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MAXWELL AFB, ALABAMA

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Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Lawmaker: Iran Could Quit Nuclear Treaty

Monday, April 8, 2013

By ALI AKBAR DAREINI - The Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran will keep the option of withdrawing from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty on the table and will seriously consider it if the West intensifies sanctions or refers the case to the U.N. Security Council, a leading lawmaker warned Monday.

Alaeddin Boroujerdi said Iran cannot remain an NPT member while it is punished for exercising its nuclear rights, while offering terms for a deal at the same time — halting high-quality enrichment in exchange for cancellation of punishing Western sanctions.

"It's not acceptable that Iran respects NPT but the U.S. and the West ignore NPT's Article 6 — reducing nuclear weapons — and Article 4 — right to enrichment," Boroujerdi said, according to the state TV's Al-Alam website.

"Therefore, there is no reason for Iran to remain an NPT member under such circumstances," he said.

Boroujerdi heads the Iranian parliament's security and foreign policy committee.

The 1968 treaty aims to stop the spread of nuclear weapons. Signatories commit to allowing international inspections of their nuclear facilities. Article 4 endorses the right of nations to peaceful nuclear development, and Article 6 states the goal of eventual nuclear disarmament. Iran signed the pact in 1968 and ratified it in 1970. Key nuclear powers, like India, Pakistan and Israel, have not signed. India and Pakistan have tested nuclear bombs.

The West fears Iran may be aiming to develop nuclear weapons. Tehran has denied the charges, saying its program is geared toward generating electricity and producing radioisotopes to treat cancer patients.

Boroujerdi said the final decision on pulling out of NPT rests with the country's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and the Supreme National Security Council, the body that handles the country's nuclear policy.

The latest round of talks between Iran and a group of six world powers, in Kazakhstan over the weekend, failed to narrow the differences. The six want Iran to stop its highest level uranium enrichment — 20 percent — and shut down its underground Fordo enrichment site as confidence-building measures.

In return, and only after confirmation from the International Atomic Energy Agency that Iran has implemented the measures, the U.S. and European Union would suspend sanctions on gold and precious metals, and the export of petrochemicals. But severe sanctions including a ban on exporting oil and restrictions on banking would remain in place.

Iran said the proposal by the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council plus Germany is "not balanced" and "not proportionate." Iran's income from oil and gas exports has dropped by 45 percent as a result of the sanctions.

Boroujerdi said Iran has the right to enrich uranium even higher than 20 percent, based on its needs.

"They say stop 20 percent enrichment. This is while such level of enrichment and even 20 and 50 percent is authorized on the basis of IAEA rules. The red line is nuclear bomb," Al-Alam quoted him as saying.

Even so, he said Iran will reciprocate proportionately if sanctions are lifted.

"If we are to cooperate in areas such as 20 percent enrichment, sanctions against Iran must definitely be lifted in return," he said.

He rejected closing the underground Fordo facility. "Fordo is to protect our nuclear equipment from the danger of air attacks or missile strikes by the Zionist regime," he said. "No sane person would put its wealth at the disposal of the enemy's target."

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<http://www.myaic.com/ap/ap/defense/lawmaker-iran-could-exit-nuclear-treaty/nXF3N/>

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Press TV – Iran

P5+1 Must Recognize Iran’s Nuclear Rights: Mehmanparast

Tuesday, April 9, 2013

Iran’s Foreign Ministry spokesman has urged the P5+1 group of world powers to recognize the Islamic Republic’s nuclear rights and take confidence-building measures with Tehran in order to prove their sincerity in talks with Tehran.

“The 5+1 group must recognize our country’s nuclear rights and take measures to prove they have stopped [their] enmity against our nation,” Ramin Mehmanparast said in his weekly press conference on Tuesday.

He reiterated that the Islamic Republic will use its nuclear capabilities for peaceful purposes and the development of the country.

Pointing to the recent round of the talks between Iran and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany (P5+1) in Kazakhstan, the Iranian official said the outcome of the talks depends on the actions of the group.

Iran and the P5+1 wrapped up their latest round of negotiations on April 6 in Almaty.

Speaking at a press conference after the talks, Secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council Saeed Jalili said extensive and comprehensive talks were held to address an action plan proposed by Tehran based on the group’s response to proposals made in previous negotiations.

Jalili said representatives from the P5+1 group sought clarification and raised many questions about the plan and received answers in full detail.

EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton, who represents the group of six powers, said in a press conference on Saturday that the two sides “remain far apart on the substance” of the talks.

However, she added, “Indeed, we have talked in much greater detail than ever before, and our efforts will continue in that direction.”

Tehran and the P5+1 have held several rounds of talks mainly over Iran’s nuclear energy program. The previous round of the talks took place in Almaty on February 26-27.

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

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

Attack on Iranian diplomat's residence in Egypt

Commenting on the recent attack on the residence of Iran’s charge d'affaires to Egypt Mojtaba Amani, Mehmanparast said, “Certain political currents are not happy with the close relations between Iran and Egypt, but they are few and their opposition does not indicate the will and the intention of the Egyptian government and nation.”

He added that unity between Iran and Egypt benefits the region while any kind of instability and insecurity serves the interests of the Israeli regime.

On April 5, a crowd of protesters attacked the residence of Amani in a suburb of the capital, Cairo, in protest at the warming relations between the two countries.



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The crowd staged the protest in front of Amani's residence and tried to scale the walls and break into the building, but was blocked by the police.

According to Amani, the crowd mostly comprised Salafi supporters as well as the supporters of the militants fighting in Syria.

Iran severed its diplomatic ties with Egypt after the 1979 Islamic Revolution because Egypt signed the Camp David Accords with the Israeli regime and offered asylum to Iran's deposed monarch, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi.

Bilateral relations, however, have been on the mend following the 2011 Egyptian revolution that resulted in the ouster of the country's dictator, Hosni Mubarak.

In August 2012, Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi visited Iran to attend a summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). It was the first visit of an Egyptian president to Iran in more than three decades.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad also visited Egypt in February to attend the 12th summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) as the first Iranian head of state to visit Egypt in 34 years.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/04/09/297335/p51-must-recognize-irans-nuclear-rights/>

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Al Arabiya – U.A.E.

U.S. Voices Concern over New Iran Uranium Mines

Wednesday, 10 April 2013

Agence France-Press (AFP)

London - The United States reacted with concern on Wednesday after Iran unveiled a new Uranium production facility and two extraction mines, but said it had not been "blindsided" by the news.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad hailed the advances on Tuesday and boasted of mastery over "the entire chain of nuclear energy" only days after talks with world powers on its disputed nuclear program ended in deadlock.

"They have continued to move forward, we are very concerned about what they are doing," a senior State Department official said, asking to remain anonymous.

The official acknowledged that despite intensive and "substantive" discussions in Almaty, Kazakhstan last week, Iran had given no hint of the news.

"We weren't blindsided about it, because we are rarely blindsided about the things that they are considering. But they did not specify that they were going to do this," the official said.

"They did specify that they were going to proceed forward and do everything they could to fulfill what they see as their inalienable right," the official told reporters travelling with U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry.

Kerry on Tuesday denounced the Iranian news as "provocative."

"To make any step that increases the rapidity with which you move towards enriched fissile material raises the potential of questions, if not even threat," he told reporters at the end of a visit to Israel.

"The clock that is ticking on Iran's program has a stop moment and it does not tick interminably."

The United States and its partners in the P5+1 talks wanted a diplomatic way forward, Kerry stressed, but "negotiations are not for the sake of negotiations, they are to make progress."

"Negotiations cannot be allowed to become a process of delay which in and of itself creates greater danger."

Iran's nuclear program will be discussed at a meeting of G8 foreign ministers in London on Wednesday and Thursday.

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And the U.S. official praised the international sanctions, aimed at choking off supplies and cash for Iran's nuclear program, which have been hitting exports of Iranian oil abroad -- a key currency earner for the regime.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2013/04/10/U-S-voices-concern-over-new-Iran-uranium-mines.html>

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Press TV – Iran

Iran to Continue Uranium Enrichment: IAEA Chief

Wednesday, April 10, 2013

The head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) says the Islamic Republic will not stop enriching uranium for its nuclear energy program.

"We produced 20-percent-enriched uranium for Tehran's Research Reactor and we will continue producing it as long as we need the fuel," Fereydoun Abbasi said on Tuesday.

Abbasi made the remarks on the sidelines of the unveiling ceremony of three nuclear achievements.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on Tuesday issued the order to launch Shahid Rezaeinejad yellowcake production plant and Saghand uranium mines in the central city of Ardakan, and Iran's first industrial electron accelerator in the city of Taft, Yazd Province.

The uranium extracted from Saghand mines in Yazd will be processed and turned into yellowcake in Shahid Rezaeinejad complex.

"We produce (the fuel) as much as necessary. We will neither send our nuclear material abroad nor will we downgrade it... Other countries had better make rational requests," the Iranian official said.

He made the remark in response to a question about media speculations that the P5+1 (Britain, China, France, Russia, and the US plus Germany) has asked Iran to turn 20-percent uranium into lower-enriched material during the latest round of the talks held on April 5-6 in the Kazakh city of Almaty.

The Iranian official reiterated that Iran's enrichment activities were completely under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and therefore there was no cause for concern.

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

Iran categorically rejects the allegation and says it has the right to use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes as a signatory to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and a member of the IAEA. head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) says the Islamic Republic will not stop enriching uranium for its nuclear energy program.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/04/10/297522/iran-to-continue-uranium-enrichment/>

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Khaleej Times – U.A.E.

UN Talks with Syria on Chemical Arms Probe at 'Impasse'

By Reuters

11 April 2013

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Discussions between the United Nations and Syrian President Bashar Al Assad's government on a possible investigation into the alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria have reached an impasse, UN diplomats said on Wednesday.

Syria and the United Nations have been exchanging letters for weeks but the two sides are far from agreement on how the investigation should be run, diplomats said on condition of anonymity.

Syria has asked the United Nations only to investigate what it says was a rebel chemical attack near Aleppo last month. The opposition has blamed President Bashar Al Assad's forces for that strike and also wants the UN team to look into other alleged chemical attacks by the government.

There have been three alleged chemical weapons attacks - the one near Aleppo and another near Damascus, both in March, and one in Homs in December. The rebels and Assad's government blame each other for all of them.

So far the Syrians are refusing to let inspectors go anywhere but Aleppo while the United Nations is insisting that the team goes to both Aleppo and Homs. France and Britain wrote to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon last month saying the mission should look into all three cases.

In an April 6 letter from Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Al Moualem to Ban, obtained by Reuters, Assad's government said the inspectors should go first to Aleppo and if they are seen to be impartial, the possibility of visiting Homs could be discussed.

'After the mission completes its work, and ascertaining its honesty and neutrality and the credibility of its work away from politicization, it may be possible to look into the Homs claims,' the letter said.

Moualem also complained about the leak of previous letters exchanged between Syria and the United Nations to Reuters, saying it 'left the impression of a lack of seriousness on the part of the (U.N.) secretariat on cooperation in good faith.'

The United Nations said it was studying a recent Syrian letter, although it was not immediately clear if that recent letter was Moualem's or a more recent one.

INSPECTORS READY TO GO TO SYRIA

Moualem offered Syrian planes that would have the UN logo painted on them 'to ensure the safety of the (inspection) team members in view of the prevailing security situation.'

Western delegations said the Syrian response of April 6 was unacceptable and that the chemical weapons team must have assurances now that it can visit both Aleppo and Homs.

After meeting in The Hague with the head of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which is providing scientists and equipment for the inspection team, Ban said an advance team was in Cyprus, ready to go to Syria within 24 hours.

Britain, France and the Americans have given Ban information about the possible use of chemical weapons in Aleppo and Homs, UN diplomats said.

'He (Ban Ki-moon) recognized that there is sufficient evidence to investigate both in Homs and in Aleppo,' the senior diplomat said.

'They should not go in to investigate the one incident if they are told by the Syrians that they can't investigate the second incident,' the diplomat said. 'So we would hope that the UN would not do that.'

The United Nations has two options, diplomats said, if Syria refuses to promise the mission can visit Homs, starting with Ban reporting back to UN member states that the Syrians are not cooperating.

'Or you can continue the investigation but outside Syria in terms of investigating witnesses in the camps,' the senior diplomat said. 'There may be some physical evidence of people who have been poisoned (who are now) outside Syria.'



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An earlier exchange of letters between Syria's UN Ambassador Bashar Ja'afari and UN disarmament chief Angela Kane highlighted other conditions Assad's government wants on the inspections, UN diplomats said on condition of anonymity.

