitical Problems, are ready to offer a project like that, and I believe, it will be supported. Today, the planetary forecast is catastrophic, and we can offer a way out of this disastrous scenario."

"Whom do you offer these solutions?"

"For the General Assembly of the United Nations, we propose to change the structure of the Security Council. The time, when the victors in World War II were playing the first fiddle, has passed. In the renewed council, representatives of the world's ethnic and cultural civilizations should act as permanent members. They are ambassadors from North America, Europe, Latin America, China, India, the Islamic world, the African Union and, of course, Russia. This is how we see it. We need to have powerful allies today in the face of world civilizations. And the next step is to develop the Euro-Asian continental union, which includes Russia, China, India, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Mongolia within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization."

http://english.pravda.ru/russia/politics/28-02-2013/123934-russia_america-0/

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Huffington Post
OPINION/The Blog

Obama Getting Ready to Reduce Nukes: A Step in the Right Direction

February 28, 2013

By Charles Knight

President Obama will soon sign a new strategic nuclear directive which reduces the number of enemy target points. This in turn will justify a reduction of about 500 warheads from the deployed strategic forces, as reported by R. Jeffrey Smith of the Center for Public Integrity and David Sanger of the *New York Times*.

The New START treaty limits deployed warheads to 1,550 by the year 2018. Having decided that U.S. national security does not require 1,550 deployed weapons and that closer to 1,000 will be adequate, it appears that the Obama administration will seek agreement with Russia for both countries to simultaneously reduce their deployed arsenals to the lower number. Likely this will not involve a treaty, but rather rely on an informal understanding, verified by national intelligence means.

A motivating factor for both the U.S. and Russia is the cost of maintaining large arsenals of nuclear weapons. Cutting its deployed strategic forces by one-third would save the U.S. tens of billions of dollars over the next ten years.

While the *Reasonable Defense* proposal from the Project on Defense Alternatives (PDA) makes the case that smaller strategic forces actually make the U.S. more secure and calls for a larger reduction in deployed weapons, the 500-weapon reduction implied in the new directive is a significant step in the right direction.

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Lawrence Korb of the Center for American Progress says that:

The United States currently spends about \$55 billion a year to maintain its triad of nuclear-capable bombers, land-based ballistic missiles, and submarine-launched ballistic missiles. Moreover, if the United States wants to refurbish, repair, and modernize its existing nuclear arsenal in its current size, we will have to spend about \$600 billion over the next decade.

How much will be saved by a 1/3rd reduction in strategic nuclear forces will depend on the structure of the residual nuclear forces. There are some components of strategic forces that cost much more than others, and the overall complexity of the strategic force incurs added costs. So far there is no proposal from the administration in regards to structural reform.

Among the most costly procurement items in the next two decades are the 12 strategic missile submarines that the Navy plans to buy to replace the 14 aging ones in the present fleet. The Congressional Research Service reports that this program will cost at least \$90.4 billion. Because of its tremendous cost, the Navy has been very reluctant to include these submarines in its regular ship building budget. No doubt the Navy would be relieved to build fewer than original planned, effectively making room in its budget for many other ships it wants to have.

Smith reports that the Navy could "cut at least two of the 12 new strategic submarines it now plans to build." PDA in its *Reasonable Defense* report recommends the Navy trim five missile subs from its plans.

As the deployed force gets smaller it makes sense to reduce the complexity of the force structure. There is nothing magic about the triad created at the height of the Cold War. PDA has argued for moving to a dyad made up of submarines and land-based ICBMs. Ending the strategic nuclear role of bombers would reduce the requirement for (and the cost of) the new bomber currently in development and also allow the remaining bomber fleet to more effectively focus on a conventional role. Others, such as the group Global Zero, have recommended retiring the ICBM leg of the triad.

Either way, reducing strategic nuclear weapons and the complexity of their force structure is a strategically safe and practical way to reduce the cost of America's national defense.

