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Al Arabiya – U.A.E.

Gulf Officials Hold Emergency Meet over Iran's Nuclear Proximity

Sunday, 14 April 2013

By Al Arabiya with agencies

Gulf environmental officials on Sunday held an emergency meeting in Saudi Arabia's capital to discuss possible threats posed to surrounding Gulf countries by the Iranian nuclear plant in Bushehr.

Last week, a powerful earthquake struck close to Iran's plant, killing 32 people and injuring 850, it also destroyed homes and devastated two small villages.

The nuclear plant is around 1200 kilometers south of Iran's capital, Tehran, and is built near Bushehr port that overlooks the Arabian Gulf.

Experts who spoke to Al Arabiya said that what makes the situation worse is the movement of the Gulf waters. The waters' current travels from the Iranian coast towards Gulf shores, meaning the water could carry nuclear waste resulting in possible environmental and oceanic disasters.

These supposed threats have led ministers in the surrounding Gulf states to establish an environmental monitoring center, based in the UAE. The center measures the degree of nuclear radiation in the Gulf region in order to avoid any possible disaster the Iranian nuclear plant may cause.

Abdullatif bin Rashid al-Zayani, secretary-general of the Gulf Cooperation Council, urged Iran to join the U. N.'s Convention on Nuclear Safety, which allows greater review by the U.N.'s atomic watchdog agency, reported AP.

The plant is 277 kilometers away from Kuwait, 300 kilometers away from Bahrain, 350 kilometers away from Iraq's southern city of Basra, about 410 kilometers away from the Qatari capital Doha, 600 kilometers away from the UAE's Abu Dhabi and about 620 kilometers away from the Saudi capital, Riyadh.

The plant poses a threat to these countries because it falls within a seismically active area; the aforementioned countries could be under the risk of being subjected to uranium and nuclear radiations leaks.

Tehran has repeatedly dismissed safety concerns over the Bushehr plant, which began operations in September 2011 after decades of delays.

Israel, Gulf Arab states and many Western countries fear Tehran is seeking a nuclear weapons capability, while the Islamic Republic is battling with international sanctions aimed at curbing specific areas within its atomic program.

Iran denies it wants nuclear arms and says its atomic work is for electricity generation and other civil uses.

The head of the Gulf states' main political bloc is urging Iran to join an international accord on nuclear safety following an earthquake near the country's lone energy-producing reactor.

Abdullatif bin Rashid al-Zayani, secretary-general of the Gulf Cooperation Council, opened a meeting Sunday in Riyadh to discuss nuclear safety issues after last week's 6.1 magnitude quake about 96 kilometers (60 miles) southeast of Bushehr, the site of Iran's reactor.

The quake killed at least 37 people. Iran says there was no damage to the reactor and insists it was built to withstand far stronger quakes.

Al-Zayani urged Iran to join the U. N.'s Convention on Nuclear Safety, which allows greater review by the U.N.'s atomic watchdog agency. But Iran is part of other U.N. pacts to report any nuclear accidents.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2013/04/14/Gulf-officials-hold-emergency-meet-over-Iran-s-nuclear-proximity.html>

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FARS News Agency – Iran

Syria: UK Chemical Traces Claim Unfounded

April 15, 2013

TEHRAN (FNA) - Syrian Information Minister Omran al-Zoubi dismissed as unfounded London's claim that a soil sample smuggled out of the country proves the use of chemical weapons there, saying only sampling by international authorities by Damascus's authorization is valid.

Media reports said on Saturday that British military scientists have examined soil smuggled back to Britain by the British spy agency MI6 that contains evidence of chemical weapons use, press tv reported.

"The testing of Syrian soil, if not performed by an official and international organization and done without the consent of the Syrian government, has no political or legal value," Syrian Minister for Information Omran al-Zoubi said.

The Times said on Saturday that soil samples from an area near Damascus holds evidence of chemical weapons use by Syrian militia or government forces.

Zoubi, however, said Turkey, Britain and France are behind the use of chemical weapons in Syria by arming the militia groups.

"Where did those who brought the rockets into Khan al-Assal get them from? Where did they get the chemical weapons from? They should ask Turkey, Britain, France and the other states about the source of these chemical weapons," Zoubi said.

This comes as the United Nations said on Thursday that western governments have "hard evidence" of chemical weapons use at least once in Syria but did not point to the details.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9107160908>

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Tehran Times – Iran

Iran Dismisses PGCC Concerns about Bushehr Nuclear Plant

By the Political Desk

April 15, 2013

TEHRAN – An Iranian nuclear official has dismissed as “baseless” the “commotion” created by the Persian Gulf Arab countries about the safety of Iran’s sole nuclear power plant, located in the southwestern port city of Bushehr.

“If these concerns are being expressed from a technical perspective, they can be easily allayed. We have repeatedly said that we are ready to provide experts with any kind of information that is necessary through the International Atomic Energy Agency,” Atomic Energy Organization of Iran Deputy Director Mohammad Ahmadian told Al-Alam News Network on Sunday.

His remarks came the same day that national emergency officials in the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council countries, namely the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, and Kuwait, met in Riyadh to discuss the risk of radiation spreading over the Persian Gulf if the Russian-built Bushehr nuclear plant is damaged by an earthquake.

The meeting came after a 6.1 magnitude quake, which struck some 90 kilometers away from the Bushehr plant on April 9, killed 37 people and injured 950 others but left the nuclear facility undamaged.

The magnitude of the quake was reported to be 6.3 by the U.S. Geological Survey.

According to Reuters, PGCC secretary general, Abdullatif al-Zayani, said at the start of the meeting at the Saudi Arabian capital, “The earthquake that the Iranian city of Bushehr was subject to has raised a great deal of concern among

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(P)GCC countries and the international community of a possible damage to the Bushehr nuclear reactor that could cause a radioactive leak, God forbid.”

He added, “The (P)GCC countries have previously warned against the danger of the nuclear reactor of Bushehr and the possible nuclear leak and its harmful effect on the environment in the (Persian) Gulf,” he added.

But Ahmadian dismissed the concerns, saying, “The nuclear industry is a highly sensitive industry, and all the operations and condition of nuclear facilities are supervised by various organizations. In this industry, you cannot launch an unsafe plant and hide the situation from others. The same applies to the Bushehr plant, and this can assure Iran’s neighboring countries in the Persian Gulf region that the Bushehr nuclear power plant poses no threat to them.”

He added, “Over the past two years, we have unloaded (fuel from) the heart of the Bushehr and fully checked the fuel for safety considerations. Although these inspections delayed the launch of the plant for several months, we upheld the principle of safety.”

Commenting on the recent earthquake that happened near the Bushehr plant, Iran’s deputy nuclear chief said, “The Bushehr atomic plant has been designed based on the most advanced and toughest international standards,” adding that the facility can withstand earthquakes of at least 8.0 on the Richter scale near the plant.

“In the event that an earthquake happens, there are systems in the plant that will disconnect the plant from the grid and the reactor will shut down,” Ahmadian said.

<http://tehrantimes.com/politics/106842-iran-dismisses-pgcc-concerns-about-bushehr-nuclear-plant>

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Jerusalem Post – Israel

Iran Test-Fires new Land-to-Sea Missile in Gulf

Tehran says it tested missile that "completely destroys the target vessel, warship," doesn't mention range.

By Reuters

16 April 2013

DUBAI - Iran test-fired a new land-to-sea ballistic missile in the Gulf, a senior official said on Tuesday, days before an annual ceremony meant to showcase its military muscle at a time of rising tension with the West over its nuclear activity.

Israel has publicly warned of possible air strikes on Iran's nuclear sites if Tehran does not resolve Western suspicions it is developing nuclear weapons know-how under cover of a declared civilian atomic energy program, something Tehran denies.

Iran has threatened to hit Israel and US bases in the region if it comes under attack, and also to block the Strait of Hormuz, the neck of the Gulf through which 40 percent of the world's seaborne oil exports pass.

"The defense ministry has been able to test a new missile in the Persian Gulf which has a high ability to hit targets," General Majid Bokaei, Iran's deputy defense minister, was quoted as saying by the state news agency IRNA, which described the missile as a ballistic missile.

"This new missile, which has been equipped with a surface-to-surface missile system, exits the atmosphere after being launched, re-enters it at high speed, and completely destroys the target vessel or warship."

Bokaei did not say when the missile was tested or give a specific indication of its range. "When this missile was tested, all the enemies' destroyers and ships retreated from near our borders," he said, according to IRNA

The Islamic Republic will mark its National Army Day on April 18, an occasion meant to celebrate its armed forces and likely unveil military advances.



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Iran often announces new weapons achievements, although these are difficult to verify independently.

In August it said it had test-launched a more accurate short-range missile capable of hitting land and sea targets within a range of around 300 km (180 miles).

Pieter Wezeman, a senior researcher at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), called the announcement another example of Iran flaunting new military muscle without providing proof.

"It might very well be a weapon with a certain capability but it is extremely hard to say. We always have to be aware of the propaganda value of all these claims," he told Reuters.

"I think in general Iran will have a difficult time to develop really advanced modern missiles ... Opponents are increasingly capable of, at least in theory, destroying these kinds of weapons before they are even being deployed."

Iran has made "robust strides" in developing its ballistic missile capabilities, the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies wrote in a 2010 assessment. The IISS also said, however, that Iran's arsenal suffered from poor accuracy.

All of Tehran's ballistic missiles would be capable of carrying a nuclear payload, the IISS said at the time.

<http://www.jpost.com/Iranian-Threat/News/Iran-test-fires-new-land-to-sea-missile-in-Gulf-309940>

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Xinhua News – China

Iran to Enrich Uranium to 50 pct if necessary: Nuclear Chief

April 17, 2013

TEHRAN, April 16 (Xinhua) -- Head of Atomic Energy Organization of Iran said Tuesday that his country will enrich uranium to 50 percent if there is a strong nuclear power need, semi-official Fars news agency reported.

"At present, we have no enrichment plan for purity levels above 20 percent, but when it comes to certain needs, for example, for some ships and submarines, if our researchers need to have a stronger underwater presence, we will have to make small engines which should be fueled by 45 to 56 percent enriched uranium," said Fereidoon Abbasi.

In defiance to the Western calls on halting nuclear enrichment activities, Iran inaugurated several nuclear-related projects last week marking the National Nuclear Technology Day.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad inaugurated Shahid Rezaeenejad Yellowcake (uranium concentrate powder) complex in the city of Ardakan in the central province of Yazd.

The Islamic republic also launched Saghand uranium complex in Yazd, projected to extract uranium from 350-meter depth under the ground. The extracted uranium will be processed into Yellowcake in Shahid Rezaeenejad complex.

After the two-day nuclear talks between Iran and the P5+1 group -- the United States, Britain, France, Russia and China plus Germany -- concluded on April 6 in Almaty of Kazakhstan, both sides said that the gap of positions over some key points seemed unlikely to be bridged.

While Iranian officials said any mechanism to settle Iran's nuclear issue in the talks should take into consideration Iran's right to uranium enrichment activities, the revised proposal by the world powers asked Tehran to suspend its uranium enrichment and shut down its underground Fordow enrichment facilities in return for limited sanction lift.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2013-04/17/c_132314428.htm

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Jerusalem Post – Israel

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Iran Moves to Speed Up Nuclear Programme Despite Sanctions

Diplomats says Tehran is increasing the number of advanced uranium enrichment centrifuges installed at its Natanz underground plant; new machines could enable Iran to refine uranium much faster.

By Reuters

April 17, 2013

VIENNA (Reuters) - Iran is increasing the number of advanced uranium enrichment centrifuges installed at its Natanz underground plant, despite tightening international sanctions aimed at stopping Tehran's nuclear progress, diplomats said on Wednesday.

Iran has for years been trying to develop centrifuges more efficient than the erratic 1970s era IR-1 machines it now uses, but introducing new models has been dogged by technical hurdles and difficulty in obtaining key parts abroad.

If launched and operated successfully, the new machines would enable the Islamic state to sharply speed up sensitive atomic activity which it says is for peaceful energy purposes but which the West fears may be aimed at building nuclear bombs.

"It is clear Iran can build them. The question is how many and how good are they," one Western envoy said.

The planned deployment of next generation centrifuges underlines Iran's refusal to bow to pressure to curb its nuclear programme, and may further complicate efforts to resolve the dispute diplomatically and avoid a spiral into war.

Iran announced early last month that it would build about 3,000 advanced centrifuges. But experts and diplomats said it was unclear whether it had the capability and materials needed to make so many, and also to run them smoothly.

Although still far from the target number, one diplomatic source estimated that roughly 500-600 so-called IR-2m centrifuges and empty centrifuge casings had now been put in place at the Natanz enrichment facility in central Iran.