Ja'afari insisted on appointing an observer to accompany the inspection team and wants duplicates of any of samples taken to test for chemical weapons traces, the diplomats told Reuters.

There will be at least 15 members of the inspection team, mainly from Nordic countries, Latin America or Asia. None of them is from a permanent member of the UN Security Council.

According to Western intelligence agencies, Syria is believed to have one of the largest remaining stockpiles of undeclared chemical weapons in the world.

If it goes ahead, the investigation will try to determine only if chemical weapons were used, not who used them. If it is confirmed that the weapons were used, it would be the first time in the 2-year-old Syrian conflict.

The United Nations estimates the Syrian conflict has resulted in more than 70,000 deaths.

http://www.khaleejtimes.com/kt-article-display-1.asp?section=middleeast&xfile=data/middleeast/2013/April/middleeast_April139.xml

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The Hill
DEFCON Hill

Security of Syrian Weapons still in Question

By Carlo Muñoz
April 11, 2013

House Intelligence Committee Chairman Mike Rogers (R-Mich.) pressed top intelligence officials Thursday on whether Washington was able to secure Syria's vast stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons if embattled President Bashar Assad is overthrown.

"What percentage do you give us at trying to secure [those] weapons systems?," Rogers asked Director of National Intelligence James Clapper and CIA Director John Brennan during the House hearing. "Not only the chemical weapons, but the stockpile of sophisticated conventional weapons?"

"I'm not sure how to make a call like that," Clapper replied.

"It would be very, very situational dependent," he added, "to render an assessment on how well we could secure any or all of the [weapons] facilities in Syria."

Washington would also need to generate sizable international support from its allies in the region and elsewhere to be able to mount a full-on security mission on those weapons, the Intelligence chief added.

"All those factors would have to be considered, certainly our own capabilities and what other capabilities could be brought to bear in the international community," he said.

Securing Syria's weapons stockpiles is a major concern for the Pentagon and intelligence community since Assad threatened to use those arms against rebels fighting to overthrow the longtime leader.

The Pentagon was reportedly drafting contingency plans to take out Syria's chemical weapons stockpiles until recent intelligence showed the country was backing off its efforts to use such weapons against rebel positions.

But with Damascus losing ground to Syrian rebels in the two-year civil war, concerns are rising these weapons could end up in the hands of Islamic extremists fighting alongside anti-government forces.

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U.S. national security leaders are also looking to avoid a repeat of the situation in Libya, where American and NATO forces were unprepared to secure Libya's stockpiles of shoulder-fired rockets after former Libyan dictator Moammar Gadhafi was killed last March.

Shortly after Ghadafi's death, U.S. intelligence allegedly picked up "worrying indicators" that the missiles, similar to the famous Stinger anti-aircraft missile that the United States supplied to the Afghans to defeat the Soviets, had made their way to terror groups operating in the region.

<http://thehill.com/blogs/defcon-hill/policy-and-strategy/293447-security-of-syrian-weapons-still-in-question>

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Bloomberg Business News

Could NKorea Hit its Neighbors with Nukes?

By Matthew Pennington

April 06, 2013

WASHINGTON (AP) — North Korea is widely recognized as being years away from perfecting the technology to back up its bold threats of a pre-emptive strike on America. But some nuclear experts say it might have the know-how to fire a nuclear-tipped missile at South Korea and Japan, which host U.S. military bases.

No one can tell with any certainty how much technological progress North Korea has made, aside from perhaps a few people close to its secretive leadership. And, if true, it is unlikely that Pyongyang would launch such an attack, because the retaliation would be devastating.

The North's third nuclear test on Feb. 12, which prompted the toughest U.N. Security Council sanctions yet against Pyongyang, is presumed to have advanced its ability to miniaturize a nuclear device. And experts say it's easier to design a nuclear warhead that works on a shorter-range missile than one for an intercontinental missile that could target the U.S.

The assessment of David Albright at the Institute for Science and International Security think-tank is that North Korea has the capability to mount a warhead on its Nodong missile, which has a range of 800 miles (1,280 kilometers) and could hit in South Korea and most of Japan. But he cautioned in his analysis, published after the latest nuclear test, that it is an uncertain estimate, and the warhead's reliability remains unclear.

He contends that the experience of Pakistan could serve as precedent. Pakistan bought the Nodong from North Korea after its first flight test in 1993, then adapted and produced it for its own use. Pakistan, which conducted its first nuclear test in 1998, is said to have taken less than 10 years to miniaturize a warhead before that test, Albright said.

North Korea also obtained technology from the trafficking network of A.Q. Khan, a disgraced pioneer of Pakistan's nuclear program, acquiring centrifuges for enriching uranium. According to the Congressional Research Service, Khan may also have supplied a Chinese-origin nuclear weapon design he provided to Libya and Iran, which could have helped the North in developing a warhead for a ballistic missile.

But Siegfried Hecker at Stanford University's Center for International Security and Cooperation, who has visited North Korea seven times and been granted unusual access to its nuclear facilities, is skeptical the North has advanced that far in miniaturization of a nuclear device.

"Nobody outside of a small elite in North Korea knows — and even they don't know for sure," he said in an e-mailed response to questions from The Associated Press. "I agree that we cannot rule it out for one of their shorter-range missiles, but we simply don't know."

"Thanks to A.Q. Khan, they almost certainly have designs for such a device that could fit on some of their short- or medium-range missiles," said Hecker, who last visited the North in November 2010. "But it is a long way from having a

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design and having confidence that you can put a warhead on a missile and have it survive the thermal and mechanical stresses during launch and along its entire trajectory."

The differing opinions underscore a fundamental problem in assessing a country as isolated as North Korea, particularly its weapons programs: solid proof is very hard to come by.

For example, the international community remains largely in the dark about the latest underground nuclear test. Although it caused a magnitude 5.1 tremor, no gases escaped and experts say there was no way to evaluate whether a plutonium or uranium device was detonated. That information would help reveal whether North Korea has managed to produce highly enriched uranium, giving it a new source of fissile material, and help determine the type and sophistication of the North's warhead design.

The guessing game about the North's nuclear weapons program dates back decades. Albright says that in the early 1990s, the CIA estimated that North Korea had a "first-generation" design for a plutonium device that was likely to be deployed on the Nodong missile — although it's not clear what information that estimate was based on.

"Given that twenty years has passed since the deployment of the Nodong, an assessment that North Korea successfully developed a warhead able to be delivered by that missile is reasonable," Albright wrote.

According to Nick Hansen, a retired intelligence expert who closely monitors developments in the North's weapons programs, the Nodong missile was first flight-tested in 1993. Pakistan claims to have re-engineered the missile and successfully tested it, although doubts apparently persist about its reliability.

Whether North Korea has also figured out how to wed the missile with a nuclear warhead has major ramifications not just for South Korea and Japan, but for the U.S. itself, which counts those nations as its principal allies in Asia and retains 80,000 troops in the two countries.

U.S. intelligence appears to have vacillated in its assessments of North Korea's capabilities.

In April 2005, Lowell Jacoby, director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, told the Senate Armed Services Committee that North Korea had the capability to arm a missile with a nuclear device. Pentagon officials, however, later backtracked.

According to the Congressional Research Service, a report from the same intelligence agency to Congress in August 2007 said that "North Korea has short and medium-range missiles that could be fitted with nuclear weapons, but we do not know whether it has in fact done so."

In an interview Friday in Germany, Gen. Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the U.S. does not know whether North Korea has "weaponized" its nuclear capability.

Still, Washington is taking North Korea's nuclear threats seriously.

The bellicose rhetoric follows not just the nuclear test in February, but the launch in December of a long-range North Korean rocket that could potentially hit the continental U.S. According to South Korean officials, North Korea has moved at least one missile with "considerable range" to its east coast — possibly the untested Musudan missile, believed to have a range of 1,800 miles (3,000 kilometers).

This week, the U.S. said two of the Navy's missile-defense ships were positioned closer to the Korean peninsula, and a land-based system is being deployed for the Pacific territory of Guam. The Pentagon last month announced longer-term plans to beef up its U.S.-based missile defenses.

South Korea is separated from North Korea and its huge standing army by a heavily militarized frontier, and the countries remain in an official state of war, as the Korean War ended in 1953 without a peace treaty. Even without nuclear arms, the North possesses enough artillery within range of Seoul to devastate large parts of the capital before the much-better-equipped U.S. and South Korea could fully respond.



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And Japan has been starkly aware of the threat since North Korea's 1998 test of the medium-range Taepodong missile that overflew its territory.

Yet in the latest standoff, much of the international attention has been on the North's potential threat to the U.S., a more distant prospect than its capabilities to strike its own neighbors. Experts say the North could hit South Korea with chemical weapons, and might also be able to use a Scud missile to carry a nuclear warhead.

Darryl Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association, acknowledges the North might be able to put a warhead on a Nodong missile, but he sees it as unlikely. He says the North's nuclear threats are less worthy of attention than the prospects of a miscalculation leading to a conventional war.

"North Korea understands that a serious attack on South Korea or other U.S. interests is going to be met with overwhelming force," he said. "It would be near suicidal for the regime."

Associated Press writers Foster Klug in Seoul, South Korea, and Robert Burns in Stuttgart, Germany, contributed to this report.

<http://www.businessweek.com/ap/2013-04-06/could-nkorea-hit-its-neighbors-with-nukes>

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Yonhap News Agency – South Korea
April 8, 2013

Seoul Plays Down Possibility of Imminent N. Korean Nuke Test

SEOUL, April 8 (Yonhap) -- South Korea's defense ministry said Monday that satellite imagery showing the movement of vehicles and personnel near North Korea's nuclear test site is seen as normal activity, refuting speculation that the latest actions point to an imminent atomic test.

Local media on Monday reported that Pyongyang may be preparing for its fourth nuclear test, citing movements at the Punggye-ri test site in its northeastern tip. The speculation grew even further after Unification Minister Ryoo Kihl-jae told lawmakers that there was an increase in the movements near the complex, which was used for past three nuclear tests.

"Vehicles and personnel have showed movements near the southern tunnel at the Punggye-ri site, but they are seen as normal activities," ministry spokesman Kim Min-seok said.

The impoverished communist nation carried out its third nuclear test on Feb. 12 and has threatened nuclear strikes against the U.S. and South Korea in response to tougher U.N. sanctions imposed for its provocative test and the joint military drills held in the South by the allies.

"Following the third nuclear test, we had explained that the North made both the western and southern tunnels ready for a nuclear test," Kim said. "The situation remains the same. If the North makes a decision, it could always carry out an atomic test."

The sprawling nuclear test site is known to have three tunnel entrances and multiple support buildings.

Last week, Defense Minister Kim Kwan-jin told lawmakers that intelligence authorities detected activity near the southern tunnel of the Punggye-ri test site following the Feb. 12 underground test at its northwestern tunnel.

However, an in-depth analysis is needed to figure out whether the activity indicates preparations for another test or is normal, Kim said, noting that South Korea has pledged to destroy the North's nuclear facilities if there is a sign that a nuclear attack is imminent.

Issue No. 1053, 12 April 2013

*United States Air Force Counterproliferation Research & Education / Maxwell AFB, Montgomery AL
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The latest move comes after Pyongyang last week said it would resume operations at its mothballed Yongbyon nuclear complex, which would allow the North to extract plutonium from spent fuel rods. The nation's main nuclear reactor was shut down under an agreement reached at nuclear disarmament-for-aid talks in 2007.

South Korean and U.S. have stepped up their intelligence efforts to detect signs of a potential missile launch as the North was last week seen moving two medium-range missiles to its east coast.

Amid mounting tensions, the Pentagon on Sunday announced its plan to delay a planned intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) test in an apparent move to avoid stoking tensions with North Korea, which has warned diplomats to consider evacuating from Pyongyang.

The defense ministry said it has been "calmly" responding to the communist rivals' warlike rhetoric in an attempt to cool tensions with Pyongyang.

"The U.S. made a decision to delay the ICBM test not to give cause for the North to provoke," spokesman Kim said. "Our military is calmly observing the North's movement."

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2013/04/08/11/0401000000AEN20130408004752315F.HTML>

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Japan Today – Japan

SDF Ordered to Shoot Down any N Korean Missile Nearing Japan

Agence France-Presse (AFP)

April 08, 2013

TOKYO — Japan has ordered its armed forces to shoot down any North Korean missile headed towards its territory, a defense ministry spokesman said Monday as speculation grows Pyongyang may fire one this week.

