



USAF COUNTERPROLIFERATION CENTER
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MAXWELL AFB, ALABAMA

Issue No. 1055, 26 April 2013

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Tehran Times – Iran

UN Nuclear Watchdog Team on Iran Faces Reshuffle

Political Desk

Saturday, April 20, 2013

TEHRAN – Two senior UN nuclear watchdog officials who have been leading talks with Iran will leave this year, Reuters reported on Friday.

Western diplomats blame Iranian stonewalling for the failure to come to an agreement, a charge Tehran denies, and some say the UN agency may soon need to reconsider its tactics. A new round of talks could be held in May.

Iran denies Western allegations that it is seeking to develop the capability to build nuclear weapons, saying its atomic activities are aimed at generating electricity.

“I think that we were approaching a potential re-set anyway. It is clear that Iran has been able to stall the process,” a diplomat in Vienna said.

Rafael Grossi, assistant director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, has been named Argentina’s envoy to the Vienna-based IAEA, a job he is expected to start in the summer, a diplomatic source said on Friday.

The IAEA last month said a senior Finnish nuclear official, Tero Varjoranta, would succeed Herman Nackaerts when he retires in the autumn as chief nuclear inspector in charge of monitoring Iran’s atomic activities and other sensitive issues.

Nackaerts, a Belgian, and Grossi have headed the IAEA’s team of experts who have met nine times with Iranian envoys since early 2012.

“Their departure deprives the agency of the two officials who have spent the most time in the last two years talking with Iranians at senior levels,” said Mark Fitzpatrick of the International Institute for Strategic Studies think tank.

Analysts and diplomats stressed, however, that it is IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano, who steered the agency into a tougher approach to Iran, who decides policy. He secured a second four-year term in March, signaling continuity.

“An administrative reshuffle by the agency below Amano will likely have little impact on the Iran talks,” said Mark Hibbs of the Carnegie Endowment think-tank.

The IAEA-Iran talks are separate from, but still closely linked to, broader diplomatic negotiations between Tehran and six world powers aimed at resolving the decade-old dispute peacefully.

The last round of IAEA-Iran negotiations, in February, yielded no breakthrough. Another session in May is a “possibility,” a diplomat in Vienna said on Friday.

Iranian state television, citing a source close to the Iranian negotiating team, denied a media report that the UN agency and Tehran had already agreed to meet in mid-May.

Amano this month said that some of the differences between the two sides were still “quite important”. He said any deal with Tehran must enable effective IAEA verification work.

The IAEA has called on Iran to sign and implement a structured approach document to resolve the outstanding issues and has stated that gaining access to the Parchin military site, which is located southeast of Tehran, is a priority for the UN nuclear watchdog.

The UN nuclear watchdog has claimed that Iran might have been trying to sanitize the Parchin site of any incriminating evidence of explosive tests that would indicate efforts to design nuclear weapons. However, Iran has dismissed the claim, calling it “baseless”.

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Tehran has rejected requests by IAEA delegations to inspect the Parchin site and has made it clear that access to the site would not be possible before an agreement is reached on the structured approach document.

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/politics/106975-un-nuclear-watchdog-team-on-iran-faces-reshuffle>

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The London Guardian – U.K.

Chuck Hagel: Arms Deal Sending 'Clear Signal' to Iran over Nuclear Programme

US defence secretary visits Israel as Pentagon finalises weapons deal to strengthen militaries of Iran's key rivals

Reuters in Tel Aviv

Sunday, 21 April 2013

US defence secretary Chuck Hagel said on Sunday a \$10bn arms deal under discussion with Washington's Arab and Israeli allies sent a "very clear signal" to Tehran the military option remains on the table over its nuclear programme.

"The bottom line is that Iran is a threat, a real threat," said Hagel, who arrived in Israel on Sunday on his first visit to Israel as defence secretary.

"The Iranians must be prevented from developing that capacity to build a nuclear weapon and deliver it," he told reporters on his plane.

The first stop on Hagel's week-long Middle East trip came two days after the Pentagon said it was finalising a weapons deal to strengthen the militaries of Israel and two of Iran's key rivals – Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

The deal includes the sale of KC-135 aerial refuelling tankers, anti-air defence missiles and tilt-rotor V-22 Osprey troop transport planes to Israel as well as the sale of 25 F-16 Fighting Falcon jets to the UAE.

The UAE and Saudi Arabia also would be allowed to purchase weapons with so-called "standoff" capabilities that enable them to engage the enemy with precision at a distance. Defence officials said the "standoff" arms would give the two countries more sophisticated systems than they currently have.

Asked if the arms deal sent a message that the military option was on the table if Tehran moved to build a nuclear weapon, Hagel said: "I don't think there's any question that that's another very clear signal to Iran."

But he added the military option had been "very clear to Iran for some time" and said the arms deal was a continuation of the US policy to maintain Israel's so-called "qualitative military edge" in the region, a general reference to the supply of advanced US-made weaponry and technology to the Jewish state.

Iran denies Western allegations that it is seeking to develop the capability to build nuclear weapons, saying its atomic activities are aimed at generating electricity.

Israel has repeatedly voiced its impatience with the pace of diplomatic efforts to curb Iran's enrichment of uranium, saying they should be coupled with a credible military threat. Both Israel and the United States have said all options remain on the table when it comes to dealing with any nuclear threat.

Such talk has raised international concern of a possible unilateral Israeli strike on Iran that could lead to wider Middle Eastern war.

Hagel, who faced resistance during his Senate confirmation hearing earlier this year from lawmakers who questioned his support for Israel, said part of the purpose of his visit was to underscore to Israelis that "the United States is committed to their security".

Asked about renewed debate in the Israeli media that Israel might have to strike Iran by itself, Hagel said "every sovereign nation has the right to defend itself and protect itself".



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"Iran presents a threat in its nuclear programme and Israel will make the decisions that Israel must make to protect itself and defend itself," he said.

But Hagel added the United States and other countries believe there is still time for diplomacy and tough international sanctions to have an impact.

"The military option is one option that remains on the table, must remain on the table," he said. "But military options, I think most of us feel, should be the last option."

After Israel, Hagel will visit Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. His trip comes amid mounting concerns about regional stability due to Iran's nuclear programme, the rocky transition to civilian rule in Egypt and the civil war in Syria.

Hagel said the United States was still assessing claims that the Syrian government may have used chemical weapons against its military opponents in recent months, a red line President Barack Obama has cautioned would be a "game changer" in how the United States addresses the conflict.

So far the United States has provided non-lethal aid but has declined to arm the Syrian rebels.

"Our intelligence community is still assessing the facts and what we need to know before we can determine whether chemical weapons were used by the Syrian government," Hagel said.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/apr/21/chuck-hagel-israel-iran-arms-deal>

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Jerusalem Post – Israel

Yadlin: Iranian Nuclear Program Crossed 'Red Line'

Former military intelligence head: Tehran needs to make decision about nuclear program following Iranian presidential elections.

By YAAKOV LAPPIN

23 April 2013

Iran has crossed the nuclear red line set by Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, former Military Intelligence chief Maj.-Gen. (res.) Amos Yadlin announced on Tuesday.

Speaking at a Tel Aviv conference held by the Institute for National Security Studies, which he heads, Yadlin later clarified the remarks, saying, "If Iran continues to enrich uranium at its current rate, toward the end of the year it will cross the red line in a clear manner."

Earlier, the former army intelligence head said, "Despite all of the attempts made to stop the nuclear program, no one is able to stop the Islamic Republic's nuclear program."

Tuesday's comments are in line with an assessment made by Yadlin in February, when he said that, at its current rate of uranium enrichment, the Islamic Republic would reach nuclear breakout capacity between June and August.

Netanyahu has defined Israel's red line regarding Iran as the possession of 250 kg. of uranium enriched to the 20 percent level, known as medium-enriched uranium.

According to an International Atomic Energy Agency report released in February, Tehran has not crossed that point, but has already amassed 167 kg. of uranium enriched to that level.

"By the summer, Iran will be a month or two away from a decision about the bomb," Yadlin said at the INSS conference, adding that the decision whether to advance beyond that will be made after Iran's presidential elections in June.

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Once Iran amasses sufficient enriched uranium, "it will be very hard to stop," Yadlin said. "If the US, Iran and Israel all stand behind their announcements, then we are on a collision course toward the end of the year."

According to the former Military Intelligence head, Tehran already has enough low-enriched uranium for six bombs, and nearly enough medium-enriched uranium for one bomb.

"They have no problem converting back what they allegedly turned to nuclear fuel. Within a week, it could be turned into nuclear material for a bomb," he warned, referring to Iran's decision in 2012 to reduce international tensions by converting some of its enriched uranium to fuel rods.

In reality, Yadlin told Channel 2, the uranium was not converted to fuel rods, but rather, to uranium oxide, which is easy to turn back to nuclear material, a process that can be completed within a week, he said.

In London last week, Netanyahu told the BBC that Iran has crept up to the red line for the production of a nuclear weapon – which he dramatically referenced when he held up a diagram of a bomb as he spoke at the United Nations General Assembly opening session in the fall – but has not crossed it. He explained that Iran was 80 kg. of medium-enriched uranium away from the required amount for one atomic weapon.

"It takes 250 kg. of 20% enriched uranium to manufacture one nuclear bomb," he said. "They've gone up from 110 to roughly 170 kg."

That's if you want precise measurement."

On Tuesday, Yadlin noted that the Arak nuclear reactor would become operational by 2014. He stressed that without a drastic change in the sanctions placed on the Islamic Republic, it would continue buying time and expanding its nuclear program.

"There will be no agreement if there is no motivation to reaching an agreement," he said, adding that the credibility of American military action is a condition to the success of the negotiations.

"This credibility will be achieved if the US aims a precise strike to stop the Iranian nuclear program and shows that it can deal with the escalation that would follow this strike."

Tovah Lazaroff and Jerusalem Post staff contributed to this report.

<http://www.jpost.com/Iranian-Threat/News/Yadlin-Iranian-nuclear-program-crossed-red-line-310791>

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Xinhua News – China

Iran Confirms Resumption of Talks with IAEA in May

April 24, 2013

TEHRAN, April 24 (Xinhua) -- Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) will hold a new round of talks over Tehran's nuclear program in May, Press TV reported Wednesday, quoting Iran's ambassador to the UN nuclear watchdog.

Ali-Asghar Soltanieh told Press TV Tuesday that the two sides would meet at the headquarters of Iran's mission to the IAEA in the Austrian capital of Vienna on May 15.

This confirms the IAEA's Tuesday announcement that it would talk again with Iran on May 15 in a bid to finalize the nuclear inspection framework which the agency had been striving for years to establish.

IAEA spokeswoman Gill Tudor said talks would be "aimed at finalizing a structured approach to resolving outstanding issues related to the possible military dimensions of Iran's nuclear program."



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However, when asked if the agency would adopt a new strategy since no concrete agreement was reached in the past rounds of talks, the agency declined further comments.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2013-04/24/c_132336750.htm

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Defense Update.com – Israel

April 25, 2013

Pentagon Report: Iran Could Test an Intercontinental Ballistic Missile by 2015

Posted by News Desk

A new Pentagon assessment of Iran's military power maintains that in two years time, Iran could flight-test an intercontinental ballistic missile capable of striking the United States, given "sufficient foreign assistance", is provided to Tehran. The new assessment reiterated a longstanding estimate of the U.S. intelligence community. Iran could test such a missile by 2015 with assistance from nations like North Korea, China or Russia. Pyongyang is already in the process of developing the KN-08, an extended range ballistic missile that can reach the US West Coast. The missile's range could be extended to provide the missile an intercontinental strike capability. Pyongyang and Tehran have been collaborating and exchanging technologies regarding ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons for many years; both countries are seeking to match the two technologies to acquire nuclear weapons delivery capabilities. U.S. experts agree that North Korea and Iran could be capable of developing and testing few ICBM class missiles based on liquid propellants, but doubt they could acquire solid-propelled weapons in the near future. The lengthy pre-flight procedures required for fuelling liquid-propelled missiles means that such weapons cannot be mass-fired without warning, as the shorter range missiles could, therefore, providing the defender time to respond, employ missile defense or conduct preemptive attack.