Charles Knight is a Senior fellow at the Project on Defense Alternatives.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/charles-knight/obama-to-call-for-fewer-d_b_2735717.html

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Gulf News – U.A.E.

OPINION

Nuclear Disarmament: Allay Russia's Fears

To fulfil his goal of making the world a safer place, Obama needs to understand Moscow's concept of security in light of China's rising power

By Dmitri Trenin

March 1, 2013

Barack Obama hopes to engage Russia in his effort to continue reducing nuclear armaments. For the US president, this is vital for advancing his goal of a world less reliant on nuclear weapons. For Moscow, however, nuclear arms remain the bedrock of military security and a key component of Russia's international status.

This does not necessarily doom Obama's approach, but it makes further reduction of US and Russian nuclear arsenals contingent on Washington's willingness to consider Moscow's security needs. The US should examine those requirements to understand not only what kind of a deal with Russia is possible, but how Russia's needs relate to its own security interests.



Since the end of the Cold War nearly a quarter century ago, Russia has existed in a heretofore unprecedented strategic environment. For the first time ever, it faces no likelihood of a major war erupting either in the west or in the east that might involve Russia.

In another first, there is no threat of a foreign invasion of Russia itself. And, finally, having reconciled itself with the loss of both its outer empire in Eastern Europe and the inner one in what used to be the USSR, Russia has no need to physically control others and no interest in reabsorbing them within a new imperial construct.

Thus, for nearly 20 years following the breakup of the USSR, Moscow could afford to postpone the modernisation of its conventional forces, allowing them to decay, while fully relying on its nuclear umbrella.

Psychologically, being one of two nuclear superpowers helped the Kremlin overcome the trauma of imperial collapse and state disintegration. As a result, Moscow's present concept of a great power is the reverse of the classical one. It aims not so much at dominating others as not being dominated by the stronger powers.

Given that the Russian military is no match for the Pentagon — or soon the People's Liberation Army — the Kremlin believes nuclear deterrence is the best way of preserving Russia's strategic independence. This deterrence operates at both strategic and tactical levels, making up for the huge gap in conventional capabilities between Russia and the leading military powers of the 21st century. Like the US, Russia, of course, has inherited from the Cold War a nuclear arsenal that was absurdly large, thus allowing for massive reductions under the START and new START treaties — but now the smaller the numbers have become, the smaller the margin is for further reductions.

Russian political and military leaders have also identified three factors that weigh on their strategic calculus and impact policy decisions: the steady US progress in the development of a global missile defence system, the vastly increased capabilities of non-nuclear weapons systems that can perform strategic missions, and the growing Chinese capability to dramatically increase its nuclear arsenal, should Beijing want.

Deterrence policy

Of course, none of the above, for now, can appreciably devalue Russia's nuclear deterrent, but, looking two decades ahead, each of these factors will become much more important. This means that the US, if it wants further cuts in nuclear weapons, will need to credibly assure the Russians that US missile defence deployments, while effective against third countries (i.e., Iran), will not diminish Moscow's deterrence power.

Washington will also need, when discussing tactical nuclear weapons, to include non-nuclear systems with a capability for precise strikes. Finally, both Washington and Moscow soon need to reach out to Beijing to include it in the process of limiting nuclear arms and enhancing strategic stability. None of these tasks will be easy, but all of them will be necessary if relations among the world's major nuclear powers are to be further stabilised.

Great-power stability is crucial for a number of reasons. One is stopping further nuclear proliferation, mainly in Iran and North Korea, for which Russia and China are key. Moscow's assessment of the pace of Tehran's nuclear programme may differ from Washington's, but it has zero interest in a nuclear-armed Iran.

Russians might prefer a different way of dealing with Pyongyang than the very uneven US approach, but they clearly see the dangers of living next to a country that is constantly testing its nuclear devices and long-range missiles. US-Russian cooperation at the strategic level certainly creates a better prospect for coordinated non-proliferation efforts. Another issue is regional security.