Defense Minister Itsunori Onodera issued the order, which will see Aegis destroyers equipped with sea-based interceptor missiles deployed in the Sea of Japan, the defense official said.

The official, who was speaking on condition of anonymity, said the order, which was issued Sunday, was routine and was being kept low-key.

"We won't hold press conferences on this order because of Japan's policy principle that we will not be swayed by North Korean provocations.

"If we announce this publicly and explain in details, North Korea will get to know part of our strategy," the spokesman told AFP.

The order came as a top South Korean security official said Sunday that North Korea may test-launch a missile this week, while the United States has delayed its own missile test because of soaring tensions on the peninsula.

Kim Jang-Soo, chief national security adviser to President Park Geun-Hye, said a test-launch or other provocation could come before or after Wednesday, the date by which the North has suggested that diplomats leave Pyongyang.

North Korea, incensed by U.N. sanctions following its nuclear and missile tests and by South Korean-U.S. military drills, has issued a series of apocalyptic threats of nuclear war in recent weeks.

It has also reportedly loaded two medium-range missiles on mobile launchers and hidden them in underground facilities near its east coast, fueling fears of an imminent launch that may further escalate tensions.

North Korea also gave an evacuation advisory to some foreign embassies in the capital Pyongyang, warning it could not guarantee their safety after April 10 if a conflict broke out, although most appeared to be staying put.



Sunday's order is similar to those Japan's defense ministry has issued three times in the past—in April 2009 and in April and December last year—when North Korea launched what it called a satellite.

But this is the first time that an order has been issued before Pyongyang has announced any actual launch.

"There is not a high possibility that the missile would target Japan, but we have determined we should prepare for any contingency," a government source told Kyodo news agency.

<http://www.japantoday.com/category/national/view/sdf-ordered-to-shoot-down-any-n-korean-missile-headed-toward-japan>

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Yonhap News Agency – South Korea

April 9, 2013

S. Korea to Begin Development of Mid-Altitude UAV

By Kim Eun-jung

SEOUL, April 9 (Yonhap) -- South Korea will resume a once-aborted program to develop mid-altitude unmanned aerial vehicles (MUAV) to bolster its monitoring capabilities of North Korea's missile and nuclear programs, a military source said Tuesday.

The state-funded Agency for Defense Development launched the indigenous drone development project in 2006 and made a prototype in May 2010. But the project was put on ice in early 2011 as it overlapped with Seoul's plan to buy high-altitude UAVs.

As calls grew for reviving the 160 billion won (US\$139 million) program to enhance South Korea's surveillance of the North's major military facilities, scientists resumed their research and successfully completed exploratory development at the end of last year.

"Following the successful exploratory development of MUAV, full-scale development will start this year," the source said, asking for anonymity.

Under the plan, the Defense Acquisition and Procurement Agency (DAPA) will open a bid for the project next month to accept proposals in the first half of this year with plans to pick a contractor to build a concept plane in October, the source said, noting the military aims to deploy the UAV in 2018.

The medium-altitude, long-endurance UAV is designed to fly at an altitude of up to 10 kilometers and its radar can scan as far as 100 km. The drone, which is capable of lasting up to 24 hours, however, has lower resolution than surveillance aircraft Hawker 800 called RC-800, currently used by the South Korean Air Force. Separately from the program, Seoul has shown interest in high-altitude, long-endurance "Global Hawk" drones to conduct intelligence missions on North Korea, as the South is preparing to take over wartime operational control from Washington at the end of 2015.

South Korea is currently waiting for the U.S. Congress to give approval for sales of four Northrop Grumman Corp's surveillance drones, estimated at \$1.2 billion. The system, akin to Lockheed Martin Corp's U-2 spy plane, can be optimized to scan large areas for stationary and moving targets by day or night despite cloud cover.

Military officials in Seoul say the surveillance network, comprising of instruments of varying capabilities, can put a close tab on the communist North, which conducted its third nuclear test in February and threatened pre-emptive strikes against the South and the U.S.

"If South Korea uses both high-altitude UAVs imported from overseas and indigenously-developed medium-altitude UAVs, it would enhance surveillance capability," a senior Air Force official spoke on the condition of anonymity for the record.



The official said a multi-UAV system will allow South Korea to establish an advanced missile defense system, a so-called "kill chain," which is designed to detect, target, and destroy incoming missiles.

The system involves spy satellites, surveillance drones for monitoring and attack systems including missile, fighter jets and warships.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2013/04/08/39/030100000AEN20130408010300315F.HTML>

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

US Can Intercept N. Korean Missile — Top Commander

9 April 2013

WASHINGTON, April 9 (RIA Novosti) – The United States is capable of shooting down a missile launched by North Korea but may opt not to depending on the threat presented by such an action, the top US military commander in the Pacific said Tuesday.

"If the missile was in defense of the homeland, I would certainly recommend that action. And if it was defense of our allies, I would recommend that action," Adm. Samuel Locklear, commander of US Pacific Command, told the US Senate's armed services committee on Tuesday.

Locklear added that he would "not recommend" intercepting any missile launched by North Korea irrespective of its trajectory.

South Korean officials have said that North Korea might be planning to conduct a missile test launch as early as Wednesday.

On Tuesday, Japan said it has deployed missile defense systems around Tokyo anticipating a possible North Korean missile test.

Locklear's testimony came amid a warning Tuesday from Pyongyang advising all foreigners to evacuate South Korea because the two nations are on the brink of a nuclear war.

White House spokesman Jay Carney called the warning "more unhelpful rhetoric that serves only to escalate tensions" on the Korean peninsula, while US State Department spokesman Patrick Ventrell said comments from Pyongyang have not prompted the agency to issue a travel warning for South Korea.

Pyongyang's latest announcement comes after months of mounting tension, culminating in North Korea's threat last week to attack South Korea and the United States.

US Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel last week ordered missile defense systems deployed to the western Pacific island of Guam, a US territory, following a pledge by North Korea to restart operations at its Yongbyon nuclear complex, including a uranium enrichment plant and a reactor.

Locklear said in his Senate testimony Tuesday that tensions on the peninsula had reached a level unseen since the immediate aftermath of the Korean War in 1950.

"The continued advancement of the North's nuclear and missile programs, its conventional force posture, and its willingness to resort to asymmetric actions as a tool of coercive diplomacy creates an environment marked by the potential for miscalculation that, and controlled escalation, could result from another North Korean provocative action," Locklear said.

Locklear said the United States is ready to defend itself and its allies against a possible North Korean missile attack.

http://en.rian.ru/military_news/20130409/180545195/US-Can-Intercept-N-Korean-Missile--Top-Commander.html



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The Korea Herald – South Korea

S. Korea should Weigh Departure from NPT, Lawmaker Says

April 10, 2013

In an effort to counter North Korea's military threats, South Korea should keep all options on the table, including withdrawal from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), a senior South Korean politician said Tuesday.

"Facing an extraordinary threat to national security, South Korea may exercise the right to withdraw from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty as stipulated in article 10 of the treaty,"

Rep. Chung Mong-joon, former leader of the ruling Saenuri Party, said, addressing the 2013 Carnegie International Nuclear Policy Conference. "South Korea would then match North Korea's nuclear progress step-by-step while committing to stop if North Korea stops."

The two-day forum opened Monday to discuss nuclear nonproliferation, deterrence, disarmament and energy, drawing 800 experts and officials from more than 45 countries and international organizations, according to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

The seven-term lawmaker emphasized that Seoul should be given this leeway as a "law-abiding member of the global community who is threatened by a nuclear rogue state."

Some in South Korea even say, he noted, the only way to solve the North Korean nuclear problem is for the country to follow the India-Pakistan example, or the case of Israel.

The maverick politician, who apparently has presidential ambitions, likened the situation to a setback in a gun-control campaign.

"It is like a member of the gun-control lobby in good-standing whose neighborhood gangster just acquired assault rifles and threatens him," Chung said. "In order to buy a gun to protect himself and his family against the gangster, he now wishes to withdraw his membership temporarily."

South Korea acceded to the NPT in 1975. It has since operated nuclear reactors for non-military purposes.

He reiterated calls for the U.S. to redeploy tactical nuclear weapons in Korea in order to send a political message not only to Pyongyang but also to Beijing.

"North Korea, and for that matter China as well, should know that South Korea has this option if it persists in possessing nuclear weapons. Nuclear proliferation in East Asia will unfold at the invitation of North Korea endorsed by China," he said. "The question for China is 'Does it want South Korea to bring back U.S. tactical nuclear weapons or develop its own nuclear capability?'"

The U.S. pulled all of its tactical nuclear weapons, which can be delivered by artillery or missile, out of South Korea in 1991 as part of President George H.W. Bush's Presidential Nuclear Initiative.

Chung said the international community needs to re-set its North Korea policy, adding that decades-long efforts to resolve the crisis have failed.

"The story of how the global community failed to prevent an isolated, failing state from acquiring the ultimate weapon will go down in the annals of diplomatic history as one of the most spectacular and consequential failures," he claimed.

Chung emphasized that it is more important to figure out North Korea's nuclear capabilities and take necessary precautions than trying to understand the intentions of its leadership.

Despite his political clout, Chung's suggestions do not seem to reflect mainstream views in the South Korean political circles, which still put more emphasis on the alliance with the U.S., trusting Washington's nuclear umbrella.



USAF COUNTERPROLIFERATION CENTER
CPC OUTREACH JOURNAL
MAXWELL AFB, ALABAMA

His calls may sound more radical than realistic, as many express worries over adverse effects to the alliance, efforts for denuclearization talks with North Korea, and Seoul's status on the global stage.

Amid North Korea's continued threats and provocations, however, a growing number of people in the South appear to be supportive of Chung's idea.

Two-thirds of South Koreans polled shortly after North Korea's third nuclear test on Feb. 12 backed a "domestic nuclear weapons program," according to the Asan Institute for Policy Studies, a Seoul-based think tank patronized by Chung.

The U.S. government took a dim view of Chung's demand, saying Washington stays committed to the defense of South Korea.

"The ROK (South Korea) is a committed partner and global leader on strengthening and maintaining the integrity of the NPT and the global nonproliferation regime," a State Department official told Yonhap News Agency, asked about Washington's position on Chung's views.

The alliance between the two nations "is fully capable to deter, defend against, and respond to the threat posed to our allies by North Korea," the official added, requesting anonymity.

"The United States remains steadfast in its commitment to the ROK's defense, including the extended deterrence provided by our conventional forces and nuclear umbrella." (Yonhap News)

<http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20130410000134>

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The Montreal Gazette – Canada

Air Force General: US Wants North Korea to Know American Military Capabilities, Deter Attack

By Audrey McAvoy, Associated Press (AP)

April 10, 2013

JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM, Hawaii - The United States sent its most powerful warplanes to the Korean peninsula in recent weeks in part because it wants North Korea to know what the American military is capable of doing, the top U.S. Air Force commander in the Pacific said.

B-2 stealth bombers, F-22 stealth fighters and B-52 bombers have recently all flown to South Korea for exercises or short deployments in what amounted to a dramatic display of U.S. air power. The stealth planes are capable of sneaking past radar undetected. B-2 and B-52 bombers are capable of delivering nuclear weapons.

"Every morning that a potential adversary gets up and goes, 'You know what, I'm not going to mess with America today' — that's a good morning," Gen. Herbert Carlisle said Tuesday in an interview at his headquarters in Hawaii. "We need all those mornings to keep coming."

The U.S. is hoping a missile defence system it's sending to Guam, a U.S. territory and strategically important military outpost 1,500 miles (2,400 kilometres) south of Tokyo, will have the same deterrent effect, he said.

If "they know we got something that can knock down their missiles — it may stop them from shooting them," Carlisle said.

The U.S. has also explained it is reassuring its allies by showing it is prepared to defend them.

The missile defence system — called Terminal High Altitude Area Defence — is designed to intercept missiles during their final stage of flight. It joins other technology the military has to intercept missiles during their initial and midflight phases.

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Carlisle said the U.S. also is considering sending high-altitude surveillance planes from Guam to Japan during the tropical island's summer storm season. Often, typhoons and thunderstorms around Guam ground the Global Hawk drones from April through November. The planes would be less likely to face weather problems if they were flying out of a place like Misawa Air Base in northern Japan, Carlisle said.

The U.S. uses the drones to monitor North Korea and could do so from Japan as well, Carlisle said.

"They could do all the missions that they do now if they were flying out of Japanese bases," he said.

Tokyo is also considering buying some of the drones for its own use, Carlisle said.