An unclassified portion of the "Annual Report on Military Power of Iran," dated January 2013 and made available by the Pentagon today, also states that Iran is continuing to develop both the "technological capabilities applicable to nuclear weapons" and "ballistic missiles that could be adapted to deliver nuclear weapons." In December 2012 US sources were sceptical about Iran's ability to reach such milestone by 2015. Tehran encountered a major obstacle in 2011, after an explosion killed 21 people during a test, among the casualties was Hasan Tehrani Moghaddam, who was in charge of the country's missile program.

The Defense Department adds that Iran "continues to develop technological capabilities applicable to nuclear weapons" and is "proceeding with uranium enrichment and heavy-water nuclear reactor activities in violation of multiple U.N. Security Council resolutions."

Iran "also continues to develop ballistic missiles that could be adapted to deliver nuclear weapons," it states. Despite "increased pressure resulting from sanctions" imposed by the United Nations, there "has been no change to Iran's national security and military strategies over the last year," according to the report.

In the past Iran was reportedly working on 'Project Koussar', a ballistic missile capable of reaching targets at ranges of 4000 – 5000 km. These missiles, sometime referred to as Shahab 5 and Shahab 6 were believed to be based on different propulsion used on the Shahab 3. Some sources indicated the Iranians were relying on the RD-216 originally developed for the SS-5 IRBM and also used to with the Kosmos SL8 satellite launcher.

James Clapper, the director of national intelligence, told the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence last month that "we do not know if Iran will eventually decide to build nuclear weapons." The U.S. government's 17 intelligence agencies, according to Clapper, "judge Iran would likely choose a ballistic missile as its preferred method of delivering a nuclear weapon, if one is ever fielded," he said in the U.S. intelligence community's annual worldwide threat assessment. These missiles are capable of delivering a weapon of mass destruction, he said.

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“In addition, Iran has demonstrated an ability to launch small satellites, and we grow increasingly concerned that these technical steps — along with a regime hostile toward the United States and our allies — provide Tehran with the means and motivation to develop larger space-launch vehicles and longer-range missiles, including an intercontinental ballistic missile,” according to Clapper.

http://defense-update.com/20130425_iran_nuclear_icbm.html

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

US Says Chemical Weapons Used in Syria

26 April 2013

WASHINGTON, April 25 (RIA Novosti) – The United States said Thursday it has evidence that chemical weapons have been used by the Syrian government in the civil war there, blaming the increasingly “desperate” regime of President Bashar al-Assad for crossing a “red line” that US President Barack Obama has said could lead to US intervention in the conflict.

Intelligence gathered by the United States, with the help of opposition forces in Syria, shows “with varying degrees of confidence that the Syrian regime has used chemical weapons on a small scale in Syria,” the White House said in a letter sent to Senators John McCain and Carl Levin.

The White House said it had physiological samples indicating that the deadly chemical agent sarin was used on two occasions in the Syrian war, which has claimed at least 70,000 lives and displaced millions in just over two years.

Although there was no hard evidence to show which side in the Syrian conflict had used chemical weapons, the White House said the attacks “very likely originated within the Assad regime,” which it said was becoming increasingly “desperate” as the situation in Syria deteriorates and has already shown “the willingness to escalate the use of violence against the Syrian people.”

US Secretary of State John Kerry also said that the United States had evidence indicating chemical weapons had been used twice in Syria, but refused to say where, when or by whom.

US Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel was the first US official on Thursday to confirm that Washington believed deadly chemical agents had been used in Syria, reading from the White House letter to reporters in Abu Dhabi.

“It violates every convention of warfare,” Hagel said.

Several US lawmakers said Syria had crossed the “red line” set by Obama, who has said the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian conflict would be a “game-changer” that could push the United States to intervene in the civil war in Syria.

“It’s pretty obvious the red line has been crossed,” said McCain, adding that the United States should “provide a safe area for the opposition to operate,” establish a no-fly zone over Syria, and, “supply weapons to people in the resistance whom we trust.”

Sen. Lindsey Graham called on Washington to “put pressure on the Russians to get Assad out and secure chemical weapons sites.”

And Sen. Dianne Feinstein, head of the Senate Intelligence Committee, warned that if the United States and its allies did not act decisively to stop the use of chemical weapons in Syria, “President Assad may calculate he has nothing more to lose” and might “further escalate this conflict.”

“It is clear that ‘red lines’ have been crossed and action must be taken to prevent larger scale use. Syria has the ability to kill tens of thousands with its chemical weapons,” Feinstein said in a statement, urging “the United Nations Security Council—including Russia—to finally take strong and meaningful action to end this crisis in Syria.”

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Moscow's ambassador to the United Nations, Vitaly Churkin, warned Wednesday that aiding opposition groups fighting the regime in Damascus would "increase terrorist activity" in the Middle East.

The White House on Thursday said that even though Obama has "set a clear red line that the use of chemical weapons was unacceptable to the United States," Washington wanted to further evaluate the evidence gathered in Syria before deciding a course of action.

"I would say that given our own history with intelligence assessments, including intelligence assessments related to weapons of mass destruction, it's very important that we are able to establish this with certainty and that we are able to present information that is airtight in a public and credible fashion to underpin all of our decision-making," a White House official speaking on background said, adding that the United States was keeping "all options on the table."

http://en.rian.ru/military_news/20130426/180852236/US-Says-Chemical-Weapons-Used-in-Syria.html

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Reuters – U.S.

"Evidence" of Syrian Chemical Weapon Use Not up to U.N. Standard

By Anthony Deutsch

Friday, April 26, 2013

AMSTERDAM, April 26 (Reuters) - Assertions of chemical weapon use in Syria by Western and Israeli officials citing photos, sporadic shelling and traces of toxins do not meet the standard of proof needed for a U.N. team of experts waiting to gather their own field evidence.

Weapons inspectors will only determine whether banned chemical agents were used in the two-year-old conflict if they are able to access sites and take soil, blood, urine or tissue samples and examine them in certified laboratories.

That type of evidence, needed to show definitively if banned chemicals were found, has not been presented by governments and intelligence agencies accusing Syria of using chemical weapons against insurgents.

"This is the only basis on which the OPCW would provide a formal assessment of whether chemical weapons have been used," Michael Luhan, a spokesman for the Hague-based Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) said.

With Syria blocking the U.N. mission, it is unlikely they will gain that type of access any time soon.

The White House and Western diplomats at the U.N. said they believe Syria had "probably" fired chemical munitions, but failed to name the chemical in question.

The Israeli military this week suggested Syrian forces used sarin and showed reporters pictures of a body with symptoms indicating the nerve gas was the cause of death.

Ralf Trapp, an independent consultant on chemical and biological weapons control, said "there is a limit to what you can extract from photograph evidence alone. What you really need is to get information from on the ground, to gather physical evidence and to talk to witnesses as well as medical staff who treated victims."

The White House, which called the use of chemicals weapons in Syria a "red line" for possible military intervention, said its assessment was partly based on "physiological" samples. But a White House official speaking on condition of anonymity declined to detail the evidence. It is unclear who supplied it.

Even if samples were made available to the OPCW by those making the assertions, the organisation could not use them.

"The OPCW would never get involved in testing samples that our own inspectors don't gather in the field, because we need to maintain chain of custody of samples from the field to the lab to ensure their integrity," said Luhan.



Established to enforce the 1997 Chemical Weapons Convention, which bans the use of toxic agents in warfare, the OPCW has exhaustive rules on how inspectors collect and handle evidence, starting with the sealing of a site like a crime scene.

Multiple samples must be taken and there need to be "blank" samples from unexposed matter and tissue, to set a baseline against which levels of contamination could be determined.

The samples would be split, sealed and flown in dark, cooled air transports to up to three certified laboratories, including one at the OPCW's headquarters in The Hague.

A team of 15 experts, put together in response to a request from U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to investigate the claims, has been on standby in Cyprus for nearly three weeks.

Headed by Swedish scientist Ake Sellstrom, it includes analytical chemists and World Health Organisation experts on the medical effects of exposure to toxins.

Reporting by Anthony Deutsch; editing by Giles Elgood.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/04/26/syria-crisis-chemical-weapons-idUSL6N0DD2F320130426>

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Yonhap News Agency – South Korea
April 20, 2013

N. Korea Says may Hold Arms Reduction Talks with U.S., but No Denuclearization Dialogue

SEOUL, April 20 (Yonhap) -- North Korea may hold arms reduction talks with the United States, but there will never be any dialogue with Washington on ending the communist nation's nuclear programs, Pyongyang's main newspaper said Saturday.

The Rodong Sinmun newspaper accused the U.S. of suggesting its willingness for dialogue with Pyongyang is an attempt to unilaterally disarm the country. The North won't give up its nuclear program until the entire world is denuclearized, it said.

"There may be talks between us and the United States for the sake of arms reduction, but there will never be talks for denuclearization," the paper said. "Our position is clear. Never dream of denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula before denuclearization of the world is realized."

Demanding the North take denuclearization steps first as a condition for dialogue shows Washington's ulterior intention to rid Pyongyang of nuclear weapons and to militarily overpower the country, the paper claimed.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2013/04/20/56/0401000000AEN20130420001200315F.HTML>

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Channel NewsAsia – Singapore

North Korea Demands Recognition as Nuclear State

North Korea renewed its demand Tuesday for recognition as a nuclear power, saying it was a pre-requisite for the start of any dialogue with the United States.

By Agence France-Presse (AFP)
April 23, 2013

SEOUL: North Korea renewed its demand Tuesday for recognition as a nuclear power, saying it was a pre-requisite for the start of any dialogue with the United States.



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A commentary in the official Rodong Sinmun newspaper rejected as "totally unacceptable" a US demand that North Korea commit to abandoning its nuclear weapons and missile programme before any talks can begin.

Any meeting at the negotiating table must be "between nuclear weapons states", it said.

The United States has made it clear that it will never formally accept the North, which carried out its third nuclear test in February, as a nuclear power.

After a month of escalating military tensions on the Korean peninsula, Seoul, Washington and Pyongyang have begun skirting around the possibility of dialogue.

For the moment, however, most energy is being expended on rejecting each other's pre-conditions.

During a trip to Seoul, Beijing and Tokyo earlier this month, US Secretary of State John Kerry said Pyongyang must first prove it was serious about reining in its nuclear programme.

North Korea responded by demanding the withdrawal of UN sanctions and an end to all future South Korea-US joint military exercises.

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/north-korea-demands-recognition-as-nucle/649184.html>

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Yonhap News Agency – South Korea
April 24, 2013

S. Korea Fails to Win U.S. Nod for Nuclear Enrichment

SEOUL, April 24 (Yonhap) -- South Korea said Wednesday that it has failed to win U.S. permission to enrich uranium and reprocess spent nuclear fuel in negotiations aimed at renewing a bilateral nuclear cooperation agreement.

Instead, the allies agreed to extend the current agreement by two more years until March 2016, said a senior official at Seoul's foreign ministry who is privy to the highly sensitive talks with the U.S., following the latest round of negotiations in Washington last week.

"The two sides agreed to extend the current nuclear cooperation agreement by two years to avoid a lapse in the agreement, and the next round of the talks will be held in June," the official said on condition of anonymity.

Extending the pact will "give Korea and the U.S. more time for close consultations and lay the ground for the two sides to achieve good results in smoothly revising the agreement," the official said.

Since October 2010, South Korea and the U.S. have negotiated to revise the 1974 agreement under which South Korea has been banned from reprocessing its spent nuclear fuel or enriching uranium for its commercial nuclear power plants, but Washington has been reluctant to do so apparently out of proliferation concerns.

This is one of the most sensitive issues for South Korean President Park Geun-hye and U.S. President Barack Obama as Seoul officials want to gain a "peaceful nuclear sovereignty" for the South Korean nuclear energy industry.

The decision to hold more talks on revising the nuclear cooperation agreement came about two weeks before Park visits the U.S. for her first summit talks with Obama.

In a press briefing Wednesday, Seoul's foreign ministry spokesman Cho Tai-young said that there has been "meaningful progress" in the negotiations in terms of "management of spent nuclear fuel, stable supply of nuclear fuel and Korea's exports of nuclear reactors."

Nevertheless, Seoul and Washington decided to extend the accord because "much more technical and specific issues still remain to be resolved," Cho said.

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"The Korean government will continue to make efforts to revise the accord in an advanced and mutually beneficial manner," Cho said.

The current pact requires South Korea to win U.S. permission before South Korea can reprocess U.S.-origin spent fuel, including spent fuel from U.S.-designed reactors in South Korea.

But the U.S. has been reluctant to grant such permission because it would be contradictory to Obama's broader non-proliferation agenda and North Korea's nuclear ambition.