That compares with 180 two months ago, according to the U.N. nuclear watchdog's latest report on Iran, issued in February. At the same time, Iran had more than 12,000 old-generation centrifuges installed at Natanz, but not all were enriching.

Two other envoys in Vienna, where the U.N.'s International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is based, also said the number of installed IR-2m machines was growing but they did not have details. The next IAEA report on Iran is expected in late May.

The diplomats said the new centrifuges were not yet operating, but the increase in installation was still likely to add to Western alarm over Iran's nuclear advances. Centrifuges spin at supersonic speed to increase the fissile concentration.

How many Iran can make depends upon whether they have all the parts and materials they need, nuclear expert Mark Hibbs of the Carnegie Endowment think-tank said: "It is possible that they have accumulated an inventory of these things."

Nuclear Technology Breakthrough?

Iran says it is enriching uranium to fuel a planned network of nuclear power plants, but the material can also provide the core of a nuclear bomb if processed to a high fissile level and the West wants it to suspend the work.

Talks between Iran and world powers this month failed to yield a diplomatic breakthrough, and the United States and Israel, widely believed to be the only nuclear-armed power in the Middle East, have not ruled out military action to prevent Tehran obtaining nuclear weapons.

If hundreds of new centrifuges had now been installed, "it indicates that Iran has made a significant breakthrough both in mastering the technology and in acquiring the raw materials," said nuclear expert Mark Fitzpatrick of the International Institute for Strategic Studies think-tank.



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"This development will be of major concern to countries that are worried about Iran's growing ability to quickly produce nuclear weapons."

Iran had previously been believed to face a shortage of the high strength metals necessary to produce the new centrifuges in large numbers but it might have been able to obtain them on the black market, Fitzpatrick added.

One of the Vienna-based diplomats said the IR-2m machine was designed to reduce sanctions-related problems "in that they replace some hard-to-get materials with what are in theory easier to get or make materials."

<http://www.jpost.com/Iranian-Threat/News/Iran-moves-to-speed-up-nuclear-program-despite-sanctions-310094>

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The Japan Times – Japan

Patriot Units to be Deployed in Okinawa Permanently

Kyodo

April 13, 2013

The government said Friday it will permanently deploy Patriot antimissile batteries in Okinawa amid repeated threats by North Korea to launch missiles that could strike anywhere in Japan.

Defense Minister Itsunori Onodera said the Self-Defense Forces will locate Patriot Advanced Capability-3 batteries at its two bases in Okinawa "as soon as possible within April."

The SDF has previously transported the missiles to the prefecture in response to specific threats. The interceptors were not fired during the previous two temporary deployments for missile tests by North Korea.

The government had earlier planned to deploy the PAC-3 batteries permanently in Okinawa by fiscal 2014, but given Pyongyang's continuing provocations, including threats to hit U.S. military bases in Japan, the deployment has been brought forward.

Onodera stressed it is "unforgivable" that North Korea has repeated provocative acts.

He met Friday with Maj. Gen. Andrew O'Donnell, deputy commander of U.S. Forces Japan, who underscored the two countries are sharing all kinds of information on the possible launch of North Korean missiles.

Tensions have been running high since North Korea issued recent statements that it could start a war with the United States and South Korea over their joint military drill and a U.N. Security Council resolution to impose additional sanctions for its nuclear test in February.

Japan remains on alert, with officials saying speculation has been mounting that North Korea could test-fire ballistic missiles around Monday, the anniversary of the birth of national founder Kim Il Sung, grandfather of the current leader, Kim Jong Un.

The country tends to demonstrate its military might around that date.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga told a news conference that the government "is taking all possible measures to protect people's lives and safety and will not be deluded by North Korean provocations."

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe ordered the SDF this week to shoot down any incoming missiles from North Korea, and the SDF has sent Aegis-equipped destroyers capable of missile interception to the Sea of Japan while setting up PAC-3 missile defense units at key locations in Tokyo and surrounding areas.

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/04/13/national/patriot-units-to-be-deployed-in-okinawa-permanently/#.UW8qTpQo5Dy>

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RT (Russia Today) – Russia

North Korea Ready to Develop Relations, Ensure Stability ‘as a Responsible Nuke State’

April 14, 2013

North Korea is ready to develop peaceful relations with world nations – but only as a nuke state, the DPRK’s nominal head of state Kim Yong-nam said on Sunday. This comes as the US, Japan, and China call for the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

North Korea, which, despite tension, is getting ready to celebrate the birthday of the country’s founder Kim Il-sung, said it was ready to conduct relations *“based on the ideals of peace and sovereignty”* and contribute to security and stability in Asia, and in the whole world *“as a responsible nuclear-weapon state.”*

However, North Korea’s Kim Yong-nam pointed out that not every nation is worthy their friendship, saying the country’s *“invincible defense forces”* armed with strengthening *“nuclear deterrence forces”* will *“unfold a total fight against the USA, acting in accordance with a wartime scenario.”*

“We will expand in quantity our nuclear weapons capability, which is the treasure of a unified Korea... that we would never barter at any price,” Kim Yong-nam stressed.

Meanwhile, the US Secretary of State John Kerry on Sunday asserted the United States is willing to *“reach out”* to North Korea – as long as it *“takes action”* towards giving up its nuclear program.

“I think it is really unfortunate that there has been so much focus and attention in the media and elsewhere on the subject of war, when what we really ought to be talking about is the possibility of peace. And I think there are those possibilities,” Kerry said during his Sunday visit to Tokyo where he is meeting his Japanese counterpart Fumio Kishida.

Japan’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Kishida reiterated the American condition for talks, saying both Japan and the US *“cannot allow North Korea in any way to possess nuclear weapons.”*

North Korea should cease its *“provocative speech and behavior,”* Kishida stressed, urging it to take *“concrete action toward denuclearization.”*

Just the day before, China also said it is *“firmly committed to upholding peace and stability and advancing the denuclearization process on the Korean peninsula.”*

“There is no question in my mind that China is very serious – very serious – about denuclearizing,” Kerry noted after his Saturday talks with top Chinese officials.

He also warned the North Korean government would be making a *“huge mistake”* if it were to launch a missile as he stopped in South Korea, where some 28,000 US troops are stationed.

The Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on Sunday added that North Korea should realize their *“provocative acts do not bring any benefit,”* other than making the situation for them *“more difficult.”* He said that Japan is willing to coordinate with the United States, South Korea, China and Russia to prevent the North Korean missiles from being launched.

The other battle front

In the meantime, Pyongyang warned South Korea of *“catastrophic consequences,”* should there be a propaganda action during the Day of the Sun – Kim Il-sung’s 101th birthday celebrations on April 15.

Several South Korean NGOs have recently announced plans to launch air balloons with leaflets criticizing the North Korean regime over the border between the two countries.



Reports said the South Korean police have already prevented one such launch on Saturday, *“for the first time ever,”* according to activists. The latter undertook such attempts in the past, sometimes also attaching dollar bills to the leaflets. The people living in the border areas have protested the actions, as it inevitably leads to flare-ups with the North, the police explained.

North Korea itself is responsible for some recent provocative actions – which are taking place on the cyber-front, Seoul officials have claimed.

The South Korean nuclear power plant operator Korea Hydro & Nuclear Power said it had to cut off the Internet access and even seal the USB ports on all the computers inside their facilities for the fear of possible cyber-attacks from North Korea. Such *“preventive measures”* were taken after several other state companies, including banks and TV stations, became subject to such attacks that were officially blamed on North Korean hackers.

Some 48,000 South Korean computers have been hacked during the recent attacks, leading some of the country’s experts to claim the war is already going on in cyber-space. They estimate an army of at least 3,000 ‘hacker troops’ from the North are taking part, according to Itar-Tass.

North Korea has dismissed the allegations as *“rumors”* and *“deliberate provocations”* aimed at worsening the existing tension.

It also thwarted the South Korean president Park Geun-hye’s recent call for dialogue and *“trust-building process,”* calling it *“a cunning trick to hide the South’s policy of confrontation.”*

There would be no negotiation until South Korea and the United States end their joint military drill on the peninsula, the North Korean Reunification committee spokesman said in a statement on Sunday, adding that under these circumstances *“such a dialogue would be meaningless.”*

The statement aired by the KCNA news agency also blamed the South for trying to *“shift its responsibility for putting the Kaesong Industrial Complex into a crisis.”* Some 53,000 North Korean workers employed by 123 South Korean companies were working at the Kaesong Industrial Complex until it closed down due to the recent escalation of diplomatic hostilities.

The South Korean media is now speculating whether the North will test-fire a missile during Monday’s birthday celebrations, some claiming the launch facility is already on standby, RT’s Aleksey Yaroshevky reported from the region on Sunday.

<http://rt.com/news/north-korea-nuke-state-844/>

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Focus Taiwan News Channel – Taiwan

China yet to Deploy 094 Sub, JL-2 & DF-41 Missiles: Security Head

April 15, 2013

By Rogge Chen and Sofia Wu, Taiwanese Central News Agency

Taipei, April 15 (CNA) China's Type 094 Jin-Class submarine and the JL-2 ballistic missile to be installed on the nuclear-powered warship are still in development or undergoing tests, Taiwan's security and intelligence chief said Monday.

"Neither of them has been deployed at any Chinese military base yet," Tsai Teh-sheng, director-general of the National Security Bureau (NSB), said at a hearing of the Legislative Yuan's Foreign Affairs and National Defense Committee.

Fielding questions from ruling Kuomintang Legislator Lin Yu-fang about the latest developments in China's military buildup, Tsai said China has also not yet deployed the new-generation Dongfeng (DF)-41 intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM).

"All three of these new types of weapons are still being developed in China," Tsai said.



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Given China's fast progress in military technology development, however, the possibility of China succeeding in producing and deploying the DF-41 mobile multi-warhead ICBM in the future is very high, Tsai said.

Based on past experience, Tsai said, China tends to experience difficulties in each stage of development when working on cutting-edge weapons or military equipment.

"Even though China's ability to resolve those problems or difficulties is now stronger than before, it does not necessarily mean that its indigenously developed weapons can initially live up to their designed functions," Tsai said.

He added that it would take time for China's new weapon systems to reach their performance targets.

Though talk turned to China's weapons capabilities, the committee hearing was mainly focused on the impact the volatile situation on the Korean Peninsula could have on Taiwan's economy and security.

Besides Tsai, Foreign Minister David Lin, Deputy Defense Minister Andrew Yang and several other defense officials were also present at the hearing.

Responding to Lin's question on whether the United States has asked Taiwan to adjust its military deployment amid Pyongyang's recent saber-rattling, Yang said the U.S. had not made such a request.

But he added that the two countries have exchanged intelligence on developments in North Korea.

Tsai pointed to the importance of that cooperation, saying that because North Korea is a closed and authoritarian country, no country can fully understand the situation there on its own.

"Regional cooperation is therefore very important. We have shared our intelligence with other countries and have also taken the initiative to ask for updated intelligence gathered by other countries," Tsai told lawmakers.

Tsai said that to his knowledge, the U.S., Japan and South Korea are all willing to give North Korea a way out following its recent bellicosity.

"They have had a hard time, however, finding a channel for dialogue with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un," Tsai said.

North Korea's unpredictability is closely related to its enigmatic leader, he said.

Tensions on the Korean Peninsula have been simmering in recent weeks, with Pyongyang threatening to fire mid- and long-range missiles at Japan, South Korea and the U.S., but not yet acting on its threats.

Tsai said nobody knows at the moment whether North Korea will launch a missile or missiles or undertake a nuclear test in the coming days.

According to intelligence sources, Taiwan's national security authorities set up a special task force after the Yeonpyeong Island incident in November 2010. The task force remains in operation to date, the sources said.

In that incident, North Korea fired dozens of artillery shells onto a South Korean island in the Yellow Sea, killing two people, setting homes ablaze and triggering an exchange of fire as the South Korean military went on top alert.

<http://focustaiwan.tw/news/aipl/201304150027.aspx>

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The Daily Beast

Exclusive: How North Korea Tipped Its Hand

The U.S. recovered the front section of the rocket used in North Korea's satellite launch in December, which gave away the status of the regime's nuclear-arms program.

By Eli Lake

April 15, 2013

Issue No. 1054, 19 April 2013

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



When North Korean engineers launched a satellite into space December 12, it seemed like business as usual, with the familiar cycle of condemnations from the West and statements of defiance from the Hermit Kingdom. But that launch also led many U.S. intelligence analysts to assess that Pyongyang possessed the ability to miniaturize the components necessary to yield a nuclear explosion for a crude warhead that would sit atop a ballistic missile.