"We're still working it with the Japanese government. I don't know whether we'll do it this year or not. It does cost money to do that, again that's another factor. We're still examining it and looking at how to make it happen. When we do it is another question," he said.

Cost is an issue as the Air Force copes with automatic federal budget cuts imposed when Congress failed to reach a deal to avert them.

The Pacific is least affected among other parts of the Air Force because of the Obama administration's emphasis on Asia and the Pacific and because of current tensions on the Korean peninsula. Even so, an F-16 squadron in Alaska — 18th Aggressor Squadron at Eielson Air Force Base — is being grounded along with others elsewhere in the country.

Carlisle said the Air Force's core activities — maintenance and operations — are disproportionately affected because the military lacks the flexibility to cut other spending.

Congress didn't allow the branch, for example, to cancel acquisitions programs even when they're behind schedule or not meeting requirements, he said. It also can't cut airmen salaries or health care coverage.

On top of this, the Air Force is implementing a year's worth of budget cuts in six months. That's because the services were told Congress would come to an agreement to avoid the budget cuts and so the Air Force didn't plan for them when the current fiscal year started in October.

"It's our ability to do the mission when we're asked to do it. It's flying hours, it's training, it's fixing airplanes, it's buying parts for airplanes. All of those things were cut 40 per cent for the rest of the year," Carlisle said.

<http://www.montrealgazette.com/technology/Force+general+wants+North+Korea+know+military+capabilities/8224530/story.html>

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Memphis Commercial Appeal

U.S. Intelligence Says North Korea can Arm Missiles, has Warheads

By Julie Pace and Robert Burns, Associated Press (AP)

April 11, 2013

WASHINGTON — A U.S. intelligence report revealed Thursday says North Korea is capable of arming a ballistic missile with a nuclear warhead, a jarring revelation in the midst of bellicose threats from the unpredictable communist regime.

The new American intelligence analysis, disclosed Thursday at a hearing on Capitol Hill, says the Pentagon's intelligence wing has "moderate confidence" that North Korea has nuclear weapons capable of delivery by ballistic missiles but that the weapon was unreliable.

At Thursday's House Armed Services Committee hearing, Rep. Doug Lamborn, R-Colo., read aloud what he said was an unclassified paragraph from a secret Defense Intelligence Agency report that was supplied to some members of



Congress. The reading seemed to take Gen. Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, by surprise. Dempsey said he hadn't seen the report and declined to answer questions about it.

And in the hours following its release, the Obama administration moved aggressively to raise doubts about the report. In a statement late Thursday, Pentagon press secretary George Little said: "While I cannot speak to all the details of a report that is classified in its entirety, it would be inaccurate to suggest that the North Korean regime has fully tested, developed or demonstrated the kinds of nuclear capabilities referenced" in Lamborn's remarks.

But the DIA conclusion was confirmed by a senior congressional aide who spoke on condition of anonymity because the Pentagon had not officially released the contents. The aide said the report was produced in March.

Notably absent from that unclassified segment of the report was any reference to what the DIA believes is the range of a missile North Korea could arm with a nuclear warhead.

Much of its missile arsenal is capable of reaching South Korea and Japan, but Kim has threatened to attack the United States as well.

David Wright, a nuclear weapons expert at the Union of Concerned Scientists, said the DIA assessment echoes the views of those who closely follow North Korea's pursuit of a nuclear weapon.

"People are starting to believe North Korea very likely has the capability to build a nuclear weapon small enough to put on some of their shorter-range missiles," Wright said. "Once you start talking about warheads small enough and technically capable to be on a long-range missile, I think it's much more an open question."

At the same House hearing where Lamborn revealed the DIA conclusion, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel was asked a different version of the same question: Does North Korea have the capability to strike U.S. territory with a nuclear weapon? Hagel said the answer is no.

"Now does that mean that they won't have it or they can't have it or they're not working on it?" Hagel added. "No. That's why this is a very dangerous situation."

The North on Thursday delivered a fresh round of war rhetoric with claims it has "powerful striking means" on standby, the latest in a torrent of warlike threats seen by outsiders as an effort to scare and pressure South Korea and the U.S. into changing their North Korea policies.

<http://www.commercialappeal.com/news/2013/apr/11/north-korea-can-arm-missiles/>

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Economic Times – India

Japan Vows Response to 'Any Scenario' after Nuclear Threat

By Agence France-Presse (AFP)
12 April 2013

TOKYO: Japan on Friday vowed it would respond to "any scenario" after a threat by North Korea that Tokyo would be "consumed in nuclear flames".

"We are aware of the remarks made by North Korea, through the media and other channels. We cannot comment on our reaction to the remarks for operational reasons," a defence ministry official told AFP.

"All we can say is we will take every possible measure to respond to any scenario."

Japan, the only country ever to have suffered a nuclear attack, has authorised its armed forces to shoot down any North Korean missile headed towards its territory.

This week Patriot missile batteries were stationed around Tokyo to protect the 30 million people who live there.



In addition to the Patriots, Aegis destroyers equipped with sea-based interceptor missiles have been deployed in the Sea of Japan (East Sea) and on Friday the government said it would be permanently installing missile defences in Okinawa.

Tokyo's comments came after the Korean Central News Agency said any attempt to shoot down its missile would result in war.

"Japan is always in the cross-hairs of our revolutionary army and if Japan makes a slightest move, the spark of war will touch Japan first," KCNA said in a commentary.

"Japan must come to its senses and behave rightly," it added.

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/news-by-industry/et-cetera/japan-vows-response-to-any-scenario-after-nuclear-threat/articleshow/19512563.cms>

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Channel News Asia.com – Singapore
April 12, 2013

S Korea "Doubts" North Has Nuclear-Armed Missile

Agence France-Presse (AFP)

SEOUL: South Korea's defence ministry said Friday it doubted North Korea had the ability to launch a nuclear-armed ballistic missile as claimed in a report by the US military spy agency.

"North Korea has conducted three nuclear tests, but it is still doubtful that North Korea has made a small, light warhead that can be mounted on a missile," ministry spokesman Kim Min-Seok told reporters.

Kim added that the North was "getting to that stage" where it could miniaturise a warhead for missile deployment.

He was reacting to the findings of the US Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) that stated Pyongyang could be capable of launching a nuclear warhead, albeit an unpredictable one.

The alarming assessment, revealed by a US lawmaker at a congressional hearing, came as tensions on the Korean peninsula mounted over an expected missile launch by Pyongyang in the coming days.

In his briefing, Kim stressed there had been no discernible build-up or movement of North Korea's armed forces in recent days.

"There is no great change," he said.

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/s-korea-doubts-north-has/636176.html>

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India Today – India

India Test Fires Nuclear Capable Agni-II Missile in Odisha

By Rakesh Dixit, Mail Today
April 7, 2013

BHUBANESWAR -- Indian scientists on Sunday successfully test-fired the medium range, nuclear capable surface-to-surface Agni-II missile with a strike range of more than 2,000 km from the Wheeler Island in the Bay of Bengal off Odisha coast.

Sources said that the user trial of the weapon system was conducted from a mobile launcher in launch complex-4 of Integrated Test Range (ITR), around 200 kms from here, at around 10.25 am.



Scientists involved in the experiment celebrated by hugging each other.

Sources said that Agni-II Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile (IRBM) has already been inducted into the defence services and today's test was carried out by the Strategic Forces Command (SFC) of the Army as part of training exercise with logistic support from the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

Sources said that the two-stage weapon launched from a mobile launcher met all the mission objectives.

Radar and electro-optical tracking systems tracked and monitored all parameters of the missile. The missile is equipped with advanced high accuracy navigation system.

Agni II can carry a payload of more than 1000 kg and can be fired from both rail and road mobile launchers. Its range can be increased by reducing the payload.

<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/agni-ii-missile-odisha-defence-strategic-forces-nuclear-capable-missile/1/261124.html>

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News Pakistan – Pakistan

Pakistan Tests Nuclear-Capable Intermediate Range Ballistic missile

April 10th, 2013

By Tahir Khan

Pakistan on Wednesday conducted a successful launch of the Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile, which can carry nuclear warheads, the military said.

The missile is capable of carrying nuclear and conventional warheads to a range of 900 kilometers, an army statement said.

“Pakistan today conducted a successful launch of the Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile Hatf IV Shaheen-1 Weapon System,” a statement from the army’s Inter-Services Public Relations said.

It said the missile incorporates series of improvements in range and technical parameters of the existing missile.

Today’s launch, whose impact point was at sea, was witnessed by senior officials who deal with Pakistan’s missile system.

The officials who were present at the test included Director General Strategic Plans Division Lieutenant General (Retired) Khalid Ahmed Kidwai, Chairman the National Engineering and Scientific Commission NESCOM Mr Muhammad Irfan Burney and other senior military officers, scientists and engineers.

Mr. Kidwai said that the improved version of Shaheen 1 has consolidated and strengthened Pakistan’s deterrence abilities manifold. He appreciated the efforts of all personnel for their dedication and professionalism.

He congratulated all scientists and engineers on the successful launch, the military statement said.

Pakistan has several types of nuclear capable missiles and many of them can hit a target in neighbouring India.

Similarly India also has different versions of missiles which can reach any city in Pakistan.

Both countries routinely conduct tests of missiles. They conducted tit-for-tat nuclear tests in 1998.

Pakistan and India have fought three wars since their independence from the British colonial rule in 1947.

<http://www.newspakistan.pk/2013/04/10/pakistan-tests-nuclear-capable-intermediate-range-ballistic-missile/>

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MAXWELL AFB, ALABAMA

RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

Russian Air Force Approves New Bomber Design – Commander

11 April 2013

MOSCOW, April 11 (RIA Novosti) – The Russian Air Force has approved the conceptual design and specification of its future PAK-DA strategic bomber, paving the way for development of components for the aircraft, Air Force Commander Lt. Gen. Viktor Bondarev said Thursday.

“The development of the aircraft is going as planned. The outline of its design and characteristics has been approved and all relevant documents have been signed allowing the industry to start the development of systems for this plane,” Bondarev said at a meeting with Russian lawmakers.

The PAK-DA (meaning future long-range aircraft) project has been in the works for several years but was given the formal go-ahead by the Russian leadership last year. It is due to replace Russia’s aging fleet of 63 Tupolev Tu-95MS Bear and 13 Tu-160 Blackjack strategic bombers in the next decade.

According to recent reports in the Russian media, citing defense ministry sources, the Tupolev design bureau has won the PAK-DA development tender with its concept for a subsonic aircraft with a “flying wing” shape which provides superior “stealth capabilities.”

The Defense Ministry insisted that the PAK-DA should be equipped with advanced electronic warfare systems and armed with new nuclear-capable long-range cruise missiles in addition to a variety of high-precision conventional weapons.

The new bomber is expected to go in production by 2020 and will be built at a new aircraft assembly line at Russia's Kazan plant (KAPO), according to defense ministry officials. The same plant previously built the Tu-95MS and Tu-160.

http://en.ria.ru/military_news/20130411/180586959.html

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Bloomberg News

Pentagon to Seek Less for Missile Defense in 2014 Budget

By Tony Capaccio

April 7, 2013

The Pentagon will request \$9.16 billion for missile defense programs for the 2014 fiscal year that begins Oct. 1, about \$550 million less than this year’s \$9.71 billion, according to internal budget figures obtained by Bloomberg News.

The missile defense proposal scheduled to be released April 10 is part of a \$526.6 billion defense budget President Barack Obama will propose, according to government officials familiar with the budget plan who asked not to be named discussing it in advance.

The request is subject to congressional scrutiny and could be increased in areas lawmakers decide to give greater emphasis, such as the ground-based system of missile interceptors based in Alaska and California to protect the U.S. Last year, House members added money to start construction of a site on the East Coast. The Senate removed the funds, asking the Pentagon to conduct an environmental impact study instead.

Funding could also face additional across-the-board reductions if automatic cuts known as sequestration stay in place throughout fiscal 2014.

The administration’s reduced request comes despite heightened concerns about North Korean threats to attack U.S. bases in South Korea, Japan and Guam.

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The Pentagon last week announced it was deploying Lockheed Martin (LMT) Corp.'s Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense system, which uses truck-mounted interceptors, to Guam. The Navy has stationed two Aegis-class destroyers, which are equipped to track and target missiles, in the region.

Representative Mike Rogers, chairman of the House Armed Services Committee's missile defense panel, said in e-mail statement: "These repeated cuts are even more troubling given the advances in nuclear weapons and missile technology by the unstable regime in North Korea."