Time has been running short because the two sides must conclude negotiations, which began in October 2010, by this summer for a revised accord to be approved by the U.S. Congress before the current accord expires in March next year.

One point of disagreement in the negotiations is whether the U.S. will permit South Korea to include a provision that allows it to reprocess its spent fuel and enrich uranium.

For years, South Korea has called for the U.S. to allow it to reprocess spent nuclear fuel to forestall a looming crisis of nuclear waste storage.

Scientists in South Korea, which runs 23 reactors and relies on nuclear energy for nearly 40 percent of its electricity needs, have estimated that spent fuel pools will run out of space beginning in 2016.

In the face of growing nuclear waste stockpiles and its ambition to become a global power in the civilian nuclear industry, South Korea hopes to adopt the so-called pyroprocessing technology, which leaves separated plutonium, the main ingredient in making atomic bombs, mixed with other elements.

South Korea wants the U.S. to allow it to use the new technology because it has to deal with more than 10,000 tons of nuclear waste at storage facilities that are expected to reach capacity by 2016.

Some nonproliferation experts say pyroprocessing is not significantly different from reprocessing, and the plutonium could be quickly turned into weapons-grade material.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2013/04/24/36/0301000000AEN20130424007200315F.HTML>

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The Japan Times – Japan

First Radiation Detected in Japan from N. Korea February Nuke Test

Agence France-Presse (AFP) – Jiji Press

April 24, 2013

VIENNA – Possible radioactive traces from a North Korean nuclear test in February have been detected for the first time, although it remains unclear what fissile material Pyongyang used, a monitoring organization said Tuesday.

"The ratio of the detected xenon isotopes (xenon-131m and xenon-133) is consistent with a nuclear fission event occurring more than 50 days before the detection," the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) said. "This coincides very well" with the North Korea's announced nuclear test on Feb. 12.

The detection at a monitoring station in Japan came 55 days after the explosion.

The group said, however, that the discovery couldn't help it answer the key question of whether Pyongyang used plutonium or uranium in the blast.

North Korea used plutonium in its 2006 and 2009 tests and any discovery that it used highly enriched uranium for its third test would mark a significant technological step for the impoverished and unpredictable regime.



It would also raise international concerns that North Korea might pass on weapons-grade uranium, or the necessary technology and knowhow to make it, to rogue states or terrorists seeking to make crude nuclear explosive devices.

It is also possible that the so-called radionuclides were from a nuclear reactor or other atomic activity, and the CTBTO said it is currently examining the traces to see whether this is the case.

It ruled out however that the source was the crippled Fukushima No.1 nuclear plant.

The detection was made in Takasaki, Gunma Prefecture, 1,000 km from the North Korean test site. Lower levels were also picked up at Ussuriysk, Russia, one of several hundred sites worldwide reporting to the CTBTO.

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/04/24/world/first-radiation-detected-in-japan-from-n-korea-february-nuke-test/#.UXgOrZQo5Dx>

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The Economic Times – India

China to Build Second, Larger Carrier: Report

By Reuters

24 April 2013

SHANGHAI: China will build a second, larger aircraft carrier capable of carrying more fighter jets, the official Xinhua news service reported late Tuesday, quoting a senior officer with the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy.

The report comes after Chinese officials denied foreign media reports in September 2012 that China was building a second carrier in Shanghai.

"China will have more than one aircraft carrier ... The next aircraft carrier we need will be larger and carry more fighters," Xinhua quoted Song Xue, deputy chief of staff of the PLA Navy, as saying at a ceremony with foreign military attaches.

Song said foreign media reports saying the carrier was being built in Shanghai were still inaccurate but did not elaborate, according to the report.

China currently has one aircraft carrier, the Liaoning, which was refitted from a Russian-made model. Considered by military experts to be decades behind U.S. carrier technology, it was originally intended to serve as a floating casino, but was turned to military use in the runup to a once-in-a-decade power transition in late 2012.

China is also building up other forms of military hardware, including a stealth fighter jet believed to be capable of landing on a carrier, drone aircraft and nuclear submarines.

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

Song also said the PLA Navy is building a naval aviation force for the Liaoning, and there will be at least two aviation regiments on one carrier, including fighters, reconnaissance aircraft, anti-submarine aircraft, electronic countermeasure (ECM) planes and rotary-wing aircraft, the report said.

Chinese officials have said the Liaoning will be used primarily for training purposes.

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international-business/china-to-build-second-larger-carrier-report/articleshow/19705261.cms>

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NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation) World News – Japan



USAF COUNTERPROLIFERATION CENTER
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Japan Refuses to Endorse NPT Statement

April 25, 2013

Japan has refused to sign a joint statement against the use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances. Survivors of the 1945 atomic bombing of Hiroshima are angry at the move.

The statement was submitted by the South African delegation on Wednesday in Geneva to a preparatory committee for the 2015 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty review conference.

It stresses the inhumanity of nuclear weapons, saying that in addition to taking lives, they have a prolonged social, economic and environmental impact, which would deprive future generations of health, food and water.

74 countries endorsed the statement, but Japan, the only country that suffered atomic bombings, refused to do so.

Mari Amano, Japan's ambassador to the Conference on Disarmament, said Japan agrees with the idea that use of nuclear weapons is inhuman.

But Amano said the wording that they should not be used "under any circumstances" differs from Japan's national security policy.

The Japanese delegation apparently feared that endorsing the statement would undermine the effectiveness of the US nuclear umbrella under which Japan is protected.

But its refusal drew criticism from supporters of a nuclear weapons ban, and about 50 people protested in front of the Japanese mission to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva.

Survivors of the 1945 atomic bombing of Hiroshima are angry that the Japanese government has refused to sign the statement against the use of nuclear weapons.

The head of a group of A-bomb survivors in Hiroshima, Sunao Tsuboi, called the refusal outrageous.

He said countries that recognize nuclear weapons are inhumane and speak out against them are increasing.

He questioned his own government's stance, saying leaders may not be serious about pursuing peace.

Yukio Yoshioka, deputy head of another Hiroshima survivor group, expressed disappointment and said, as a survivor, he cannot condone the government's action.

He pointed out that Japan is the only country in the world that suffered nuclear bombings and has an obligation to push for the abolition of nuclear arms.

He said Japanese leaders are inviting international condemnation by not joining the cause.

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20130425_11.html

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Yonhap News Agency – South Korea

April 25, 2013

N.K. Army's Reconnaissance Chief Leads Saber-Rattling: Source

SEOUL (Yonhap) -- A hard-line North Korean general suspected of masterminding the sinking of a South Korean warship three years ago seems to be behind the North's recent brinkmanship, a government source said Thursday.

Kim Yong-chol, a four-star general who heads the powerful Reconnaissance General Bureau of the Korean People's Army (KPA), appears to be playing a leading role in ratcheting up tensions on the Korean Peninsula, said the source, requesting anonymity.

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In recent months, Pyongyang has threatened to launch nuclear attacks against South Korea and the United States and said it will not abide by its denuclearization pledges made in the past.

The general, also a member of the ruling Workers' Party Central Military Commission, has been the chief delegate to general officer-level meetings between South and North Korean armed forces. He is also suspected of having ordered the 2010 torpedoing of the Cheonan that left 46 South Korean sailors dead.

"A skilled negotiator has been upping the ante in recent months," the source said.

Kim came into prominence after the communist country detonated its third nuclear device on Feb. 12, in defiance of warnings issued by the international community, he said.

"He even called a meeting with foreign diplomats in Pyongyang to explain the overall situation taking place in the region," the source said. "Kim may have tried to follow the decades-old pattern of intentionally fueling tensions with the hope of winning concessions and aid."

The source, meanwhile, said Kim Kyong-hui, the sister of late North Korean leader Kim Jong-il, is currently acting as a close adviser to her nephew Kim Jong-un, who inherited the country following his father's sudden death in late 2011.

Jang Song-thaek, her husband and the leader's uncle, is widely considered the No. 2 man in the country and has taken control over the internal security apparatus that can help consolidate power and stamp out dissent.

The expert said Choe Ryong-hae, director of the military General Political Bureau and member of Standing Committee at the Politburo of the Party's Central Committee, is in charge of controlling the military.

He said compared to the past, the KPA's divisional and corps commanders are doing more to train their soldiers, adding there has been a spike in field exercises.

The source said that despite various speculations, the transfer of power to Kim Jong-un began gradually in 2009 and was likely completed last year.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2013/04/25/0401000000AEN20130425011100315.HTML>

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

S.Korean PM against Redeploying US Tactical Nuclear Weapons

25 April 2013

SEOUL, April 25 (RIA Novosti) - South Korean Prime Minister Chung Hong-won reiterated Seoul's commitments to a denuclearized Korean Peninsula on Thursday and said he opposed the idea of redeploying the US tactical nuclear weapons in his country.

"The [South Korean] government remains committed to maintaining the principle of denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula," the Yonhap news agency quoted the minister as saying at a parliamentary session.

"While not pursuing independent nuclear sovereignty, I think [South Korea] can deter [the North's] nuclear programs by managing the extended deterrence provided by the United States," he said.

Defense Minister Kim Kwan-jin said the North "does not appear to be able to produce miniaturized nuclear weapons and missiles to carry them," though it has been "ready to fire mid-range missiles with its own launchers."

"We are working on how to deal with North Korea's nuclear programs by devising two concepts. One is making retaliatory measures in case of its firing of nuclear missiles, and the other is how to detect, control and target its nuclear weapons. We are developing extended-range interceptors," the minister said.

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Tensions have risen sharply on the Korean Peninsula since December, when North Korea tested a long-range Taepodong 2 missile, and in February carried out its third nuclear test, following tests in 2006 and 2009.

The UN responded with sanctions. The start of joint military exercises between South Korea and the United States last month further irritated the North, which threatened to carry out a nuclear attack on the US mainland, as well as on US forces in the region.

<http://en.ria.ru/world/20130425/180838301.html>

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Global Post – Boston, MA

North Korea Leader Oversees Military Parade

By Agence France-Presse (AFP)

April 25, 2013

North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un oversaw a military parade marking the anniversary Thursday of the founding of the country's army as military tensions remain high on the Korean peninsula.

Kim attended a ceremony at which soldiers marched on the plaza outside the Kumsusan Palace of the Sun, containing the embalmed bodies of the country's two late leaders, according to the North's Korean Central News Agency (KCNA).

Kim "saluted the columns marching past the tribune of honour", it said.

The march came as the Korean peninsula remains in a state of heightened military tension after the North carried out its third nuclear test in February.

Incensed by fresh UN sanctions and joint South Korea-US military exercises, Pyongyang has spent weeks issuing blistering threats of missile strikes and nuclear war.

To coincide with the military parade, "(North Korea's) inter-continental ballistic missiles have already set the dens of the brigandish US imperialists as their first target", Strategic Rocket Force Commander Kim Rak-Gyom said in his speech quoted by KCNA.

"If the US imperialists and their followers dare make a preemptive attack, they will be made to keenly realise what a real nuclear war and real retaliatory blows are like and their stooges be made to feel the taste of horrible nuclear holocaust," he said.

Air and Anti-air Force Commander Ri Pyong-Chol said that the men of his force were waiting for "a final attack order to put an end to the enemies".

"The flying corps... once given a sortie order, will load nuclear bombs, instead of fuel for return, and storm enemy strongholds to blow them up", he said.

<http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/afp/130425/north-korea-leader-oversees-military-parade>

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News Track India – India

India's Sea-Based Nuclear Deterrent Soon: Shyam Saran

By Indo-Asian News Service (IANS)

Wednesday, April 24, 2013

New Delhi, April 24 (IANS) India's nuclear deterrent is based on a credible nuclear doctrine and is sustained by a "systematic drive to operationalize" its various delivery components, including a sea-based one by 2015-16, Shyam Saran, chairman of the National Security Advisory Board, said here Wednesday.

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Countering critics of India's nuclear weapons programme that it was driven by notions of prestige rather than considerations of national security, Saran, also a former foreign secretary who was closely connected with the negotiation of the Indo-US civil nuclear deal, said India's nuclear doctrine is based on the current geopolitical environment, especially with Pakistan actively building up its nuclear arsenal and keeping its aggressive actions and strategies against India in mind.

Giving a talk on "Is India's nuclear deterrent credible?", at the India Habitat Centre, Saran said: "India does have a credible theory of how its nuclear weapons may be used and that is spelt out in its nuclear doctrine."

