



USAF COUNTERPROLIFERATION CENTER
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MAXWELL AFB, ALABAMA

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Khaleej Times – U.A.E.

Six Powers' Flesh out Nuclear Proposals in Iran Talks

By REUTERS

19 March 2013

Six major powers gave Iran more details of their proposals to end a standoff over Teheran's nuclear programme in talks in Istanbul on Monday, the European Union (EU) said.

The EU's short statement on the expert-level talks between the six powers and Iran offered no clue how the proposals were received by the Iranian experts or whether any progress had been made.

The two sides agreed to hold the technical discussions at a Feb. 26-27 meeting between officials in the Kazakh city of Almaty, when the United States, China, Russia, Britain, France and Germany offered modest sanctions relief in return for Teheran curbing its most sensitive nuclear work.

Iran says its nuclear programme is peaceful but Western powers suspect Teheran of seeking nuclear weapons capability.

The statement by Michael Mann, a spokesman for EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton, reaffirmed that Monday's technical talks would be followed by another meeting at the political level in Almaty on April 5-6.

Western diplomats have made clear they want to see a substantive response from Iran to the six powers' proposals at the next meeting in Almaty.

In Istanbul, experts from the six powers, led by nuclear expert Stephan Klement, gave Iran further details of the "revised confidence-building proposal" they put forward in Almaty, Mann said.

"The meeting also provided an opportunity for both (six-power) and Iranian experts to explore each other's positions on a number of technical subjects," he said, declining to go beyond the statement.

Ashton oversees contacts with Iran on behalf of the six powers.

MEANINGFUL STEPS

U.S. President Barack Obama insisted on Monday that "now is the time" for Iran to take meaningful steps to resolve its nuclear standoff with the West as he issued a direct appeal to the Iranian people before his first official trip to Israel.

Obama will hold talks in Israel on Wednesday with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who repeatedly has called for a "credible" military threat against Iran and hinted at the prospect of a unilateral Israeli attack.

Western officials said the offer presented by the six powers in Kazakhstan 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.

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 proposals appeared to soften the six powers' previous demands.

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

http://www.khaleejtimes.com/kt-article-display-1.asp?section=todaysfeatures&xfile=/data/todaysfeatures/2013/March/todaysfeatures_March29.xml

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The London Daily Telegraph – U.K.

Syria: Regime Accuses Rebels of Killing 25 in Chemical Weapons Attack

Chemical weapons were suspected to have been deployed for the first time in the Syrian civil war, it was claimed, as the warring sides accused each other of a poison gas attack that killed at least 25 near Aleppo.

By Damien McElroy, Foreign Affairs Correspondent

19 March 2013

Russia's foreign ministry said it had information that the rebel Free Syrian army units fighting in the south-west of the second city had used chemical weapons captured from the government in an attack on Assad forces.

The US said the incident was under investigation but rebuffed the accusation the rebels used weapons of mass destruction.

An early morning rocket attack on government-held parts of Khan al-Assal, a town on the south-western outskirts of Aleppo, left victims gasping for breath and foaming at the mouth. A large proportion of the victims were government soldiers.

The most credible report so far of the use of chemicals as a weapon of war in the two year conflict came hours after the opposition chose a prime minister to oversee areas freed from government control.

Experts in biological warfare said the incident was likely to have been a "chemical leak" in which a store of industrial or agricultural chemicals was hit by a missile. The type and scale of injuries did not indicate that a sophisticated, highly-engineered device had been used by the regime.

"It is not likely that this was mustard gas or other nerve agents from what is being reported. There are a lot of nasty chemicals that could have been released by accident that create the illusion that chemical weapons have been deployed," said Hamish de Bretton Gordon, a director of SecureBio, a specialist chemical warfare firm.

Moscow said the intensifying conflict was raising the likelihood that chemical weapons would be turned on civilians.

"We are very seriously concerned by the fact that weapons of mass destruction are falling into the hands of the rebels, which further worsens the situation in Syria and elevates the confrontation in the country to a new level," the foreign ministry statement said.

Jay Carney, the White House spokesman, reminded Bashar al-Assad's regime that use of such materials was a "red line" that would trigger US intervention.

"We have no evidence to substantiate the charge that the opposition has used chemical weapons," he said. "We are deeply sceptical of a regime that has lost all credibility and we would also warn the regime against making these kinds of charges as any kind of pretext or cover for its use of chemical weapons."

Britain said the use or proliferation of chemical weapons in Syria would demand a serious response from the international community. Omran al-Zoabi, Syria's Information Minister, said the country's armed forces would never use internationally banned weapons, after the government and rebels traded blame for what both sides said was a chemical attack near Aleppo.

"Syria's army leadership has stressed this before and we say it again, if we had chemical weapons we would never use them due to moral, humanitarian and political reasons," Mr Zoabi said.

"Our armed forces absolutely could not use, not now, nor at any time, nor in the past, any weapon banned by international law."

The allegation emerged as the Syria National Coalition (SNC) picked Ghassan Hitto, an exile who ran an IT company and was involved in Islamic activism in the US, as the prime minister charged with establishing services in the north.



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The SNC has been under pressure from its Western and Arab backers to form an interim government that would attract weapons and humanitarian aid from the international community.

But there were divisions over the choice of Mr Hitto, who won 35 out of 49 votes recorded.

Some fear his lack of military experience will perpetuate the divisions between politicians and soldiers that has granted the initiative to Islamic fundamentalists.

But the commander of the armed wing said his officers would recognise the political leadership provided by Mr Hitto.

"Any institutions not following this government would be considered to be acting illegitimately and would be prosecuted," Gen Selim Idriss said.

Meanwhile a US official said Baghdad is "looking the other way" as Iran sends military equipment through Iraqi airspace to the Assad regime.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/9940103/Syria-regime-accuses-rebels-of-killing-25-in-chemical-weapons-attack.html>

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The Hill
Global Affairs

Feinstein, Rogers: Assad Appears to Have Used Chemical Weapon

By Jonathan Easley
March 19, 2013

The chairs of the House and Senate Intelligence Committees said Tuesday briefings lead them to believe Syrian President Bashar al Assad has crossed President Obama's "red line" and used a chemical weapons on his citizens, and that U.S. military action should be taken once this is confirmed.

"This is highly classified and we have been advised to be careful with what we say," Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), the chair of the Senate Intelligence Committee, said on CNN.

"I'm told that the White House has been briefed...and the White House has to make some decisions in this. I think the days are becoming more desperate and the regime is more desperate and we know where the chemical weapons are. It's not a secret that they're there and I think the probabilities are very high that we're going into some very dark times. I think the White House needs to be prepared now that both committees have been fully briefed," she said.

House Intelligence Committee chairman Mike Rogers (R-Mich.) concurred.

"I have a high probability to believe chemical weapons were used," he told CNN. "We need that final verification but given everything we know over the last year and a half, I...would come to the conclusion that they are either positioned for use or in fact have been used, and in both of those scenarios I think we need to step up in the world community to prevent a humanitarian disaster."

Press secretary Jay Carney on Tuesday declined to confirm reports that a chemicals weapon has been used for the first time in Syria's civil war, saying only that the White House is "looking carefully at the information as it comes in."

But Feinstein and Rogers said the verdict is nearly complete, and they await only the final "forensic evidence" that would provoke the White House to action. Obama has promised "consequences" if the Syrian regime turn weapons of mass destruction on its own people, saying Assad would "be held accountable."

Feinstein on Tuesday urged the White House to put out a statement.

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"We have been fully briefed and I think every member that was at the briefing is very concerned," she said. "I think it's a very serious situation. The president of Syria ought to know this and I think that the White House needs to complete an assessment and make some statement as to what action the United States will take."

Rogers said it may only be a matter of hours before the White House confirms its suspicions.

"Do I believe that they may have configured weapons and used them? Yes. However, we don't know for sure and for certain, I think that will happen within hours if not days, that we'll get some sort of confirmation about chemical weapon use to prove that point," he said. "I think that we are morally obligated to take some action to make sure that they cannot use – that they lose their capability to use their chemical weapons, I think that's incredibly important. "

Rogers said the likeliest action would be a "limited military strike" targeted at the regime's chemical weapons depository.

"If in fact we prove beyond a shadow of doubt that they have used these chemical weapons, I think we are morally obligated to do something I think we're morally obligated to do something about their ability to deliver these weapons," he said. "If that was a limited military strike to do that, I think we're obligated to do that if in fact they've crossed the president's red line of chemical weapons use."

<http://thehill.com/blogs/global-affairs/middle-east-north-africa/289133-sen-feinstein-rep-rogers-assad-appears-to-have-used-chemical-weapons>

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Al Jazeera – U.A.E.

Obama Vows to Keep Iran from Nuclear Weapon

Obama says US prefers to resolve Iran nuclear issue diplomatically, but warns that all options are on the table.

20 March 2013

Source: Al Jazeera and Agencies

Barack Obama, the US president, has promised to work closely with Israel and do whatever is necessary to keep Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons.

In a joint press conference with Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu on Wednesday, Obama said that while the US "prefers to resolve" the Iran issue diplomatically, "all options are on the table" if diplomacy falls short.

Netanyahu said he was "absolutely convinced" that Obama was determined to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon.

"Mr President, you have made it clear that you are determined to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons. I appreciate your forthright position on this point," Netanyahu said.

"And as you know, my view is that in order to stop Iran's nuclear programme peacefully, diplomacy and sanctions must be augmented by clear and credible threat of military action."

Obama also issued a stark warning to Syria about using chemical weapons against its civilians, saying it would be a "grave and tragic mistake" and a "game-changer."

On Syria, Obama said he was "deeply sceptical" of claims that the opposition used chemical weapons, given his knowledge of Syria's chemical weapon stockpiles.

He said the US would "investigate thoroughly" in collaboration with other countries in the region and international institutions before taking any action.

But he emphasised the US stance that "the use of chemical weapons is a game changer" which would require it to intervene.



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Military aid to Israel

Obama also said that Israel and the United States were opening talks on extending US military aid beyond 2017, saying that despite a budget crunch in Washington there would be no interruption to funding of Israel's vaunted Iron Dome anti-missile system.

"As part of our long-term commitment to Israel's security, the prime minister and I agreed to begin discussions on extending military assistance to Israel," Obama said.

"Our current agreement lasts through 2017, and we've directed our teams to start working on extending it for the years beyond."

Obama also said that despite budget showdowns between the White House and Republicans in Washington that have led to sharp military spending cuts, there would be no interruption of US funding for the Iron Dome anti-missile system.

"As a result of decisions that I made last year, Israel will receive approximately \$200 million this fiscal year, and we will continue to work with Congress on future funding of Iron Dome," Obama said.

These are further reminders that we will help to preserve Israel's qualitative military edge so that Israel can defend itself by itself against any threat.

The last US military aid deal to Israel which started in 2007, saw the Jewish state secure \$30 billion over the decade, which was to be spent on US and Israeli military equipment.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/03/2013320194234768922.html>

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The London Daily Telegraph – U.K.

Britain to Airlift Chemical Weapons Detection Kits to Syria

Britain is to airlift hundreds of chemical weapons detection and protection kits to Syrian rebels as part of its first shipment of non-lethal equipment since an EU arms embargo was relaxed to allow battlefield supplies.

By Damien McElroy and Jon Swaine

20 March 2013

Government sources said the equipment from Ministry of Defence stores would allow rebel fighters to detect and identify suspected chemical weapons as they battle against the regime.

The shipment was being assembled as senior US politicians heaped pressure on President Barack Obama to intervene in the Syrian civil war following a poison gas attack that killed at least 25 on Tuesday.

David Cameron told the House of Commons that a feeble international reaction was allowing Syria to fall into a Bosnia-style spiral of death.

Syria's regime and its opposition opponents have traded accusations of deploying chemical weapons in the town of Khan al-Assad, near Aleppo. Bashar al-Jafaari, Syria's ambassador to the UN demanded a "specialised, independent and neutral mission" set-up by Ban Ki-moon, the Secretary General, to investigate the incident. The rebel Syrian National Coalition has also demanded an international inquiry.