'Lip Service'

"The United States cannot be defended with lip service," the Alabama Republican said. "It is time for President Obama to commit to a robust missile defense program now."

This year's missile defense request is lower than last year's primarily because the administration is requesting no funding for the ground-based, mobile Medium Extended Air Defense System, or Meads, being developed by Lockheed Martin, of Bethesda, Maryland, with Rome-based Mbda Italia SpA. and Schrobhausen, Germany-based LFK Lenkflugkoerpersysteme GmbH.

Congressional budget negotiators in December blocked further funding for the program. Lawmakers, however, included \$400 million to complete U.S. participation in the Meads system in a continuing budget resolution Congress passed last month to keep the government operating through Sept. 30.

Missile Defense Agency spokesman Richard Lehner said he'd have no comment on the budget until it's released.

Missile Contractors

Major missile defense contractors include Chicago-based Boeing Co. (BA); Dulles, Virginia-based Orbital Sciences Corp. (ORB); Waltham, Massachusetts-based Raytheon Co. (RTN); Falls Church, Virginia-based Northrop Grumman Corp. (NOC); and Lockheed Martin business units in Moorestown, New Jersey, and Dallas.

Last month, the Pentagon said it planned to spend \$1 billion by 2017 to improve and deploy additional Orbital Sciences ground-based interceptors in Alaska to stop a small number of intercontinental ballistic missiles that could be fired from Iran or North Korea.

How much of that money will be included in the fiscal 2014 budget request depends in part on a test of the still-unproven system's new warhead that won't take place until later this year or in early 2014. The warhead failed two intercept tests in 2010.

The Pentagon is seeking about \$1 billion in fiscal 2014 for the ground-based interceptor system managed by Boeing, an increase of about \$100 million from this year.

Aegis Funding

Proposed spending on Aegis sea-based systems built by Lockheed Martin and Raytheon's missile unit in Tucson, Arizona, increases to \$1.5 billion from \$1.4 billion.

Combined spending of \$945 million for Lockheed Martin's Patriot Advanced Capability-3 program, to include a "missile segment enhancement" upgrade for current missiles, remains about the same as the Pentagon's request for fiscal 2013.

The administration's proposed defense spending for fiscal 2014 doesn't include automatic cuts of as much as \$50 billion that will be imposed unless Obama and Congress rescind or amend the deficit-reduction requirement.

The total Pentagon request will drop to about \$475 billion if Congress doesn't roll back the automatic cuts, Todd Harrison, a budget analyst with the non-partisan Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments in Washington told reporters April 5.

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-04-08/pentagon-to-see-less-for-missile-defense-in-2014-budget.html>



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The Hill
DEFCON Hill

Pentagon Opts to Fund Controversial Multi-Nation Missile Defense Program

By Jeremy Herb
April 09, 2013

The Pentagon has decided to use \$380 million from the continuing resolution passed last month to fund a joint missile defense program, despite a provision in last year's Defense authorization bill specifically prohibiting funding the program.

In a letter sent Monday to the German and Italian Defense ministers, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said the U.S. would provide the money in 2013 for development of the Medium Extended Air Defense System (MEADS), a joint venture between the three countries.

"The appropriated amount, less the sequester reduction, will be the final U.S. contribution to the MEADS program," Hagel wrote in the letter, obtained by The Hill. "I am pleased we are able to fulfill our commitment."

MEADS has long been in the cross-hairs of congressional lawmakers, as the Army decided two years ago it would not procure the missile defense system.

But the Pentagon has urged the completion of development for MEADS anyway, in order to manufacture the technology and uphold its obligations to NATO allies.

The program is produced by MEADS International, a group of international defense firms headed by Lockheed Martin.

Sen. Kelly Ayotte (R-N.H.) led the charge against MEADS during debate on the government funding measure last month, calling the system the "missile to nowhere."

"It's outrageous that the administration is 'pleased' to provide this funding, especially at the same time the Defense Department has begun grounding combat aircraft as a result of sequestration," Ayotte said in a statement to The Hill Tuesday.

Defense officials argued that the termination costs associated with breaking the U.S. contract to the Germans and Italians were roughly the same as the costs for developing the program, so they said that the money might as well go toward the program.

Pentagon spokeswoman Maureen Schumann confirmed the Pentagon would fund the program. She said the money would provide for an intercept flight test in late 2013 and closing out the program.

"This final year of funding will allow the program office to complete the archival of data from the development and test program so that each participant will have a database of the design and performance data that can be used in future air and missile defense efforts," Schumann said.

The Pentagon and some lawmakers in Congress still disagree, however, over how the Pentagon should be using the \$380 million for the program that was in the continuing resolution.

Appropriators had said in the legislation that the money could either go toward developing the program or covering termination costs.

The House Appropriations Committee, however, said that the funds could only be used for termination costs, because the National Defense Authorization Act specifically prohibited using money to develop the program.

Committee spokeswoman Jennifer Hing said Tuesday that the Pentagon's decision was not in compliance with the law.



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"The committee's position is that the funding provided for MEADS should be used for termination costs only, as prescribed by the Defense Authorization bill," Hing said. "We do not believe that any other use of the funds would be in compliance with the law."

The House Armed Services Committee also disagreed with the Pentagon and said it was ignoring "very clear congressional intent," an aide said. The aide said the committee would work with appropriators to ensure this situation does not occur again.

The Pentagon, however, argued the continuing resolution "effectively superseded" the authorization bill, and as a result funding MEADS is not prohibited.

"As the most recent expression of Congress's direction with regard to MEADS, the Appropriations Act itself must be given full force and effect," Schumann said.

Ayotte attempted last month to strip the MEADS funding with an amendment to the funding resolution. But the amendment was not given a vote, thanks in part to efforts from the Senate's No. 3 Democrat, Sen. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.), as his state houses jobs for the weapon program.

Raytheon, which is headquartered in the Northeast, lobbied hard against MEADS, as the defense firm has the rival Patriot Missile program that MEADS was supposed to supplant.

During the Senate's budget vote-a-rama, Ayotte successfully included a measure that prohibited funds for the program in 2014, although that was nonbinding.

MEADS International said in a statement that the funding "will enable the U.S., Germany and Italy to demonstrate the advanced 360-degree capabilities of MEADS in a tactical ballistic missile intercept test later this year."

<http://thehill.com/blogs/defcon-hill/army/292695-pentagon-opts-to-fund-controversial-missile-defense-program>

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

Obama Calls for More Nuclear Weapons Funding, Cuts for Nonproliferation

11 April 2013

WASHINGTON, April 10 (RIA Novosti) – US President Barack Obama on Wednesday proposed boosting funding for the Energy Department to modernize the nation's existing nuclear weapons in what analysts say is part of a bargain he struck with Republican lawmakers to secure their support for the New START deal with Russia to reduce nuclear stockpiles.

In his federal budget blueprint unveiled Wednesday, Obama called for \$7.87 billion in funding "to maintain a safe, secure and effective nuclear deterrent," an increase of \$654 million, or 9 percent, compared to the 2012 budget.

The budget reiterated Washington's commitment to the New START treaty with Moscow, which calls for both sides to cut their respective nuclear arsenals to 1,550 deployed warheads by 2018.

The money earmarked for modernizing the US nuclear arsenal would go toward upgrades to the W76, B61, W78 and W88 nuclear weapons, as well as toward the construction of a uranium processing facility in Tennessee and "sustaining the existing stockpile by maintaining the underlying science, surveillance and other support programs," according the proposed budget.

The budget proposals come as no surprise given the pressure Republican lawmakers put on Obama to modernize the US nuclear arsenal in exchange for their support for New START, which was ratified by the US Senate in December

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2011, said Simon Saradzhyan, a security expert at Harvard University's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs.

"Russia is modernizing, and other countries are actually expanding their arsenals," Saradzhyan told RIA Novosti on Wednesday. "The United States is not unique in doing this."

Nonproliferation advocates this week expressed concern over a report by the Center for Public Integrity (CPI) ahead of Wednesday's budget unveiling that outlined planned budget cuts for programs aimed at preventing nuclear materials from falling into the wrong hands.

"[T]he U.S. programs for securing, reducing and eliminating weapons usable nuclear materials are a critical part of our strategy for combating nuclear terrorism and preventing the proliferation of these deadly dangerous materials," Joan Rohlfing, president of the Nuclear Threat Initiative, was quoted by CPI as saying Wednesday.

"A decision to significantly cut these programs, including our near-term ability to dispose of excess plutonium, would be a setback to our ability to reach critical security goals," Rohlfing added, CPI reported.

Saradzhyan said that the nonproliferation cuts targeting the Mixed Oxide (MOX) Fuel Fabrication Facility, which is being built in South Carolina and has been plagued by cost overruns, would not impact nuclear security.

The facility would dispose of plutonium by converting it to MOX fuel and burning it in commercial nuclear reactors.

"The materials that would be processed there are not currently threatened, meaning it is not like there is no plausible possibility that these materials will be stolen by a group and fashioned into a nuclear device," he told RIA Novosti.

Saradzhyan added that he does not think it would be wise to slash funding for efforts to secure and retrieve weapons-grade materials in other countries.

"Lack of these materials is the biggest obstacle that terrorists face in building nuclear weapons," he told RIA Novosti.

The proposed budget, which must be approved by the US Congress, added that the Obama administration "recognizes the importance of the U.S.-Russia Plutonium Management and Disposition Agreement, whereby each side committed to dispose of at least 34 metric tons of weapon-grade plutonium."

http://en.rian.ru/military_news/20130411/180566358/Obama-Calls-for-More-Nuclear-Weapons-Funding-Cuts-for.html

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IB (International Business) Times – U.K.

US Cyber Weapon Classification Marks Beginning of Cyber Arms Race

Cyber war moved a step closer after the US Air Force has designated six cyber tools as weapons.

By David Gilbert

April 9, 2013

The move, which comes a month after US intelligence officials warned that cyber-attacks are now seen as the number one threat to the stability of the country, replacing terrorism.

Lieutenant General John Hyten, vice commander of Air Force Space Command, which oversees satellite and cyberspace operation, said the new designations would help normalise military cyber operations as the US military works to keep up with rapidly changing threats in the newest theatre of war.

"This means that the game-changing capability that cyber is going to get more attention and the recognition that it deserves," Hyten told a cyber-conference held in conjunction with the National Space Symposium in Colorado Springs.

Responding to the announcement Jarno Limnéll, director of cyber-security for Stonesoft, commented: "The classification of cyber capabilities as weapons, shows it is clear the world has entered a new arms race era."

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The move comes at the same time as widespread cuts have been made to the defence budget available to the Pentagon and could make it easier to secure funding for cyber defences now that the tools have been designated as weapons.

Hyten said the recent decision by Air Force Chief of Staff General Mark Welsh to designate certain cyber tools as weapons would help ensure funding.

"It's very, very hard to compete for resources ... You have to be able to make that case," he said.

Specifics

No specifics were revealed about what these cyber-weapons are, but the US is already among a cadre of three or four nations which lead the way in cyber espionage techniques, along with China, Russia and Israel.

In February a major report into cyber espionage attacks against a range of companies in the US concluded that the Chinese government was behind the attacks, though this has been strongly denied.

Hyten said the Air Force planned to expand its cyber workforce of about 6,000 by 1,200 people, including 900 military personnel.

He said it took the Air Force decades to explain the central importance of space-based assets for warfare, but did not have time to wait with cyber-security.

"We have to do this quickly. We cannot wait. If we just let decades go by, the threat will pass us screaming by," he said.

Hyten said the Air Force was trying to leverage investment in cyber-security already being made by private industry, but still had work ahead to improve its interface with the companies that operate the largest computer servers, and any agreements would have to benefit both sides.

"We have to bring resources to the table," he said. "They don't stay in business by doing things for free."

<http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/articles/455143/20130409/classification-cyber-weapons-marks-beginning-arms-race.htm>

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Washington Free Beacon

The American Flu

Chinese colonel says latest bird flu virus is U.S. biological weapon

By Bill Gertz

April 9, 2013

A Chinese Air Force officer on Saturday accused the U.S. government of creating the new strain of bird flu now afflicting parts of China as a biological warfare attack.

People's Liberation Army Sr. Col. Dai Xu said the United States released the H7N9 bird flu virus into China in an act of biological warfare, according to a posting on his blog on Saturday.

The charge was first reported in the state-run Guangzhou newspaper *Southern Metropolis Daily* and then picked up by several news outlets in Asia.

State Department spokesman Jason Rebholz dismissed the claim. "There is absolutely no truth to these allegations," he told the *Washington Free Beacon*.