He said India's nuclear doctrine, which was formally adopted at a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) in Jan 4, 2003, and the regular checks that are held have strengthened the level of confidence in India's nuclear deterrent.

While further reforms would be required "to make our deterrent more robust, it is unhelpful to peddle the impression that it is dysfunctional or worse that it is non-existent", he said at the lecture, held in collaboration with the Subbu Forum and the Society for Policy Studies (SPS).

He said since the May 1998 nuclear tests, India has demonstrated "quite clearly a sustained and systematic drive to operationalize the various components of the nuclear deterrent in a manner best suited to India's security environment. This is not the record of a state which considers nuclear weapons an instrument of national pride and propaganda".

"It is expected that a modest sea-based deterrence will be in place by 2015 or 2016," Saran said and termed the development of the "third leg of the triad (of nuclear delivery systems) which is submarine based" as "work in progress".

He said Pakistan has given the excuse of the Indo-US civil nuclear deal as the reason for the "relentless build up of its nuclear arsenal", its refusal to allow the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva to undertake multilateral negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT) as well as its threat to deploy theatre nuclear weapons to meet a so-called conventional Indian armed thrust across the border.

"The votaries of non-proliferation in the West have criticised the Indo-US civil nuclear agreement as having allowed exceptionalism in favour of India, which has encouraged a nuclear arms race between India and Pakistan," Saran said.

The exception provided to India in clinching the deal "rests on India's universally acknowledged and exceptional record as a responsible nuclear state as contrasted with Pakistan's equally exceptional record as a source of serial proliferation and in possession of a nuclear programme born in deceit and deception", he said.

"There is no moral equivalence in this respect between the two countries and this point must be driven home every time Pakistan claims parity. We should not allow such an insidious campaign to affect our proposed membership of the NSG (Nuclear Suppliers Group) and the MTCR (Missile Technology Control Regime)".

Saran said Pakistan's nuclear weapons are focused in large part on the threat from India, real or imagined.

In the buildup of its nuclear arsenal, "what Pakistan is signalling to India and to the world is that India should not contemplate retaliation even if there is another Mumbai because Pakistan has lowered the threshold of nuclear use to the theatre level".

This he said, is "nothing short of nuclear blackmail, no different from the irresponsible behaviour one witnesses in North Korea" and deserves condemnation by the international community as it is a threat not just to India but to international peace and security".

Saran said Pakistan's nuclear build-up is "driven by a mind-set which seeks parity with and even overtaking India, irrespective of the cost this entails".



Islamabad is also driven by the fear that the US may carry out an operation, like the top secret one to kill Osama bin Laden in Abbotabad, "to disable, destroy or confiscate, its nuclear weapons".

Saran added that "in the current world scenario of multiple nuclear actors, there is pervasive uncertainty about how the nuclear dynamics will play itself out even if a nuclear exchange commenced with only two actors".

Saran said the "mostly self-serving and misconceived notions" about India's nuclear deterrent "have much to do with the failure on the part of both the state as well as India's strategic community to confront and to refute them".

He termed the "motivated assessments" and "speculative judgments" as "deeply troubling".

He blamed it on an "information vaccum" and hoped the government makes public its nuclear doctrine and releases data regularly on what steps have been taken and are being taken to put the requirements of the doctrine in place.

"It is not necessary to share operational details but an overall survey, such as an annual Strategic Posture Review, should be shared with the citizens of the country who, after all, pay for the security which the deterrent is supposed to provide to them.

Another welcome step would be to hold an "informed and vigorous debate based on accurate and factual information". The people of the country also need to be taken into confidence about the risks and benefits of maintaining a nuclear deterrent.

<http://www.newstrackindia.com/newsdetails/2013/04/24/376--India-s-sea-based-nuclear-deterrent-soon-Shyam-Saran-.html>

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The New Indian Express – India

Another Trial of Nuke-Tipped Agni V Next Month

By Hemant Kumar Rout

24th April 2013

BALASORE -- India is readying for the second developmental trial of 5,000-km range nuclear capable ballistic missile Agni-V which put the country in the elite club of six nations including the US, the UK, China, France and Russia, having intercontinental ballistic missile capabilities.

Defence sources on Tuesday said the missile, considered as a "game-changer", had been planned to be test-fired from the Wheeler Island off the Odisha coast any time in the third week of May. A successful launch of the missile would be another step forward towards its induction in the armed forces, possibly in 2015, though it has to undergo two more trials in the next couple of years.

The missile was first tested successfully on April 19 last year. While the preparation for the second test has already begun, officials are busy fixing the schedule and logistic issues since the missile has to traverse across the Indian Ocean. "Though the Union Cabinet has already given a go-ahead for the mission, the exact date of firing has not been fixed yet," said a source. As the missile has the striking capabilities close to intercontinental range, prior to the test, an official said, India will have to alert a number of countries including Indonesia and Australia along with the international air and maritime traffic within the test zone.

Sources said a group of scientists associated with Agni-V missile would arrive here on Saturday to oversee the launch preparation. The DRDO is contemplating to conduct the trial by the end of next month as its chief and Scientific Adviser to Defence Minister V K Saraswat, who was instrumental in the success of missiles like Prithvi, Interceptors and even Agni-V, is retiring on May 31. The officials are also awaiting a warship from the Indian Navy to place the Israeli radar acquired recently.



The surface-to-surface canister-launched missile, which can carry a payload of 1.5 tonne, is 17-metre long, 2- metre wide and weighs around 50 tonnes. Initially tested for a single warhead, Agni-V would also feature Multiple Independent Re-entry Vehicles (MIRVs) with each missile being capable of carrying two to 10 separate nuclear warheads. "Each warhead can be assigned to a different target, hundreds of kilometres from each other and two or more warheads can be assigned to one target. This technology is under development," said the official.

<http://newindianexpress.com/states/odisha/Another-trial-of-nuke-tipped-Agni-V-next-month/2013/04/24/article1559208.ece>

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

Three Nuclear Subs to Join Russian Navy by Yearend

23 April 2013

MOSCOW, April 23 (RIA Novosti) - The Russian Navy will take delivery of two Project 955 Borey-class ballistic-missile submarines, the Alexander Nevsky and the Vladimir Monomakh, and one Yasen-class attack submarine, the Severodvinsk, by the end of the year, a Defense Ministry official said on Tuesday.

Everything is going according to plan and there will be "no delays," said Andrei Vernigora, director of the ministry's state defense contracts department, refuting reports the Alexander Nevsky would only be put into service only in 2014.

Alexander Nevsky is due to be commissioned with the Navy in September, he added. The boat has been undergoing trials at the Sevmash shipyard since 2012. A Bulava ballistic missile will be test-launched from the submarine in the summer, a Navy official told RIA Novosti in late March.

Alexander Nevsky is the second Borey-class submarine. The first, the Yury Dolgoruky, entered service with the Northern Fleet in January, and the third, the Vladimir Monomakh, was floated out last December and will start trials in the White Sea in June, United Shipbuilding Corporation President Andrei Dyachkov said earlier this month.

The Sevmash shipyard will start construction this year of two more Borey-class Project 955A submarines - the Alexander Suvorov and the Mikhail Kutuzov.

Borey class submarines are to become the mainstay of the Navy's strategic nuclear deterrent, replacing the ageing Project 941 (NATO Typhoon class) and Project 667 class (Delta-3 and Delta-4) boats.

A total of eight Borey-class submarines are to be built for the Russian Navy by 2020.

Sevmash said in August it hoped to hand the Severodvinsk attack submarine over to the Russian Navy by the end of 2012.

The Severodvinsk carried out a series of cruise-missile test-firings in November earlier including the test-launch of a supersonic cruise missile at a land target. Laid down in 1993, Severodvinsk is one of eight Yasen-class boats being built for the Russian Navy.

The multirole attack submarine has a submerged displacement of 13,800 tons, length of 119 meters, speed of 31 knots, and can dive to 600 meters. It has a crew of 90 including 32 officers.

It is armed with 3M55 Oniks (SS-N-26) and 3M54 (SS-N-27) Kalibr cruise missiles, torpedoes, and mines.

http://en.rian.ru/military_news/20130423/180801068/Three-Nuclear-Subs-to-Join-Russian-Navy-by-Yearend.html

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Times of India – India



Russia Studying US Missile Defence Moves, still Seeks Guarantees

Reuters

April 23, 2013

BRUSSELS: Russia is studying changes to the US missile defence programme, but still wants guarantees that the system would not be used against Russia, foreign minister Sergei Lavrov said on Tuesday.

US and NATO plans to build an anti-missile shield around Western Europe to protect against attack from Iran and North Korea have been a major irritant in relations with Russia, which fears the system's interceptors could eventually shoot down its long-range nuclear missiles.

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.

This latter type of missile had caused most concern to Moscow, which believed it could be used to shoot down Russian strategic missiles. US officials hope the change will end the standoff with Moscow.

Lavrov said he discussed the issue in his talks at NATO headquarters on Tuesday where he met NATO ministers, including his US counterpart John Kerry.

"We are studying the proposals conveyed by the American side to us to further deepen the dialogue on missile defence cooperation. We are studying these proposals and the current developments and plans of the United States in this field," Lavrov told a news conference at NATO headquarters.

"We are ready for dialogue but cooperation could be only equitable, with clear-cut guarantees," Lavrov said.

http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-04-23/europe/38762081_1_nato-plans-sergei-lavrov-missile

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

Russia Launches Rail-Mobile ICBM Project

23 April 2013

MOSCOW, April 23 (RIA Novosti) - Russia's Moscow Institute of Thermal Technology has started an R&D program to develop new rail-mobile intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) systems, Deputy Defense Minister Yury Borisov said on Tuesday.

The work is in the initial stages, he said, adding the cost of the program has yet to be determined. He provided no timeframe for the program.

The Moscow Institute of Thermal Technology is the developer of the Bulava (submarine-based) and Topol and Yars (land-based) ballistic missile systems.

A prototype system could be deployed by 2020, a Russian defense industry official told RIA Novosti in December. The new missiles will be half the weight of their decommissioned Soviet analogues, allowing them to fit into one railcar, he added.

The original rail-mobile system included SS-24 Scalpel missiles which weighed 104 tons, required three locomotives to move, and were so heavy that they damaged railroad tracks. The missiles were based on trains in order to make them harder to find than stationary launchers, complicating a counter-strike.

The Soviet military deployed its first rail-portable long-range missile in 1987, and had 12 of them by 1991. Rail-mobile missiles were removed from service in 2002 and the last base dismantled in 2007 under the START II arms reduction treaty with the United States.



However, the treaty's successor, START III, agreed in 2010, does not prohibit development of rail-mobile ICBMs.

Russian military analyst Alexander Kononov said last year this apparent return to cumbersome Soviet concepts, even in revamped form, was a "bad idea" and that missile trains were outdated.

http://en.rian.ru/military_news/20130423/180797933/Russia-Launches-Rail-Mobile-ICBM-Project.html

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Global Security Newswire

Pentagon Eyes Smaller Role in Russian WMD Disposal

April 24, 2013

By Diane Barnes, Global Security Newswire

WASHINGTON -- The United States' work to destroy Soviet-era unconventional arms in Russia could be getting "less important" now that many projects have been completed, a senior Defense Department official said on Tuesday.

An agreement set to lapse in June has enabled Russia to participate in the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction initiative, which for more than 20 years has provided U.S. financial and technical backing for WMD destruction in former Soviet states and beyond. Moscow has said it would not extend the deal in its current form, but the sides have been in negotiations to prepare a follow-on arrangement.

The CTR program as of Dec. 31 had eliminated 7,610 nuclear warheads and 908 ICBMs, quantities greater than four-fifths of the destruction goals the program aims to meet for each system by 2017, according to data from a nonprofit organization recently established by former Senator Richard Lugar (R-Ind.).

The program had already met several targets, including elimination of all 155 nuclear-capable bombers slated for dismantlement as well as destruction of 906 nuclear-capable aircraft-fired missiles. However, nearly one-third of targeted Russian chemical warfare agents -- 1,757.4 metric tons of material -- still awaited disposal.

"I think, practically, a lot of the work in Russia is really coming to completion so ... the actual work is probably less important at this point, although I don't ever want to underplay or undersell it," Madelyn Creedon, assistant Defense secretary for global affairs, told the Senate Armed Services Emerging Threats and Capabilities Subcommittee.