After the North Korean launch, U.S. Navy ships managed to recover the front section of the rocket used in it, according to three U.S. officials who work closely on North Korean proliferation. That part of the rocket in turn provided useful clues about North Korean warhead design, should the next payload be a warhead rather than a satellite.

The same basic engineering and science needed to launch a satellite into space is also used in the multistage rockets known as intercontinental ballistic missiles. The front of the satellite rocket, according to three U.S. officials who work closely on North Korean proliferation, gave tangible proof that North Korea was building the missile's cone at dimensions for a nuclear warhead, durable enough to be placed on a long-range missile that could reenter the earth's atmosphere from space.

"Having access to the missile front was a critical insight we had not had before," one U.S. nonproliferation official tells *The Daily Beast*. "I have seen a lot of drawings, but we had not seen the piece of that missile at that time." This official continues: "We looked at the wreckage from the launch and we put it together with other kinds of intelligence and came to this judgment that they had figured out the warhead piece."

The Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) released a classified assessment last month saying that it now has "moderate confidence" that the "North currently has nuclear weapons capable of delivery by ballistic missiles however the reliability will be low," South Korea has provided additional intelligence bolstering this conclusion, according to U.S. officials.

That assessment, in line with, but more assertive than earlier comments from the agency, was made public three days ago in a question from Rep. Doug Lamborn, a Republican from Colorado, to the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, Gen. Martin Dempsey. Pentagon spokesman George Little and the director of national intelligence, James Clapper, soon after the disclosure issued statements trying to play down the news. Clapper said, "It would be inaccurate to suggest that the North Korean regime has fully developed and tested the kinds of nuclear weapons referenced in the passage." He added, "North Korea has not yet demonstrated the full range of capabilities necessary for a nuclear armed missile."

But neither Little nor Clapper disputed the basic judgment that North Korea could likely build a nuclear warhead of low reliability. While the DIA assessment does not represent the view of all 16 U.S. intelligence agencies, the recovered satellite rocket helped move CIA analysts away from their skepticism about North Korea's ability to build a nuclear warhead as well. "The DIA was always more forward leaning on this," one U.S. official said. "The CIA was always extremely cautious on this. The doubters in the CIA finally found some common ground with DIA when we did the recovery." (The CIA declined to comment.)

Intelligence suggesting North Korea could design a nuclear warhead has been building for many years. A.Q. Khan, the man considered to be the father of the Pakistani nuclear program, for example, has said in interviews and correspondence that in 1999 on a visit to North Korea, he was shown boxes of components for three finished nuclear warheads that could be assembled within an hour.

One U.S. official who works on North Korean proliferation said there was reason to believe that Khan could have been lying when he said this. "Khan was like a used-car salesman," he said. "He wanted future customers to think he could get them the full package even though many times the equipment would not work as well as he said." This official said there may have been components for warheads in a box, but "we never knew if those components could actually work."

More recently, though, other kinds of intelligence have also come to the attention of the U.S. intelligence community that suggest North Korea has mastered the miniaturization and warhead design work as well. Another U.S. official who works on North Korea work told *The Daily Beast* that South Korea has recently shared more traditional kinds of



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intelligence with the United States about North Korea's warhead design work, but did not get into the details of that intelligence.

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/04/15/exclusive-u-s-recovered-north-korean-rocket-head.html>

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Focus Taiwan News Channel – Taiwan

China Reportedly Testing New Nuclear Missiles

By Zep Hu, Chiu Kuo-chiang and Lilian Wu, Central News Agency (CAN)

April 16, 2013

Taipei, April 16 (CNA) Unidentified lights have been seen over the Bohai Sea at night, which could be a sign that China is testing new nuclear missiles, Duowei News, a Chinese-language media based in New York, cited Chinese websites as reporting Tuesday.

The Bohai Sea is the innermost gulf of the Yellow Sea on China's northeastern coast.

The Nezavisimaya Gazeta, a Russian newspaper, reported a day earlier that China must have developed new multiple-warhead intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), and has the ability to overwhelm U.S. missile defense systems and launch counter nuclear attacks.

The Wall Street Journal, meanwhile, reported that the U.S. now has 806 ICBMs deployed, while Russia has a total of 491 and China has only between 50 and 75.

Some experts have said that China plans to increase its deployed ICBMs to 500.

In addition, it plans to develop multiple-warhead ICBMs to penetrate the U.S. anti-missile system with the hope of maintaining a low-degree nuclear intimidation capability so as to ensure that it has the ability to counterattack in the event of a U.S. nuclear strike.

Meanwhile that same day, China issued a white paper on national defense in which it elaborated on its new peacetime security challenges and the diversified employment of its armed forces to cope with such challenges.

Wu Xihua, vice director of the Emergency Response Office of the People's Liberation Army's General Staff Headquarters, said China is opposed to war.

But he also said that if someone "imposes war upon us, we have to be able to fight resolutely and win."

He reaffirmed China's determination to safeguard its core interests of sovereignty, security and territorial integrity.

<http://focustaiwan.tw/news/aall/201304160034.aspx>

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People's Daily – China

Obama Says DPRK Has No Nuclear Missile Capability

(Xinhua)

April 17, 2013

WASHINGTON, April 16 (Xinhua) -- U.S. President Barack Obama said on Tuesday that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) does not have the ability to arm a ballistic missile with nuclear warhead.

In an interview with NBC, when asked if Pyongyang has "the ability to put a nuclear weapon on a ballistic missile?", Obama responded: "Based on our current intelligence assessments, we do not think that they have that capacity."

But he also stressed that Washington is preparing for "every contingency out there."

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"That's why I've repositioned missile defense systems to guard against any miscalculation on their part," Obama said.

He warned that Pyongyang can make "more provocative moves over the next several weeks." But Obama said he was in the hope that "we can move into a different phase in which they try to work through diplomatically some of these issues."

On Thursday, U.S. Representative Doug Lamborn said at a hearing that intelligence indicated the DPRK may have acquired the capability to deliver a nuclear warhead with its ballistic missile.

"DIA assesses with moderate confidence the North currently has nuclear weapons capable of delivery by ballistic missiles," Lamborn read from, according to him, an unclassified intelligence assessment by the Pentagon's Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA). "However, the reliability will be low."

However, in the same day, Pentagon spokesman George Little said that it would be inaccurate to suggest that the DPRK has fully demonstrated the capability to launch a nuclear-armed missile.

Tensions have been heightened on the Korean Peninsula since the DPRK conducted its third nuclear test on Feb. 12 in protest against joint military drills between the Republic of Korea and the United States.

The DPRK has declared "a state of war" with the South and threatened to launch a preemptive nuclear strike for self-defense, and urged all foreign organizations, companies and tourists in the South to evacuate in case of war, saying the DPRK "does not want to see foreigners in South Korea fall victim to the war" as the situation on the peninsula "is inching close to a thermonuclear war."

<http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90777/8211511.html>

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China Daily – China

PLA Strives for Transparency

April 17, 2013

By Zhao Lei (China Daily)

China declassified a host of details on its military on Tuesday, a move experts suggest is a big stride by the armed forces to boost transparency and openness.

In a white paper titled "The Diversified Employment of China's Armed Forces", which was published by the State Council Information Office, the PLA disclosed the strength and formation of its ground force, air force, navy and missile arm. The structure and missions of the Armed Police Force and Chinese militia were also made public.

According to the document, the eighth of its kind issued by the Chinese government since 1998, the mobile operational units of the PLA ground force consist of 18 combined corps and several independent combined combat divisions or brigades. These units have a strength of 850,000.

The paper for the first time unveils the designations of combined corps and the military command that directs them. It also reveals that the PLA navy has 235,000 people in active service, and the air force has 398,000 servicemen and servicewomen. In addition, there is an airborne corps under the air force's control.

The PLA second artillery force, the country's core force for strategic deterrence, has an arsenal of Dongfeng (East Wind) ballistic missiles and Changjian (Long Sword) cruise missiles. It is the first time that the Chinese military has publicly mentioned the codenames of its missiles.

"This is the first time that the Chinese government has issued a white paper that focuses on one of the specific factors of its armed forces," said Senior Colonel Wen Bing, a researcher at the national defense policy research center under the PLA Academy of Military Science.



"The release of the document is of great importance for enhancing the system of white papers on national defense and expanding military transparency."

Wen said the international community has some concerns over China's increasing use of its armed forces, so the Chinese government decided to explain the diversified missions of its armed forces, such as in disaster relief, high sea escorts as well as joint drills with foreign militaries.

"(The paper's) content will help to better understand China's resolve to uphold peaceful development," he said.

Senior Colonel Hou Xiaohe, a strategy expert of the PLA National Defense University, said: "The disclosure of a lot of previously classified information, like the combined corps' designations and the strength of each military branch, is in response to the international community's attention. Moreover, the move signals that China now has the confidence of being a responsible power."

The white paper says China advocates a new security concept featuring mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and coordination, and pursues comprehensive security, common security and cooperative security.

"China will never seek hegemony or behave in a hegemonic manner, nor will it engage in military expansion," the white paper says. However, it warns that China still faces multiple and complicated security threats and challenges.

The paper also mentions the determination of China's armed forces to protect the country's "national security interests" in outer space and cyberspace.

"The pledge is in accordance with our armed forces' new missions under new circumstances," said Senior Colonel Meng Xiangqing, who specializes in defense strategy at the PLA National Defense University. "As the strategic competition has been intensifying around the globe, the range of each country's national interests is also expanding."

He noted China has been facing diversified safety challenges and remains a major victim of cyberattacks. "Therefore we must ensure that the Internet and outer space will be used for peaceful purposes and in the interests of all people."

"China's security interests stretch from the land to the sea, to outer space and cyberspace, from territorial security to overseas interests, and from traditional areas to nontraditional fields," said Major General Chen Zhou, director of the PLA Academy of Military Science's national defense policy research center.

He made the remarks during an interview with China News Service when explaining why the paper uses two chapters to emphasize maritime and overseas interests.

"We have been witnessing a remarkable surge in issues concerning overseas resources, strategic routes on the sea and citizens living abroad, so the armed forces must strengthen their overseas operational capabilities to safeguard our country's overseas interests," he added.

Yang Yujun, spokesman for the Defense Ministry, said on Tuesday that military transparency is closely related to national security and has no universal definition, adding that no country can boast complete transparency of military affairs.

China is open and candid in its armed forces' strategic purposes and military capability, according to the spokesman.

China has established strategic consultation mechanisms with 23 countries, and has explained its defense policies, security concerns and the military's missions via various channels including senior leaders' speeches, multilateral meetings and interviews with the media, Yang said.

"It is fair to say that China has been highly transparent in its military affairs."

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-04/17/content_16413000.htm

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Yonhap News Agency – South Korea



April 18, 2013

N. Korea Says Nuclear Weapons Critical for Survival

SEOUL, April 18 (Yonhap) -- North Korea said Thursday that owning nuclear weapons is critical for the survival of the communist regime in the face of threats posed by the United States.

Citing the downfall of Muammar Qaddafi's Libya, the daily Rodong Sinmun said in an article countries that gave up efforts to strengthen their military capabilities under pressure and appeasement tactics by Washington invariably met a tragic end.

The daily, an organ of the ruling Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) and used to explain the country's policy goals to the general public, said Libya had pursued clandestine nuclear and long-range missile development plans, but after the 2003 invasion of Iraq by the U.S. and coalition forces, it changed its mind. Libya had declared it will give up its nuclear program in late 2003.

"They feared that if they opposed the U.S., they may end up like Iraq," the article monitored in Seoul said. "The leadership in Tripoli, instead of building up arms opted to give up its nuclear program to ward off possible threats to its security."

Despite Libya's acceptance of inspections and dismantling of nuclear facilities, the U.S. did not keep its pledge to help the North African country's economy, it said.

"Internally (the U.S.) was planning to overthrow the country that had opposed them for years," the media outlet argued. It said by the time Libya realized they had been tricked, it was too late.

"In 2011, the U.S. with the help of its supporters conducted massive air attacks that turned the country into rubble. This action was followed by an uprising that caused the destruction of the Qaddafi regime," the paper said.

Based on the tragic end of Libya, people should not have illusions about the imperialists and that only by having independent nuclear deterrence can a country protect itself from the U.S. nuclear threat.

The article, meanwhile, comes after the Rodong Sinmun carried a report about NATO's 1998 air raids on Kosovo on Wednesday. That article claimed air strikes were made possible because the former Yugoslavia, which broke up into many smaller states, including Kosovo, did not have credible self-defensive capabilities.