British officials see the provision of chemical weapons suits, equipment that monitors the air and analysis sets as a key need for the opposition, officials said. Alongside body armour and armoured vehicles, the suits will be part of the first shipment sent within weeks via Turkey to the front line.

"Protective equipment in the MoD stores is very effective for activists engaged against the regime on the ground and if it is known that kits are deployed we judge it less likely that the regime would use it," said an official involved in the planning. "But if there are chemicals used it will allow the rebels to detect it accurately and the world to react."

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Mr Cameron said the chemical weapons threat was one reason to remove the embargo on the rebels altogether. "I felt sitting round the European Council chamber there was a slight similarity between some of the arguments that were being made about not putting more weapons into Syria that seemed to me to be very familiar to the discussions we had about Bosnia and the appalling events that followed," he said.

Robert Ford, the US Syrian envoy, said America so far had "no evidence to substantiate" claims that chemical weapons had been used and Mr Obama's "red line" crossed.

However the administration shared widespread concerns that the pink-white smoke and chlorine smell reported by victims who were struggling to breathe and foaming at the mouth was a chemical material.

The alleged use of chemical weapons prompted senior senators from both parties in Washington to heap pressure on President Barack Obama to intervene.

Carl Levin, the Democratic chairman of the Senate armed services committee, called for strikes on the Assad regime's military facilities and for a no-fly zone to be imposed over the country.

"There should be the next ratcheting up of military effort, and that would include going after some of Syria's air defences," Mr Levin told Foreign Policy magazine.

John McCain and Lindsey Graham, two Republican senators, reiterated their long-standing demand for the US to step in, with Mr Graham even suggesting the US put "boots on the ground".

In an effort to show his regime's resilience, President Assad was pictured at a reception for a Damascus fine arts centre.

King Abdullah II, the Jordanian monarch warned that President Assad's regime was doomed and that an Islamic fundamentalist state was likely to emerge on his borders.

"The most worrying factors in the Syrian conflict are the issues of chemical weapons, the steady flow or sudden surge in refugees and a jihadist state emerging out of the conflict," the king said.

The cost of the conflict already exceed half a billion dollars and were rising rapidly.

An estimated 500,000 Syrian refugees – about nine per cent of Jordan's population of 6 million, had crossed into Jordan in the last 12 months.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/9943791/Britain-to-airlift-chemical-weapons-detection-kits-to-Syria.html>

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Bloomberg News

Iranian Envoy Sees Possible Breakthrough on Nuclear Deal

By Indra A.R. Lakshmanan and Kambiz Foroohar
March 20, 2013

Iran for the first time sees the "possibility for a breakthrough" in negotiations next month over its disputed nuclear program, the Islamic Republic's ambassador to the United Nations said.

Talks in Kazakhstan three weeks ago marked a "turning point" where the U.S. and five other world powers seemed "more realistic" about Iran's bottom-line position that it has a right to enrich uranium for peaceful use, Mohammad Khazaei said in an interview March 18 at Bloomberg's New York headquarters.

Khazaei, Iran's UN envoy since 2007, said the nuclear program has become a matter of "national pride, regardless of how much we need, how much it costs." Economic sanctions haven't sapped Iran's resolve and, instead, have impeded talks by fueling Iran's suspicion of its critics, he said.



Khazaei spoke before President Barack Obama arrived today in Israel, where Iran's nuclear ambitions are on the agenda for talks with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Obama has supported giving more time for economic sanctions to persuade Iran to make nuclear concessions, while Netanyahu has repeatedly said a military strike may be the only way to stop Iran from producing an atomic bomb that could threaten Israel.

The U.S., the U.K., France, Germany, China and Russia proposed at a two-day meeting last month in Almaty, Kazakhstan, the easing of sanctions on Iran's petrochemicals and gold trade in exchange for Iran ceasing production of medium-enriched uranium, according to officials involved in the talks.

Technical Talks

Technical experts from Iran and the six world powers held talks in Istanbul on March 18 to discuss details of the plan. A Western diplomat, who asked not to be named because of the sensitivity of the negotiations, said yesterday the Istanbul technical discussions were genuine and businesslike.

Talks among senior political representatives are to resume April 5 in Almaty.

Iran says its 20 percent-enriched uranium is for medical isotopes for cancer patients. Such material can be further enriched to produce bomb-grade fuel, and the U.S. and its allies suspect Iran of seeking the capability to make a nuclear bomb.

While the offer to ease petrochemical and gold sanctions is "positive," Khazaei said it "doesn't help that much" and won't be the reason if Iran makes any deal.

Khazaei, who has been Iran's vice minister for the economy, chief representative to the World Bank and a member of parliament, dismissed the Obama administration's assertion that sanctions on banking, trade and oil exports -- Iran's main source of revenue -- have forced Iran to consider an agreement after years of stalled talks.

Oil Markets

Iran was the No. 6 producer in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries in February, and any rise in tensions would hit oil markets. West Texas Intermediate crude for April delivery, which expires today, slid \$1.58 yesterday to settle at \$92.16 a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange.

Iran survived far worse conditions, including shortages of staples such as milk, in the 1980s during the Iran-Iraq War, Khazaei said. Today's high prices, fueled by restrictions on Iran's oil exports and banking transactions, seem minor in comparison, he said.

The key to a deal would be international acceptance of what his government sees as its right under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to enrich uranium, even at the 5 percent level needed to fuel power plants, Khazaei said.

Accepting Enrichment

Because even Iranians viewed as "agreeable" by the U.S. share this view, he said presidential elections set for June in Iran won't affect talks.

Some U.S. officials have privately said there will be pressure on the Obama administration to accept Iran's uranium enrichment at low levels under UN safeguards. Israel and some non-proliferation specialists have said Iran must be denied any domestic enrichment capability -- a position Khazaei said is a non-starter.

Khazaei said the underlying obstacle is the "mistrust between the two sides." Fear of Iran is based on "allegations or suspicions," he said, denying that Iran is seeking to destabilize or attack any of its neighbors. The U.S. has sanctioned Iran for support of terrorism, human rights abuses and ballistic missile and nuclear proliferation.

On the eve of Obama's trip, Khazaei asserted that "Israelis every day are threatening Iran" and called on Obama to urge Israel to give up its undeclared nuclear arsenal. He said Israel has nothing to fear from Iran.



No Attacks

"Iranians have not, and they do not intend to attack any country, any nation in the region," Khazaei said.

The U.S. and Israel are among countries that have accused Iran of supporting proxies such as the militant group Hezbollah to carry out attacks on Israeli and Jewish targets and a plot to kill Saudi Arabia's ambassador to Washington.

Iran doesn't recognize the legitimacy of Israel and has rejected a two-state solution for Palestine. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has called for a referendum of all the inhabitants in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza.

In an interview last week with Israel's Channel 2 television, Obama said Iran is more than "a year or so" away from being able to build a nuclear weapon and repeated that "all options are on the table" if diplomacy fails.

Obama reached out to Iranians with a March 18 video to mark the Iranian New Year, urging the government to take "immediate and meaningful steps to reduce tensions and work toward an enduring, long-term settlement of the nuclear issue."

'Disastrous' Result

Khazaei warned that if Israel attacked Iran, the "result would be disastrous for everybody." A conflict in the region could close the Strait of Hormuz, through which 20 percent of the world's oil is shipped daily on average, and military analysts have said Iran would strike back using proxies around the world.

Khazaei discounted the possibility of an Israeli strike.

"I don't think it's going to happen because there are even some wise people in the region that they know that they should not play with the lion in the region, which is Iran," he said.

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-03-19/iranian-envoy-sees-possible-breakthrough-on-nuclear-deal.html>

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Al Arabiya – U.A.E

Assad Regime has Chemical Weapons, possibly in Mountains: Former VP to Al Arabiya

Thursday, 21 March 2013

Abdel Halim Khaddam, Syria's former vice president, said that the regime of President Bashar al-Assad was storing a huge supply of chemical weapons following attempts to make nuclear bombs in the 1970s.

"It is difficult to know the location of these weapons, especially to those who are outside the [Assad] circle," Khaddam told Al Arabiya in a telephone interview on Wednesday.

However, he added that the arms may be in mountainous regions of the country.

The former VP said that nothing connects the Syrian president to the country's people, and that Assad feels no sense of responsibility towards his countrymen.

Khaddam told Al Arabiya that there is a department in the army that handles "chemical war" and "the production of weapons."

He also said that there are specific research centers that work on the chemical weapons.

"Nothing prevents Bashar al-Assad from using chemical weapons, because he has failed in beating the uprising," Khaddam said. "That is why [Assad] is using Weapons of Mass Destruction, like cluster bombs and long-range missiles."

The former VP also said that is the international community responsibility that the Assad regime still exists.



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<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/2013/03/21/Assad-regime-has-nuclear-weapons-possible-in-mountains-former-VP-to-Al-Arabiya.html>

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CNN.com

Official: 'Something Went Down' in Syria, but It Was Short of Chemical Weapons

By Barbara Starr, Chelsea J. Carter and Amir Ahmed, CNN
Friday, March 22, 2013

(CNN) -- The United Nations will investigate claims by the government and rebels that either side used chemical weapons against each other in the Syrian conflict.

The United Kingdom and France have also put in requests with the U.N. to investigate the alleged use of such weapons in three cases.

U.S. President Barack Obama and other American officials have said in recent days there was no intelligence to substantiate reports that rebels used chemical weapons against government troops.

Now analysts are also "leaning hard away" from the notion that Syria used chemical weapons against its own people, a U.S. military official directly familiar with the preliminary analysis told CNN.

That official told CNN "there are strong indications now that chemical weapons were not used by the regime in recent days." The official would not detail the indications.

The officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity, were not authorized to publicly release details of the intelligence analysis.

Syria claimed rebels used chemical weapons in an attack Tuesday in Khan al-Asal in the northern province of Aleppo. State-run media blamed rebels for the attack, which it said killed 25 people and injured more than 110 others.

Rebels, meanwhile, accused government forces of a chemical weapons attack on the rural Damascus suburb of Ateibeh.

An analysis of video of hospitalized Syrians released by state-run TV suggests people are not suffering from a chemical weapons attack, nor are they being treated as though they were in such an attack, the U.S. military official said.

"The actions in the video don't match up to a chemical weapons response," the official said, adding that Syrian hospitals may have a shortage of the supplies that would be expected to be used in such an attack.

Analysts believe it's possible people in the video were deliberately exposed to a "caustic" agent such as chlorine. But that would not be the same as using a chemical weapons as defined by international treaties, such as a nerve or blister agent.

"Something went down, but it was short of a chemical weapon," a senior State Department official told CNN. The official was speaking on condition of anonymity for the same reason as the other two officials.

NATO and U.S. radar or satellite intelligence also do not indicate there was a launch of a missile at the time Syrians say the alleged attack occurred, according to the military official.

"The fact that it's not a weapon doesn't mean it's not some creative use of a caustic agent," the official said.

'Unfettered access'

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The news came as U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called for full cooperation from all sides, saying the investigation would begin as soon as "practically possible." He also stressed the investigation must include "unfettered access," something that has not been possible in some previous attempts to investigate claims of violence.

Ban's promise of an investigation into the claims followed a formal, written request by al-Assad's government for an independent investigation.

While Ban told reporters at the United Nations he was aware of the rebel claims of a chemical weapons attack by the government, he did not say whether those claims will also be investigated.

A senior administration official, traveling with Obama in Israel, told reporters the United States supports a U.N. investigation but said that it should include allegations by the Syrian government and the rebels.

"We believe very strongly that that investigation needs to address all allegations of chemical weapons use. Not be limited to any one allegation," said the official, who also spoke on condition of anonymity for the same reason as the others.

The United States, meanwhile, continues to monitor Syria's chemical weapons very closely, the official said.

Analysts believe the Syrian government may have one of the largest stockpiles of chemical weapons in the world. Specifically, the supply is believed to include sarin, mustard and VX gases, which are banned under international law. Syria has denied the allegation.