Seven deaths from the bird flu outbreak were reported as of Tuesday in state-run Chinese media. As many as 24 people reportedly were infected by the disease in Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and Anhui.

Chinese authorities are trying to calm public fears of a major epidemic, claiming there is no evidence the virus can be transmitted between humans.



The government also is claiming that the outbreak is not related to the recent discovery of thousands of dead pigs floating in a river in China.

The accusation of U.S. biological warfare against China comes as the Pentagon is seeking closer military relations with China. Army Gen. Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is set to travel to China for talks with Chinese military leaders later this month.

Dai is a military strategist who in the past has been outspoken in seeking to foment conflict between China and the United States. He told the *Global Times* in August that China should go to war over U.S. support for Japan's claims to the disputed Senkaku Islands.

Writing on Sina Weibo, a Chinese microblogging site akin to Twitter, Dai stated that the new bird flu strain was designed as a biological weapon similar to severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), which he also claimed was developed as a U.S. bio-weapon, that affected the country in 2003.

According to Dai's posting, the new flu outbreak should not be a cause for concern. "The national leadership should not pay too much attention to it," the PLA lecturer at the National Defense University wrote. "Or else, it'll be like in 2003 with SARS!"

"At that time, America was fighting in Iraq and feared that China would take advantage of the opportunity to take other actions," he said. "This is why they used bio-psychological weapons against China. All of China fell into turmoil and that was exactly what the United States wanted. Now, the United States is using the same old trick. China should have learned its lesson and should calmly deal with the problem."

Dai said that even if "a few may die" from the flu outbreak, it will not equal one-thousandth of the deaths caused by vehicle accidents in China.

Dai in the past has called for China to punish the United States for U.S. arms sales to rival Taiwan, by selling arms to U.S. enemies. "China recognizes that a few perfunctory protests will not have any effect," Dai said in 2010. "China can't directly sanction American arms companies since they did not do business with China ... but China can sanction companies that are doing business with China directly, like Boeing or General Electric."

Dai also has said the United States has used crises with North Korea and offers of cooperation on the issue as a plot to drive a wedge between Beijing and its fraternal communist ally.

Dai also has said U.S. efforts to counter Chinese espionage and intelligence-gathering were part of a U.S. "plot theory" of "western countries threatening others by [releasing] information gained through spying in order to damage the reputations of other countries."

A State Department official said China notified the World Health Organization (WHO) on March 31 about its first detected human cases of H7N9 infection. Fourteen cases were confirmed by the WHO by April 5, of which six were fatal. The organization said there is no evidence of human-to-human transmission.

"U.S. Embassy Beijing and U.S. Consulate Shanghai are monitoring the situation, working closely with counterparts at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, and the Beijing and Shanghai municipal governments," the official said.

The colonel's accusation provoked a widespread response on Chinese websites. One post in reaction joked that Dai's comment about auto deaths must mean that the United States and Germany are responsible for a conspiracy to produce cars, according to a report in Hong Kong's *South China Morning Post*.

Luo Changping, deputy editor of *Caijing*, said most PLA soldiers would not support Dai's comments and he urged the colonel to resign and apologize to those who have died from the current bird flu outbreak.

A defiant Dai then said in a new posting Sunday that "it is common knowledge that a group of people in China have been injected with mental toxin by the United States."

"Now, a group of fake American devils are attacking me," he wrote in another post. "I will not retreat even half a step."



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Analysts say the colonel's remarks are a reflection of the growing xenophobic atmosphere within the Chinese military that views the United States as its main enemy.

Former State Department intelligence analyst John Tkacik said China's military was largely to blame for mishandling the 2003 outbreak of SARS. Tkacik said there was speculation when the epidemic began that "the PLA suspects SARS had emanated from its own biological laboratories and was all the more eager to keep it secret." China is known to have a covert biological arms program.

"Col. Dai Xu is a shameless liar when he accuses the United States of using bio weapons," Tkacik told the *Free Beacon*. "He's probably motivated by a desire to exculpate the PLA for their mishandling of the epidemic—no doubt most Chinese have happily forgotten the episode—as much as by a cynical xenophobia. But, that's what passes for deep strategic thought at China's National Defense University these days."

The Pentagon has been trying with varying success to develop closer ties to the Chinese military as part of a strategy aimed at building trust. However, China's military leaders believe the U.S. offers of closer ties are a ruse designed to contain China's growing military buildup.

Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel spoke by phone with China's Defense Minister Gen. Chang Wanquan on April 2. Chang is the No. 4 defense official after Chinese President Xi Jinping and two other generals who run the Central Military Commission, the Communist Party's ultimate power organ.

"The leaders both expressed their intention to work together to continue to build a military-to-military relationship that serves the vision of both President Obama and President Xi," Pentagon press secretary George Little said in a statement after the call.

"The secretary discussed the importance of focusing on areas of sustained dialogue, practical areas of cooperation, and risk reducing measures," he said.

U.S. ties with China are strained due to China's reluctance to rein in neighboring North Korea.

China provides North Korea with large amounts of fuel oil and other goods. However, Beijing has not taken steps to pressure Pyongyang using its economic leverage during the ongoing crisis.

The flu has lit up China's thriving Internet, according to analysts. Over 945,600 microblog postings addressed the flu between April 8 and 9. Since the outbreak began some seven days ago, between 1.3 million and 3 million postings were put online on outlets including Sina Weibo and QQ Weibo.

Tens of thousands of users expressed doubts about the official Shanghai municipal government's denial of any link between the dead pigs found floating last month in the region's Huangpu River.

The proximity to the initial outbreak in Shanghai and the river has led to speculation that the pig deaths may have been linked to the flu virus jumping from animals to humans.

That speculation was fueled by reports that one of the victims of the flu was a pig butcher.

The avian flu strain is similar to an earlier outbreak with a significant difference: The current strain does not kill the birds it infects, making it more difficult to identify infected poultry.

The Shanghai government waited 20 days before announcing the first H7N9 infection on March 31.

<http://freebeacon.com/the-american-flu/>

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Foreign Policy
OPINION/*The Cable*

McCain: Shoot Down the North Korea Missile

Issue No. 1053, 12 April 2013

United States Air Force Counterproliferation Research & Education / Maxwell AFB, Montgomery AL
Phone: 334.953.7538 / Fax: 334.953.7530



Posted By Josh Rogin
Monday, April 8, 2013

If North Korea fires off a missile in the coming days, the United States should use its missile defenses to shoot it down, even if it's not headed for a real target, Sen. John McCain (R-AZ) told *The Cable*.

The Obama administration has been moving missile defense related assets closer to North Korea recently and has plans to shoot down a North Korean missile headed for Japan, South Korea, or Guam, according to the *New York Times*, but not if the missile is just going to fall into the water.

McCain begs to differ.

"If they launched a missile, we should take it out. It's best to show them what some of our capabilities are," he said. "Their missile would most likely miss, but the fact that they have the ability to launch one with that range is very escalatory at least."

Asked if a failure of U.S. missile defenses in such a scenario would be harmful to the credibility of U.S. weapons systems, McCain said, "That's true, but I would hope that would be a minimal risk."

South Korean officials have been predicting that North Korea could launch a medium-range ballistic missile on or about April 10, just ahead of the April 15 birthday of North Korea's founder Kim Il Sung. Last year, North Korea launched an Unha-3 rocket with a satellite attached on April 12, scuttling its ongoing diplomacy with the Obama administration.

North Korea's missile-launch preparations are ongoing, but South Korean officials on Monday walked back comments from over the weekend warning that North Korea is preparing a fourth nuclear device test. Meanwhile, the *Times* reported that the United States and South Korea have prepared a new "counterprovocation" plan that would allow for proportional retaliatory strikes if North Korea conducted a limited military strike on the South.

Secretary of State John Kerry will visit China, South Korea, and Japan later this week. A senior administration told *CNN* that Kerry will try to present a diplomatic path out of the crisis during his trip.

"Secretary Kerry agrees that we have to have a robust deterrent because we really don't know what these guys will do," the official said. "But he also knows that the North Koreans need a diplomatic off-ramp and that they have to be able to see it."

Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Martin Dempsey will visit Beijing next week and National Security Advisor Tom Donilon is scheduled to travel to China in May.

McCain said the key to solving the North Korean crisis in the short term is held by the Chinese, who although they have made increasingly sharp statements and have been conducting military exercises near their border with North Korea, have yet to use whatever leverage they have on Pyongyang.

"The Chinese are the only ones who have real influence over the North Koreans and they could take action that would ratchet down this crisis dramatically and they are not doing that," McCain said. "China could shut down their whole economy in a short period of time... It's symptomatic of Chinese behavior... They are not behaving appropriate to a world power."

Josh Rogin reports on national security and foreign policy from the Pentagon to Foggy Bottom, the White House to Embassy Row, for The Cable.

http://thecable.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/04/08/mccain_shoot_down_the_north_korea_missile?wp_login_redire ct=0

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency
OPINION/Valdai Discussion Club



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CFE Treaty is Dead, Long Live 2011 Vienna Document

9 April 2013

By LITOVKIN, Viktor

The Russian Defense Ministry shares its conventional and strategic arms control secrets.

The Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty has no future, Sergei Ryzhkov, Head of the Russian Defense Ministry's International Treaties Implementation Department (National Nuclear Risk Reduction Center), told journalists at a briefing the other day.

The CFE Treaty was signed in November 1990, a time of confrontation between NATO and the Warsaw Pact countries. But by late 2007 the treaty had become completely obsolete after Russia withdrew from it, Ryzhkov explained. Some former Warsaw Pact member countries have joined NATO. Several post-Soviet republics, namely Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, have also become NATO members. Although the CFE Treaty has lost its *raison d'être*, the arms control process continues. But there are no chances that it can be reinstated on a new basis. The arms control process currently relies on the New START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty), officially called Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms, which was signed by the presidents of Russia and the United States in 2010. Moreover, the arms control process relies on the 2011 Vienna Document on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures. The Defense Ministry stresses that, unlike previous years, both documents are non-confrontational. All their provisions are being fulfilled meticulously and on time. And all contentious issues are addressed by bilateral commissions. Journalists noted that one such issue, the violation of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) by the United States, may also be discussed. To test their missile interceptors the US Armed Forces use medium-range missile stages, which under the INF Treaty are supposed to be scrapped. Ryzhkov said that he knew about this problem, and that senior Foreign Ministry and Defense Ministry officials had repeatedly raised the issue with the US side. It is to be hoped that our US partners will take notice of Russia's concerns.

Currently, the Department monitors the implementation of 16 international agreements, Ryzhkov told journalists. They include such important documents as the New START Treaty, the Treaty on Open Skies and the 2011 Vienna Document. Unlike the CFE Treaty, the 2011 Vienna Document is based on principles of collaboration and cooperation with foreign partners. Under this document, the parties concerned put on display their military equipment, partners are invited to attend military exercises, air force bases and military aircraft are shown, and exchanges of cadets and students of higher educational institutions are arranged. Under the 2011 Vienna Document there will be five inspections a year, compared to 45 under the CFE Treaty. The party which voiced this initiative has the right to choose the locations subject to inspection. Combat-ready motorized rifle brigades or tank brigades, rather than weapons and military equipment depots, are monitored, so that in effect, inspectors check everything that may threaten the security of any country. However, military equipment depots and their components are still checked in terms of tanks, armored fighting vehicles, artillery systems with a caliber of over 100 mm, airplanes and helicopters, like they were under the CFE Treaty. An officer of the reserve noted that the entire arms control strategy should be revised. Currently, conventional weapons should not be viewed separately from strategic arms, high-precision weapons, electronic countermeasures (ECM) and radio-electronic warfare systems, unmanned combat air vehicles (UCAVs), air-defense and missile-defense systems, which without question affect the security of any state.

The National Nuclear Risk Reduction Center, which is headed by Ryzhkov, focuses on the following two high-priority aspects in its work. First, the Center notifies foreign partners about Russian military activities, including missile launches, military exercises, naval operations, military flights, etc. At the same time, it directly monitors similar activities of Russia's partners. The Center, which annually receives up to 2,000 notifications, has already conducted 39 inspections under the New START Treaty, including three inspections in 2013. The Russian side also sends up to 1,500 notifications each year.

Viktor Litovkin is Executive Editor, Independent Military Review.

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<http://valdaiclub.com/defense/57220.html>

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The National Interest
OPINION/Commentary

Big Hurdles Ahead for Arms Control

By Steven Pifer
April 9, 2013

Four years ago in Prague, President Obama announced his desire to reduce the role and number of nuclear weapons in U.S. security policy and set an ultimate goal of a world free of nuclear arms. He returned to the Czech capital one year later to sign the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START). The president has said he wants to do more: cut nuclear weapons further and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). Those are worthwhile goals, but achieving them will require overcoming significant challenges.