"We're going to change, obviously, how we work," Creedon said, adding a significant number of Pentagon-backed CTR operations are "on a natural glide path for completion" in coming years.

"We want to make sure that as we transition out of these programs that Russia is going to be able to sustain them, [and] that they have the budget making and funding capability to sustain these programs," she said. The Obama administration requested a small budget increase for Nunn-Lugar operations in fiscal 2014, even as it sought cuts to other threat reduction accounts.

Creedon described a continued need for CTR operations to address certain dangers around the world, including those from weapon-usable biological materials. Potential areas of focus might presently be "underaddressed ... and the bio threat sort of fits in that one at the moment," she said.

The Pentagon official stressed the importance of maintaining a strong "strategic relationship" enabling effective collaboration between the two governments against WMD threats from third countries.

She made separate reference to a number of Nunn-Lugar activities in countries outside the former Soviet bloc, including funding a new project aimed at preventing chemical weapons from being smuggled into Jordan from Syria. While offering no operational specifics, Creedon described the effort as the "second portion" of a broader push to increase security along the Jordanian border. Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel last week said the United States was providing "training and equipment to detect and stop any chemical weapons transfers" between the countries.

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The initiative is intended to help "prevent the leakage or the proliferation primarily of chemical weapons but also of technology," Creedon said in response to a question from Senator Kay Hagan (D-N.C.). "We're also working with several of the other border countries and we've also done a fair amount of work with the Jordanian military, helping them to also be able to respond in some sort of a chemical environment."

The United States is studying indications that Syrian President Bashar Assad's regime has carried out chemical strikes against rebels in the country's 2-year-old civil war. President Obama has said use or proliferation of arms from Syria's sizable chemical warfare stockpile would necessitate a strong response by the United States.

The leader of the Nunn-Lugar initiative's main implementing body described additional Pentagon preparations to counter Syrian chemical threats. The Defense Threat Reduction Agency is cooperating with an arm of U.S. Strategic Command and another DOD anti-WMD planning office "to identify pockets of chemical weapons expertise, capabilities and equipment," DTRA Director Kenneth Myers said.

"We have developed internally an entity called the Regional Contingency Team to bring the three organizations together in an effective and efficient manner, and together we are synchronizing planning efforts across the combatant commands, identifying and applying specialized WMD knowledge and expertise to the challenges at hand," Myers said, adding officials were moving to "mitigate the gaps that might currently exist."

<http://www.nti.org/gsn/article/russian-wmd-destruction-could-be-getting-less-important-us/>

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The Hindu Business Line – India
April 26, 2013

China Intended to Limit US Operations in West Pacific: Pentagon

By Press Trust of India (PTI)

Washington, Apr 26: Expressing concerns over the pace at which China is increasing its defence budget and rapidly modernising its armed forces, the Pentagon has said that the aim of the regional hegemon is to limit US's ability to operate in Western Pacific.

"The concern that we have is the pace of this military expenditure as well as the scope of the investments. China's investing in a comprehensive modernisation of its military," David Helvey, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence for the East Asia Asian and Pacific Security Affairs, told Senators during a Congressional hearing.

Responding to questions, Helvey said China's defence budget now stands at \$ 120 billion and has been growing at 10 per cent per annum for past two decades now.

"The challenge is that there is not a whole lot of transparency in terms of what China's military spending," he said.

The US, he said, is paying good attention to a number of capabilities that China is building now.

"China's investments in its nuclear and nuclear-capable forces is something that we're watching very carefully; investments in its undersea warfare capabilities, including submarines both nuclear-powered and conventionally diesel-powered submarines, as well as its long-range conventional precision strike weapons systems, both ballistic and cruise missiles," Helvey said.

"These are part and parcel of what we in the Department of Defence refer to as an anti-access and area denial type of strategy, which, if put into place and executed, could be intended to limit the ability of the United States or other militaries from operating in the Western Pacific," the top Pentagon official told lawmakers.

However, the Pentagon official asserted that the recent decision of the Obama Administration to rebalance itself towards the Asia Pacific region is not aimed towards China.

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“The rebalance toward the Asia-Pacific is not about China. It’s about what we are doing with our allies and partners in the region, and China can potentially be a partner in this regard. It’s what we’re doing to support and sustain the regional political and economic system that has persisted for the past six decades,” he said.

Chairing the Congressional hearing, Senator Benjamin Cardin said the US must continue to engage China in a constructive dialogue and need it to understand and respect the cyber security concerns of the US, he said.

Noting that the US-China relationship is a central part of its overall rebalance efforts, Helvey said the US is continuously pursuing a more sustained and substantive military-to-military relationship.

“We believe it’s not only in the interests of both China and the United States but also in the region as a whole,” he said, adding, “In all our discussions with the Chinese we continue to urge the importance of increased communication between our militaries in enhanced transparency about the intentions behind China’s military modernisation.”

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/international/china-intended-to-limit-us-operations-in-west-pacific-pentagon/article4657401.ece>

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MyHealthNewsDaily.com

New Bird Flu: What the First 82 Cases Reveal

April 25, 2013

By Rachael Rettner, MyHealthNewsDaily, Senior Writer

Although health officials still haven't confirmed the species of animal that is the source of the H7N9 bird flu outbreak in China, most people who fell ill had contact with birds or pigs, according to a new report.

The report, published online Wednesday (April 24) in the New England Journal of Medicine, describes an investigation of the 82 people who were infected with the virus from the beginning of the outbreak (in February and March) through April 17.

So far, health officials know of 108 people who've fallen ill with the new strain of bird flu, 22 of whom have died, according to the World Health Organization.

The new report says that of the 77 patients who could report whether they had been in contact with animals, 59 patients, or 77 percent, reported recent exposure to animals, the report said. Most (76 percent) had contact with chickens (including four who were poultry workers), while 20 percent reported exposure to ducks, and 7 percent to swine, the report said.

The researchers said they suspect the source of H7N9 infections to be poultry. This agrees with the result of a study published today, which points to poultry markets as the likely source of H7N9 bird flu infections.

Other findings from the investigation of the 82 cases include:

- **H7N9 has a high death rate:** About 21 percent of patients who fell ill with the virus died. That's a higher death rate than that of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), which killed about 9.6 percent of those who contracted the virus between 2002 and 2003. However, the new bird flu is so far not as deadly as the H5N1 bird flu virus, which caused an outbreak in 2003 and 2004 and has a mortality rate of 60 percent.
- **It takes about four days to become very sick:** The average time between onset of H7N9 flu symptoms and hospitalization was 4.5 days, the researchers said. That's longer than the time between the onset of symptoms and hospitalization for the H5N1 strain of bird flu, which is about seven days, according to earlier studies.
- **Most patients are male:** Seventy-three percent of these cases in the study were male. Patients ranged in age from 2 to 89, but 46 percent of cases occurred in people ages 65 and older.
- **No confirmed human-to-human transmission:** Nearly all of the 82 cases were not connected, and they occurred across six regions of China. In two cases, health officials could not rule out the possibility that sick



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individuals caught the virus from family members. However, there is no evidence of sustained human-to-human transmission.

More investigation is needed not only to identify patients who may be sick with the virus, but also to determine risk factors for becoming ill (some people may not get sick), the researchers said.

A ban on the sale of poultry in market stalls, disinfection of markets or market closures may need to be considered to prevent the spread of the virus from animals to people, the researchers said.

Pass it on: An investigation of 82 people infected with the new bird flu virus shows most who fell ill had contact with birds or pigs.

<http://www.myhealthnewsdaily.com/3762-bird-flu-investigation-cases.html>

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Albuquerque Journal – Albuquerque, NM
OPINION/Guest Columns

Nuclear Defense still a Big Issue

By Ed Feulner, President, The Heritage Foundation
Saturday, April 20, 2013

Almost everyone knows the acronym “EMT.” We know that emergency medical technicians will arrive in a hurry if someone calls for an ambulance. Less familiar is the acronym “EMP.” But if an electromagnetic pulse were to hit the United States, we’d need a lot more than an ambulance to fix the problems that would result.

That’s because an EMP is a high-intensity burst of electromagnetic energy that causes severe current and voltage surges. The result: all electronic devices within the line of sight would be burned out. Cell phones and microwaves would be toast, along with all the other devices we rely on in our daily lives.

How big a line of sight are we talking? A single EMP could, in a flash, shut down the entire power grid and transportation systems over a large region of the country. Tens of millions of Americans would suddenly find themselves in a situation that’s not only inconvenient, but life-threatening.

EMPs have two basic causes. One is natural. They can be generated by geomagnetic storms, or “space weather.” A solar flare can cause one. The other cause is man-made: nuclear and radio-frequency weapons. A nuclear warhead detonated at the right altitude could put you back about two centuries in a hurry. A lot of people would wind up wishing they had an old-fashioned bomb shelter in the backyard.

Sound a bit overblown? According to some critics, yes. To New York Times reporter William J. Broad, for example, the EMP threat is “science fiction.”

Tell that to the congressionally mandated Commission to Assess the Threat to the United States from Electromagnetic Pulse Attack. Its members called a high-altitude nuclear EMP one of the few ways an enemy could inflict “catastrophic” damage on the United States.

“The commission’s report is no exercise in science fiction,” writes Heritage Foundation nuclear experts James Carafano and Owen Graham. “It presents the consensus view of the defense and intelligence communities, as well as the nuclear weapon labs. These sober national security experts don’t use the word ‘catastrophic’ lightly.”

They’re not alone. A second commission, the Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States, independently re-examined the EMP threat and reached the same conclusion. No fewer than five bipartisan commissions and independent U.S. government studies have made it clear that an EMP would place our critical infrastructure – and by extension, the American people – at great risk.

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And what's the most effective way to get a nuclear weapon to a position where it can be detonated to create an EMP? Where it can cause maximum damage to the U.S. electrical grid and other elements of our infrastructure? A ballistic missile. What are rogue nations such as North Korea trying to acquire? Ballistic missiles.

Which is one of the reasons it's crucial that we get serious about building a comprehensive missile defense.

The Obama administration has taken one important step. In the wake of North Korea's most recent (and particularly bellicose) round of saber-rattling and missile testing, it has reversed its previous policy to cut missile-defense interceptors in Alaska. Those interceptors are back in the budget now.

But there's a lot more we can be doing to protect ourselves. We have a rudimentary missile defense in place, but we need a network with land, sea, air and space capabilities. That means locating sensors throughout the world and in space. It also means increasing the number of interceptors we have to counter long-range missiles. With a layered system, we have a much better chance of destroying an incoming missile.

It might be tempting to dismiss North Korea's threats as just talk. But as Korea expert Bruce Klingner notes: "It's talk until it happens. We thought it was just talk until they sank a South Korean ship in South Korean water. We thought it was just talk until they shelled a South Korean island."

We have the technological know-how and capability to do more than just hope for the best. Why take the chance?

<http://www.abqjournal.com/main/2013/04/20/opinion/nuclear-defense-still-a-big-issue.html>

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The London Guardian – U.K.

OPINION/Comment

Obama Accused of Nuclear U-Turn as Guided Weapons Plan Emerges

Plan to spend \$10bn on updating nuclear bombs goes against 2010 pledge not to deploy new weapons, say critics

By Julian Borger, diplomatic editor

Sunday, 21 April 2013

Barack Obama has been accused of renegeing on his disarmament pledges after it emerged the administration was planning to spend billions on upgrading nuclear bombs stored in Europe to make the weapons more reliable and accurate.

Under the plan, nearly 200 B61 gravity bombs stockpiled in Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy and Turkey would be given new tail fins that would turn them into guided weapons that could be delivered by stealth F35 fighter-bombers.

"This will be a significant upgrade of the US nuclear capability in Europe," said Hans Kristensen, a nuclear weapons expert at the Federation of Nuclear Scientists. "It flies directly in the face of the pledges Obama made in 2010 that he would not deploy new weapons."

In its Nuclear Posture Review in 2010, the US undertook to do reduce the role and numbers of its nuclear weapons, in part by not developing new nuclear warheads, and pledging it would not "support new military missions or provide for new military capabilities".

According to newly published budget figures, the US will spend about \$10bn (£6.5bn) on a life extension programme for the B61 bombs, and another \$1bn on adding controllable tail fins. Kristensen said the tail kit would give the B61 new capabilities, once some of the upgraded weapons were deployed as scheduled in Europe in 2019 or 2020.