The Chemical Weapons Convention prohibits the production, stockpiling and use of chemical and biological weapons. Syria is not one of the 188 signatories to the convention.

In recent months, reports have repeatedly surfaced that Syrian forces moved some of the chemical weapons inventories possibly because of deteriorating security in the country, raising fears the stockpile could fall into the hands of al Qaeda-linked groups working with the opposition should al-Assad's government fall.

As a result, the United States has been talking with neighboring countries about the steps needed to secure the weapons should al-Assad be forced from office.

Cleric killed

In the latest violence to hit the country Thursday, at least 49 people were killed and 84 wounded when a suicide bomber struck one of the main mosques in Damascus, killing a top Sunni cleric and longtime al-Assad supporter, Syrian state-run media.

Mohammad Said Ramadan al-Bouti was teaching religious class at the mosque when he was killed during the blast, state-run media reported.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack, but al-Bouti is hated among rebels for his support of al-Assad.

In one of his final sermons at the Umayyad, or Great Mosque, of Damascus, al-Bouti called on Syrians to stand by the government and condemned rebels as "terrorists."

As has become common in violent attacks that kill civilians, the government and the opposition accused one another of being behind the attack.

The opposition Local Coordination Committees of Syria said the area where the mosque sits is near al-Assad's party headquarters.

"The whole area was under the full control of the regime forces with much military reinforcement," the LCC said.

The government, meanwhile, accused rebels of being behind the attack.



Sunni Arabs make up the majority of Syria's population and are dominant in the opposition, but some support the government, controlled by Alawites -- an offshoot of Shiitism.

More than 70,000 people have died in Syria since unrest began two years ago, the United Nations has said.

http://www.cnn.com/2013/03/21/world/meast/syria-civil-war/?hpt=hp_t1

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RT (Russia Today) – Russia

North Korea Says Nuclear Program Not a Bargaining Chip, Slams US Policy

March 17, 2013

North Korea said its nuclear program is not a bargaining chip and it won't negotiate with Washington as long as it maintains a hostile policy toward the North. It came after the US said it would boost missile defenses in case of a North Korean attack.

"If [the US] thinks we have acquired our nuclear weapons to trade them for some economic benefits, it will be nothing but an utterly absurd miscalculation," a spokesman for the North's foreign ministry said in a Saturday statement, according to the state-run KCNA news agency.

"As long as the United States does not abandon its hostile policy, we have no intention of talking with it, and we will stick fast to our course under 'songun.'" The term "songun" refers to North Korea's "military first" ideology, which gives top priority to building nuclear arms and bolstering the military.

Pyongyang also blamed the US for *"having compelled [North Korea] to have access to nukes" because it "escalated the situation of the Korean Peninsula to an extreme phase."*

But despite North Korea's latest statement, some experts still expect the country to return to the negotiating table.

"The U.S. and North Korea will likely stage a usual tug of war over the lifting of sanctions—which Pyongyang regards as representing the hostile U.S. policy—before having talks, which are likely to be brokered by the Chinese," Yang Moo-Jin of the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul told The Wall Street Journal.

Many analysts and officials have suggested that Pyongyang may give up its nuclear weapons in exchange for economic and other incentives. Some say the harsh language used by the North was just a ploy to maximize its leverage.

Pyongyang has noticeably hardened its position on its nuclear weapons program since the United Nations Security Council imposed more sanctions to punish North Korea for launching along-range rocket in December and completing a third nuclear test last month.

North Korea's statement came just one day after US Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel announced a \$1 billion plan to *"stay ahead of the threat"* posed by Iran and North Korea. The plan involves adding 14 interceptors to the 30 already in its missile-defense system by fiscal year 2017.

Just days ago, President Obama's national security adviser Tom Donilon said that *"to get the assistance it desperately needs and the respect it claims it wants, North Korea will have to change course."*

Donilon advised Pyongyang to learn from Myanmar, where changes resulted in billions in debt forgiveness, development assistance, and an influx of foreign investment.

But the words seemingly went in one ear and out the other, failing to sway North Korea.

"We did not own nuclear weapons just to get someone's recognition," the North said, calling its arsenal *"an all-powerful sacred sword that protects national sovereignty and security."*



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Pyongyang said offers like Donilon's "may work for other nations, but to us, they are nothing but the barking of a dog."

<http://rt.com/news/north-korea-nuclear-weapons-393/>

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Channel NewsAsia – Singapore

North Korea Has Missile that Can Reach US: Lawmaker

Agence France-Presse (AFP)

18 March 2013

WASHINGTON: Nuclear-armed North Korea has a ballistic missile that could hit the United States, the leading lawmaker on the US House of Representatives intelligence committee warned Sunday.

Congressman Mike Rogers also raised concern that North Korea's young leader Kim Jong-Un is trying to prove himself to his military and that Washington could not be sure of his "stability."

"They certainly have a ballistic missile that can reach US shores," Rogers told the CNN news network, without specifying whether he was referring to the more exposed US states of Alaska and Hawaii or to America's west coast.

"You have a 28-year-old leader who is trying to prove himself to the military, and the military is eager to have a sabre rattling for their own self-interest, and the combination of that is proving to be very, very deadly."

North Korea has tested missiles that could strike South Korea or Japan but has yet to demonstrate it has the capability to fire long-range missiles that could reach the continental United States.

It is also not clear how close North Korea is to being able to convert one of the nuclear devices that it has tested to function as a missile warhead.

On Friday, the United States said it would beef up its defences against a possible North Korean missile strike a week after Pyongyang threatened a "pre-emptive" nuclear attack against its arch enemy.

Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said 14 more interceptors would be stationed in Alaska by 2017, increasing by almost half the number already deployed along the California and Alaska coastlines.

Pyongyang has threatened to unleash a second Korean War -- backed by nuclear weapons -- in response to UN sanctions imposed after its third atomic test last month and to joint South Korea-US military manoeuvres.

"This is something that we have to take seriously, and you can see that they're looking for some provocations, not just along the border, but there's some islands that they're interested in," Rogers said.

Rogers acknowledged the United States knew more about Kim's father, Kim Jong-Il, than it does about the country's current head.

"We just don't know the stability" of the 28-year-old, Rogers said.

http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/afp_asiapacific/view/1260622/1/.html

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AsiaOne News – Singapore

US Promises S. Korea all Military Resources

Monday, March 18, 2013

Agence France-Presse (AFP)

SEOUL - US Deputy Defence Secretary Ashton Carter on Monday promised to provide South Korea with every military resource under the US nuclear umbrella at a time of heightened tensions with North Korea.

Issue No. 1050, 22 March 2013

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Carter was in Seoul on the second leg of a four-nation tour of US allies and partners in Asia including Japan, the Philippines and Indonesia.

"We remain steadfast to our commitment to extended deterrence offered by the US nuclear umbrella," Carter said after talks with South Korean Defence Minister Kim Kwan-Jin.

"We'll ensure all of our resources will be available to our alliance," he was quoted as saying by Yonhap news agency.

Carter's visit came just days after the United States announced it would bolster defences against a possible North Korean missile strike in response to Pyongyang's threat of a "pre-emptive" nuclear attack.

Defence Secretary Chuck Hagel said Friday that 14 more interceptors would be stationed in Alaska, increasing by almost half the 30 already deployed along the California and Alaska coastlines.

Hagel said the defence upgrade was designed to "stay ahead of the threat" from North Korea, which is still believed to be years from having a missile capable of carrying a nuclear warhead to the continental United States.

Military tensions on the Korean peninsula have escalated dramatically since the North conducted its third nuclear test last month.

Pyongyang responded to the subsequent UN sanctions with threats of "all-out war" backed by nuclear weapons.

Some lawmakers in Seoul have suggested it is time for South Korea to develop its own nuclear deterrent, rather than relying on the US umbrella.

<http://news.asiaone.com/News/AsiaOne%2BNews/Asia/Story/A1Story20130318-409512.html>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Reuters – U.S.

China Criticizes U.S. Anti-Missile North Korea Plan

Monday, March 18, 2013

BEIJING (Reuters) - China said on Monday U.S. plans to bolster missile defenses in response to provocations by North Korea would only intensify antagonism, and urged Washington to act prudently.

"The anti-missile issue has a direct bearing on global and regional balance and stability. It also concerns mutual strategic interests between countries," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei told a daily news briefing.

U.S. Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel announced plans on Friday to bolster U.S. missile defenses in response to "irresponsible and reckless provocations" by North Korea, which has threatened a preemptive nuclear strike against the United States.

Hong said China believed efforts to increase security and resolve the problem of nuclear proliferation were best achieved through diplomatic means.

"Actions such as strengthening anti-missile (defenses) will intensify antagonism and will not be beneficial to finding a solution for the problem," Hong said.

"China hopes the relevant country will proceed on the basis of peace and stability, adopt a responsible attitude and act prudently."

The Pentagon said the United States had informed China, North Korea's neighbor and closest ally, of its decision to add more interceptors but declined to characterize Beijing's reaction.

The remarks from China's Foreign Ministry come days before U.S. Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence David Cohen visits China to discuss implementation of economic sanctions against North Korea.

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China has expressed unease at previous U.S. plans for missile defense systems, as well as sales of such systems to Taiwan and Japan, viewing it as part of an attempt to "encircle" and contain China despite U.S. efforts to ease Chinese fears.

China has responded by developing an anti-missile system of its own, announcing the latest successful test in January.

Reporting by Sui-Lee Wee; Writing by Ben Blanchard; Editing by Robert Birsell.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/03/18/us-korea-north-china-idUSBRE92H05A20130318>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

China, Russia to Stand Together on Missile Defense in AsPac

19 March 2013

BEIJING, March 19 (RIA Novosti) – Russia and China will coordinate their reactions to US plans to boost its missile defense in the Asia-Pacific region, a senior Chinese diplomat said on Tuesday.

The remarks follow Washington's recent announcement that it has shelved plans for a European-based missile shield in favor of boosting its defenses in Alaska, which would give it coverage from a potential North Korean attack.

Beijing and Moscow oppose the deployment of missile shields, arguing that they undermine their own military strategies.

"The matter of missile defense has to do with global strategic balance, and China and Russia have similar views on it," Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Cheng Guoping said in Beijing.

"Russia and the People's Republic of China have been cooperating on the matter for years, and we will only be strengthening collaboration in this direction," he said.

US efforts to bolster its homeland missile defense follow threats by North Korea last week to attack the United States with its long-range missiles.

The US military intends to deploy 14 additional interceptors in Alaska by 2017 to counter the threat and install a radar station in Japan for early tracking of North Korean missiles.

Russian ambassador to China, Sergei Razov, also urged Moscow's partners to "adjust their defense efforts to real challenges and threats" and said that no nation's security effort should pose a threat to others.

Neither Cheng nor Razov elaborated on their countries' possible reaction to US plans.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei earlier Monday said Washington's adapted defense blueprint would "only intensify antagonism and not help to solve the problem."

He also criticized "missile proliferation" in an apparent reference to North Korea's December launch of a rocket to put a satellite into space that observers believe could serve as a precursor to Pyongyang developing the capability to launch long-range missiles.

Northern Korea carried out a nuclear test in February, prompting a new round of US-led international sanctions, which triggered the threats by North Korea to attack the United States.

Russia has for years vocally resisted US plans to deploy a missile shield in Eastern Europe, arguing that it would threaten the strategic parity between the two former Cold War foes.

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20130319/180114267/China-Russia-toStand-Together-on-Missile-Defense-in-AsPac.html>

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Atlanta Journal-Constitution
Tuesday, March 19, 2013

Renewed Nuke Sale Fear after Recent NKorea Test

By FOSTER KLUG, Associated Press (AP)

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea's nuclear test last month wasn't just a show of defiance and national pride; it also is advertising. The target audience, analysts say, is anyone in the world looking to buy nuclear material.