Next year's US withdrawal from Afghanistan is ushering in a number of uncertainties in Central and South Asia. In post-American Afghanistan, the Taliban are likely to increase their influence, even as Pakistan and India will compete even more intensely there.

Russia's defence policy these days focuses more and more on contingencies along its southern borders, primarily in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Moscow has been trying, with mixed results, to revamp and strengthen the very loose post-Soviet Collective Security Treaty Organisation, which it leads, to deal with emergencies in that part of the world.



A Eurasian economic union might help, but, to be successful, it will need to stay economic and voluntary. Americans should lose no sleep over it: Moscow's desire, and ability, to impose its will on these partners is small. The Russian empire will continue to rest in peace.

Tsarist practices

To many US observers, however, Russia's efforts there are virtually indistinguishable from former tsarist and Soviet practices. Yet, the decade-long Chechen war, and the 10-year post-war recovery have resulted in a settlement under which Chechnya exists as a virtual state loosely associated with Russia. It is actually more stable and more prosperous today than other republics in the Russian North Caucasus.

As to Georgia, Russia's military response to President Mikheil Saakashvili's 2008 reckless attack in South Ossetia was strong, but also measured: Despite the popular belief in the West, Tbilisi controls almost as much territory today — with very minor exceptions — as it did before the war. Both South Ossetia and Abkhazia broke away from Georgia and proclaimed independence in the early 1990s, although now, unlike before the war, they also host regular Russian forces.

For the foreseeable future, both places are de facto Russian military protectorates. The US and virtually every other country support Georgia's territorial sovereignty, so the conflict will only be resolved politically. Until then, it will remain safely frozen.

Moscow's biggest benefit from Obama's foreign policy reset has been his downplaying of the Nato option for Georgia and Ukraine. Since then, the domestic changes in Kiev and, more recently, in Tbilisi have de-emphasised the Nato accession option even more.

Policymakers relieved

Russian policymakers and strategic planners feel relieved: They no longer have to account for the possibility of US power projection too close to their borders. In the South Caucasus, they are happy to leave Georgia to deal with its own problems, and only worry that the long but uneasy truce between the Azeris and the Armenians in Nagorny Karabakh may be broken.

As Erevan's formal military ally with forces on the ground, and Baku's economic partner, Moscow has a stake in keeping the situation under control — an interest shared by Washington. The Nato enlargement spectre out of the picture, Ukraine has remained an economic and geopolitical issue to Russia, but it has ceased to be a military one.

The Baltic states may be perennially worried about their big neighbour, and some Swedes may implicitly use Russia as an argument in favour of increasing defence expenditures, but Europe has ceased to be a priority for Moscow's strategists. Their only significant new activity along the western axis has been the announced deployment of missile defences to counter Nato's system — in the wake of a failure, so far, to reach an agreement with the US on the issue.

In the best possible scenario, US/Nato and Russian defences can be operationally coordinated — with the western system, while effective against third-country missiles, having no capability against the Russian nuclear deterrent. A formal treaty to this effect is not necessary, but a high degree of mutual openness is.

If this were achieved during Obama's second term, it would amount to a real game-changer in US-Russian strategic relations, phasing out residual adversity now rooted in mutual mistrust and allowing collaboration to gradually prevail.

Finally, as Russia's military reform progresses and its force modernisation continues, Moscow may become a more equitable partner to the Pentagon in a number of areas, from search and rescue in the Arctic, to fighting pirates off the African coast, to anti-narcotics operations in Afghanistan.

The US may indeed appreciate a solid working relationship with a country that, while being vociferously independent and straight-talking, is no longer expansionist and ideological. Americans should kick the habit of seeing mainly through the prism of its past experience with the Soviet Union, or through the optics of Russia's domestic developments alone.



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Obama's nuclear bid, to be successful, requires an updated and comprehensive look at Russia.

— *Washington Post*

Dmitri Trenin is director of the Carnegie Moscow Centre.

<http://gulfnnews.com/opinions/columnists/nuclear-disarmament-allay-russia-s-fears-1.1152607>

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