"What will be going back to Europe will be a guided nuclear bomb," he said. "Especially when you combine it with F35 with stealth characteristics, that expands the targets you can hold at risk from Europe, because by placing the

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explosion closer to the target you can choose a lower explosive yield. That is very important as there is less radioactive fallout. For many people this is a great concern because it means making nuclear weapons more 'usable'."

The new B61 Mk12 will be a 50 kilotonne weapon, like most of the "tactical" nuclear bombs currently in Europe. The bigger, strategic versions of the B61, stockpiled in the US, would be discontinued. Some European countries, led by Germany, have attempted to get the American B61 bombs withdrawn from Europe on the grounds they serve no military purpose following the end of the cold war and that they represent a security risk because of the possibility of their theft by terrorists. But some eastern European states have resisted their withdrawal, fearing it would show a weakening of US commitment to defend them against Russia.

US administration officials say the addition of tail fins to the bomb does not represent a significant change in its mission and therefore does not break the 2010 pledge. They insist that Obama remains committed to the disarmament agenda he outlined in a 2009 landmark speech in Prague, in which he promised to work towards a world free of nuclear weapons.

Since then, the US signed the new Start treaty with Russia, limiting both sides' strategic arsenals to 1,550 deployed warheads each. This spring, Obama was expected to make a speech outlining proposals to make further cuts to about 1,100 warheads. But US officials have said the crisis over North Korea and the time needed to install a second-term national security team have delayed the speech.

Obama's national security adviser, Tom Donilon, went to Moscow earlier this month to deliver a message from the president to his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, which included proposals to cut the two countries' nuclear arsenals and finding a compromise in the long-running dispute over US plans for a missile defence system in Europe. Sources familiar with the talks described the Russian response as positive. Obama and Putin are to meet at the G8 meeting at Lough Erne in Northern Ireland in June, but it is unclear whether the new nuclear weapons cuts will be ready by then.

Joseph Cirincione, the president of the Ploughshares Fund, an arms control pressure group, said the B61 modernisation plans were largely driven by domestic political considerations but risked sending mixed messages to Russia at a time when Washington and Moscow needed to strike a deal.

"I'm convinced the president wants to continue his efforts to reform US nuclear policy," Cirincione said. "But the administration had a schizoid approach on this issue. They believe they have to buy off legislators with billions of dollars in expenditure in their states in order to get votes for arms control measures later.

"The billions of dollars we are lavishing on the B61 is criminal. This is billions of dollars spent on a weapon whose mission evaporated at the end of the cold war. It's clearly aimed at buying senators' votes."

- *This article was amended on 23 April 2013 to clarify that Hans Kristensen said the B61 tail kit would give the weapon new capabilities, but not that it would give it a new mission.*

Julian Borger is the Guardian's diplomatic editor. He was previously a correspondent in the US, the Middle East, eastern Europe and the Balkans.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/apr/21/obama-accused-nuclear-guided-weapons-plan>

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China U.S. Focus – Hong Kong, China
OPINION/Commentary

China Will Not Change Its Nuclear Policy

Yao Yunzhu, director of China-America Defense Relations, Academy of Military Science
April 22, 2013

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On April 16th the Information Office in the State Council of the People's Republic of China released its newest edition of its defense white paper. As usual, this document attracted immediate media attention and triggered wide-ranging discussions on the intentions and capabilities of the Chinese armed forces. One speculation has been that China might consider changes to its long-held no first use (NFU) nuclear policy (See James Acton, "Is China Changing Its Position on Nuclear Weapons?"), as the white paper has for the first time failed to reiterate China's pledge not to use nuclear weapons first.

A careful reading of this year's white paper and a study of all such papers since 1998 might easily explain this conspicuous absence of a key phrase most frequently repeated in Chinese official documents on defense and nuclear policy.

First, unlike previous editions which all have the title "China's National Defense", the latest edition has the specific title: "The Diversified Employment of China's Armed Forces", indicating that the white paper's format may have changed from a comprehensive elaboration to a more focused discussion on a specific subject. Major General Chen Zhou, a senior researcher and a key author of the white paper, explained in an interview that this is the first white paper that adopts a thematic approach, so that the subject can be dealt with more thoroughly. Compared with previous editions, this year's white paper has no section on "National Defense Policy", which usually carries the nuclear policy and the statement of the NFU commitment.

Second, in the section on the "Building and Development of China's Armed Forces", the force structure, missions and roles of the PLA Second Artillery Force are specified, stating that its nuclear component is "responsible for deterring other countries from using nuclear weapons against China, and carrying out nuclear counterattacks." This is in full conformity with China's NFU policy. In the section on "Defending National Sovereignty, Security and Territorial Integrity", the preparedness of the Second Artillery Force "in peacetime", "under a nuclear threat", and "under a nuclear attack" are respectively described, and the alert posture of the Second Artillery Force is also in full compliance with China's NFU nuclear policy. It is safe to say that the latest white paper provides more detailed information on how the PLA Second Artillery Force carries out the Nation's NFU policy.

In addition, the most recent re-affirmation of the NFU policy by a Chinese head of state was made by former President Hu Jintao at the March 2012 Nuclear Summit in Seoul. And it has been reiterated in all necessary policy documents and official statements since. There is no sign that China is going to change a policy it has wisely adopted and persistently upheld for half a century.

However, speculations on a possible change to the NFU policy have not been conjured up without reason. Calls for a policy change on the official NFU pledge are repeatedly heard in the Chinese media (including social media such as weibo). The concerns over the NFU commitment stem from two basic facts:

- 1) The Ballistic Missile Defense systems that the United States and its allies have deployed, or are planning to deploy, are capable of intercepting residue Chinese nuclear weapons launched for retaliation after it has already been attacked, thus potentially negating the deterrence effect of the Chinese nuclear arsenal.
- 2) The United States is developing a series of conventional strategic strike capabilities. Once deployed, they could have the capability to strike China's nuclear arsenal and make China's NFU policy redundant.

So far, no nuclear states have made it official policy to strike with strategic conventional capabilities against the nuclear weapons of another nuclear weapon state, although such capabilities are being developed for the declared purpose of neutralizing the WMD capabilities of nuclear proliferators. The cold war position of only using nuclear weapons against nuclear weapons still seems valid. However, the US Congress has passed the 2013 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which President Obama signed into law on Jan 2nd. It requests a report from the Commander of US Strategic Command by August 15th, to describe the alleged Chinese underground tunnel networks and to review the US capability to "neutralize" such networks with "conventional and nuclear forces." It seems to imply that a conventional strike against the Chinese nuclear weapon system is an option.



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For nearly half a century, China's NFU pledge has served as the cornerstone of its nuclear policy, and any change has required careful review and thorough debate. It is better for China and the rest of the world for China to uphold its NFU policy, rather than discredit such a commitment. To alleviate China's concerns, a constructive approach would be to assure the policy through nuclear policy dialogues, to establish a multilateral NFU agreement among all the nuclear weapon states, and to consider limiting or even prohibiting the use of nuclear weapons in a legally binding international agreement.

Major General Yao Yunzhu is the director of China-America Defense Relations, Academy of Military Science.

http://www.chinausfocus.com/peace-security/china-will-not-change-its-no-first-use-policy/?utm_source=Sinocism+Newsletter&utm_campaign=5a8f8b4d29-Sinocism04_24_13&utm_medium=email

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The China Post – Taiwan
OPINION/Editorial

Army Numbers Not Enough to Ensure Transparency in China

The China Post news staff
April 22, 2013

In China's eighth defense "white paper" published on Tuesday, titled "The Diversified Employment of China's Armed Forces," (中國武裝力量的多樣化運用), for the first time, the coded numbers of all 18 army combined corps of the PLA Army were published. And through this gesture, it seemed to some that the Chinese government embarked — at least symbolically — on a new era of transparency. The development actually came in two steps, given that state media began revealing army designations in January.

Secrecy has long shrouded even the numeric designations of the People's Liberation Army. For decades, whenever a military unit is mentioned, the word for "a," or "one" in Chinese (某) is the only determiner that is used by Chinese media.

Chinese commentators have pointed out that this may reflect the greater confidence China is presenting in strategic face-offs with other powers. Whereas secrecy was once the overarching concern with China's military announcements, perhaps the Chinese media is touting that their country no longer fears transparency.

It is true that the numerical designations of military units carry significance for their heritage of battles. A unit draws pride upon its combat experience, and the military uses history to exemplify particular units for illustrious performance to inspire an ideal. For China, the long years of shrouding even the most basic of military identifications indicates the extent to which the country has been anything but transparent.

The New York Times published an article Thursday by James Acton, a researcher at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, entitled "Is China relinquishing its position on nuclear weapons?" Acton draws attention to the absence of China's long-held "no first-use" pledge with regard to nuclear weapons, stating that since China's establishment as a nuclear power half a century ago, the "no first-use" pledge has been a cornerstone of its defense policy. He further calls for urgent attention on the part of Washington to negotiate with China to reissue the pledge because it is a measure of long-standing commitment to the containment of nuclear weapons.

"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," Acton points out. Not only has the pledge been omitted in the white paper, Acton points to a speech by China's President Xi Jinping addressing the second artillery force last December in which he stressed the nation's nuclear capabilities as a buttress for the unit's strategic mission. Notably, the pledge was left unmentioned. Combined, the international relations expert states that the shift is almost certainly not a "bureaucratic error."

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For Taiwan and for the broader East Asian region, it is especially critical that China's nuclear weapons policy is one that is reined in by caution and strategic antiproliferation efforts. Any allusion to striking first, even in the context of a presumed imminent strike on China, is combusive, especially when it is directed at countries such as Japan and South Korea. The former is engaged in territorial disputes with China, while the latter has heard voices calling for redeployment of nuclear weapons in the face of threats from North Korea.

A feel-good news story about President Xi was published on Thursday by Hong Kong's Ta Kung Pao, in which the pro-Beijing newspaper ran a lengthy feature on a purported exchange between Xi and a taxi driver in Beijing. In the alleged 8.2-km trip that took Xi to a high-end hotel, Xi reportedly asked for the driver's thoughts on party policies and echoed the layman's concern about pollution. At the end of the 27 yuan (US\$4.4) trip, Xi granted the star-struck cabby's request for an autograph.

Yet by the end of Thursday, the story was denied by official media. Ta Kung Pao retracted the story with an apology saying it was faulty reporting. The state-run Xinhua News Agency, which had confirmed the story earlier, agreed that it was false. As rumors continue to swirl over what actually happened that day, the story has become a case in point about the current state of Chinese transparency. The contrast with the white paper is striking. However far the government has come in achieving transparency, its media outlets have countered the progress of those steps.

So, perhaps the driver Guo can step forward and share his thoughts on the Chinese Ground Force's numerical designations as revealed in the white paper on Tuesday? Or, perhaps Ta Kung Pao can give a more detailed explanation of why the error was made — and whether the driver even exists at all.

<http://www.chinapost.com.tw/editorial/taiwan-issues/2013/04/22/376620/Army-numbers.htm>

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POLITICO.com

OPINION/Opinion Contributor

Nuclear Deterrence Still Matters

By ELBRIDGE COLBY

April 23, 2013

North Korea's recent belligerence reminds us that the threat of big war, including nuclear war, is not a thing of the past. After 20 years spent focused on humanitarian interventions, counterterrorism and counterinsurgency, we face a likely future of dealing with at least one nation, and ultimately probably more, armed with nuclear weapons and long-range ballistic missiles and an evident willingness to strike at us and our allies.

Needless to say, this has proved more than a little disconcerting. We thought we had buried these kind of fears with the Cold War. Indeed, we had become accustomed to a feeling of, if not invulnerability, then the next best thing. Few worried much about Russia or China launching a nuclear attack, and North Korea and Iran couldn't hit us. And just in case, we were developing an impressive array of missile defenses and strike capabilities.

So when North Korea recently successfully tested a nuclear weapon (its third such test) after conducting a rocket launch in December that marked a major step forward in its ambitions to develop an intercontinental ballistic missile that could reach the United States, our first — and quite natural — reaction has been to focus on beefing up our missile defenses at Fort Greely and possibly on the East Coast.

This is well and good — the United States should seek to field a capable and effective missile defense system against North Korean (and other rogue states') ICBMs. Such a defense would provide protection for Americans and reduce any coercive leverage Pyongyang would acquire from its long-range nuclear weapons program. The problem, though, is that U.S. missile defenses aren't fully there yet — and are vulnerable to advances by North Korea in its missile technology, advances Pyongyang can be relied on to pursue.