Though Pyongyang has threatened to launch nuclear strikes on the U.S., the most immediate threat posed by its nuclear technology may be North Korea's willingness to sell it to nations that Washington sees as sponsors of terrorism. The fear of such sales was highlighted this week, when Japan confirmed that cargo seized last year and believed to be from North Korea contained material that could be used to make nuclear centrifuges, which are crucial to enriching uranium into bomb fuel.

The dangerous message North Korea is sending, according to Graham Allison, a nuclear expert at the Harvard Kennedy School: "Nukes are for sale."

North Korea launched a long-range rocket in December, which the U.N. called a cover for a banned test of ballistic missile technology. On Feb. 12, it conducted its third underground nuclear test, which got Pyongyang new U.N. sanctions.

Outside nuclear specialists believe North Korea has enough nuclear material for several crude bombs, but they have yet to see proof that Pyongyang can build a warhead small enough to mount on a missile. The North, however, may be able to help other countries develop nuclear expertise right now, as it is believed to have done in the past.

"There's a growing technical capability and confidence to sell weapons and technology abroad, without fear of reprisal, and that lack of fear comes from (their) growing nuclear capabilities," Joel Wit, a former U.S. State Department official, said at a recent nuclear conference in Seoul.

Pyongyang says it needs nuclear weapons because of what it calls a hostile U.S. policy aimed at invading the North. An unidentified spokesman for North Korea's Foreign Ministry warned Wednesday of military strikes if the United States repeats recent test flights in South Korea of the nuclear-capable B-52 bomber.

The U.S., South Korea and others say North Korean brinkmanship meant to win aid and other concessions is the real motive. Even China, North Korea's most important ally, opposes its neighbor's nuclear ambitions.

North Korean nuclear sales earn the impoverished country money that can be pumped back into weapons development, analyst Shin Beomchul at the South Korean-run Korea Institute for Defense Analyses in Seoul said Tuesday.

Its growing capabilities could make North Korea more attractive to buyers, especially if it is determined that highly enriched uranium was used in last month's test.

Proliferation worries have ramped up since late 2010, when North Korea unveiled a long-suspected uranium enrichment operation. North Korea's first two nuclear tests, in 2006 and 2009, were suspected to be fueled by its limited plutonium stockpile. A crude uranium bomb is easier to produce than one made with plutonium, and uranium production is easier to conceal.

Little is known about North Korea's uranium program, but Washington and others are keenly interested in whether it is producing highly enriched uranium for bombs and whether uranium was used in the third test — two things suspected, but not yet confirmed, by outsiders.

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A nuclear test using highly enriched uranium "would announce to the world — including potential buyers — that North Korea is now operating a new, undiscovered production line for weapons-usable material," Allison, the Harvard nuclear specialist, wrote in a New York Times op-ed after the North's test.

U.S. officials have hinted that retaliation would follow should Washington discover North Korean cooperation behind any atomic attack on an American city or U.S. ally.

Pyongyang's nuclear transfers and any use of weapons of mass destruction "would be considered a grave threat to the United States and our allies, and we will hold North Korea fully accountable for the consequences," President Barack Obama's national security adviser, Tom Donilon, said last week.

U.S. officials have long tracked North Korean dealings in nuclear and weapons technology. Sanctions have cut down on missile sales, but Iran and Syria, two countries seen by Washington as rogue actors, may continue to be customers.

In November, the head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization proposed observing North Korea's nuclear test, the Japanese news agency Kyodo reported, citing an unidentified Western diplomatic source privy to Pyongyang-Tehran ties.

North Korea is believed to have helped Syria build what senior U.S. intelligence officials called a secret nuclear reactor meant to produce plutonium. In 2007, Israeli jets bombed the structure in a remote Syrian desert.

Japan's government said Monday that it has determined that a shipment believed to have originated in North Korea violated U.N. sanctions because it contained material that could be used to make nuclear centrifuges.

The shipment of an aluminum alloy was seized from a Singaporean-flagged ship transiting Tokyo last August. The ship was reportedly bound for Myanmar from the Chinese port of Dalian, although Japanese government officials didn't confirm Myanmar as the destination.

Japan's chief government spokesman, Yoshihide Suga, said officials searched the ship because they believed it carried North Korean cargo. News reports said the United States tipped off Japan. Suga said officials had determined in subsequent analyses that the rods were made of an alloy that suggests they were intended for use in a nuclear centrifuge.

Suga said the seizure was the first to be conducted under a law Japan passed in 2010 to clamp down on the movement of materials that could be used for nuclear weapons development being brought into, or exported from, North Korea.

The murkiness of the clandestine nuclear trade is a major worry. It's difficult to know how a buyer would use atomic material or know-how, or where material could end up after being sold.

"The terrorist threat of an improvised nuclear device delivered anonymously and unconventionally by a boat or a truck across our long and unprotected borders is one against which we have no certain deterrent or defensive response," Robert Gallucci, a former senior U.S. diplomat who negotiated a U.S.-North Korea nuclear deal used to defuse a nuclear crisis in the 1990s, said late last month in Seoul.

"For Americans, this threat is far greater than the unlikely threat that may someday be posed by North Korean nuclear weapons delivered by a ballistic missile," he said.

Associated Press writers Eric Talmadge in Tokyo and Hyung-jin Kim in Seoul contributed to this report.

<http://www.aic.com/ap/ap/defense/renewed-nuke-sale-fear-after-recent-nkorea-test/nWwwy/>

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RT (Russia Today) – Russia

North Korea Threatens to Attack US Bases in Okinawa, Guam

March 21, 2013

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North Korea has threatened to target US airbases in Okinawa and Guam as it issued an air raid alert on Thursday and ordered its military to stand ready, the country's state media reported.

"The United States is advised not to forget that our precision target tools have within their range the Anderson Air Force base on Guam where the B-52 takes off, as well as the Japanese mainland where nuclear powered submarines are deployed and the navy bases on Okinawa," the North Korean command spokesman was quoted as saying by KCNA news agency.

The threats came as a response to the use of nuclear-armed US B-52 bombers in joint war games South Korea held with the US. *"We cannot tolerate the US carrying out nuclear strike drills, setting us as targets, and advertising them as strong warning messages,"* the spokesman said.

The air raid alert was issued at 9:32 am local time (00:32 am GMT) with military units and civilians told to take cover, Korean Central Television said.

A news report by South Korea's Yonhap news agency suggested that the warning appears to be a part of a military drill, though this has not been confirmed by Pyongyang.

This comes amid growing tensions on the Korean Peninsula and ongoing saber-rattling that followed the UN Security Council's imposition of strict sanctions on Pyongyang over its third underground nuclear test in February.

On Monday, the US said that every military resource at its disposal, including its nuclear arsenal, would be available to South Korea in the event of a confrontation with the North.

Earlier in March, Pyongyang threatened all-out nuclear war with the US and South Korea after the two countries began joint military drills on the Korean Peninsula. The North also nullified the 1953 armistice that ended the Korean War, claiming the drills were preparations for an invasion.

<http://rt.com/news/north-korea-air-raid-alert-568/>

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

Russia's 5G Submarine to Feature New Stealth Technology

19 MARCH 2013

MOSCOW, March 19 (RIA Novosti) - The distinguishing feature of Russia's newest, fifth-generation submarines will be stealth rather than higher speed or greater depth capabilities, Vladimir Dorofeyev, head of the Malakhit Design Bureau, said on Tuesday.

"It is quite possible that new technological solutions will appear to protect submarines from detection," he said in an interview with RIA Novosti.

The fifth-generation submarine will acquire new capabilities through close interaction with other components of the Armed Forces, including surface warships, warplanes, spacecraft, satellites, as well as other submarines, based on an integrated information space, he said.

He added, however, that the incorporation of submarines, alongside surface warships and warplanes, into a single communications system is at odds with the idea of a "stealth vessel," insofar as the sheer exchange of information is a "telltale sign."

"But that is a field that requires serious scientific-technical research," Dorofeyev said

Rubin Central Design Bureau head Igor Vilnit said on Monday work is in progress on fifth-generation nuclear-powered and diesel submarines.

The new submarine will have a service life of about 50 years, he said.



The fifth generation will be distinguished by its lowered noise, automated control systems, reactor safety, and long-range weapons.

The Russian Navy currently relies on third-generation submarines with fourth-generation subs of the Yury Dolgoruky (Project 955 Borey) and St. Petersburg (Project 677 Lada) class just beginning to be adopted for service. In addition to Rubin, Defense Ministry research centers and the Navy Institute, as well as Rubin's partners and contractors, are currently working to develop a basic design of the fifth-generation submarine.

The Defense Ministry previously said Russia is planning to develop its fifth-generation submarine by 2020 under a 2011-2020 arms procurement program, to be armed with both ballistic and cruise missiles.

Russia also plans to build eight fourth-generation strategic nuclear subs by 2020 and arm them with Bulava submarine-launched ballistic missiles.

http://en.rian.ru/military_news/20130319/180112651/Russias-5G-Submarine-to-Feature-New-Stealth-Technology.html

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The Moscow Times – Russia

Missile Defense Is a Nice Problem to Have

19 March 2013 | Issue 5090

By Nikolaus von Twickel

Washington's decision to scrap the last phase of the planned NATO missile shield for Europe elicited expectations that U.S.-Russian relations might improve by removing a major stumbling block that had irked Moscow.

Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel announced Friday that the U.S. would not carry out Phase 4 of the shield, which envisaged land-based interceptors in Poland and Romania. Moscow had fiercely opposed those plans, arguing against boosting American military presence close to Russia's borders.

But any hopes for a rapid thaw were dashed Monday, when both the Foreign Ministry and prominent pro-Kremlin lawmakers said they were unimpressed by the move.

Analysts argued that the negative reaction proved that the country's hawkish foreign policy makers need controversies, if only for domestic purposes.

Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov told Kommersant that he felt "no euphoria" because he saw no concession to Russia. Instead, he stressed that Moscow would continue to seek legally binding agreements that all of the missile defense shield's elements were not aimed at the country's strategic nuclear forces.

Vyacheslav Nikonov, a first deputy chairman of the State Duma's Foreign Affairs Relations Committee, said that the move hardly changed the military balance with the U.S.

In an interview with Interfax, he argued that the missile shield's first three phases already offered enough of a threat. He added that the U.S. decision to instead station interceptors in Alaska created another problem because this was again close to the country's borders. "We are talking about a general buildup of American missile deployments," Nikonov, a member of the governing United Russia faction, was quoted as saying.

Committee chairman Alexei Pushkov even argued that the move unmasked Washington's dishonesty. "The U.S. told us over and over that a missile shield must be deployed in Poland to counter a rocket attack from North Korea. Now they are deploying it in Alaska. Why did they lie?" he wrote on Twitter.

In comments carried by Interfax, Pushkov added that this justified Moscow's reservations and showed the failure of Washington's policies. "The U.S. has practically admitted that Russia was right and that they misled us," he was quoted as saying.



Experts polled for this article said the missile shield was an example of a problem that is better to have than to solve.

"Very often having a problem can have its own advantages; you can pin other problems on it," said Pavel Bayev of the Peace Research Institute Oslo.

He added that while this can hold true for both sides, in the case of missile defense it is clearly in the interest of President Vladimir Putin to keep the conflict simmering, while Washington would rather tone down the rhetoric.

Bayev argued that missile defense has become an essential element of the Kremlin's anti-American campaigns, ranging from recent sanctions against U.S. non-governmental organizations to the infamous ban on American adoptions of Russian children.

"This has become a cornerstone of anti-American policy. If it is taken away, everything looks shaky," he said by telephone from Norway.

Alexei Malashenko, an analyst with the Carnegie Moscow Center, argued that Moscow was shying away from any positive reaction because it would threaten the image of the West that it built up over the past years.

"Any concession from the West destroys the image of Russia as a fortress surrounded by enemies," he said.

Moscow Times defense columnist Alexander Golts argued that Russia needed missile defense as its bogeyman vis-a-vis the West.

Another controversy that might be labeled advantageous is Moscow's persistent failure to even reach a modest visa deal with the European Union.