North Korean watchers in Seoul said that the daily's article reflected comments made by leader Kim Jong-un on March 31 to the central committee of the WPK, which emphasized the need for Pyongyang not to follow in the footsteps of some countries that were invaded because they did not secure viable deterrence.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2013/04/18/32/0401000000AEN20130418006400315F.HTML>

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The Economic Times – India

North Korea Needs more Tests for Nuclear Missile: US Expert

By Reuters

18 April 2013

VIENNA: North Korea would need to carry out at least one more atomic test in order to develop a nuclear missile, a prominent US scientist who has often visited the isolated Asian state said on Thursday.

Stanford University's Siegfried Hecker, who in 2010 was shown a previously undetected uranium enrichment facility in North Korea, said he believed it might be able to conduct its fourth such explosion soon, in weeks or months.

The North has threatened nuclear attacks on the United States, South Korea and Japan after new UN sanctions were imposed in response to its latest nuclear arms test in February.



"My view is that they need at least one more nuclear test and most likely several more nuclear tests," said Hecker, who is believed to have been the last Westerner to visit North Korea's Yongbyon nuclear complex. "It is primarily in order to be able to miniaturise (a bomb to fit on a missile) and have sufficient confidence that you can put a nuclear weapon on a warhead," he told reporters during a visit to Vienna.

The most important and serious short-range threat could instead be delivery of a nuclear bomb by other means than a missile, for example on a boat or even in a car or van, Hecker said. "That would be the simplest delivery mechanism. However, it is very difficult to pull that off," he said. "In the shorter term, most likely a boat would be the most serious threat."

Missile launches and nuclear tests by North Korea are both banned under UN Security Council resolutions. North Korea deems its nuclear arms a "treasured sword" and has vowed never to give them up.

PENTAGON SPY AGENCY REPORT

Signalling a possible end to weeks of hostility on the Korean peninsula, however, North Korea on Thursday offered the United States and South Korea a list of conditions for talks, including the lifting of UN sanctions. The United States has offered talks, but on the pre-condition that they lead to North Korea abandoning its nuclear weapons ambitions.

Hecker made clear he did not agree with a Pentagon spy agency report that triggered alarm last week that North Korea might be able to deliver a nuclear-tipped missile at a time of heightened tensions in Asia over Pyongyang's threats of war. The evaluation from the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), produced in March and revealed at a congressional hearing, concluded that North Korea likely has nuclear bombs that could be delivered by missiles.

The Obama administration has played down the DIA report. Based on the number of nuclear and missile tests the North had carried out, "I just don't believe they have that capability yet and certainly they couldn't possibly have the confidence yet to put one of those on a missile," Hecker said. He added: "You have to test, both a nuclear test and then the combination of the nuclear warhead, or dummy warhead, with the missiles."

North Korea occasionally lets experts like Hecker into the country, most likely to persuade them that it is not bluffing over its nuclear capabilities, U.N. diplomats and officials say.

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/north-korea-needs-more-tests-for-nuclear-missile-us-expert/articleshow/19618867.cms>

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The London Guardian – U.K.

North Korea: Pyongyang lays out Detailed Conditions for US Talks

Pyongyang wants withdrawal of all UN sanctions and US pledge not to engage in 'nuclear war practice' with South

By Tania Branigan in Beijing

Thursday, 18 April 2013

North Korea has issued a detailed statement on its terms for dialogue with the United States, after weeks of tensions.

The demands from the North's top military body include the withdrawal of all UN sanctions imposed due to Pyongyang's nuclear and missile tests, and a US pledge not to engage in "nuclear war practice" with the South. It said denuclearisation of the peninsula should begin with the withdrawal of US weapons.

Seoul was swift to dismiss the North's conditions as incomprehensible and illogical. The foreign ministry spokesman Cho Tai-young said: "We again strongly urge North Korea to stop this kind of insistence that we cannot totally understand and go down the path of a wise choice."

The Japanese news agency Kyodo said the prime minister, Shinzo Abe, had called for increased pressure on the North.



Leonid Petrov, an expert on the North at the Australian National University, said of the North's statement: "It's a good sign, they are prepared to negotiate, but they are demanding an exorbitant and impermissibly high price ... The game will continue."

Pyongyang has issued threats against Seoul and Washington, withdrawn workers from an industrial complex it runs with the South and appears to have prepared for a possible missile test. It was angered by the tightening of sanctions over its third nuclear test in February and joint US-South Korean military drills.

"Dialogue and war cannot co-exist," the North's national defence commission said in a statement carried by the official news agency KCNA on Thursday. "If the United States and the puppet South have the slightest desire to avoid the sledge-hammer blow of our army and the people ... and truly wish dialogue and negotiations, they must make the resolute decision."

It said the UN resolutions imposing sanctions had been "fabricated with unjust reasons". "The denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula can begin with the removal of the nuclear war tools dragged in by the US and it can lead to global nuclear disarmament," it added.

South Korea's president, Park Geun-hye, told foreign diplomats on Wednesday: "We must break the vicious cycle of holding negotiations and providing assistance if [North Korea] makes threats and provocations, and again holding negotiations and providing assistance if there are threats and provocations."

In Washington, John Kerry insisted: "I have no desire as secretary of state and the president has no desire to do the same horse trade, or go down the old road."

Barack Obama earlier sent a similar message, suggesting the North was likely to engage in more "provocative behaviour" and warning: "You don't get to bang ... your spoon on the table and somehow you get your way."

But Kerry has said the US is prepared to reach out if the North shows it is serious about meeting previous commitments.

Petrov added: "I would predict the status quo will prevail. North Korea won't be recognised as a nuclear state; the US will continue its joint military drills; periodically, tensions will escalate, probably once or twice a year."

The North Koreans may be able to set a higher price than in the past, he suggested. "It looks like their successful nuclear test [in February] and [rocket] launches changed the rules of the game."

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/apr/18/north-korea-conditions-us-talks>

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Reuters – India

China to Send First Aircraft Carrier on High Seas Voyage: Xinhua

Friday, April 19, 2013

BEIJING (Reuters) - China will send its first aircraft carrier, the Liaoning, on a voyage on the high seas for the first time within a year, the state-run news agency Xinhua said on Friday.

The Liaoning, purchased used from Ukraine and refurbished in China, has conducted more than 100 exercises and experiments since it was commissioned last year, Xinhua said.

Although considered decades behind U.S. technology, the Liaoning represents the Chinese navy's blue-water ambitions and has been the focus of a campaign to stir patriotism.

It has also been the most visible of China's efforts for more than a year to build up military hardware, including test flying two prototype versions of stealth fighter jets -- one of which is believed capable on landing on aircraft carriers.

Last year, China also unveiled its first attack helicopter and a range of drone aircraft it hopes to export.



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In November a U.S. government commission said it believed that within two years, Chinese submarines would be capable of deploying nuclear weapons.

China is alone among the original nuclear weapons states to be expanding its nuclear forces, according to the report by the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission.

Xinhua did not say where the Liaoning would go or for how long. The carrier has been conducting training manoeuvres since it arrived at its east coast home port of Qingdao in February.

"To date, all the tests have been going smoothly, and the Qingdao home port has been proven capable of berthing and supporting the carrier", Xinhua said.

"It will undergo further tests, including ocean-going trials and flight-landing exercises under the schedule."

Reporting by Terril Yue Jones; Editing by Ron Popeski

<http://in.reuters.com/article/2013/04/19/china-navy-carrier-idINDEE93I07V20130419>

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China.org.cn – China

India's Military Strength on the Rise

China.org.cn

April 15, 2013

India has successfully test-fired an "Agni II" surface-to-surface ballistic missile capable of carrying a nuclear warhead of one ton. The missile, equipped with solid fuel engines, has a range of 2,000 km. According to Russian newspaper Nezavisimaya Gazeta, the launch once again proved that India has a reliable deterrent. As one of the world's largest arms-importing countries, India's weapons and equipment replacement program have been designed in response to armed conflict with Pakistan and to contend with increasingly military powerful China. For Russia, the consolidation of India's military forces goes hand-in-hand with Russia's strategic interests.

As The Economist pointed out, the overall strength of the Indian armed forces is rapidly increasing. In the last five years, India had imported most arms in the world. For a long time, Russia has been India's main weapon supplier. According to a report released by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, India purchased weapons and equipment worth a total of \$ 17.3 billion from Russia from 2007 to 2011. Additionally, India is in negotiations with French Dassault to buy 126 Rafale fighters, worth a total amount of over 12 billion dollars.

In terms of army-size, the total strength of the Indian Army in Asia comes next to China's. India's defense budget has reached \$ 46.8 billion. Experts predicted that by 2020, India's defense spending would catch up with the United Kingdom, France and Japan. In the construction of nuclear power, India has 80 or more nuclear weapons, and the number is likely to increase further. As to the country's power in terms of nuclear weapons, India's surface-to-surface missiles appear able to cover the whole territory of Pakistan and most parts of China.

New Delhi believes that instability in Pakistan and the world's second-largest economy China, are most likely to pose a threat to India's security. From a geopolitical point of view, China undoubtedly catches the Indian leaders' attention. As Indian Defense Minister Antony had declared in 2009, "India's major threat is not Pakistan, but China."

Recently, despite India-Pakistan relations showing signs of abating, the situation still carries the possibility of escalating at any given time. China, as Pakistan's traditional ally, may help Islamabad in its fight against India. China, although it has never formally stated its stance on this matter, has provided Pakistan with a large number of weapons and nuclear technology, according to Nezavisimaya Gazeta.

In addition to the Pakistani army, several jihadist communities active in Pakistan have also caught India's attention. These communities frequently organize terrorist attacks on domestic Indian objectives.

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



"Bharatiya Janata Party, one of the two major political parties in India, has strong nationalist tendencies. It has opposed the partition scheme implemented by the UK and advocates the re-inclusion of Pakistan in India's territory. This claim, although not recognized by the Indian government and mainstream political forces, is likely to affect the relationship between India and Pakistan," Tatiana Shomyan, director of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, said in an interview with Nezavisimaya Gazeta.

New Delhi is seeking to normalize relations with Islamabad. But no one knows what will happen next if the U.S. and NATO pull out of Afghanistan.

"The border dispute between China and India is not a major problem. The border situation is stable. What disturbs India most is that China is establishing and consolidating new outposts around India, especially in the Indian Ocean area. A Chinese company has obtained control of Pakistan's Gwadar Port. In addition, China also hopes to perfect its naval support capabilities with the help from Sri Lanka. India is in response expanding its naval force. It is not having a conflict with China, but competing for influence in South Asia," Tatiana Shomyan remarked on Sino-Indian Relations.

In order to maintain the strategic balance within the region, India is likely to seek the support of Moscow. Traditionally, India and Russia have maintained friendly relations at a political level, and this relationship has never been affected by any other geo-political disputes.

http://www.china.org.cn/world/2013-04/15/content_28542572.htm

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Xinhua News – China

Russia, U.S. to Resume Missile Defense Dialogue

April 16, 2013

MOSCOW, April 16 (Xinhua) -- Russia expects to resume the missile defense dialogue with the United States, but needs to verify the latter's sincerity to address Russia's concerns over the issue, a high-ranking defense official said Tuesday.

On the sidelines of a Monday meeting between the visiting U.S. National Security Advisor Thomas Donilon and Russian Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev, the two sides discussed the "possibility and expediency of a meeting in Brussels on April 30, backed by military delegations," Deputy Defense Minister Anatoly Antonov told reporters.

"The U.S. colleagues are expected to elaborate on the changes in the U.S. plans in the area of missile defense, namely their giving up the 4th phase of deploying the missile defense system in Europe," the Itar-Tass news agency quoted Antonov as saying.

The official said the U.S. side's readiness to resume the missile defense dialogue "is viewed positively by our side."

Meanwhile, Moscow had to verify Pentagon's real intention. "Russia needs not the words of assurance but concrete, clear and understandable guarantees that the U.S. missile defense system is not aimed at Russian nuclear deterrence forces," Antonov said.

He noted the key point was that such guarantees should be legally binding and contain certain military and technical criteria of U.S. missile defense system.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2013-04/16/c_132314217.htm

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

US Missile Shield No Threat to Russia - Deputy PM

16 April 2013



USAF COUNTERPROLIFERATION CENTER
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MAXWELL AFB, ALABAMA

LONDON, April 16 (RIA Novosti) - Russia's strategic forces are capable of penetrating the US missile shield and it poses no military threat to the country, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin said on Tuesday.

"We have solved the issue of penetrating the missile shield. We regret that the United States waste their money on missile defense and compel us to do the same. The missile shield is nothing for us, it's a bluff. It poses no military threat, but remains a political and economic problem," Rogozin said during his speech at the Russian embassy in London.