The New START Treaty limits the United States and Russia each to no more than 1,550 deployed strategic warheads on 700 deployed strategic missiles and bombers. That is a good step, but do those weapons levels make sense twenty years after the end of the Cold War? New START, moreover, covers only a part of the total nuclear arsenals of the superpowers; non-deployed (reserve) strategic warheads and non-strategic (tactical) weapons remain free of any constraint.

The superpowers each have total stockpiles numbering 4,500–5,000 nuclear weapons, more than fifteen times larger than the next nuclear weapons state. Washington and Moscow could easily reduce their arsenals by half and retain robust deterrents—and they would clearly remain top dogs in the nuclear-arms world.

In his January state of the union message, Mr. Obama stated his intention to “engage Russia to seek further reductions in our nuclear arsenals.” Press reports in early February suggested the administration was nearing a decision on reductions to no more than 1,000–1,100 deployed strategic warheads and a total of 2,500–3,500 total nuclear weapons. The administration could pursue this in different ways.

One option would seek to negotiate a U.S.–Russian treaty covering *all* nuclear weapons. It might limit each side to 2,500 total weapons, with a sublimit of 1,000 deployed strategic warheads. That would reduce the New START level by 35 percent and, more significantly, for the first time cap reserve strategic and tactical nuclear weapons.

Negotiating such an agreement would get into new territory; for example, the sides would need to develop agreed definitions, counting rules and verification measures to apply to the classes of warheads not previously limited. None of that would be easy and would take considerably longer than the eleven months it took to finish New START.

The Obama administration might conclude that it lacks time to finish such a treaty before the end of his second term. It thus might consider a fast deal to reduce New START’s limits. That could be as simple as just negotiating new numbers, for example, a limit of 1,000 deployed strategic warheads in place of 1,550. New START’s definitions, counting rules and verification measures would apply equally well to the new numerical limits. As for reserve strategic and tactical weapons, Washington could seek to engage Moscow in a process beginning with transparency and confidence-building measures and ultimately leading to a negotiation of legally binding limits. However, getting to that negotiation, and then concluding it, would take far longer than agreeing to change the New START limits.

Pursuing either approach would encounter challenges. The first and most critical: is Moscow prepared to engage? President Putin and the Russians have shown little enthusiasm recently for further nuclear arms cuts. They may choose not to play.

Perhaps not, but it is too early to close that door. The Russian government could have incentives to negotiate. For example, while the U.S. military can easily maintain its forces at New START levels, the Russian military must build new

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missiles to keep to the levels. Lowering New START's limits could provide an attractive cost-saving measure for Moscow.

National Security Advisor Donilon travels to Moscow next week, and presidents Obama and Putin plan to meet in June and September. Those encounters provide opportunities to sound out the Russians' readiness to deal.

Verification will pose a special challenge for limits on reserve and tactical nuclear arms. The U.S. intelligence community has high confidence in its ability to monitor New START's limits. But monitoring constraints on reserve strategic and tactical weapons—which are not deployed on large strategic ballistic missiles but sit in storage bunkers—will prove a tougher task.

In the end, the intelligence community likely will not have the same degree of confidence in its ability to monitor those limits as it does with New START. That will raise questions, particularly in the Senate, though the risk posed by less certainty in monitoring limits on reserve strategic and tactical weapons should be set against the current situation, in which there are *no* constraints of any kind on those weapons.

A third challenge waits on Capitol Hill. Senate turnover has meant the loss of considerable muscle memory on nuclear arms-control questions. Senate Republicans, moreover, tend to be skeptical about the value of arms control. And they feel that the Obama administration has not moved as fast on nuclear modernization as it promised during the New START ratification debate. So, any new nuclear-reductions treaty would face a stiff test in a ratification vote.

That has led the administration to weigh options other than a legally binding treaty. One could be to seek a political commitment by the U.S. and Russian presidents to cut deployed strategic warheads to one thousand on no more than five hundred deployed strategic delivery vehicles. The sides could use New START's verification measures to monitor these politically binding limits as well as the legally binding limits of 1,550 and 700.

The administration also would like to secure ratification of the 1996 CTBT. The Senate did not consent to ratification in 1999, primarily due to concerns about the reliability of the U.S. stockpile absent testing and the ability to detect cheating. Developments over the past ten years in the stockpile-stewardship program and advances in monitoring, such as improved seismic techniques, have largely allayed those two worries.

Bear in mind also how hard Nevada fought against storage of nuclear waste at the nuclear test site. With the population of nearby Las Vegas having tripled since 1992, the year of the last U.S. nuclear test, does anyone believe a resumption of testing would be feasible politically? Moreover, the United States carried out more nuclear tests than the rest of the world combined and learned more from individual tests. Why not freeze this American advantage?

Persuading Senate Republicans of the validity of these points nevertheless cannot be taken for granted. The administration will want to do a careful head count before making a CTBT ratification push, as a second negative vote in the Senate would be devastating for the treaty.

The president has said he wants to do more on cutting nuclear-arms levels and moving the CTBT closer to reality. Those are worthy goals that could cement his nuclear legacy and make America more secure. But major challenges stand before his agenda. President Obama has to engage personally, both with the Russians and the Senate, if he wants to overcome them.

Steven Pifer directs the Brookings Arms Control Initiative and is co-author of [The Opportunity: Next Steps in Reducing Nuclear Arms](#).

<http://server1.nationalinterest.org/commentary/big-hurdles-ahead-arms-control-8324>

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The Indian Express – India
OPINION/Commentary

Seoul's Nukes

Issue No. 1053, 12 April 2013

*United States Air Force Counterproliferation Research & Education / Maxwell AFB, Montgomery AL
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By C. Raja Mohan
Wednesday, April 10, 2013

As the United States struggles to cope with the North Korean atomic challenge, there is a growing sentiment in South Korea in favour of building nuclear weapons. In a public opinion poll conducted after the third North Korean nuclear test in February, nearly two-thirds of South Koreans supported the development of a national nuclear arsenal.

Debating the nuclear weapon option has long been taboo in South Korea. That taboo is breaking down amidst Pyongyang's adventurism and the growing pessimism in Seoul about the US's ability to rollback North Korea's nuclear weapons programme.

As one of the world's leading economies with an advanced industrial base, South Korea has long had the wherewithal to quickly mount a significant nuclear weapons programme. What held it back until now is a political decision to forego the nuclear weapon option.

Seoul did pursue the nuclear weapon option in the 1970s, but the US persuaded South Korea to abandon the programme. South Korea was encouraged instead to rely on the US nuclear shield.

Faith in the US nuclear umbrella allowed South Korea to take a stoic view of the North Korean nuclear and missile programmes, until recently. But Seoul's patience has begun to snap in the last two years amidst the intolerable provocations from the North.

Making matters worse was the growing South Korean perception that a weakening America may no longer have the ability to either rein in North Korea or defend Seoul against Pyongyang's nuclear arsenal.

Some in Seoul call for strengthening the American nuclear umbrella by the redeployment of US tactical nuclear weapons in South Korea. The US had withdrawn the tactical weapons from South Korea after the end of the Cold War in 1991 in a gesture of reconciliation towards North Korea. Others insist South Korea has no alternative but to acquire nuclear parity with the North.

US DILEMMA

In Washington, of course, there is little

political appetite for a prospective South Korean nuclear weapons programme. American policy is committed to keeping the Korean Peninsula free of nuclear weapons.

The problem, however, is that the US finds itself unable to compel North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons while continuing to restrain its longstanding ally South Korea from matching the atomic arsenal of the North.

While South Korea may be some distance away from exercising its nuclear weapon option, Seoul is demanding that the US allow it to beef up its civilian nuclear infrastructure. Washington is squirming at that too.

South Korea wants to produce enriched uranium and plutonium to fuel its expansive civil nuclear programme and make it more efficient. The current US policy bars countries that don't have these facilities from acquiring them, on the grounds that these technologies make it easier to build nuclear weapons.

When South Korean President Park Geun-hye visits Washington next month, she is expected to press Barack Obama to let Seoul strengthen its nuclear prowess. The non-proliferation community in Washington is dead set against the liberalisation of the policy in favour of South Korea.

MISSILE RULES

While Washington wrings its hands on the nuclear question, it has made one important concession to Seoul last year that lets South Korea match the North Korean missile programme.



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In an agreement with Washington in 2001, Seoul agreed not to develop or deploy ballistic missiles with a range of more than 300 km and a payload of more than 500 kg. These restrictions were in line with the rules of the Missile Technology Control Regime and meant to reduce the dangers of missile proliferation in the Korean Peninsula.

South Korea's self-restraint made no difference to the North, which has steadily advanced towards developing longer range missiles. Under a new agreement announced last October, Washington has agreed that South Korea can build missiles with ranges up to 800 km. Seoul will also be free to develop missiles with ranges shorter than 800 km that can carry heavier warheads than 500 kg.

Once Seoul develops the new ballistic missiles in the coming years, it will have the capacity to target all of North Korea. The US justified the decision by saying that allowing South Korea to develop longer range missiles was a "proportionate" response to the threats.

As Pyongyang rattles the nuclear sabre, the tension between the deepening political crisis in the Korean Peninsula and the non-proliferation regime has become increasingly difficult to manage.

The writer is a distinguished fellow at the Observer Research Foundation, Delhi and a contributing editor for 'The Indian Express'.

<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/seouls-nukes/1099972/0>

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The Toronto Star – Canada

OPINION/Commentary

China Losing Patience with North Korean Antics

Beijing leaders express frustration with Kim Jong Un's erratic regime.

By: Zhu Feng

Wednesday, April 10, 2013

BEIJING—After nearly a month of belligerent bluster from North Korea, China appears to have had enough, ending its silence about North Korea's brinkmanship and suddenly roaring its disapproval of its ally's reckless threats. China's exceptionally tough talk does not necessarily mean that it intends to abandon Kim Jong Un's regime. But, at the very least, it does suggest that a radical shift in China's policy toward North Korea might no longer be unthinkable.

When Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi exchanged phone calls with United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on April 6, he expressed China's rejection of rhetoric and action aimed at destabilizing the northeast Asian region. Moreover, Wang made clear that China would not allow "troublemaking on China's doorstep."

The next day, Chinese President Xi Jinping, speaking to an assembly of primarily Asian political and business leaders at the annual government-sponsored Boao Forum for Asia, declared that no country "should be allowed to throw a region and even the whole world into chaos for selfish gain." Xi did not mention any country by name, but his implicit condemnation of North Korea was clear to all.

Before these official rebukes, there had been much speculation about whether China would risk a fundamental change in its relations with North Korea, the socialist "little brother" that it continues to subsidize heavily. Following the rare display of open indignation by Xi and Wang, such speculation has now become stronger than ever.

Some ask what "value" Kim's hermit kingdom provides that prevents China from acting decisively; others wonder to what extent Chinese leaders' domestic concerns continue to inhibit their willingness to switch course on North Korea.

In fact, China's leaders have agonized over North Korea's recent provocations. They have been struggling to persuade the Kim regime to temper its volatility and accept a "grand bargain": official recognition and normalization of relations with all of its neighbours, and with the United States, in exchange for denuclearization. Indeed, this has led to considerable squabbling between the two countries in recent years.

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For China, the Kim regime's survival can be assured only if it follows China's lead in reforming and opening up. But, faced with South Korea's shining democracy and booming economy, the Chinese model is irrelevant to the North: following it would mean acknowledging the South's supremacy on the Korean Peninsula, and thus an instant loss of legitimacy. So the country's rulers have come to believe that they can gain attention and resources only through provocation.

During the past two decades, North Korea's leaders have experimented lightly with minimal "reform," only to retreat from it quickly. China patiently bore this pattern of intermittent brinkmanship and timid reform, largely owing to its belief that the risks posed by the Kim dynasty could be controlled. More important, China's leaders believed that by shielding the North from U.S. pressure, it was acting in the interest of its own national security.

But here China's analysis was completely wrong, for it underestimated the Kim regime's unmanageable desperation whenever it believes its survival is in doubt. Moreover, North Korea does not want to be beholden to any power, including China. So it exploits China's goodwill and national-security concerns, and even regards Chinese patronage as its due.

A further complication concerns North Korea's nuclear aspirations. The North appears to be convinced that, with nuclear weapons, it can maintain complete diplomatic independence, and that China, fearing nuclear blackmail, will never abandon it.