Earlier this month, hopes were raised that a so-called facilitation agreement, allowing businesspeople, journalists and NGO workers to get long-term multiple-entry visitor visas, could be imminent.

The perspective arose after Germany gave up its opposition to a Russian demand to include a waiver for government officials, which had held up negotiations for more than a year.

But European officials then poured cold water on those hopes, pointing to a previously unknown Transportation Ministry decree stipulating that airlines must pass on sensitive passenger data to law enforcement authorities.

The decree is supposed to come into force on July 1 and covers all foreign airline flights, even those that only pass through the country's vast airspace — meaning that some 19 million passengers will be affected annually, according to EU officials.

Stefano Manservigi, the European Commission's second-highest home affairs official, said last week that the 27-member bloc would likely agree on a visa deal only if a sharing agreement for so-called passenger name records is reached — because otherwise flights originating in Europe would violate EU law.

While Brussels has reached sharing agreements with the U.S. and other countries in the past, officials complain that Moscow did not warn its partners in time. "This was like a hand grenade thrown into the ring," a European diplomat said on condition of anonymity.

However, experts said the visa issue cuts both ways because some European countries, first and foremost Germany, have signaled that they oppose visa-free travel with Russia because of migration and security concerns.

Sergei Utkin, a researcher with the Institute of World Economy and International Relations, said there was an element of arbitrariness in the European opposition to granting Russian officials visa-free travel. "They could have agreed on that early on, as they did with Moldova and Ukraine," he argued.

Utkin said that introducing complications was standard negotiation practice, not just in international diplomacy. "It happens when you haggle over a car," he said.

<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/missile-defense-is-a-nice-problem-to-have/477098.html>



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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

Moscow Needs Explanations on US Missile Shield Changes

19 March 2013

BRUSSELS, March 19 (RIA Novosti) - The United States should explain to Russia what changes it made in its European missile defense plans before Moscow draws its conclusion, a Defense Ministry official said on Tuesday.

US Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said at a news conference on Friday that plans to place upgraded missile interceptors in Poland are being abandoned and that 14 new interceptors will be placed on the US West Coast instead.

“The US statement needs a very serious explanation. We need to hold negotiations to understand what this statement is about, what the United States is scrapping in particular and what is eventually implementing. Only after this we will be drawing conclusions,” said Sergei Koshelev, the head of the ministry’s Military Cooperation Department.

Commenting on the issue, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said on Monday in an interview with Kommersant daily, that US changes in the missile defense plans had nothing to do with Moscow’s national security concerns.

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 emerging threat nations like 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.

http://en.rian.ru/military_news/20130319/180102366/Moscow-Needs-Explanations-on-US-Missile-Shield-Changes.html

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Russia & India Report – India

Russia to Modernise Akula Class Submarines

The overhaul of the first Akula class submarine should be completed in two years, and it will rejoin the Russian Navy after sea trials.

March 20, 2013

RIA Novosti

Russia will modernise its fleet of the third-generation Project 971 (Akula class) nuclear-powered attack submarines, Vladimir Dorofeyev, head of the Malakhit Design Bureau, said.

“The Defence Ministry has decided to overhaul all third-generation attack submarines,” Dorofeyev said on Tuesday in an interview with RIA Novosti.

“The first Project 971 submarine is already being upgraded at the Zvezdochka shipyard [in northern Russia],” he said without specifying the name of the vessel and the total number of submarines to be overhauled.

According to Dorofeyev, the overhaul of the first Akula class submarine should be completed in two years, and it will rejoin the Russian Navy after sea trials.

The upgraded vessels will feature better “stealth” capabilities and improved electronics, the official said.



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Together with Project 885 Yasen (Graney) class nuclear-powered vessels they will constitute the core of the Russian fleet of nuclear attack submarines.

The third-generation Project 971 submarine was developed by the Malakhit Design Bureau in the 1970s-80s as an alternative to costly titanium-hull Sierra class vessels.

A total of 15 submarines were built from 1984 to 2001 at the Amur shipyard in Komsomolsk-on-Amur and at the Sevmash shipyard in Severodvinsk. It is not known how many of them are still in service, but one of the subs, the Nerpa, has been leased to India for 10 years under the name INS Chakra.

Akula class submarines feature very low acoustic signatures and can carry up to 12 submarine-launched cruise missiles with nuclear warheads and a range of 3,000 kilometres in addition to anti-ship missiles and torpedoes.

The Indian Navy is looking to spend more than \$10 billion on next generation submarines to scale up its undersea combat capabilities. India, at the moment has 10 Russian Kilo-class, four German HDWs and an Akula-2 nuclear-powered attack submarine leased from Russia at \$1 billion.

http://indrus.in/economics/2013/03/20/russia_to_modernise_akula_class_submarines_23081.html

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

Moscow to Study New US Missile Defense Proposals

21 March 2013

MOSCOW, March 21 (RIA Novosti) – A senior Russian diplomat said on Thursday that the United States has provided new information on its missile defense program that Moscow will study in detail.

Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said that although Moscow remains apprehensive over Washington's missile shield strategy, it is heartened by the readiness to continue dialogue on the issue.

US Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel announced last week that plans for the final stage of Central European-based missile shield are to be scrapped and that interceptors will instead be placed in Alaska.

The change is designed to counter potential incoming threats from North Korea, but Russia worries that any missile defense program undermines the integrity of its own military strategy.

Russian deputy Defense Minister Anatoly Antonov said on Wednesday that security officials from Russia and the United States will meet in the coming months to discuss the impact of recent developments.

Antonov said talks could be held at a security conference in Moscow due to take place on May 23-24.

Russia says it is pressing for "legally binding agreements guaranteeing that US missile defense elements are not aimed against Russia's strategic nuclear forces."

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20130321/180163842/Moscow-to-Study-New-US-Missile-Defense-Proposals.html>

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Minneapolis Star-Tribune

US Officials Reassure Poland over Changes to Missile Defense Plans

By VANESSA GERA, Associated Press (AP)

March 18, 2013

WARSAW, Poland - A U.S. plan to deploy missile defense interceptors to Poland and Romania has been a source of assurance to Washington's allies, who welcome further integration in a key U.S. security system. Meanwhile, it has

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infuriated Russia, which sees the interceptors as a threat and has cited them to block cooperation on nuclear arms reductions and other issues.

So some might have expected the Russians to be relieved and the Poles to express anxiety at a new plan announced last week by U.S. Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel, which effectively cancels plans to put long-term interceptors in Poland in the next decade.

But on Monday, the Russians said they still weren't happy and Polish officials were saying almost nothing, a possible indication that they are relieved that shorter-range missiles, at least, will still be deployed to Poland in the next five years. Romanians also haven't complained, noting merely that U.S. missile defense interceptors will still be deployed there in 2015, as planned.

"We feel no euphoria in connection with what was announced by the U.S. defense secretary and we see no grounds for correcting our position," Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said in comments carried Monday by the Kommersant newspaper. "This is not a concession to Russia and we do not see it as such."

Russia has complained about the U.S. plan, with the Kremlin saying it believes it is aimed against Russia's missile program. Washington adamantly denies that and says the system is meant to stop missiles from Iran and North Korea.

The U.S. missile defense plans for Europe involve building up the system in four phases, with shorter- and medium-range interceptors to be deployed in the first three phases, and longer-range interceptors meant for the fourth phase.

Phase one of the system has already been deployed, with anti-missile interceptors on a ship in the Mediterranean Sea. Phase two is to include interceptors in Romania in 2015, then interceptors in Poland will be deployed starting in 2018 as part of phase three.

However, the fourth stage has not yet been funded by Congress, and there are indications the technology of the long-term interceptors — which theoretically could have protected U.S. territory from Poland — is not ready.

U.S. officials visiting Warsaw on Monday sought to reassure Poland that the cancellation of the final stage will not sideline the country and was not made to appease Russia.

"For Poland there is no change, because the phase-three system, which was always planned to be in Poland, is still now planned to be in Poland," Madelyn Creedon, the U.S. assistant defense secretary for global strategic affairs, told The Associated Press. "It's funded, it's committed. That was our original plan and we haven't changed it."

Wendy Sherman, U.S. undersecretary of state for political affairs, also said in Warsaw that the Polish site "will go forward as scheduled."

Past efforts by President Barack Obama's administration to alter the missile defense program have sparked criticism in Poland. Poland's main aim in having the U.S. interceptors has been to have an American military presence on Polish soil in the belief it will increase the country's security, particularly given fears that Russia could one day try to dominate the region again.

During a news conference in Warsaw along with a Polish diplomat, Sherman was asked by a Polish reporter if the move was meant to mollify Russia. In her answer, she noted that U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry told his Polish counterpart of the decision before announcing it publicly — a courtesy not extended to Moscow.

"Russia was only notified after those calls," Sherman said.

The U.S. missile defense system at Romania's Deveselu military base is not affected either and will become operational in 2015 as planned, the Romanian defense ministry said Monday.

<http://www.startribune.com/world/198764371.html?refer=y>

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The Moscow Times – Russia

Romania Says Anti-Missile Interceptors to Be Deployed

19 March 2013 | Issue 5091

The Associated Press

BUCHAREST — Romania's defense minister said Tuesday that U.S. plans to deploy anti-missile interceptors in his country were going ahead and that Romania had an "exceptional" partnership with the United States.

U.S. Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said last week that plans to place long-range missile interceptors in the final stage of its European system were being abandoned. U.S. officials have stressed that they would deploy shorter-range missiles to Poland and Romania.

Mircea Dusa said in an interview Tuesday that "I have very serious assurances from the American side that the investment in Romania will continue," and interceptors would be deployed in 2015. "Our military cooperation [with the U.S.] since we joined NATO is an exceptional one."

He said the changes in the defense system plans were caused by spending cuts, not political considerations.

"There is a worldwide problem with the economic crisis, and in 2013 very many states are spending less on their defense budgets," he said.

He says Romanian officials were informed three weeks ago followed by confirmation "two to three hours" before the U.S. announcement.

He refused to comment on Russia's opposition to the anti-missile interceptors beyond saying Romania had "normal" relations with Moscow.

Russia has complained about the U.S. Missile system, with the Kremlin saying it believes the plan is aimed against Russia's missile program. Washington adamantly denies that and says the system is meant to stop missiles from Iran and North Korea.

<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/romania-says-anti-missile-interceptors-to-be-deployed/477138.html>

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Wall Street Journal

March 16, 2013

U.S. Boosts Defense from North Korea

By JULIAN E. BARNES, KEITH JOHNSON and DION NISSENBAUM

Page – A7

WASHINGTON—The Pentagon will spend \$1 billion to expand the West Coast-based missile-defense system in a direct response to provocations by North Korea and rising tensions on the Korean peninsula, officials said Friday.

By 2017, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said the U.S. would install 14 additional ground-based missile interceptors at Fort Greely, Alaska, representing an increase of nearly 50% over the 30 interceptors now located both there and in California.

The move accentuates new worries that North Korea has accelerated progress in its intercontinental ballistic missile program.

The precise ranges of North Korea's missiles are uncertain. Defense officials currently believe that North Korean missiles can reach Hawaii as well as Alaska, but not the continental U.S. At the same time, U.S. officials don't believe North Korea has developed a miniaturized nuclear warhead that could be mounted on any missile.



Mr. Hagel didn't specify when U.S. military and intelligence analysts believe Pyongyang will have an ICBM capable of carrying a nuclear warhead. The purpose of Friday's announcement was to keep ahead of Pyongyang's military developments, Mr. Hagel said.

"The United States has missile-defense systems in place to protect us from limited ICBM attacks, but North Korea in particular has recently made advances in its capabilities and is engaged in a series of irresponsible and reckless provocations," Mr. Hagel said.

Pentagon officials cited recent developments in North Korea—a long-range missile test, a nuclear test and the demonstration of a mobile launcher—that suggested the country's missile technology is advancing faster than earlier predicted.

On Friday, North Korea fired two short-range missiles, according to South Korea's Yonhap news agency, a test that appeared to be a response to joint U.S.-South Korean military exercises under way in the region.