He said that most of Russia's criticism is caused by the fact that the planned missile shield is "provocative" and "excessive by nature" and thus forces other countries to boost their strategic defenses.

The deputy prime minister, who oversees Russia's defense industry, said that Russia was "compelled to search for a wise and asymmetric response."

"We are carrying out a rearmament program until 2020, it would enable us to renew the hundred percent of our strategic forces. It will be done within the framework of international commitments," the vice premier said.

Rogozin added that because of missile defense issues, countries have to divert attention and funding from other important needs, such as the asteroid threat.

"We have recently witnessed the [meteorite] event in Chelyabinsk. No one can say whether more such incidents will follow, whether we are guaranteed against meteorite strikes. Scientists are baffled by how billions that are being spent on missile shield... while a space threat to the whole humanity is being ignored," he said.

He said that Russia seeks international cooperation in creating a global system to monitor and exchange information on potentially dangerous space objects.

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20130416/180661245/US-Missile-Shield-No-Threat-to-Russia--Deputy-PM.html>

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The Virginia Gazette – Williamsburg, VA

Russia Says U.S. Must Do more to Address Missile Shield Concerns

By Steve Gutterman, Reuters

April 18, 2013

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russian officials said on Thursday the United States had not done enough to address their concerns about an anti-missile shield it is deploying in Europe, indicating U.S. moves to scale down its plans will bring no quick breakthrough.

Their remarks suggested missile defence will remain a bone of contention in relations, increasingly strained since Vladimir Putin returned to the Russian presidency last May.

They indicated there had been no major progress during a visit on Monday by President Barack Obama's national security adviser Tom Donilon, who met Putin in the highest-level contact since Obama began a new term in January.

"There is still time to search for a solution to this problem, but it requires political will, and so far this has not been apparent in sufficient measure from the American side," Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said at a discussion with Russian policy analysts.

The Pentagon said last month it would station additional missile interceptors in Alaska in response to North Korean threats and at the same time forgo a new type of interceptor that would have been deployed in Europe as part of the shield.

RUSSIA WANTS GUARANTEES

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NATO and U.S. officials have expressed hope that the change could help end the standoff by removing what Russia has called its main concern: that the system's interceptors could shoot down its long-range nuclear missiles.

But Ryabkov repeated Russia's demand for "firm legal guarantees" that the shield, which consists of interceptor missiles and radar systems and is to be completed by about 2020, is not intended to shoot down Russian missiles and cannot do so.

The United States and NATO, which is cooperating on the shield, have refused to provide such guarantees, which would be virtually impossible to get past U.S. lawmakers because of concerns about giving Moscow a veto on missile defence plans.

The allies say the shield is designed to protect against potential threats from Iran and poses no danger to Russia.

Some Western diplomats suspect the Kremlin has been using its concern over the European missile shield as a bargaining chip and will continue to do so.

Russia has indicated it is unlikely to agree to further cuts in long-range offensive nuclear weapons, beyond those agreed in the 2010 New START treaty with the United States, if its concerns about missile defence are not addressed.

Deputy Defence Minister Anatoly Antonov, who spoke after Ryabkov at the discussion, said Russia needed binding guarantees about the U.S. shield because there was a risk it could change its plans in the future.

"The Americans always say, 'Aw, forget about your guarantees - let's start cooperating, and as we cooperate you'll see how harmless our system is,'" Antonov said. "We are not prepared to do things that way."

Editing by Andrew Roche.

<http://www.vagazette.com/news/sns-rt-us-russia-usa-missilesbre93h0oz-20130418,0,6239791.story>

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Russia & India Report – India

Russia to Get New ICBM Later This Year

19 April 2013

RIA Novosti

The first modernized intercontinental ballistic missile, Yars-M, will enter service with Russia's Strategic Missile Forces (RVSN) later this year, RVSN Commander Col. Gen. Sergei Karavayev said on Thursday.

A defense industry source previously told RIA Novosti the Armed Forces will take delivery of a fifth-generation Yars-M missile before the end of the current year.

Karavayev declined to provide any details, including the missile's specifications.

The existing RS-24 Yars (NATO reporting name, SS-29) is a MIRV'ed ICBM that is heavier than the Topol-M (SS-27 Stalin) and can carry up to 10 independently targetable warheads.

The RVSN previously said that the Topol-M and RS-24 ballistic missiles will be the mainstay of the ground-based component of Russia's nuclear triad and would account for no less than 80 percent of the RVSN's arsenal by 2016.

Karavayev also said the Tatishchevo RVSN Division, near the city of Saratov in southwestern Russia, at present has 60 Topol-M missile systems.

The Topol-M missile, with a range of about 7,000 miles (11,000 km), is said to be immune to any current and planned US antiballistic missile defense. It is capable of making evasive maneuvers, and carries targeting countermeasures and decoys.

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By 2020, the RVSN are expected to be equipped with over 170 Topol-Ms (mobile and silo-based), as well as 30 SS-19 and 108 RS-24 missile defense systems in nine divisions.

http://indrus.in/news/2013/04/19/russia_to_get_new_icbm_later_this_year_23955.html

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Nextgov.com

Pentagon Weighs Refurbishing or Replacing Ballistic Missiles

By Elaine M. Grossman, *Global Security Newswire*

April 18, 2013

The U.S. Defense Department is weighing the feasibility of extending the service life of the nation's aging Minuteman 3 intercontinental ballistic missiles versus replacing them in coming decades with brand new nuclear-armed ballistic missiles.

The 450 Minuteman 3s are expected to last through 2030, but might be retained longer if they can be further refurbished, senior Pentagon officials said at a Senate hearing on Wednesday. The weapons were first deployed in 1970 and sit on alert in underground silos at three different bases in Montana, North Dakota and Wyoming.

The Air Force, which fields and maintains the missiles, is "very carefully analyzing exactly how the current system is degrading, so that they have a much better understanding of how they might extend the life of this [ICBM], if that is the alternative that's chosen," Madelyn Creedon, assistant Defense secretary for global affairs, told the Senate Armed Services Strategic Forces Subcommittee in testimony alongside other civilian and military leaders.

The analysis, which is to begin in July after some "bureaucratic delays," will conclude late next year, said Lt. Gen. James Kowalski, who heads Air Force Global Strike Command. The assessment will examine whether to undertake a "program to further extend the life of the Minuteman 3 or to develop a follow-on ICBM," Creedon elaborated in her written testimony.

Many details about the various modernization options and their projected costs -- first examined in an initial Capabilities Based Assessment finalized last October -- remain classified. However, officials say key factors under study include whether to place any new ICBMs in fixed launch silos or make them mobile on trucks or other vehicles; which warhead to mate with the delivery vehicles; and how to modernize these systems most affordably.

Whether the country's future ICBM -- dubbed the "Ground-Based Strategic Deterrent" -- is an updated Minuteman or a totally new design, it appears the missile will share quite a bit of hardware in common with the Navy's future ballistic missile for basing aboard submarines, Defense officials say.

Which option ultimately is selected, according to experts, might come down to a question that many automobile owners would find familiar: Does it make more sense to save upfront investment by continuing to operate an old design with swapped-out parts and upgrades, or to invest instead in a new system with more up-to-date design efficiencies that could be easier to maintain in the long run?

Another question facing the Minuteman 3's overseers and custodians is whether the missiles, even after some recent renovations, could actually function through 2030. At the hearing, Senator Deb Fischer (R-Neb.) asked if the Minuteman might age out sooner unless near-term steps are taken to extend its service life.

"I am confident we can get the missile, as it is, to 2030 with the programs that we have in place, or the programs that we don't have funded yet but plan to pursue in the next couple years," responded Kowalski, whose command is based in Louisiana.

For example, he said, there is some question about whether the casings around the missile propellant might degrade early, a possibility that could lead to leaks or malfunctions. If the existing propulsion unit lasts an estimated 30 years,

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no refurbishment would be needed until 2025 or later, he said. However, less longevity in the technology could demand earlier intervention.

Of the Minuteman's three rocket stages, the third motor is attracting most concern. However, there is no indication to date of any degradation of the materials with which it is made -- not even any "adverse trends" -- which has led many officials to conclude that the already overhauled propulsion system might even last a half-decade or more beyond an estimated 30-year lifespan, one issue expert said.

The expert asked not to be named in discussing the sensitive issue of how long a nuclear-armed system might remain viable.

The Minuteman 3 missile guidance system also could require a service-life extension between now and 2030, Kowalski said.

This, too, is a question under internal debate, according to the issue expert. The Air Force estimate is that the current guidance system -- which helps direct a warhead to its target -- will function for another 17 years. However, some have raised questions about whether existing electronics might fail earlier and should be traded out for updated replacements, this source said.

Kowalski noted in written testimony that the overall service life initially anticipated for the Minuteman 3 was just 10 years, but the missile has since "proven its value in deterrence well beyond the platform's intended lifespan."

The Air Force is studying how any near-term maintenance for the deployed Minuteman 3s, if needed, would relate to the missile's eventual replacement, the commander said at the hearing.

"All of the things that we plan to invest in the Minuteman 3 are specific subsystems that we intend to dovetail into the ground-based strategic deterrent, the follow-on [ICBM]," said the three-star general, adding that the Pentagon intends to ensure "we are not paying for the same thing twice."

Some have suggested the United States might safely eliminate the ICBM leg of the nation's nuclear triad, and rely instead on a combination of dual-capable, nuclear-conventional bomber aircraft and ballistic missiles aboard highly survivable submarines at sea.

However, Kowalski suggested that as the capability to field atomic arms and ballistic missiles proliferates around the globe, Washington's ICBM arsenal remains a crucial bulwark against possible nuclear blackmail or coercion threats.

"There are 450 hardened launch facilities in the heartland of this country," he said. "And if we did not have those, we'd need to think through what that scenario looks like in 15 or 20 years."

Creedon was asked about a recent Obama administration decision to avoid further escalating tensions with North Korea by rescheduling a Minuteman 3 test launch from Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif., which had been slated for last week.

"We decided it was wise to postpone for a while the last launch because of the situation on the Korean Peninsula," she said. "It was a situation that we just wanted to deal with in a way that we didn't increase the provocation cycle" in the region, she said.

Plans are now for the next Minuteman 3 test flight to occur between May 21 and 23, which would effectively resume the normal launch schedule where it left off, Creedon said.

<http://www.nextgov.com/defense/2013/04/pentagon-weighs-refurbishing-or-replacing-ballistic-missiles/62639/?oref=ng-HPriver>

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The Heritage Organization
OPINION/The Foundry



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New START: State Department's "Facts" Don't Match Reality

By Michaela Dodge
April 14, 2013

"Three years in, New START has performed exactly as advertised," writes John Kerry, Secretary of State, in his most recent article. In reality, the New Strategic Arms Reductions Treaty (New START) was a bad deal for the U.S. three years ago and it remains so today.

Kerry says he would like to see unanimity on vital issues on nonproliferation and arms control. He asks, "How do we do that?" For starters, the State Department should negotiate treaties that are not lopsided to the U.S.'s disadvantage. A large majority of reductions that must be conducted under New START are to the U.S. nuclear weapons arsenal; Russia is allowed to build up. Moscow launched the most expensive nuclear weapons modernization program since the end of the Cold War after New START was signed.

Secretary Kerry asserts that New START is "maintaining stability and predictability." This is just not so. The severely degraded verification regime compared to the original START's standard does not provide sufficient insights into Russia's strategic buildup or locations of its strategic systems.

New START preserved Russia's at least 10:1 advantage in tactical nuclear weapons and re-established the link between strategic offensive and defensive systems. This link allowed Russia to use New START as a vehicle to protest against U.S. missile defense deployments in Europe. The President's comments to outgoing Russia President Medvedev in March 2012 that he would have more "flexibility" after his re-election further undermined U.S. efforts to protect itself and allies from a ballistic missile threat from Iran.

The Administration recently decided to "restructure" the SM-3 Block IIB program, a more powerful interceptor that was supposed to be deployed in Europe to address a long-range ballistic missile threat. The "restructure" will delay the program by years—if it is completed at all.

The President also failed to deliver on his promises to the Senate to fund the nuclear weapons complex at levels necessary to revitalize the decrepit U.S. nuclear weapons infrastructure. His budget proposal from last year would underfund the nuclear weapons account by about \$4 billion compared to his own 2010 certification between fiscal years 2013 and 2017. Yet the U.S. nuclear weapons complex is in dire need of investments, especially considering that the U.S. is the only nuclear weapons state in the world without a substantive nuclear weapons modernization program.

It would be easier to forge an arms control consensus if New START benefited the U.S. It did not three years ago, and it does not today.

Michaela Dodge specializes in missile defense, nuclear weapons modernization and arms control as policy analyst for defense and strategic policy in The Heritage Foundation's Allison Center for Foreign Policy Studies.