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These facts are actually not points of partisan contention. As a judicious but hard-hitting recent National Academy of Sciences study by a distinguished group of experts and former officials concluded, the U.S. missile defense against long-range North Korean missiles has been developed to deal “with an early generation North Korean threat of very limited numbers and capability,” and the systems “have shortcomings that limit their effectiveness against even modestly improved threats.” In other words, don’t bet the farm on it. At the same time, U.S. conventional strike capabilities are also limited — especially against the kind of mobile missile systems the North Koreans are busy fielding.

At first glance, this seems extremely worrisome. If we can’t be sure we can completely defend against or pre-empt North Korean missiles, are we helpless before Pyongyang’s tree-shaking blackmail and the threat of a North Korean attack? The answer, fortunately is no. But it’s a no with strings attached. The reason we aren’t helpless is because what ultimately will keep Pyongyang from striking us — what deters them, in old speak — is the threat of punishing retaliation from us, and above all from the prospect of nuclear retaliation. North Korea’s leaders seem, in loose terms, “crazy” — they are morally detestable, hard-to-predict risk takers — but they aren’t “crazy” in the sense of a group that’s looking to commit mass suicide for quixotic objectives. Indeed, no country able to develop and field nuclear weapons and sophisticated missile and other military systems is at all likely to answer to the latter description.

Missile defenses and conventional strike capabilities, then, are a cushion; nuclear deterrence is the foundation. Yet the amount of time and energy devoted to missile defense and, to a lesser extent, conventional strike seems to outweigh that devoted to nuclear deterrence in an inverse correlation to their respective actual influence. Indeed, when nuclear deterrence does come up, it usually seems to be in the context of the need to abolish it.

This wouldn’t be much of a problem if nuclear deterrence were easy or simple. Against a country like North Korea, however, it isn’t. This is not due to any lack of capability to ruin the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, but rather because the North Korean leadership may well doubt our resolve to use such force. And such doubts aren’t without justification: Would any president be inclined to get really tough with North Korea over anything but the gravest of disputes when such a decision might actually trigger a nuclear war?

Fortunately, however, there are things we can do to lessen the pointedness of this awful question. But it would involve some changes in how we talk and do business about our nuclear policy. The most important thing is for the U.S. government — and especially for the president personally — to give Pyongyang the distinct impression that it — and he — are willing to use nuclear weapons against them if push truly comes to shove. The president doesn’t need to be, nor should he be, aggressive or domineering — but he should seem resolute and determined. When the president talks about nuclear weapons, therefore, he should downplay the rhetoric of abolition and reducing reliance on nuclear weapons, rhetoric that, whatever caveats are added, telegraphs that he is at best unlikely and at worst unprepared to use these terrible weapons.

This change wouldn’t rule out an ambitious arms control and nonproliferation agenda, but it would change their logic. Instead of emphasizing reductions in nuclear weapons with Russia on the way to a nuclear-free world, for instance, the U.S. could and should emphasize stabilizing measures. Such measures can be designed to show that conventional cruise missiles and missile defenses do not threaten Russia’s strategic deterrent, for instance, lessening the frightening chances of accidental escalation if the U.S. launched Alaska-based interceptors against a North Korean missile along a trajectory that Russians might find genuinely threatening.

There also are concrete things the U.S. could do to make the president’s terrible choice somewhat less terrible. For one thing, the military currently lacks weapons that can effectively attack North Korea’s leadership in the hardened and deeply buried bunkers they are so fond of. To rectify this, the U.S. should restart its program for a more effective “bunker-buster” nuclear weapon. Sadly, the modernization program for this important capability fell victim to the politics of the early 2000s. The Obama administration should jump-start the Clinton administration’s aborted program to develop a better one. Doing so would send a strong signal to Pyongyang and to our allies.

It bears emphasizing that the point of all this would be to avoid war while protecting our interests. Indeed, a tougher posture might well be coupled with an open hand. But there’s no escaping that preventing aggression or coercion by



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regimes like North Korea's requires an unpleasant, and to many, even repugnant firmness. Past American leaders knew this well. Our current and future ones will know it, too.

Elbridge Colby is a principal analyst at CNA, where he advises the U.S. government on strategic issues. He previously served on the New START negotiations for the Department of Defense and as an adviser to the Congressional Strategic Posture Commission.

<http://www.politico.com/story/2013/04/nuclear-threat-north-korea-cold-war-90515.html>

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National Review Online
OPINION/Commentary
April 25, 2013

Our Much-Needed Missile Defense

Now is the time for the United States to upgrade its missile-defense technology.

By Peter Brookes

Our attention is focused on the terrorist attack in Boston last week, but just two weeks ago we were gripped by North Korean threats of a new Korean War and the possibility of New York's being hit attacked by long-range missiles. While North Korean promises of thermonuclear war have faded from the news for the moment, the threat hasn't gone away for good.

The national-security challenges our country faces from the advances in ballistic-missile and nuclear-weapon programs continue apace. Global missile- and nuclear-proliferation problems are real, and they can't be ignored. So the development and deployment of missile-defense programs must be a priority for American security.

Take North Korea. Bluster, belligerence, brinkmanship, and blackmail are routinely directed at Washington. Yet Pyongyang's actual ability to carry out threats against us is improving – and significantly.

In December, North Korea launched a long-range, multi-stage ballistic missile that put a small satellite into orbit. The real concern wasn't the satellite itself, but Pyongyang's ability to put a satellite into space *at all*. If you can put a satellite of as little as 1,000 pounds into orbit, you can launch a nuclear warhead toward a target anywhere on the Earth's surface.

Then, in February, North Korea conducted its third nuclear test since 2006, which may have used a smaller test apparatus of the sort that would be needed for the development of an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) warhead.

There is plenty of debate within the U.S. intelligence community as to whether North Korea already has a functional nuclear warhead that it can mate with the missiles of various ranges currently in its arsenal. But there is little doubt that we will be near, or at, the top of the targeting list when they do have one.

Then there's Iran. Although they are also out of the news at the moment, Iranian centrifuges continue to spin, producing kilograms of low- and medium-enriched uranium, which — if further enriched — could be used in nuclear weapons.

The ever-cautious International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the United Nations' nuclear watchdog, suggests that Iran may be involved in the development of a nuclear weapon for that fissile material.

While publicly available intelligence estimates differ, Tehran may have the wherewithal to produce its first nuclear weapon in the very near future.

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*United States Air Force Counterproliferation Research & Education | Maxwell AFB, Montgomery AL
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Iran's ballistic-missile program isn't any more comforting. In 2009, Tehran was able to put a satellite into space using its own launch vehicle. Today, the U.S. government estimates that Iran will have an ICBM by 2015, adding to what is already the largest ballistic-missile arsenal in the Middle East.

While seemingly obvious, it's worth pointing out that the principles of physics that would allow North Korea to put a warhead anywhere on the Earth's surface also apply to Iran.

Another inconvenient fact is that both the North Korean and the Iranian nuclear and missile programs could move along faster than currently assessed if either receives outside assistance — including from each other, which some analysts strongly believe is ongoing.

We shouldn't overlook the Chinese or the Russians, who are also modernizing their strategic arsenals.

Beijing has moved its nuclear arsenal from silo-based to road-mobile systems and is sending its nuclear forces to sea aboard submarines. Moscow still relies heavily on its strategic forces and is developing, or deploying, new sea- and land-based ICBMs.

The obvious question is: What should we do?

As we all know, diplomacy and punitive economic sanctions haven't stopped North Korean or Iranian missile or nuclear programs — despite years of trying. Military responses are filled with risks, and Cold War-era "Duck and Cover!" isn't a good alternative, either.

Nothing makes more sense than investing in American missile defenses.

With advances in missile defense, a robust, layered, capable system will not only protect us from enemy ballistic missiles and their nuclear and other payloads (e.g., chemical, biological, conventional, or electromagnetic pulse), but it will provide decision-makers with additional policy options beyond massive retaliation.

In addition, due to missile defense's ability to blunt the effectiveness of the ballistic-missile threat, it may well deter aggression with these weapons against us in the first place.

The best option now is to move forward vigorously with funding, developing, and deploying American missile-defense systems to protect the homeland, to protect our troops overseas, and to protect our allies and friends from the growing nuclear and missile menaces around the world.

Peter Brookes is a Heritage Foundation senior fellow and a former deputy assistant secretary of defense.

<http://www.nationalreview.com/article/346579/our-much-needed-missile-defense>

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The Indian Express – India

No-First-Use

By C. Raja Mohan

Friday, April 26, 2013

No-First-Use

The absence of a standard formulation on the no-first-use of nuclear weapons in the latest Chinese defence white paper issued last week has raised questions about a likely evolution in Beijing's nuclear doctrine. The previous white paper, issued in 2011, had reaffirmed Beijing's well known position that China adheres to a policy of "no-first-use of nuclear weapons at any time and in any circumstances". It also underlined Beijing's unequivocal commitment that "under no circumstances will it use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states or nuclear-weapon-free-zones".



China watchers picked up the disappearance of this phraseology that has remained essentially unchanged ever since Beijing declared itself a nuclear weapon state in 1964. Given its centrality to China's declared nuclear canon, its absence is considered significant by many. To be fair, in its few references to the nuclear doctrine, the latest edition of the white paper emphasises deterrence and nuclear counterattacks. There is no hint of an explicit shift to a strategy of nuclear first-use. It is also important to note that the 2013 paper is not a comprehensive summary of China's defence strategy, conventional or nuclear. It focuses on a specific theme — the diverse roles envisaged for China's armed forces.

Some analysts, however, insist that potential changes in China's its no-first-use pledge might be linked to growing doubts, at home and abroad, about the credibility of Beijing's current nuclear doctrine. They point to the fact that at the heart of any no-first-use pledge is a robust nuclear force capable of absorbing the attack by an adversary and responding with a retaliatory strike. Given the relatively small size of its strategic nuclear forces, these analysts say, Beijing can't bet that they will survive a first strike and be available for a riposte. China must either significantly expand its nuclear arsenal or switch to a posture that calls for first use of nuclear weapons under certain circumstances.

Missile Defence

The one big impulse for a possible change in China's nuclear doctrine is Beijing's growing concern about US missile defences deployed close to China in the Asian theatre. The US insists that its missile defence deployments are directed at the threat from North Korea and are meant to reassure its treaty allies South Korea and Japan. Beijing is not convinced and points to the danger of US missile defences degrading the deterrent capability of China's strategic nuclear forces.

At an international conference on nuclear issues in Washington earlier this month, a Chinese delegate Gen. Yao Yunzhu vigorously articulated China's objections. American deployment of missile defences in East Asia is a "very, very disturbing factor having implications for the calculation of China's nuclear and strategic arsenal".

The Chinese general blamed the US missile defence collaboration with Japan and South Korea for North Korea's determined pursuit of a nuclear weapon programme. Yao also dismissed speculation in the Western and Russian media that China has a large undeclared arsenal of nearly 3,000 nuclear weapons. While emphasising China's commitment to "minimum deterrence", Yao said, "A certain amount of opaqueness is an integral part of China's no-first-use policy".

Precision Strikes

Accurate missiles armed with powerful conventional weapons add another layer of complexity to China's nuclear doctrine and its dynamic interaction with the US forces forward deployed in Asia. The Second Artillery Force, the white paper says, is at the core of China's strategic deterrence and is "mainly composed of nuclear and conventional missile forces". "It is primarily responsible for deterring other countries from using nuclear weapons against China and carrying nuclear counterattacks and precision strikes with conventional missiles".

The US, too, is developing advanced conventional missiles to counter the China's growing capacity to target American forward military bases and aircraft carriers. The difficulties of differentiating between conventionally armed and nuclear-tipped missiles mean a rapid lowering of the nuclear threshold in a crisis involving the US, its Asian allies and China.

Given the new emerging instability in the US-China nuclear equation and its profound interconnection with the shifting conventional military balance in Asia, many American think tanks are calling for a substantive arms control dialogue between Washington and Beijing. Beijing has resisted those calls, at least until now. If and when those talks occur, they are likely to be on Chinese terms given the American eagerness for such an engagement.

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

<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/nofirstuse/1107674/0>



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The Washington Free Beacon

OPINION/Article

First Strike

China omission of no-first-use nuclear doctrine in defense white paper signals policy shift

By Bill Gertz

April 26, 2013

China omitted a reference to its no-first-use strategic nuclear weapons doctrine in a recently published government white paper, indicating Beijing shifted the policy as part of its large-scale nuclear arms buildup.