The weapons tests have been accompanied by a spike in hostile North Korean rhetoric—including a threat to attack Washington and turn South Korea into a "sea of fire"—and a repudiation this week of the 1953 Korean War armistice.

The Pentagon announcement, analysts said, will send a clear signal to Pyongyang that it has Washington's attention, and that the West intends to respond. That may be a signal Pyongyang has been seeking.

"After North Korea's successful December launch and third nuclear test, their threats are not completely empty," said Ellen Kim, a scholar at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

The administration decision to beef up the missile-defense system comes after President Barack Obama put a hold on the plan in 2009 after taking office. Republican lawmakers agreed Friday with the move to reinstate the missile-defense capacity, and said the administration was wrong to freeze the system in 2009.

"Four years ago, the Obama administration began to unilaterally disarm our defenses and deterrent in the hope our enemies would follow suit," said Rep. Mike Rogers (R., Ala.), chairman of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Strategic Forces. "President Obama is finally realizing what President Reagan taught us 30 years ago—the best way to keep the peace is through strength."

Former President Ronald Reagan in March 1983 unveiled his Strategic Defensive Initiative, a project widely known at the time as "Star Wars."

Pentagon officials dismissed the Republican criticism, saying North Korean technology was considerably less developed four years ago.

James Miller, undersecretary of defense for policy, said the U.S. approach is to "stay ahead of the threat," based on North Korean technological capabilities, and not on the regime's rhetoric or intent.

Adm. James Winnefeld, the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said that the system was meant to dissuade North Korea's new leader, Kim Jong Eun, from toying with the idea of an attack.

"We believe this young lad ought to be deterred...and if he is not, we will be ready," Adm. Winnefeld said.

The administration has been laying the groundwork for toughening its stance against North Korea. Earlier this week, White House National Security Advisor Tom Donilon said in a speech in New York that the U.S. would tap "the full range of our capabilities to protect against and respond to the threat posed to us and our allies by North Korea."

Both intelligence officials and top lawmakers rang alarm bells on North Korea's nuclear threat at a hearing before the Senate Intelligence Committee this week to assess the threats facing the U.S. from around the world.

U.S. spy agencies concluded in a new assessment that the danger from North Korea has grown into "a serious threat to the United States" as well as to East Asia.



Whether the U.S. system of ground-based interceptors are the right response quickly became a matter of debate Friday. The interceptors, vehicles that are launched to intercept intercontinental missiles in flight, have failed in some recent tests, with the last fully successful test occurring in 2008.

Mr. Hagel said the U.S. wouldn't purchase the new weapons until military officials conduct successful tests of the interceptors.

Yousaf Butt, a scholar at Monterey Institute of International Studies, said the ground-based interceptors remains scientifically flawed, and could give American politicians a "false sense of security" that could prompt missteps in the Western Pacific.

"I don't see how adding 14 more [ground-based interceptors] along the Pacific Coast by 2017 will substantially change the North Koreans' perception of the system's well-known abysmal performance," he said. "The North Koreans may be irrational, but they are probably not that irrational."

Mr. Hagel also outlined a series of upgrades under development, including plans to install a second advanced radar system in Japan to more quickly detect North Korean missile launches.

The Pentagon is also examining a location for a third U.S. site for interceptor missiles to augment the sites in Alaska and California. Officials said they are looking at two locations on the East Coast, as well as a second field at Fort Greely.

Pentagon officials said that they notified China of the new interceptors. Beijing has been skeptical of U.S. missile defense initiatives, believing they are aimed at China.

China plays a vital role in the standoff, and last month backed a United Nations Security Council Resolution slapping tougher sanctions on Pyongyang following North Korea's third nuclear test, a stance that encouraged some analysts.

But China has supported international goals before, only to undermine them later by cozying up to North Korea or failing to enforce sanctions, said Victor Cha, an expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Ultimately, the new U.S. moves may not influence North Korea's behavior. Given North Korea's domestic problems, seeking foreign scapegoats is of diverting attention from Pyongyang's shortcomings.

By saber-rattling against the U.S., Kim is diverting attention away from his own "ineptitude and failings as the leader of the country," said Bruce Bennett, an expert on North Korea and missile defense at the Rand Corp., a think tank which works extensively for the U.S. government.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887324532004578362570462466896.html>

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Foreign Policy

The Cable

Liz Sherwood-Randall Promoted to New White House Position

By Josh Rogin

Tuesday, March 19, 2013

The National Security Staff's Senior Director for Europe Liz Sherwood-Randall will take up a newly created senior White House post next month, called the White House coordinator for defense policy, countering weapons of mass destruction, and arms control, *The Cable* has learned.

Randall will take over all the main responsibilities of the White House's former "WMD Czar" Gary Samore, who left government late last year for a position at Harvard University. But the newly created job will add defense policy to Samore's former portfolio in a move that White House officials say is meant to recognize and better coordinate the relationship between these various issues. The job is also meant to help galvanize a renewed second-term



administration push to implement the Prague agenda on nuclear weapons reductions that President Barack Obama announced in 2009.

"As one of the president's closest advisors for the past four years, Liz's leadership and advice have been instrumental as we have successfully strengthened our alliances and partnerships across Europe, helped to revitalize NATO, and worked with Europe to advance the president's global agenda," National Security Advisor Tom Donilon said in a statement to be released Tuesday, obtained in advance by *The Cable*. "Liz brings deep expertise and a track record of accomplishment in defense issues and in proliferation prevention. The president will look to her to bring significant energy and capability to his second term as we pursue the ambitious goals he set forth in his Prague speech in 2009 and prepare our military to defend the American people and our allies against the threats we face today and in the future."

Sherwood-Randall will become one of only three senior "coordinators" inside the NSS. Former Assistant Secretary of State for Europe Phil Gordon began March 11 as the White House coordinator for Middle East, North Africa, and the Gulf region. Michael Daniel is the White House cybersecurity coordinator.

In this new position, Sherwood-Randall will work closely with acting senior director for defense policy and strategy Lt. Col. Ron Clark (USMC), senior director for WMD terrorism and threat reduction Laura Holgate, and senior director for arms control and nonproliferation Lynn Rusten. The White House is now working on finding a replacement for Sherwood-Randall as senior director for Europe. State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland is expected to be nominated to replace Gordon at State.

Sherwood-Randall worked at the Pentagon during the first term of the Clinton administration as deputy assistant secretary of defense for Russia, Ukraine, and Eurasia and also served as chief foreign affairs and defense policy advisor to then Sen. Joseph Biden. Former Defense Secretary Bill Perry, Sherwood-Randall's mentor, praised the White House's decision to promote her in an interview with *The Cable*.

"Liz has a unique background and experience in all of those fields. I can't think of anybody else who has the same background," Perry said, noting that Sherwood-Randall is a Russian speaker and was a key staffer to him when he worked to remove nuclear weapons from the former Soviet states of Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus.

Sherwood-Randall and Deputy Defense Secretary Ash Carter were Perry's two key aides during that effort, Perry said. In fact, when Perry met with Russian Defense Minister Pavel Grachev to take a photo commemorating the departure of the last nuclear weapon from Ukraine, Grachev insisted Sherwood-Randall be in the picture.

"Wait a minute, bring Liz in here. She's the one who made this happen," Grachev said, according to Perry.

Perry said combining defense policy with arms control and WMD issues makes sense, as long as you have someone who has expertise in all of those areas.

"There's a lot of synergism. The problem is that you usually can't find someone with background in all those areas. If you have someone who has all of the background in those three areas, then it's a good idea to combine them," he said.

NSS Spokeswoman Caitlin Hayden told *The Cable* that the new position is meant to add senior level attention to the mission of aligning nuclear policy with defense strategy across the government.

"In the first term, the President laid out an ambitious nonproliferation and nuclear agenda in Prague, and last year he issued Defense Strategic Guidance that aims to ensure our military is postured appropriately around the world and has the capabilities to address the challenges we face in the future," she said. "Appointing Liz to this position will bring serious energy and experience to these two interconnected strategic priorities in the second term. She'll be able to rely on the relationships she's forged in the interagency and in Europe over the past few years, and on her relationship with the president."

Sherwood-Randall begins her new job April 8.



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http://thecable.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/03/19/liz_sherwood_randall_promoted_to_new_white_house_position?wp_login_redirect=0

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Global Security Newswire

U.S. Brass Sees WMD Threat from Pan-American Smuggling Channels

March 19, 2013

By Diane Barnes, *Global Security Newswire*

WASHINGTON -- The criminal smuggling channels used to transport illicit drugs into the United States might also be used to move unconventional arms across the nation's borders, several top U.S. military officials warned lawmakers on Tuesday.

Asked to describe the greatest threat to the United States from South America and Latin America, Southern Command chief Gen. John Kelly referred to "the trafficking network that drugs ride on ... people ride on and potentially weapons of mass destruction could ride on."

Southern Command covers South and Central America, along with much of the Caribbean. Its missions include countering drug trafficking through the region.

European Command head Adm. James Stavridis echoed Kelly's cautionary remarks during a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing.

"The truly dark end of the spectrum is weapons of mass destruction," Stavridis said. "These routes, the ability to move 10 tons of cocaine in a mini sub, well, if you can move 10 tons of cocaine you can put a crude nuclear device in that and move it into the homeland."

Asked by Senator Angus King (I-Maine) whether the regional criminal network incorporates a top-down command structure or consists of "a bunch of random bad guys," the general said the level of coordination was "somewhere in the middle."

King said the prospect of a U.S. antagonist collaborating with a smuggling cartel to transfer an unconventional weapon into the United States must be considered a "very serious national security issue."

Kelly responded: "You won't get an argument from me, senator."

<http://www.nti.org/gsn/article/us-brass-sees-wmd-threat-pan-american-smuggling-channels/>

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Government Security News

DHS, FBI Agents Nab NASA Contractor as Apparent Spy

Tuesday, March 19, 2013

By Mark Rockwell

A Chinese man employed by NASA's Langley research labs, was arrested on March 16 as he tried to board a jet for Beijing with a one-way ticket, allegedly trying to sneak sensitive unmanned drone aircraft technology out of the country.

Bo Jiang, a contractor at the National Institute of Aerospace (NIA) who had been working at NASA-Langley, was detained by DHS agents at the Dulles International Airport near Washington, D.C., as he awaited his connection to Beijing, said Rep. Frank Wolf (R-VA), chairman of the House Appropriations subcommittee that funds NASA in a March 18 press conference.

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Jiang, employed by the National Institute of Aerospace, a Hampton, VA-based NASA contractor, apparently had unlimited and unescorted access to NASA's Langley facility, which works on classified U.S. space defense technologies research programs. He was detained by U.S. customs agents during a "border stop" at Dulles as he waited for his flight to Beijing, said Wolf.

According to Wolf, the information Jiang allegedly carried could "pertain to the source code for high-tech imaging technology that Jiang has been working on with NASA. This information could have significant military applications for the Chinese Peoples Liberation Army."

"The reason this is so important," said Wolfe in a statement, "is that the president's own strategy on mitigating the theft of U.S. intellectual property specifically singled out 'unmanned aerial vehicles, and other aerospace/aeronautic technologies' and 'civilian and dual-use technologies in sectors likely to experience fast growth' as information of the greatest interest to foreign spies, including China."

Jiang, said Wolf, reportedly affiliated with an institution in China designated as an "entity of concern" by other U.S. government agencies, was arraigned in federal court in Norfolk on March 18. He was charged with making a false statement to federal law enforcement officials.

The FBI, said Wolf, has been investigating Jiang since March 13 and is concerned with "conspiracies and substantive violations of the Arms Export Control Act." According to Wolf, the investigation into Jiang's alleged illicit activities was the result of NASA whistleblowers.

Federal agents had to act fast, said Wolf, as they learned on March 13 that Jiang "was leaving the United States abruptly to return to China on a one-way ticket."

On March 16, Jiang traveled by plane from Norfolk to Dulles to connect to a flight to China.