<http://blog.heritage.org/2013/04/14/new-start-state-departments-facts-dont-match-reality/>

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The Chosun Ilbo – South Korea
OPINION/Column

The Power of Public Opinion in the 2 Koreas

April 15, 2013

Early this year, North Korea's state-run Rodong Sinmun daily justified the North's nuclear weapons program by claiming it is rooted "in the people's desire." The North Korean state media had never previously been very bothered by public sentiment. The free press the world over likes to conduct opinion polls at the drop of a hat, but no surveys have ever been carried out about the North Korean regime's handling of affairs of state, and indeed it would be dangerous for the regime if they were.

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Yet while North Korea supposedly obeyed public sentiment in ratcheting up military tensions on the peninsula, South Korean public sentiment has shifted to the right. According to Gallup and Korea Research polls in 2006, just after North Korea's first nuclear test, and in February of this year following the third nuclear test, the proportion of South Koreans who oppose any aid to the North until it scraps its nuclear weapons program rose from 27 to 46 percent.

The proportion who back a preemptive strike against North Korean nuclear test sites, even at the risk of triggering a war, rose from 21 to 36 percent. And those who want South Korea to acquire its own nuclear weapons increased from 53 to 67 percent. Some 72 percent of South Koreans feel Seoul should retaliate 10-fold against any North Korean provocation.

The rightward tilt reflects growing frustration over having to deal with North Korea's threats at a time when the recession already makes living conditions tougher. The most noticeable shift is among South Koreans in their 20s, who used to support the Sunshine Policy of engagement with the North, but took a more hardline stance after North Korea shelled Yeonpyong Island in November 2010.

According to the Gallup poll, 73 percent of South Koreans in their 20s feel that North Korean leader Kim Jong-un is a warmonger, compared to only 64 percent of people in their 30s, 58 percent in their 40s and 59 percent in their 50s or older.

But South Koreans also continue to believe that inter-Korean relations will improve. According to another Gallup poll last week, 67 percent believe North Korea will not attack, compared to only 24 percent who think it will.

This is why the atmosphere here remains calm despite perceptions overseas that a war is imminent. At play are a mix of confidence that the North would not dare start a suicidal war and hopes that Pyongyang will opt for a peaceful resolution.

Some observers sense a dangerous level of complacency among South Koreans, who have grown used to repeated escalations. But a more likely reason is that South Koreans have grown wise to the North's brinkmanship tactics.

However, there are two different sides when it comes to South Koreans' views on the government's capability to deal with the North. According to a survey by Research and Research last month, 58 percent have faith in President Park Geun-hye's crisis-management skills, which is significantly higher than her 43 percent approval rating for handling the economy.

There were concerns before her inauguration that a female president could be weak on security matters, but her strong approval rating in the area dissipates them. But at the same time as many as 53 percent also feel the government is not prepared to handle a North Korean provocation. That is a point officials should be well aware of.

By Hong Young-lim from the Chosun Ilbo's News Desk

http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2013/04/15/2013041501211.html

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The Washington Times
OPINION/Commentary

PRY: The Danger of Dismissing North Korea's Nuclear Threat

Bizarre regime can hit U.S. targets now

By Peter Vincent Pry

Monday, April 15, 2013

Prudence and common sense appear to be absent in the Obama administration and Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, who during the current crisis with North Korea, falsely reassure the American people that Pyongyang cannot deliver on its threats to make a nuclear attack on the U.S. mainland.



North Korea could deliver a nuclear bomb in the hold of a freighter under a foreign flag to destroy a U.S. port city such as New York or Los Angeles. They could give a bomb to terrorist groups such as al Qaeda or Hezbollah to deliver by truck or plane across the porous U.S. border. They could use a false-flagged freighter to move a Scud or their medium-range Nodong missile close enough to make a nuclear strike on the U.S. mainland.

What about North Korea's claim that it has long-range nuclear missiles that can strike the United States right now? If our current crop of leaders is as prudent as were President Dwight Eisenhower and Sen. Lyndon Johnson in 1957, they would warn the American people that North Korean nuclear threats to the U.S. heartland may be real. After all, North Korea has had at least three successful nuclear tests and successfully orbited a satellite the latter being the usual indicator that a nuclear power has achieved intercontinental reach.

A recently leaked Defense Intelligence Agency briefing concludes North Korea probably has miniaturized nuclear warheads for ballistic missiles. The Obama administration is desperately backpedaling from this assessment, trying to downplay and even deny the existence of a North Korean nuclear-missile threat in sad contrast to the example of strategic prudence, realism and honesty set by Eisenhower and Johnson.

After the Soviet Union successfully tested a nuclear weapon in 1949 and then launched into orbit its Sputnik satellite in 1957, a bipartisan national consensus quickly emerged that the USSR had achieved a technological breakthrough, and would soon possess intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) capable of delivering nuclear annihilation against the American heartland. Consequently, the United States launched a crash program to develop ICBMs and other systems to deter this emerging Soviet missile threat.

Liberal historians often criticize those Republican and Democratic leaders of 1957 for "overreacting" to an allegedly exaggerated "missile gap" that spurred the United States to outrace the Soviet Union in ICBM production. President John F. Kennedy was glad, though, to have a 5-to-1 advantage over the Soviets in ICBMs during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis.

There is no such thing as an excess of caution when it comes to anticipating and preparing to deter or defeat the existential threat represented by nuclear weapons. Prudence, caution and preparedness are the watchwords that enabled the United States to avoid a thermonuclear holocaust and ultimately prevail in the Cold War.

Contrary to most press reporting, that North Korea has nuclear missiles is old news. Previously, the DIA (2011), European intelligence agencies (2009), and a CIA official (2008) have all stated publicly that North Korea has miniaturized nuclear warheads and deployed them on its Nodong medium-range missile. This is a conservative, sound assessment, since North Korea has been working on nuclear warheads for nearly 20 years, and has had three nuclear tests. Israel and South Africa developed nuclear warheads for their missiles without any nuclear tests.

North Korea's long-range missile orbited a satellite that weighs only 220 pounds. Can a nuclear warhead weigh so little? North Korea's so-called Space Launch Vehicle could deliver against the U.S. heartland any of the following nuclear weapons:

Using the technology of 56 years ago, the United States in 1957 deployed the MK-9, a nuclear weapon weighing 120 pounds with a yield of 15 kilotons, as powerful as the 9,000-pound Hiroshima bomb (10 to 15 kilotons), but with weight reduced to nearly 1 percent.

Using the technology of 51 years ago, the United States in 1962 deployed the W-45 missile warhead, which weighed 150 pounds with a yield of 15 kilotons.

Using the technology of 49 years ago, the United States in 1964 deployed the W-58 Polaris warhead, which weighed 257 pounds and had a yield of 200 kilotons some 20 times more powerful than the Hiroshima bomb. The W-58 was deployed 19 years after Hiroshima.

North Korea has been working on nuclear weapons for 19 years, but using modern 21st-century technology, with access to copious declassified U.S. materials on nuclear-weapons design, and with help from Russia, China, Pakistan, Iran and others.



The W-58 was a thermonuclear warhead, while North Korea is assessed as having only plutonium- and uranium-fission atomic weapons. Might North Korea have the H-bomb? In 2010, North Korea may have conducted two clandestine tests of fusion nuclear devices, according to credible European analysis of radionuclides. The United States focuses on North Korea's plutonium and uranium programs because that is all we can see. Hiding advancement to thermonuclear weapons is relatively easy. The U.S. did not know Israel developed thermonuclear weapons, and assessed Israel as having only atomic weapons until the defection of Israeli nuclear weapons expert Mordechai Vanunu exposed that Israel has thermonuclear weapons, too developed clandestinely without testing.

The worst case for the United States is if North Korea has super-electromagnetic pulse weapons. A single such nuclear warhead detonated over America would generate a powerful electromagnetic pulse that would assuredly collapse the national electric grid and other critical infrastructures necessary to sustain modern society and the lives of 310 million Americans. Such a super-warhead would likely be small enough for delivery against the U.S. mainland by North Korea's long-range missiles. Russia, South Korea, China and the U.S. EMP Commission have all warned that North Korea has super-electromagnetic pulse nuclear weapons.

Prudence and caution dictate that North Korea's threats to make nuclear attacks on the U.S. mainland should not be lightly dismissed as mere "bluster." If we are prepared to be so misled by our leaders, then we should be ready to hear from the White House and Congress in the near future that Iran despite orbiting several satellites, and even if it conducts three successful nuclear tests is still not a real threat to the American heartland.

Peter Vincent Pry is executive director of the Task Force on National and Homeland Security, and served on the Congressional EMP Commission and the House Armed Services Committee and at the CIA.

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2013/apr/15/the-danger-of-dismissing-north-koreas-nuclear-thre/?page=all#pagebreak>

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The Foreign Policy Initiative (FPI) – Washington, D.C.
OPINION/Bulletin

FPI Bulletin: Kerry's Dangerous Overtures on North Korea

By Chris Griffin and Robert Zarate
April 15, 2013

The U.S. recovery of the front section of a ballistic missile fired by North Korea in December 2012 was the basis for the Defense Intelligence Agency's assessment with moderate confidence that Pyongyang already has nuclear weapons that can be delivered with missiles, reporter Eli Lake revealed today in *The Daily Beast*.

This revelation is a game changer. As North Korea prepares to test yet another ballistic missile that could strike our allies and military forces in Asia, it is essential that the United States demonstrate resolve in its standoff with Pyongyang.

Instead, Secretary of State John Kerry has offered to cut U.S. ballistic missile defense deployments if China reins in North Korea and suggested that the United States may lower the bar for direct talks with Pyongyang.

After weeks of careful efforts to manage this crisis, Kerry's apparently off-the-cuff remarks—both made during pressers—threaten to undermine the confidence of our allies.

First, Congress should call on the Obama administration to rebuke Secretary Kerry's comments about potential missile defense concessions to China and instead reaffirm America's commitment to our missile defense efforts. There is no reason to suggest weaker U.S. missile defenses after learning that North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile threat is much more advanced than previously believed.

The continued development and deployment of U.S. missile defenses is an essential component of our efforts to reassure allies like South Korea and Japan, with whom we cooperate extensively on these programs. Missile defenses



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are responsive to an array of threats, including North Korea's chemical-armed ballistic missiles as well as China's own growing arsenal of regional and intercontinental-range missiles. Kerry's intimation that we would no longer require robust missile defenses if Pyongyang's nuclear program went away betrays allied interests, as well as our own.

The administration should instead explain to Beijing that China's failure to rein in North Korea's threatens regional stability throughout the Asia-Pacific. Despite U.S. assurances of extended deterrence, a majority of South Koreans now say that Seoul should have its own nuclear weapons program. A North Korean-sparked nuclear arms race in Asia would be just as bad for China as it would be for the United States.

Second, the Obama administration should clarify Kerry's suggestion that Washington has lowered the bar for direct talks with North Korea. The United States has a long and sordid history of offering concessions to Pyongyang without making any progress toward denuclearization.

Lawmakers should call on President Obama not to engage in direct talks with North Korea unless Pyongyang has made meaningful and unambiguous steps to meet its longstanding commitments to denuclearize and dismantle its ballistic missile programs.

At the same time, Congress should push the President to develop a comprehensive strategy to strengthen our military alliances surrounding North Korea and begin the rollback of the ultimate source of this crisis—the Kim family regime. As the Foreign Policy Initiative has argued, these steps should include aggressively targeting North Korea's financial assets and proliferation activities, taking on North Korea's humanitarian disaster, and exploring the possibility of creating an international reconstruction fund to prepare for Korean unification.

The revelation that North Korea may already possess a nuclear-tipped missile capability shows the damage that our prior mistakes with Pyongyang have wrought. This is no time to repeat them.

Christopher J. Griffin is the FPI Executive Director and Robert Zarate the Policy Director.

<http://www.foreignpolicyi.org/content/fpi-bulletin-kerry%E2%80%99s-dangerous-overtures-north-korea>

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Huffington Post
OPINION/The Blog

Cut Nukes Now

By William Hartung
April 15, 2013

When he first took office, Barack Obama was a leader in the cause of reducing global nuclear arsenals. The president got off to an excellent start four years ago this month when he took the opportunity of a visit to Prague to announce his commitment to promoting "the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons." He promised to do a number of things to move that agenda forward, from negotiating a new nuclear arms reduction treaty with Russia to taking the lead in locking down or destroying the world's unsecured stocks of nuclear weapons and nuclear bomb-making materials.