Now, however, North Korea has made a mistake. Kim Jong Un's childish tantrums have genuinely enraged China. Yes, the country's leaders have sometimes complained about the heavy burden of subsidizing North Korea but, until now, they had never shown such open disgust with the North.

China's warning that it will not allow North Korean "troublemaking on China's doorstep" can be considered the equivalent of a "yellow card" in soccer. China has not decided to abandon North Korea. But the warning is a stern one for Kim Jong Un: China may send him to the sidelines if he does not change his behaviour.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry is set to visit Beijing in the coming days. It is now time for American and Chinese leaders to negotiate a real and viable exit from the current crisis, while productively exploring ways to restart the denuclearization process on the Korean Peninsula.

If Kim's bombast and nuclear threats lead to China-U.S. bonding over a joint North Korea settlement, the entire world will be the safer for it.

Zhu Feng is deputy director of the Centre for International Studies and professor of International Relations at Peking University.

http://www.thestar.com/opinion/commentary/2013/04/10/china_losing_patience_with_north_korean_antics.html

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Japan Times – Japan
OPINION/Commentary

Pyongyang-Tehran Military Ties Test Nuclear Nonproliferation Regime

By Michael Richardson
April 11, 2013

SINGAPORE – Although North Korea and Iran are thousands of kilometers apart on opposite sides of Eurasia, they are linked — directly as well as indirectly — in the North Korean crisis.

Iran's nuclear and long-range ballistic missile ambitions are silent actors in the confrontation between North Korea and a wide range of countries in the international community, including the United States, China and Russia.

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All these countries, and many others including Japan, have condemned Pyongyang's threats to launch nuclear and missile attacks on the U.S. and American bases in Japan and the Western Pacific.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry warned at his first press conference last month, following his appointment, that a failure to respond effectively to North Korea's nuclear sabre rattling risked emboldening Iran. Kerry, who will hold high-level talks in South Korea, Japan and China this week on his first trip to Asia as America's top diplomat, said after North Korea's third underground nuclear weapons test on Feb. 12: "This is about proliferation and this is also about Iran, because they are linked."

Raymond Tanter, a former U.S. National Security Council member, put it more explicitly. "If you want to prevent Iran from getting the bomb, you have to take a hard line against North Korea. If you allow North Korea to get away with miniaturizing (a nuclear warhead), with three nuclear tests, with any number of missile tests, that signals to Iran that a nuclear-armed North Korea can get away with murder and therefore Iran will not be deterred from getting the bomb."

North Korea and Iran could be the forerunners of a much wider spread of nuclear arms in Asia and the Middle East, as other countries in these regions try to protect themselves by also acquiring nuclear and missile capabilities. Unlike North Korea, Iran denies it is seeking nuclear warheads small enough to fit on intercontinental ballistic missiles able to strike the U.S. mainland. Iran remains a member of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty while North Korea renounced it seven years ago.

However, Iran has rejected international demands to curb uranium enrichment and halt development of plutonium production facilities, both of which can make fissile material for nuclear weapons.

In fact, there are a growing number of reports and disturbing pieces of circumstantial evidence that North Korea and Iran are sharing their nuclear and missile advances through an increasingly close cooperation pact.

John Park, a nuclear arms trade specialist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, says that this exchange of technology and know-how between Pyongyang and Tehran has been a "critical — yet under-examined — enabler" of North Korea's long-range missile development, culminating in its successful launch in December of a three-stage Taepo Dong 2 rocket that placed a small satellite in orbit before the final stage plunged into the Philippine Sea.

Park says that what started as a transactional relationship, where oil-rich Iran provided much-needed cash to North Korea in return for missile parts and technology, has evolved into an effective partnership that includes sharing technical data and procuring specialised components from abroad in defiance of United Nations and Western sanctions. "The time has come to view their previously independent ballistic missile programs as two sides of the same coin," he adds.

The nuclear and missile partnership was sealed in September when the official North Korean news agency reported that top-level delegations from both countries took part in the signing in Tehran of a memorandum of understanding on cooperation in science, technology and education.

In February British and Israeli newspapers reported that an Iranian physicist, Mohsen Fakrizadeh, was in North Korea when its third nuclear explosive test took place. Fakrizadeh, one of the architects of Iran's clandestine nuclear program, is involved in designing warheads that could be carried by Iranian missiles.

Also in February, other Western analysts reported that North Korea had recently improved its ballistic missile launch facility at Musudan-ri, on the northeast coast, and that several of the new features were identical to those first seen at Iran's Semnan launch complex.

A report to U.S. lawmakers in December by the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service said that North Korea and Iran have combined to advance their nuclear and missile capabilities because neither is any longer receiving as much help from China or Russia as they would like. Both also find it more difficult to obtain certain critical components and materials because of sanctions related to their nuclear and missile programs.



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To achieve effective nuclear weapon strike power, North Korea and Iran are working together to obtain sufficient stocks of fissile material, extend the range and accuracy of their ballistic missiles, and design reliable nuclear warheads small enough to fit on the missiles.

Iran already has the largest arsenal of ballistic missiles in the Middle East, many of which are copies of North Korean missiles. The U.S. Defense Department told Congress in its 2012 annual report on Iranian military power that "with sufficient foreign assistance," Iran might be technically capable of flight-testing an intercontinental ballistic missile by 2015. An ICBM is generally defined as having a range of more than 5,500 kilometers.

North Korea now appears to be irreversibly committed to a future with nuclear weapons and missile delivery systems to offset deficiencies in its large, but out-of-date, conventional military forces. Like Iran, North Korea evidently sees atomic arms as a means of regime preservation, national prestige, coercive diplomacy, and a way to be taken seriously on the international stage.

By banding together, North Korea and Iran may be able to better circumvent sanctions and isolation. The big worry is that with struggling economies, both North Korea and Iran will intensify illicit revenue earning activities by exporting nuclear weapons technology as well as ballistic missiles and components.

North Korea has a history of selling missiles and associated materials to a number of countries, including Iran, Syria and Libya. It assisted Syria in constructing a plutonium nuclear reactor before the partly completed plant was destroyed by an Israeli bombing raid in 2007.

Unless ways can be found to prevent North Korea and Iran from joint proliferation, the outlook for international controls to limit the spread of nuclear arms and ballistic missiles will be bleak.

Michael Richardson is a visiting senior research fellow at the Institute of South East Asian Studies in Singapore.

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2013/04/11/commentary/pyongyang-tehran-military-ties-test-nuclear-nonproliferation-regime/>

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The Chosun Ilbo – South Korea

OPINION/Editorial

April 12, 2013

N.Korea Triggers Nuclear Arms Race in Northeast Asia

The U.S. Defense Department plans to assess the strategic value of deploying additional conventional and nuclear weapons to the West Pacific to submit a report to Congress in June as required under the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2013. The west Pacific region covers South Korea, Japan and Guam.

Section 1046 of the act stipulates that the defense secretary in consultation with the secretary of state is to report on the issue "to ensure the presence" in the West Pacific "of a robust conventional and nuclear capability, including a forward-deployed nuclear capability... in response to the ballistic missile and nuclear weapons developments of North Korea and the other belligerent actions North Korea has made against allies" of the U.S.

It in short pressures the Obama administration to respond in kind to North Korea's growing nuclear threat.

The U.S. had deployed so-called tactical nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula since the late 1950s but pulled them all out following the 1992 Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. "Tactical" nuclear weapons refer to bombs with destructive capabilities ranging between 0.1 and several hundred kilotons of TNT to destroy enemy weapons, military positions and armed forces within reachable areas, while bigger "strategic" nuclear bombs can decimate entire cities.

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Rep. Trent Franks, who spearheaded the legislation, plans to hold a congressional hearing once the Pentagon submits its report.

The U.S. agreed with the former Soviet Union in 1991 to reduce the number of nuclear weapons, and the Obama administration's top international priority is to stem the spread of nuclear weapons. It is therefore unclear whether tactical nuclear weapons will really be redeployed on the Korean Peninsula.

Since its third nuclear test in February, North Korea has threatened to launch nuclear attacks against South Korea and the U.S. It has even devised a law legitimizing its use of nuclear weapons. These threats have played into the hands of Japanese attempts to bolster its military and raised calls within South Korea for Seoul to acquire its own nuclear weapons. North Korea's belligerence is threatening Northeast Asia into a nuclear tinderbox.

http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2013/04/12/2013041201213.html

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The Sydney Morning Herald – Australia
OPINION/Comment

China and US Keen to Cut Risk of Knee-Jerk War

April 12, 2013

By John Garnaut, China correspondent for Fairfax Media

Later this month, over four days yet to be disclosed, the most important generals of the United States and China will meet and see if they can set the world's most dangerous military relationship on a safer path. Their task is to reduce the risk that any of the flashpoints proliferating on China's periphery will escalate into war with the US.

General Martin Dempsey, Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, is affable and straight-talking. So is General Fang Fenghui, chief of the general staff of China's People's Liberation Army. "Fang is smart, he's impressive, he's his own person and he wants to make a more professional force," says one recent caller on him in Beijing.

PLA leaders have always calculated that their interests are best served by allowing minimal genuine communication and revealing nothing about capabilities, intentions or systems of command. But, as it gets bigger and more scary, there are signs that the calculus of secrecy is changing.

Does China have "more than 100 nuclear weapons", as the US's Defence Intelligence Agency estimated in 2006, or 3000 as guesstimated by a recent Georgetown University study? In what circumstances would it use them, and who has the power to press the button?

Could Dempsey tell the difference between the launch signature of an anti-ship ballistic missile, with a conventional warhead, and a nuclear weapon on its way to the US? If he urgently used the hotline to the Zhongnanhai Telecommunications Directorate would he actually get through to Fang?

Until recently Deng Xiaoping's famous dictum - "hide one's capacities and bide one's time" - helped the PLA build strength without triggering a neighbourhood arms build-up. Its intentions were sufficiently ambiguous to discourage bigger nations from pushing it around, while its capabilities were not so scary as to provoke serious defensive response.

But the PLA can no longer use secrecy to disguise its capabilities after two decades of double-digit budget hikes. It has flight-tested a stealth fighter, deployed the world's first anti-ship ballistic missile - dubbed the "assassin's mace" in China - and launched its first aircraft carrier, the Liaoning.

With all the shiny hardware, it seems the PLA no longer has the patience to bide its time. China's navy is pushing harder into disputed territories and causing almost every maritime nation in the region to increase military spending, form new security links and encourage the US to accelerate its "pivot" towards China.

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In December, Christopher Ford, then at the Hudson Institute in Washington, explained the diminishing returns of secrecy. He told PLA colonels and generals that an element of uncertainty can sometimes aid deterrence, particularly around the question of what provocation might trigger nuclear attack, but a profound lack of clarity will lead the other party to assume the worst. And this is what's happening with China.

"Beijing's strategic secretiveness has contributed to making it increasingly easy for Americans, and China's own neighbours, to assume the worst about the PRC's strategic planning and the intentions such planning supports," said Ford in a paper on Sino-American distrust delivered at a PLA conference in Beijing's Fragrant Hills.

That, of course, assumes that American and regional assumptions about China's potential for military aggression are inflated beyond reality. "If engineering a coercively Sinocentric regional or global 'harmony' is not in fact the PRC's ambition, and Beijing's objectives are indeed as benign as its leaders claim, then it is vital to bring about vastly greater transparency," Ford said. "So far, the PRC has refused to provide meaningful transparency, but I would argue that this is becoming untenable and counterproductive."

The PLA still defines the US as its enemy-in-chief, as Fang's deputy, Qi Jianguo, made clear in an essay in the Communist Party's main theory magazine Seeking Truth earlier this year.

But the strategic calculus of secrecy may be changing.

Since October, PLA officials have been treating their US counterparts with relative warmth and openness to the point that one shocked Pentagon official privately described it as a "love fest".

Australia - with more open channels of co-operation than the US or any other US ally - has proposed pushing the boundaries of joint exercises and exchanges. Behind closed doors it has received a "positive" reply. Last month Fang used the dusty hotline and told Dempsey China was "willing to strengthen its communications with the US military to enhance mutual trust, handle differences properly, and deepen co-operation," said a Xinhua report confirmed by Dempsey's office.

The powers remain in a dangerous rivalry but communication is opening and reducing the risk of an accident causing disaster.

John Garnaut is China correspondent.

<http://www.smh.com.au/comment/china-and-us-keen-to-cut-risk-of-kneejerk-war-20130411-2hogm.html>

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