According to the arrest warrant, during the border stop, "federal agents asked Jiang what electronic media he had with him. Jiang told the Homeland Security agent that he had a cell phone, a memory stick, and external hard drive and a new computer. However, during the search, other media items were located that Jiang did not reveal. Such items include an additional laptop, an old hard drive and a SIM card."

The warrant also notes that the FBI "believes this to be material to the federal investigation, in that it was important to learn what electronic media Jiang was taking out of the United States." It also mentions that agents are aware that Jiang had a previous trip to China with a laptop belonging to NASA that agents believe to have contained sensitive information.

Wolf commended the leadership of Langley Research Center, who, he said, moved quickly once it was aware of the alleged activity, reviewing all security protocols and access to the center by foreign nationals. "It is my understanding that the center is in the middle of a comprehensive security review and is implementing new training."

"I would encourage all NASA centers to follow Langley's lead to ensure that similar security issues are prevented at other centers," said Wolf, recommending specific measure the facilities should implement to protect sensitive information.

http://www.gsnmagazine.com/node/28743?c=border_security

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Fox News.com

Contractor Accused of Giving Info on US War Plans, Nuclear Weapons to Chinese Girlfriend

March 19, 2013

Associated Press



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MAXWELL AFB, ALABAMA

HONOLULU – Federal authorities say a civilian defense contractor who works in intelligence at Pacific Command gave his Chinese girlfriend information on existing war plans and U.S. nuclear weapons.

Benjamin Pierce Bishop, 59, appeared in court Monday to face one count of communicating national defense information to a person not entitled to receive it and one count of unlawfully retaining national defense documents and plans. He was arrested March 15 at Pacific Command headquarters at Camp H.M. Smith in Hawaii.

Bishop gave information to the woman, a 27-year-old Chinese national, after meeting her at a conference on international military defense issues in Hawaii, according to the complaint filed in U.S. District Court in Honolulu. Authorities did not say when the conference took place but said she was in the U.S. on a student visa at the time.

The identity and whereabouts of the woman were not released. U.S. Attorney Florence Nakakuni didn't answer questions at a press briefing Monday.

U.S. authorities say Bishop divulged the information in an email in May, and also in a phone call in September, when he told the woman about the deployment of U.S. strategic nuclear systems and about the ability of the U.S. to detect other nations' low- and medium-range ballistic missiles.

Authorities did not say when Bishop met the woman, but alleged they began an intimate, romantic relationship in June 2011. The woman was in the U.S. on a J-1 visa, for people in work- and study-based exchange programs. It was not clear what institution she attended.

It's also not known which defense contractor employs Bishop.

Bishop is accused of hiding the relationship from the government even though his position and security clearance requires him to report contact with foreign nationals.

Authorities conducting a covert search of Bishop's home in Kapolei, a Honolulu suburb, in November found 12 individual documents marked "secret" even though he's not authorized to keep classified papers at home, court documents said.

The woman asked Bishop last month what western countries knew about "the operation of a particular naval asset of People's Republic of China," the complaint said, though the topic fell outside Bishop's regular work assignments. Bishop researched the issue using open source records and was observed collecting and reviewing classified information on the topic, the complaint said.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Richard Puglisi conditionally appointed Bishop an attorney after hearing arguments that his finances weren't sufficient to cover the costs of defending himself.

Bishop's court-appointed attorney, Birney Bervar, said Bishop is a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army Reserve.

"Col. Bishop has served this country for 29 years. He would never do anything to harm the United States," Bervar told reporters.

Bart DaSilva, a neighbor of Bishop's, said the man lived alone and was initially friendly when he moved in about three years ago. DaSilva said Bishop once brought over a woman and a girl he said were his wife and daughter from Thailand.

DaSilva said he never saw Bishop with other visitors.

Bishop increasingly began to keep to himself, DaSilva said. "I kind of felt, 'What did we do?'" DaSilva said. "It was almost like he switched off."

No one answered the door Monday at the brown, two-story home, which is in a hilly neighborhood overlooking Pearl Harbor and downtown Honolulu.

Bishop was scheduled to appear in court Friday for a hearing on whether he will remain in detention during the case. A preliminary hearing was scheduled for April 1.

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Associated Press writer Oskar Garcia contributed from Kapolei, Hawaii.

<http://www.foxnews.com/us/2013/03/19/contractor-accused-giving-info-on-us-war-plans-nuclear-weapons-to-chinese/>

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Foreign Policy

OPINION/National Security

Alaskan Folly

OPINION/Commentary

We've doubled down on a defense that doesn't work against missiles that don't exist.

BY JOE CIRINCIONE

March 18, 2013

The Obama administration's announcement that it would spend \$1 billion to deploy 14 additional antimissile interceptors in Alaska was a clever move. It sent a strong signal to North Korea -- and to China. It reassured close allies Japan and South Korea. It won praise from Republican opponents and generated great newspaper headlines: "U.S. beefs up missile defenses." It hit all the right buttons.

There is only one problem: The interceptors do not work.

The Ground-based Midcourse Defense has cost almost \$40 billion, but it has not had a successful intercept test since 2008, the year President Obama was elected. It has failed to intercept targets in half of its 15 carefully scripted tests. The success rate is getting worse, not better. It hit only two targets in eight attempts since 2002. In some of these tests, the interceptors could not even get out of the silos. The problems are so bad that the Pentagon has not attempted an intercept test for two years.

Philip Coyle, the former director of operational testing for the Department of Defense, said four years ago, "The GMD system still has no demonstrated effectiveness to defend the U.S., let alone Europe, against enemy attack under realistic operational conditions." Despite efforts to fix it, a scathing report from an expert National Academy of Sciences committee last year said that "the system has serious shortcomings," with major technical and operational problems. It only provides a "fragile" capability against a primitive North Korean threat -- that is, one or two missiles without any counter-measures. The committee called for a complete redesign with brand new interceptors, radars, and locations. "The technical core of the U.S. missile defense program is in tatters," says Coyle now.

Some of these problems may be fixable given time and billions more dollars, but the basic problem is with the whole idea of trying to intercept long-range missiles with ground-based missiles. After a few minutes of powered ascent, an ICBM coasts through outer space before reentering the atmosphere in its final few minutes of flight to strike its target. Ground-based interceptors attempt to hit the small, cold, dark warheads flying at 17,000 miles an hour while they are still in space. This is a difficult task, which is why early missile defense systems that the United States and Russia planned in the 1960s and 1970s used interceptors armed with nuclear warheads -- they eliminated the need for precision.

Today, amazingly, interceptors can, under ideal conditions, "hit a bullet with a bullet." The kinetic energy of the impact destroys the target. But a determined foe can thwart today's interceptors in many ways, all cheaper for the enemy to execute than for the defense to counter. This includes salvo launches to overwhelm the defenses, attacks on radars to blind the defenses, or, easiest of all, counter-measures to make it impossible for the interceptor to see its target. In space, aluminum balloons or clouds of paper-clip-size wires or radar-absorbing paint could foil even the finest sensors. In 1999, U.S. intelligence agencies concluded that these decoys, chaff, paints, jammers, and other techniques are well within the capability of any nation that can build a long-range missile.

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The NAS committee found that a U.S. defense against Russian or Chinese long-range missiles "is not practical, given the size, sophistication, and capabilities of Russian and Chinese forces and both countries' potential to respond to U.S. defense efforts." Even for a limited threat, they warned, "the midcourse discrimination problem must be addressed far more seriously if reasonable confidence is to be achieved." In other words, right now we do not have "reasonable confidence" that interceptors can see or hit the warheads. And yet the Obama administration is saying we do.

For Democrats, this is part of a larger problem. "Defense Democrats" decided years ago to triangulate the missile defense problem. Knowing that the public expresses strong support for missile defense and tired of attacks from the right for failing to protect the country, they opted to embrace antimissile systems, increasing budgets and trying new schemes. They played along with the game. At \$10 billion per year, missile defense is now the single largest weapons system in the Pentagon budget.

Fortunately, when it comes to North Korea, the threat animating last week's announcement, most officials and experts agree with Senator Bob Corker (R-TN), who said this Sunday, "I don't think the threat is imminent. I don't think they have the delivery mechanisms that are necessary to really harm us." The country would need several more years and many more tests to miniaturize a nuclear weapon so it could fit on a missile and survive the stresses of launch, and to develop and test a re-entry vehicle, advanced guidance systems, and missiles capable of flying much farther than their current ones. Iran is further behind in missile technology and does not have a nuclear weapon.

What's more, there are two major silver linings in the administration's missile defense decision. The first is a pledge by Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel: "We certainly will not go forward with the additional 14 interceptors until we are sure that we have the complete confidence that we will need." This is a chance to introduce the missile defense program to reality. Rushed into deployment, the existing interceptors have never been tested against a target with ICBM range or realistic decoys, and the new "kill vehicle" that was supposed to fix problems with the previous model failed its first two tests, as arms expert Kingston Reif details on his blog, *Nukes of Hazard*.

The second positive move is the decision to cancel the planned Phase Four of the antimissile system being deployed in Europe. Instead of going ahead with the development of a new interceptor, the Standard Missile 3 IIB, the administration will shift funding to the Alaska site. The interceptor was still just a paper concept and eliminating it makes sense, writes Reif, noting that the Government Accountability Office had criticized the system and the NAS committee called it ineffective and unnecessary.

This appears to have been primarily a program decision by the Department of Defense, but it has significant ramifications for U.S. relations with Russia. Moscow had focused its objections to the European antimissile system on Phase Four, fearing that the SM 3 IIB would be able to intercept Russian missiles as well as Iranian ones. The dispute had blocked progress on a new agreement to further reduce the U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals. "In effect, by sticking with a plan that was neither likely to work in the last stage but was creating significant and needless diplomatic hurdles we gained nothing," says Eisenhower Institute scholar Sean Kay.

The cancellation, little noticed in most news accounts, may have the most real world impact of all. If the Russians react constructively, this could open the way for a new round of reductions and perhaps impact Russian plans to build a new ICBM. If so, canceling a missile defense program may end up destroying more missiles than the system itself ever could.

Joe Cirincione is president of Ploughshares Fund.

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/03/18/alaskan_folly?page=full

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New York Times
The Moscow Times – Russia
OPINION/Commentary



Obama's Flexibility Not Enough to Please Putin

19 March 2013 | Issue 5090

By Alexander Golts

It turns out that President Vladimir Putin was right after all not to trust U.S. President Barack Obama. After passing the Magnitsky Act, the U.S. has now hit Russia in its most vulnerable spot by abandoning a key phase of the planned missile defense system in Europe.

Initially, newly appointed U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel was vague about U.S. intentions, saying that he wanted to push back the deployment of the fourth phase of the European missile defense program to 2022. It seems that Hagel's explanation was only an attempt to buy time to delay being attacked by Republicans for whom missile defense, including the fourth phase, is sacred.

Yet Under Secretary of Defense James Miller quickly gave away Hagel's secret. Shortly after Hagel's statement, Miller said: "In the fourth phase, in the previous plan, we would have added some additional type of interceptors: the so-called SM-3 IIB would have been added to the mix in Poland. We no longer intend to add them to the mix." According to the Kremlin, those interceptors in Poland would have been capable of destroying Russia's intercontinental ballistic missiles, although most Western military analysts and independent analysts in Russia asserted that this would have been impossible to accomplish from a technical point of view.

The Kremlin's fear was that fourth-phase U.S. interceptors stationed in Europe would allow the U.S. to take out Russian missiles in the boost phase of their trajectory. According to this argument, that is why Washington wanted to station its missile defense facilities as close as possible to Russia's nuclear missile installations. Putin's advisers conveniently overlooked two crucial facts: first, missile defense installations in Poland were located too far away to intercept Russian missiles during their boost phase, which only lasts several hundred kilometers; and second, the U.S. in 2009 already concluded that it makes no sense whatsoever to try to intercept missiles during their boost phase and rejected this option outright as part of its missile defense strategy.