The administration got right down to work, beginning negotiations with Russia on a new arms accord -- New START (the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty). The treaty was signed into law two years ago this month after a tough battle in the Senate which ultimately persuaded 13 Republican senators to support the agreement. This was no mean feat at a time when Republicans in Congress were opposing the administration on virtually every initiative it proposed.

In some respects New START was a modest step forward, cutting deployed nuclear warheads on each side by about one-third, down to 1,550 per side. But the treaty was about more than just numbers. It was the first full-scale arms control treaty between the U.S. and Russia in roughly two decades, and it included a rigorous monitoring system that could not only ensure mutual compliance with New START but also serve as the basis for verifying adherence to any

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follow-on arms reduction treaties. The most important thing about New START is that it can be a foundation for further progress.

The president moved quickly to jump-start global efforts to secure loose nuclear weapons and poorly protected bomb-making materials, calling an unprecedented summit of 47 world leaders to address the problem. It was the largest gathering of heads of state and government on U.S. soil since the founding conference of the United Nations in 1945. A number of countries took the opportunity of the conference to announce concrete steps like sending their stocks of enriched uranium to the U.S. and Russia for more secure storage and converting reactors into versions whose waste products are much harder to use to develop a nuclear bomb. At the conference, the Obama administration also reiterated its pledge to secure or immobilize all global stocks of nuclear bomb making materials within four years.

A follow-up conference was held in Seoul in 2012. Significant progress has been made since the original summit, including the elimination of all bomb-making materials from 10 countries, but far more needs to be done. The administration's new budget, announced last week, raises questions about whether it can keep up the pace on nuclear security (see more, below).

After getting off to a fast start in its first two years in office, the administration's progress on the nuclear front has slowed considerably. For the moment at least, progress on a new nuclear arms reduction treaty with Russia is blocked by disagreements over the scope and purpose of U.S. missile defense systems in Europe.

The Obama administration has assured Moscow that the emerging system is meant solely as a hedge against the possibility that Iran might develop a nuclear-armed ballistic missile that could reach Europe. But Russian leaders see it as a system that could be adapted to target them, possibly creating the capability for the U.S. to launch a first strike against Russian nuclear sites and then mop up any remaining Russian missiles with its European-based anti-missile system. However remote this prospect may be, Russia is thinking in terms of worst-case scenarios, as military and political leaders so often do.

So, until there is a meeting of the minds on missile defense involving either further assurances to Russia or some form of U.S.-Russian cooperation, the successful negotiation of a new arms reduction treaty is unlikely.

Where does that leave the administration? There are still things that can be done, even absent a new treaty. There have been reports that the administration has been discussing reducing U.S. deployed warheads from the 1,550 level set by New START to perhaps as low as 1,000. This could induce Russia to follow suit even without a formal agreement, or encourage them to resume talks aimed at a new treaty. And whether or not it sparks action by Russia, it will send a positive signal internationally even as it maintains the ability of the U.S. to dissuade any nation from attacking it with a nuclear weapon.

A more ambitious approach would be to embrace the option offered in last year's report by a commission convened by the group Global Zero that calls for the U.S. to go to 900 total warheads over the next decade, down from the current level of over 4,000. The intent of the report was to sketch out a substantial interim step towards eliminating nuclear weapons altogether. The commission was chaired by former head of the U.S. Strategic Command Gen. James Cartwright and included now-secretary of defense Chuck Hagel. Hagel distanced himself from the study's recommendations during his confirmation hearings, stressing that the proposal was "illustrative" and refusing to endorse specific aspects of it. But he certainly understands that we can defend the country with far fewer warheads than exist now.

Another way the administration can set the stage for further progress in nuclear arms reduction is in how it crafts its budget. Unfortunately, the FY2014 budget announced last week was a disappointment in that respect. Not only does it increase the overall nuclear weapons budget of the Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), but it increases spending on unneeded projects like the breathtakingly expensive B-61 bomb while reducing urgently needed nonproliferation funding. The nonproliferation money is targeted at one of the president's key goals, cited above - helping to prevent terrorists from getting their hands on nuclear bombs or bomb-making materials. This job is far from over, so cutting back funding at this point poses an unnecessary risk.



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Meanwhile, the B-61 bomb program - which is scheduled to build 400 bombs at a total cost of \$10 billion - received a healthy increase of over about \$250 million in the FY2014 budget. At \$25 million each, the B-61 will literally cost more than its weight in gold. Even worse, it is not needed. Many of the new B-61's are slated for deployment in Europe, where they provide no military advantage and are increasingly unpopular in the countries where they would be deployed.

A logical step in the right direction would be to radically cut back the B-61 program and use some of the resulting funds to shore up nonproliferation projects. The likelihood of this shift happening will depend in part on what the administration hears from the Congress and the public on this issue.

There were some positive elements of the FY2014 nuclear weapons budget. The administration maintained its position of withholding funding for the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement Facility (CMRR), which was slated to increase the number of plutonium triggers or "pits" for nuclear bombs that can be produced each year. And it slashed spending on the MOX (mixed oxide) plant in South Carolina, which was originally meant to turn plutonium waste from nuclear weapons plants into fuel for civilian reactors. But there are no assured customers for the mixed oxide, and the facility will cost over \$20 billion to build and operate over the next two decades. The administration should cancel the MOX project now.

The Obama administration has a lot on its plate at the moment, from North Korea to gun control to immigration to ongoing budget battles with the Congress. But despite these challenges, it can and must vigorously pursue the president's stated goal of eliminating nuclear weapons by finding a way to take additional steps in that direction, even in a tough political environment. It's time to restore the urgency that marked the president's first two years in office. Doing so will make us all safer, and it can also contribute tens of billions of dollars over the next decade towards solving the nation's budget crunch.

William Hartung is the Director, Arms and Security Project, Center for International Policy.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/william-hartung/cut-nukes-now_b_3086949.html

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POLITICO.com

OPINION/Opinion Contributor

A Reality Check for Missile Defense

By LAURA GREGO

April 16, 2013

Increasing tension on the Korean peninsula has turned the spotlight back onto missile defense in hopes of an answer to worrisome missile threats. In response to North Korean brinkmanship, the United States is moving ship-based defenses closer to North Korea and has committed to deploying the Terminal High-Altitude Air Defense to Guam.

More broadly, the Pentagon recently announced that it will spend \$1 billion to add 14 interceptors to the Ground-based Midcourse missile defense system in Alaska and California. Congress, meanwhile, recently demanded a study of options for another interceptor site, including locations on the East Coast.

Three decades after Ronald Reagan's famous "Star Wars" speech, announcing his plan for a missile defense system to make nuclear weapons "impotent and obsolete," the United States has declared missile defense a success — albeit against the significantly less daunting threat of future North Korean long-range missiles. At a recent press conference, White House spokesman Jay Carney stated, "I can tell you that the United States is fully capable of defending against any North Korean ballistic missile attack."

This rosy view of missile defense, however, is not only wrongheaded, it's dangerous and foolish. Foolish because the Pentagon, which has never tested these systems in a real-world situation, has no idea whether the system could stop a North Korean missile. And dangerous because the mistaken belief that the system could block an attack could

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encourage the United States and its allies to opt for a military solution before exhausting a diplomatic one or engage in behavior that would make a conflict more likely.

It's time to take a clear-eyed look at what these systems can and cannot do.

Consider GMD. First, all of the tests to date have been scripted. That means that system operators were privy to significant information about the "attack" in advance. Even with that knowledge, seven of 15 intercept tests have failed, and the system's track record has not improved over time.

Second, the Pentagon rushed the GMD system into the field in 2004, and it has conducted only two completely successful intercept tests since then. It has not tested the system against an intercontinental-range missile and has no plans for such a test until 2015.

Third, it has never tested the system against a tumbling warhead, which is extremely difficult to intercept.

Fourth, of the 30 deployed GMD interceptors, half include obsolete parts while an additional 10 have been taken off operational status because of a known design flaw.

Finally, and perhaps most important, the Pentagon still has no idea how to design the system to deal with decoys and other countermeasures that can either fool or overwhelm it. This is a showstopper. Any country capable of launching a long-range missile, according to the U.S. intelligence community, would be capable of including such countermeasures.

Noting the program's overall dismal state, a recent National Academy of Sciences study concluded "the current GMD system [is] deficient" with respect to six fundamental principles of a cost-effective ballistic missile defense system.

Regardless, the Obama administration is prepared to spend \$1 billion fielding additional unproven interceptors, and some members of Congress want to spend even more. How can this be?

This is due in part to the George W. Bush administration exempting the system from standard Pentagon oversight procedures in its haste to field it. Missile defense is apparently so urgent the Pentagon doesn't have the time to build it right.

This is not to say that the United States shouldn't respond to North Korea's saber rattling. It should. But our political and military leaders are deceiving themselves if they believe the U.S. strategic missile defense system works as advertised, and maintaining this deception will have implications beyond North Korea. Building more of these systems — whether they work or not — could provide Russia and China motivation (at worst) or justification (at best) to modernize their nuclear arsenals, which would undermine efforts to reduce nuclear weapons worldwide.

Ultimately, the U.S. long-range missile defense system is an expensive symbolic gesture that may do more to imperil American security than guarantee it. After 30 years, we must start to deal with reality.

Laura Grego, senior scientist, Global Security Program, Union of Concerned Scientists.

<http://www.politico.com/story/2013/04/North-Korea-reality-check-Pentagon-missile-defense-90157.html?hp=r4>

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China Daily – China
OPINION/Editorial

Military Transparency

April 17, 2013
(China Daily)
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On Tuesday, China issued its eighth defense white paper in 15 years, elaborating its new security concept and providing detailed information on the diversified employment of its armed forces.



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As a move to improve its military transparency, the document provides a prism for the outside world to see its defense policy and help others better understand why China is obliged to enhance its military capabilities.

While analyzing the challenges China's armed forces are facing today, the white paper emphasizes the country's pursuit of peaceful development and the country's commitment to a national defense policy that is defensive in nature. It drives home the message that China is fully capable of defending its land and people as well as its growing interests overseas.

The document includes a considerable amount of information that has been made public for the first time, and its unprecedented transparency is in line with the country's efforts to help the public know more about its armed forces.

In the past few months the People's Liberation Army has voluntarily increased its disclosure of the testing of new military equipment and the military exercises it is planning. The PLA has also been conducting regular military exchanges with other countries, and it has actively and extensively participated in United Nations peacekeeping missions. These moves show China is committed to greater military transparency and moving to deepen strategic mutual trust with other countries.

There has long been criticism from outside whenever China announces a major move to heighten its military's capability. Some countries have even used the advancement in China's armed forces to justify their own military ambitions.

For those who insist on pointing an accusing finger at China's military modernization, they are advised to reflect on the challenges the country faces in safeguarding its territorial integrity and the many complicated security threats it confronts. To cater to the practical needs of its security and development interests, China is fully justified in strengthening its national defense capabilities.

Increasing its military transparency is an essential move to eliminate misgivings about the country's pursuit of better security guarantees. The white paper is conducive to quelling the allegation that China's military build-up is too opaque.

http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2013-04/17/content_16413707.htm

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AOL Defense.com
OPINION/Commentary

How to Handle North Korea: Building 21st Century Deterrent Capabilities

By Robbin Laird
April 18, 2013

I had the privilege to study and work with Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski as a student and for my first research job. With Brzezinski, one is always pushed towards the "Zbig" picture.

It was no different when I recently visited Brzezinski in his office and we settled down to discuss the current Korean crisis and the way ahead to deal with the crisis. One concern which I have had in watching both the discussions about and the policy reactions to the crisis is the implicit assumption that what is occurring now is simply a replay of what has happened earlier.

To put it simply, the historical patterns seems to be the following: North Korea saber rattles, and uses the crisis to generate a new flow of revenue from those states most threatened by the saber rattling.

This crisis is different.

- First, the North Koreans have a new leader, not necessarily engaged in following his predecessor's pattern of behavior.

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- Second, North Korea has been evolving both warhead and delivery technologies, so a new crisis with new capabilities might lead to expectations of different outcomes than before. Might nuclear threats reshape the military forces facing you in a positive way, from the perspective of the North Korean leader?
- Third, Japan is different. Japan may call their forces a self-defense force but they are becoming transformed into a "dynamic defense" force not simply willing to set back and take strikes.
- Fourth, South Korea and Japan might well go nuclear in response to the evolution of North Korean capabilities and lack of restraint.

With the Obama administration publicly committed to reducing the nuclear arsenal and providing precious little focus on expanding deterrent warfighting capabilities, do Japan and South Korea want to depend on the "Battle of Benghazi" President? It is clear that the current crisis is part of the learning process of the Second Nuclear Age as envisaged by Paul Bracken.

What those lessons are, what rules of the road are being developed we will know only when the current crisis has matured and receded. Brzezinski emphasized the need for airpower to hold at risk the artillery capabilities of North Korea threatening South Korea, as well as our ability to destroy delivery capabilities and being able to hold North Korea's the leadership at risk. And he emphasized the importance of discussing with the Chinese at the highest level what we were prepared to do, and to make it crystal clear that we would not accept an outcome dictated by North Korean threats. We might even request Chinese help in identifying leadership targets.

The Chinese might well take this discussion forward by providing advice to North Korea and helping provide them with a solid dose of reality. It is important for the North Korean leadership to understand that the United States is not going to sit idly by and be blackmailed by North Korea. More importantly, they need to see that we are mobilizing the capacity to underscore the reality of this position.

From my perspective, recovering a credible understanding of how the United States can leverage air and sea power to conduct significant strikes on an adversary like North Korea is crucial to shaping positive outcomes in the Second Nuclear Age. Simply flying in a couple of B-2s and F-22s does not cut it. It is more a PR stunt than a deterrent warfighting strategy. What is needed is a ramp up of air and strike power integration and to build out from that integration effort over time the kind of attack and defense enterprise one will need for Pacific security and defense in the long haul.

By deploying high-end airpower -- F-22s and B-2s to start with -- and better integration of the carrier strike force with high-end airpower it will be possible to enhance the credibility of the deterrent power of an American strike force. Crucial to this as well will be the ability to integrate subsurface and surface strike capabilities, as well as target identification via various air-breathing and space-based means as part of an integrated strike and defense force.

The North Korean crisis is as far from Afghanistan as possible. This is not a slow motion war in which ground forces are the key. This is a fast paced crisis in which the invasion of North Korea is not the core deterrent force; the ability to destroy launch vehicles and to hold the leadership at risk is. The US Army is not a centerpiece of Pacific deterrence. As the crisis unfolds, winds down, or pauses, the Obama Administration and the Congress might consider budgetary actions which can immediately enhance the warfighting deterrent character of US forces.

- First, upgrade the F-22s by putting the new MADL data link systems into the aircraft to enable the fleet to operate more effectively as a strike fleet by communicating among themselves and back to the bombers more effectively. With a Pacific F-35 fleet on the way, this would be an intelligent investment now and for the future. Such an ability to go deep and destroy offensive and defensive systems deep in enemy territory is crucial. Funding new weapons for the F-22, which could be used now and with the F-35 in the near future to play the Suppression of Enemy Air Defenses or SEAD function, is crucial as well. It is now time to prioritize the weapons revolution.
- Second, fund better data links between offensive forces such as the F-22, B-1 and B-2 and defensive systems such as Aegis and SM-3 to clarify that the response to threats like North Korea is not simply hunkering down to defend Anchorage. I referred to this in a Naval Institute piece as building the "long reach of Aegis."



- Third, invest in a new strike system like the hypersonic cruise missile. This needs to be clearly and visibly done to make our message clear.
- Fourth, Congress should fund development and deployment of fuel tanks to extend the range of the F-22, ones which are integrated within the stealth profile. According to Michael Wynne, former Air Force Secretary, "such tanks are both doable and necessary to provide for enhanced time on station or range."

We can re-enforce American deterrent capacity in the current crisis and build towards more effective 21st century at the same time. With the deployment of stealth aircraft -- first the B-2s and then F-22s -- Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel signaled that he clearly understood the importance of putting advanced US technology and capabilities up -- the B-2 and the F-22 -- against the problem.

Instead of being Cold War weapons, the question now asked of the F-22 was a different one: how many can you send? It is important to remember that all current 21st Century technology was built on the vision and commitment of bipartisan 20th Century politicians. We need a similar commitment now by Republicans and Democrats to band together and build the capabilities we need for the next two decades of the 21st century.

Robbin Laird, a member of the AOL Defense Board of Contributors, is an international defense consultant and owner of the Second Line of Defense website.

<http://defense.aol.com/2013/04/18/how-to-handle-north-korea-building-21st-century-deterrent-capab/>

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Federation of American Scientists
OPINION/ Strategic Security Blog

Chinese ICBM Force Leveling Out?

April 19, 2013

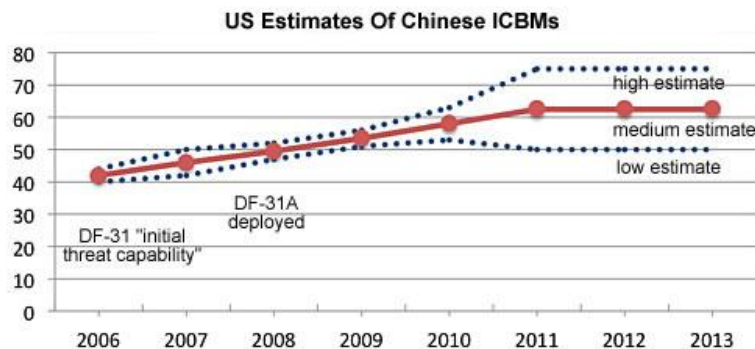
By Hans M. Kristensen

The size of China's intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) force appears to be leveling out instead of increasing.

During Thursday's Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on Current and Future Worldwide Threats, Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) director Lieutenant General Michael T. Flynn told the lawmakers:

"China's nuclear arsenal currently consists of approximately 50-75 ICBMs, including the silo-based CSS-4 (DF-5); the solid-fueled, road-mobile CSS-10 Mod 1 and 2 (DF-31 and DF-31A); and the more limited CSS-3 (DF-3) [sic*]."

The force level of 50-75 ICBMs is the same as the U.S. Defense Department reported in 2012 and 2011, slightly up from a medium estimate of 55-65 ICBMs reported in 2010 and rising since the DF-31 and DF-31A first started deploying in 2006-2008. But instead of continuing to increase, the force level estimate has been steady for the past three years at a medium estimate of about 63 ICBMs.





Of the 50-75 ICBMs reported for the past three years, “less than 50” can reach the continental United States, according to DIA. Twenty of those are the silo-based DF-5A. That means that China has deployed fewer than 30 DF-31As, six years after it first started fielding the new missile. DOD stopped providing detailed breakdowns of the Chinese missile force in 2011, but the actual DF-31A number might only be around 20 (2-3 brigades) because the total ICBM estimate also includes DF-4 and DF-31, neither of which can reach the continental United States from their deployment areas in China.

This year’s DIA assessment does not include the prediction from previous years that the number of Chinese ICBMs that can strike the continental United States “probably will more than double...by 2025” to around 100 missiles. This estimate has continued to slide. In 2001 CIA predicted deployment of 75-100 ICBMs “deployed primarily against the United States” by 2015, a prediction that seems in doubt if the the current trend continues.

This year’s DIA threat assessment is also interesting because it doesn’t mention the fabled DF-41, a possible MIRVed ICBM that was rumored to have been test-launched in August 2012. Nor are any of the other new potential launchers identified.

Finally, introduction of China’s new Jin-class SSBN continues to slide; DIA projects the ballistic missile submarine “may reach initial operational capability around 2014,” or four-seven years later than the intelligence community predicted in 2006. Apparently, there have been problems with the Julang-2 missile.

* Note: The designation “DF-3” for the CSS-3 is a typo. It should have been DF-4, for the ageing 5,400-km liquid-fueled ICBM. The DF-3 is an intermediate-range, liquid-fueled ballistic missile that is being retired. Neither the DF-3 nor the DF-21, a more modern medium-range ballistic missile, is mentioned in the testimony.

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

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<http://blogs.fas.org/security/2013/04/china-icbm/>

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New York Times
OPINION/Op-Ed Contributor

Is China Changing Its Position on Nuclear Weapons?

By JAMES M. ACTON
April 19, 2013

INTERPRETING any country’s pronouncements about its nuclear weapons can be a study in fine distinctions, but occasionally a state says — or fails to say — something in a clear break from the past. A Chinese white paper on defense, released on Tuesday, falls into this category and now demands our attention, because it omits a promise that China will never use nuclear weapons first.

That explicit pledge had been the cornerstone of Beijing’s stated nuclear policy for the last half-century. The white paper, however, introduces ambiguity. It endorses the use of nuclear weapons in response to a nuclear attack but does not rule out other uses.

With North Korea making overt nuclear threats, the job of deciphering Beijing’s cryptic and mild-sounding statement may not seem a priority. Indeed, it is because the likelihood of nuclear escalation with China is low that most defense experts are likely to focus instead on what the white paper has to say about China’s rapidly expanding conventional military capabilities.



But all of those developments may be closely connected.

In 1964, immediately after testing its first nuclear weapon, China promised to “never at any time or under any circumstances be the first to use nuclear weapons.” This “no-first-use pledge” was explicitly and unconditionally included in each of China’s defense white papers, from the first, in 1998, through the sixth and most recent, in 2011. It was among the strongest assurances in the world of no-first-use, a stance that the United States has never taken.

The change this year is almost certainly not the result of bureaucratic error. No-first-use has been such an intrinsic part of the Chinese nuclear liturgy that the authors of the white paper would have been extremely unlikely to have forgotten it. Besides, other evidence indicates that a broader rethinking of Chinese nuclear strategy may be under way.

Last December, shortly after being selected as general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, Xi Jinping, who last month became China’s president, gave a speech to the Second Artillery Force, which is responsible for China’s land-based nuclear weapons. In the past, borrowing Mao Zedong’s imagery for China’s adversaries, Chinese officials have generally played down the value of nuclear weapons, describing them as “paper tigers.” But in a significant rhetorical shift, Mr. Xi is reported to have said that nuclear weapons create strategic support for the country’s status as a major power. In the speech, Mr. Xi did not repeat China’s no-first-use promise.

Taken together, the speech and the white paper are likely to create concern in the United States and among its allies, particularly Japan. Unquestionably, some of that concern will be stirred up by self-described “China hawks” who have been dismissing China’s no-first-use pledge as pure propaganda for the last five decades. Now, opportunistically, they may make a big issue of the apparent shift.

But theirs will not be the only voices expressing concern; indeed, even moderates are likely to agree. Only last month, the Center for Strategic and International Studies published a report by a bipartisan group of American analysts that said China’s no-first-use pledge was “broadly stabilizing and should be sustained.”

The white paper may also make it more difficult politically for President Obama to carry out his ambitious nuclear agenda, which includes creating the conditions that would allow the United States to declare that the sole purpose of its nuclear weapons is to deter their use by others.

The apparent shift in Beijing’s nuclear doctrine may well be a response to other security trends in the region. Even before the North Korean leader, Kim Jong-un, issued his latest round of nuclear threats, the Pentagon announced plans to reinforce its missile defenses in northeast Asia.

The United States has said that those defenses are meant to defend against North Korea, but they also appear to be intended to counterbalance Beijing’s growing arsenal of regional conventional missiles. Chinese defense planners worry that the United States may one day develop those defenses to the point at which they could neutralize China’s long-range nuclear forces as well, a fear exacerbated by American investments in conventional-strike capabilities.

So China may intend the new language in its white paper to send a signal: that in a future crisis, if it concluded that the United States was about to attack its nuclear arsenal with conventional weapons that were backed up by missile defenses, China might use its nuclear weapons first. The United States should recognize this concern; it was called “use ‘em or lose ‘em” during the cold war.

A candid, high-level dialogue regarding nuclear deterrence has been needed for some time. The new white paper and Mr. Xi’s speech have made the need urgent.

While the probability of nuclear escalation is low, the consequences would be catastrophic. The risk of nuclear use is already unacceptably high and, for that reason alone, mutual confidence-building is necessary. In addition, mutual suspicion in the nuclear domain spills over into the conventional domain, complicating efforts to reduce the chance of any kind of conflict.

Unfortunately, in spite of repeated invitations by the administrations of Presidents Obama and George W. Bush, China has not been willing to engage in a sustained conversation. The presidency of Xi Jinping may, however, present an



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opportunity. Given that Mr. Xi appears to have a personal interest in nuclear strategy, he may be willing to corral China's military into engaging with the United States. His representatives should explain why China's nuclear doctrine and posture are evolving. In the meantime, Beijing should avoid actually repudiating no-first-use to make it easier to reinstate the doctrine down the line.

For its part, Washington could make successful engagement more likely by offering to broaden such talks to include the full range of strategic military interactions between the two countries. Because the conventional arms competition in the western Pacific may be heightening Chinese concerns about the survivability of its nuclear forces, such a dialogue might appear more attractive to China than one narrowly focused on nuclear weapons.

No one can predict whether Mr. Xi will accept a renewed offer to talk. But it would be a win-win proposition.

James M. Acton is a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/19/opinion/is-china-changing-its-position-on-nuclear-weapons.html?pagewanted=all>

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