It would seem that Obama kept promise that he made in early 2012 to then-President Dmitry Medvedev when he said that, if re-elected, he would be "more flexible" on missile defense. It is no surprise, however, that the Kremlin is not celebrating this diplomatic victory.

The Kremlin and Foreign Ministry will surely respond by saying that the U.S. rejection of the fourth phase is not enough and that the first three phases still disrupt the "strategic parity" between Russia and the U.S. The same thing happened four years ago when Obama rejected the missile defense architecture proposed by former U.S. President George W. Bush. Moscow insisted that the interceptors shouldn't be stationed in Poland and the radar in the Czech Republic if they were designed to intercept Iranian missiles. Obama responded by placing a radar facility in Turkey, yet the next day Russian officials began complaining that the new radar installation will allow Washington to surveil large swath of Russia's territory.

Now, Hagel has himself given fuel to the Russian critics by announcing that the money saved from canceling the fourth phase in Europe will enable the U.S. to deploy an additional 14 interceptor missiles in Alaska and California. That would give the U.S. a total of 44 interceptor missiles that can shoot down long-range missiles. Moscow responded by claiming that Washington's missile defense capabilities are only gaining in strength. But most military specialists maintain that five or as much as 10 interceptors are required to guarantee the destruction of a single nuclear warhead, meaning that the U.S. would be able to take out no more than from four to nine incoming warheads. That would be woefully inadequate to defend against a nuclear attack from a major power like Russia, which has an arsenal of more than 1,500 deployed warheads. At the same time, 44 U.S. interceptors would be more than enough to deal with the potential threat of several North Korean missiles. In addition to its fervent anti-U.S. rhetoric, Pyongyang is actively developing a missile program and has already conducted its third successful nuclear test. But it will take many years before North Korea can produce more than a few long-range missiles.



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At the end of the day, the Kremlin desperately needs U.S. missile defense for propaganda purposes. The very existence of the U.S. missile defense program — even a scaled-down version — offers a perfect pretext for Putin to voice his frustration with the U.S. Just like NATO expansion, the European-based U.S. missile defense program is an ideal bogeyman for Moscow to claim that its national security is being undermined by U.S. warmongers in Congress and the White House. What's more, Putin sincerely believes that the U.S. wants to topple him using the technology of a "color revolution." To contain what he sees as Washington's global geopolitical and military ambitions, Putin needs something he can use to artificially return to the Cold War-era concept of mutually assured destruction, however absurd that might appear today. This is precisely why the Kremlin will never give up the opportunity to quibble over missile defense, even while the U.S. eliminates phases and otherwise reduces the scope of its missile defense program.

Mark my words: In the coming days, weeks and possibly months, we will hear Kremlin-friendly analysts with stern facial expressions warn that Obama's refusal to implement the fourth phase of the European missile defense program is just a clever, cynical trick intended to mask its true intention: to secure and maintain a strategic advantage over Russia.

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

<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/opinion/article/obamas-flexibility-not-enough-to-please-putin/477069.html>

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Heritage Foundation
OPINION/The Foundry

How Not to Negotiate with Russia: The Missile Defense Fiasco

By Ariel Cohen
March 19, 2013

Russia's objections to U.S. missile defense development and deployment have been on the agenda of consecutive American Administrations starting with Ronald Reagan in the 1980s. For President Obama, it became a high priority as Moscow turned missile defense disagreement into a principal bone of contention. But he threw it under the bus, sending all the wrong signals to friend and foe alike. He has also forgone an opportunity to extract important concessions from the Kremlin on Syria and Iraq, for example.

Moscow and Obama's White House view the missile defense dispute through the prism of a broader U.S. political agenda—and disagreements, such as efforts to further reduce U.S. and Russian nuclear forces, Moscow's continuous support of the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria, Russia's lack of real opposition to Iran's quest for nuclear weapons, and North Korea's truculence.

Yet the Obama Administration's decision last Friday to "restructure" European missile defense, announced by Secretary Chuck Hagel, came as a surprise—and a unilateral concession to Moscow.

U.S. abandonment of the SM-3 IIB interceptor might be influenced by the U.S.'s desire to assure Russia that European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA) is not a threat.

However, "restructuring" the SM-3 IIB out of existence would not change Russia's negative position toward EPAA Phase III. It would also not remove Russia's concerns related to future development of the U.S. system.

As the Russian Foreign Ministry stated, the Kremlin will continue to insist on legally binding guarantees that U.S. missile defenses are not aimed at it and that would allow Russia to access sensitive telemetric data and limit vital parameters of a U.S. strategic defensive system.

Unsurprisingly, the Hagel statement was not enough to satisfy the Kremlin. It pocketed the unprecedented concession and asked for more.

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Washington's decision to scrap plans to place SM-3 IIB missile defense elements in Poland does nothing to address Moscow's national security concerns and will not affect its stance on the issue, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said. Ryabkov added that there was no connection between Russia's objections to the deployment of a U.S. missile defense system in Europe and Hagel's announcement, possibly because there were no negotiations: "That is not a concession to Russia, nor do we regard it as such.... All aspects of strategic uncertainty related to the creation of a US and NATO missile defense system remain. Therefore, our objections also remain."

Russia has threatened a range of countermeasures against NATO's missile defenses, including tactical nuclear missile deployment in its Baltic exclave of Kaliningrad and improvements to its strategic nuclear missile arsenal.

The decision to scrap Phase IV of EPAA will damage relations with Poland and signal to Central European states that the Obama Administration cares little about them, as it did not consult or prepare those governments for its action.

This decision reflects the shift away from a Euro-centric strategic posture and is undoing the post-Cold War security system in Europe. All the talk of NATO expansion now sounds hollow, as the U.S. is increasingly focusing in the Asia-Pacific region. With the disengagement from Afghanistan approaching, our allies will wonder about the ability of the alliance to shape a long-term strategy in its out-of-area engagements. Budget concerns may be the driver in D.C., but Europeans may come away questioning the advantages of an Atlantic connection, which would not be in their interest—or ours.

Finally, this is exactly the wrong signal to Iran on the eve of President Obama's trip to the Middle East. Not only will the U.S. not support a military action of last resort against the Iranian nuclear program; limiting missile defense will severely limit our ability to protect our European allies against the Iranian missile threat.

Ariel Cohen brings firsthand knowledge of the former Soviet Union and the Middle East through a wide range of studies, covering issues such as economic development and political reform in the former Soviet republics, U.S. energy security, the global War on Terrorism and the continuing conflict in the Middle East.

<http://blog.heritage.org/2013/03/19/how-not-to-negotiate-with-russia-the-missile-defense-fiasco/>

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Washington Post
OPINION/Post's View

The Administration Yanks a Missile that Upset Russia

By Editorial Board,
March 19, 2013

THE OBAMA administration's restructuring of plans for missile defense appears, for the most part, to be a rational response to changing circumstances, including an increasing threat from North Korea. However, it raises questions about whether the administration chose to address one of Russia's largest concerns about a Europe-based missile system without obtaining any concessions from Moscow in return.

Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel chose Friday afternoon, the traditional time for releasing potentially controversial news, to announce that the administration would add 14 interceptors to an anti-missile base in Alaska and deploy a new radar in Japan. The deployment, which essentially reversed a decision by President Obama to freeze the Alaska system, was prompted by North Korea's progress toward building intercontinental ballistic missiles that could reach the United States, as well as its recent nuclear test. Iran, too, may be making similar progress: Director of National Intelligence James R. Clapper recently told Congress that Tehran could test an ICBM this year.

That was a good decision. But missed in some of the subsequent stories was the other shoe: The Pentagon is canceling the planned fourth phase of an anti-missile system that had been scheduled for deployment in Poland in 2022. The SM3 IIB missile was significant for two reasons: It was the only interceptor planned for the Europe-based system that



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could have defended the United States against an attack from Iran; and it was the component of the system most decryd by Russia, which claimed that it could be used against its intercontinental missiles.

As it did when it canceled a previous European missile plan in 2009, the administration insisted that its decision had nothing to do with Russia or its objections. The phase-four missile was dropped, officials said, because Congress had cut some of its funding, meaning it could not have been completed in the next decade, even while the timeline of possible ICBM threats is shortening. Officials say the money can be better spent on deploying more interceptors in the United States and improving their components. As proof that Moscow has not been appeased, the White House pointed to statements by Russian officials saying they are still unsatisfied with U.S. missile defense plans and continue to demand binding legal assurances that the system can't be aimed at Russia.

Still, the fact remains that the United States has removed from its plans the missile that Russian officials previously cited as their foremost concern, just a few months after President Obama promised the Kremlin "greater flexibility" on missile defense after his reelection. In doing so, the administration has eliminated the possibility of a defensive system that would give the United States two shots at an Iranian ICBM — what in Pentagon jargon is called a shoot-look-shoot capacity. It also has decoupled the European missile system from the defense of the continental United States. These compromises could have made sense as part of a broader agreement with Russia on missile defenses. To undertake them unilaterally, for what are portrayed as purely budgetary reasons, is imprudent.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-administration-yanks-a-missile-that-upset-russia/2013/03/19/aec6da52-90ca-11e2-bdea-e32ad90da239_story.html

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Chicago Tribune
OPINION/Editorial

The Growing Need for Missile Defense

March 19, 2013

Decades ago, in the scariest days of the nuclear arms race with Russia, American schoolchildren learned to "duck and cover" under their desks in case an atomic bomb was dropped nearby. Since the end of the Cold War, kids have grown up free of the fear of nuclear attack. But those days may be coming to an end.

New threats have emerged. The first is North Korea, which is believed to have as many as 10 nuclear warheads and recently carried out its third nuclear test. The Pyongyang regime, according to House Intelligence Committee Chairman Mike Rogers, R-Mich., has missiles "that can reach U.S. shores."

This month, North Korea threatened to launch a "preemptive nuclear attack against the headquarters of the aggressor," meaning the United States. It's no comfort that Pyongyang's arsenal is now in the hands of a young and inexperienced ruler, Kim Jong Un, whose inclinations are a mystery.

Then there is Iran, which is believed to be proceeding toward building its own nuclear stockpile. Its missiles are capable of hitting targets in Israel and Europe, and in 2010 the Pentagon warned that, "With sufficient foreign assistance, Iran could probably develop and test an intercontinental ballistic missile capable of reaching the United States by 2015."

So it's no surprise that American military planners are feeling some urgency about addressing the looming specter of nuclear attack. True, the U.S. retains a formidable nuclear capability that would guarantee the instant and total destruction of any government so rash as to launch a missile in our direction. But that doesn't make it any more comfortable to ponder a mushroom cloud over an American city.

Missile defense is an attempt to buttress the power to retaliate with the ability to fend off incoming warheads before they arrive. Last week the Defense Department said it would spend \$1 billion to deploy more missile interceptors along the West Coast to shoot down a North Korean missile, increasing the total number from 30 to 44 in the next four years.

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It's a reasonable and useful step, at a cost that would seem trivial if the system were ever called on to deflect an attack. The defensive system would doubtless give pause to the North Koreans, who would have to contemplate wasting one of their few warheads while assuring a devastating U.S. strike in return. Though the program has been modestly successful in testing, hitting only about half its targets, it is advanced enough to add a significant challenge for Pyongyang.

With regard to Iran, the administration took a different step, scrapping the last phase of a missile defense system that has elicited vigorous objections from the government of Russia — which regarded the program as a threat to neutralize its nuclear weapons. The Pentagon insisted the U.S. decision was based on technical problems, which may be true. But it may also serve to pave the way to better relations and even arms reductions with Moscow.

The danger still exists, of course, but President Barack Obama has made it clear he will take military action if necessary to keep Iran from getting the bomb. If he succeeds in deterring Tehran from that course — or in forcibly preventing it — the European missile shield will not be needed quite so soon.

American missile defense still has a lot of hurdles to surmount before it can offer a reliable safeguard against attack. But even an imperfect system is better than nothing. And no one can doubt the need to keep pursuing it.

http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2013-03-19/news/ct-edit-missile-0319-jm-20130319_1_missile-defense-incoming-warheads-nuclear-warheads

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