The omission, along with recent comments by a senior Chinese military officer, is raising new concerns among Pentagon officials about China's nearly opaque strategic arms buildup.

Chinese Maj. Gen. Yao Yunzhu, a senior researcher at China's Academy of Military Science, revealed earlier this month that China is considering expanding its growing nuclear arsenal in response to U.S. missile defense deployments and upgrades.

"The current development, especially the deployment of missile-defense systems in East Asia would be, in Chinese eyes, would be a very, very disturbing factor having implications for the calculation of China's nuclear and strategic arsenal," she told a conference April 8 at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

The statement was initially viewed as the general seeking to exploit U.S. concerns about China's nuclear buildup as a way to force the Pentagon to scale back missile defenses, which China regards as undermining its large missile force.

Yao then stated that China's long-held no-first-use nuclear policy requires "a certain amount of opaqueness." Some U.S. officials and private experts said the comment undermines China's long-held strategic nuclear policy. The no-first-use policy states China will not be the first to use nuclear arms in a conflict, and it would not use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states.

If China abandons the policy, the United States will need to expand its aging nuclear forces to better maintain deterrence against both China and Russia.

The white paper omission follows periodic statements and writings by Chinese officials since the late 1990s that are undermining U.S. intelligence estimates, which for several decades have predicted China's stockpile of strategic nuclear arms will remain relatively small, limited to around 240 warheads.

Russian and private U.S. analysts recently disputed the U.S. assessments and have said the Chinese nuclear arsenal could be far larger, possibly a stockpile of as many as 1,500 to 3,000 warheads.

The Pentagon's 2010 annual report on the Chinese military said the no-first-use nuclear policy is ambiguous and Chinese officials have not clarified it.

"There is some ambiguity over the conditions under which China's [no-first-use] policy would apply, including whether strikes on what China considers its own territory, demonstration strikes, or high altitude bursts would constitute a first use," the report said.

"Moreover, some PLA officers have written publicly of the need to spell out conditions under which China might need to use nuclear weapons first; for example, if an enemy's conventional attack threatened the survival of China's nuclear force, or of the regime itself. However, there has been no indication that national leaders are willing to attach such nuances and caveats to China's no-first-use doctrine."



Additionally, China is known to engage in Soviet-style strategic deception regarding its nuclear forces. U.S. officials have said the deception efforts include masking nuclear forces as part of a calculated effort to undermine foreign nations' assessments of its strategic forces and the forces that are required to deter or counter them.

Larry M. Wortzel, a former military intelligence official who worked in China, revealed in an article published last year that China appears to have circulated a suspect "top secret" document affirming its announced plan to maintain a small nuclear weapons force. The document appeared aimed at bolstering "everything that the arms control community would advocate about building down U.S. nuclear forces toward 'nuclear zero,'" Wortzel stated.

A Chinese U.N. official once said the no-first use policy wouldn't apply to a Chinese response to a foreign invasion of Taiwan, and in 2005 a general said China would use nuclear weapons against the United States in response to conventional-tipped cruise missile attacks on China.

Chinese military writings also call for using all weapons, both nuclear and non-nuclear, in conflicts to assure victory.

Yao's comments suggesting a shift in the no-first-use policy were magnified a week later with the release of the annual Chinese defense white paper. The paper omitted all references to the no-first-use nuclear arms policy. The annual white paper is considered the most authoritative statement of policy by the ruling Communist Party of China on military affairs and doctrine.

A U.S. official familiar with strategic arms doctrine said several key Obama administration policymakers favor the U.S. adoption of a Chinese-style no-first-use policy for the United States. The official said such a policy would severely undermine global and regional deterrence and likely trigger several allies that currently do not have nuclear arsenals to build their own.

China opposes U.S. plans to expand missile defenses in Asia by adding 14 new long-range missile interceptors to the 30 currently deployed in Alaska and California.

Uncertainty about the number of nuclear arms in the Chinese stockpile increased last year with the disclosure that China may have hundreds more nuclear warheads hidden in tunnels than the approximately 240 warheads estimated by U.S. intelligence agencies.

Richard Fisher, an expert on China's military with the International Assessment and Strategy Center, said the white paper omission is evidence that China "quite clearly has eroded the no-first-use policy."

"The simple fact is that there is no verifiable body of official documents or consistent data that assures us of China's nuclear posture," Fisher said in an interview. "We cannot say we know China's nuclear order of battle or their nuclear doctrine. This non-transparency is further sustained by a body of conflicting statements by Chinese officials."

After the defense white paper was published, Chinese spokesmen sought to play down the omission of the nuclear doctrine.

Yao on Wednesday published an article asserting that the new white paper did not change the no-first-use nuclear policy.

She did not seek to clarify the policy in the article. However the general used an op-ed in the Center for Strategic and International Studies Pacific Forum to attack congressional legislation passed last year that requires the Pentagon to more accurately assess China's nuclear forces. She also said the legislation would undermine calls in China to jettison the no-first-use policy by hardliners. The article was later published in the state-controlled China Daily newspaper.

"All of this only serves to reemphasize the importance of the administration complying with the congress's requests for information about the nuclear forces," Fisher said.

<http://freebeacon.com/first-strike/>

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Sydney Morning Herald – Australia

OPINION/Article

All the Toys, but Can China Fight?

China's Xi Jinping has warned his corruption-riddled military to clean up its act and be ready for battle.

April 27, 2013

By John Garnaut, Beijing

Every morning at 6am, more than two dozen of the world's leading submarine watchers, aviation experts, government specialists, imagery analysts, cryptanalysts and linguists gather at the headquarters of the US Pacific Fleet in Hawaii. Their job is to probe the overnight intelligence reports to guide the activities and strategies of the six aircraft carrier groups, 180 ships and 1500 aircraft that constantly patrol the Pacific and Indian oceans.

The morning meetings are convened by the fleet's top intelligence officer, Captain James Fanell, and are supposed to cover activities emanating anywhere "from Hollywood to Bollywood", as the head of US Pacific Command, Admiral Samuel Locklear, likes to put it. But the group never takes long before zeroing in on the country driving the military and diplomatic "pivot" to Asia, which was announced by President Barack Obama in Canberra in November 2011 and which now has support from almost every maritime nation in east and south-east Asia.

"Every day it's about China; it's about a China who's at the centre of virtually every activity and dispute in the maritime domain in the east Asian region," said Fanell, reading from prepared remarks at a US Naval Institute conference in San Diego on January 31.

Fanell spelt out in rare detail the reasons the US is shifting 60 per cent of its naval assets to the Pacific, including a rotation of 2500 marines near Darwin. He was blunt: The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy is focused on war, and it is expanding into the "blue waters" explicitly to counter the US Pacific Fleet. "My assessment is the PLA Navy has become a very capable fighting force."

Some were shocked to hear Fanell detail the extent and intensity of China's carefully orchestrated maritime provocations, especially coming from an officer whose job may make him more of an expert on Beijing's naval manoeuvres than anyone outside China. Others wondered whether the Pacific Fleet was perhaps lobbying for a greater share of the US military budget or wider authority to act by magnifying the threat.

But it may well be that the most contestable of Fanell's assertions were about the Chinese military's capabilities, not its provocations. For the question on many minds in Washington, Beijing and Canberra is this: Can China actually fight? And the person most anxious to learn the answer is China's new leader: Xi Jinping.

The 59-year-old new president has stated clearly that the military is central to his vision for China. "We must ensure there is unison between a prosperous country and strong military," he said in a pep talk to sailors on board a guided-missile destroyer in December. But his ambition to have a strong, professional fighting force is greatly complicated by an even bigger question that has occupied every Communist Party leader since Mao uttered his famous dictum that "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun". Can Xi be sure that the PLA will always be loyal to the party, and specifically to him?

Xi may be able to build a military that is either modern and capable or personally loyal and political. But many in China now believe he can't have both.

The PLA today boasts a 2.25 million-strong standing army and its capabilities have been greatly strengthened by two decades of double-digit budget increases.

Xi has taken charge at a moment when China has been surprising the US and shocking its neighbours with the speedy development of new hardware and the aggressive manner in which it has deployed those tools to support its expanding ambitions.

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Top US intelligence analysts and generals have admitted to being caught out by the 2011 flight-testing of China's new J-20 stealth fighter. They were dumbfounded by China's subsequent deployment of the East Wind 21D, the world's first anti-ship ballistic missile, dubbed the "assassin's mace" in China and "the carrier killer" in the West. China is on track to triple its fleet of maritime strike aircraft by 2020, according to the US Congressional Research Service.

China is simultaneously developing and producing seven types of submarine and surface warships. That's after a decade in which it quadrupled its number of modern submarines, including nuclear submarines designed to carry nuclear-armed ballistic missiles. It has massively expanded production of corvettes, frigates, amphibious ships, and destroyers. In September, China launched its first aircraft carrier, which it has flagged as a training platform for others to come.

The backstop for all these new platforms and capabilities is the PLA's strategic missile force, which possesses conventional ballistic missiles that can destroy satellites in space, as well as several hundred nuclear weapons.

"No other great power today enjoys China's ability to dedicate such vast amounts of capital and personnel so dynamically to such a wide range of new programs," says Andrew Erickson, an expert on PLA technology at the US Naval War College's China Maritime Studies Institute. "China enjoys unparalleled flexibility and adaptability and could increase production rapidly if desired."

The dizzying display of hard power is sending fear and awe throughout the Asia-Pacific region. But Xi, it seems, is unconvinced that all this shiny hardware can be effectively deployed by an organisation that was designed for civil war and adapted as an internal security force.

High-ranking insiders have come forward to say the Chinese military is rotten to the core. Formal hierarchies are trumped by personal patronage, co-ordination between branches is minimal, and corruption is so pervasive that senior positions are sold to the highest bidders while weapons funding is siphoned into private pockets.

"Corruption has become extremely institutionalised and significant," says Tai Ming Cheung, director of the Institute on Global Conflict and Co-operation at the University of California/San Diego. "It makes it much more difficult to develop, produce, and field the weapons systems required to achieve world-class power projection."

It's not just corruption. Politics have always played a key role and the PLA retains a Soviet-style dual command structure. A powerful political department sits at the centre of the organisation, while political minders shadow commanders at every level of the enormous hierarchy.

The PLA is one of the world's largest bureaucracies - and behaves accordingly. "They have a meeting now for everything," says Nan Li, associate professor at the US Naval War College's China Maritime Studies Institute. Li says PLA military universities have even been reduced to printing textbooks that instruct commanders how to transcend the tyranny of committee-style decision-making.

"That shows how much the PLA has been defeated by - corroded by - peace," he says.

Xi's associates believe he harbours even more serious concerns. They note that Liu Yuan, the senior general who sent shock waves through the party and military establishment after warning in an internal speech that mafia-like knots of patronage and corruption were crippling the PLA, did so only after getting a nod from Xi. "Only our own corruption can destroy us and cause our armed forces to be defeated without fighting," Liu warned in his December 2011 speech.

The two ambitious princelings, as the privileged sons of China's revolutionary leaders are known, have been close friends since the late 1970s.

Another close friend of the Xi family, whose father fought alongside Xi's father when the Chinese Red Army was a hungry, disciplined machine, said Xi was so appalled at the state of the PLA that he had focused his political capital on whipping it into better shape and probing to see which generals he can personally rely on.



The family friend says Xi's relentless inspection program and calls for combat readiness are designed less to prepare for war than to filter out grossly incompetent, unwilling and disloyal generals: "To sort the horses from the mules you need to walk them around the yard."

Xi's associates point out that his first real job, as personal assistant to the secretary-general of the Central Military Commission, gave him a ringside seat for studying the art of accumulating power as demonstrated by one of the world's great strongmen, Deng Xiaoping. Deng tightened his "grip on the gun", as Communist Party insiders put it, in part by mobilising the military for an invasion of Vietnam in February 1979.

The lesson learnt? "Without the gun in your hand, who will obey you?" as Xi's close family friend puts it. "So the first thing Xi did after his rise was seize military control."

That's where China's rapidly escalating territorial showdown with Japan, still the world's third-largest economy, comes in. Claims that Xi has exploited or even orchestrated the brinkmanship with Japan might seem preposterous to outside observers, given that a miscalculation could lead to war. But the logic is compelling for those who have grown up near the centre of China's endless and unforgiving internal struggles.

"Promoting people into positions is always a very sensitive question," says a retired officer, the son of one of the PLA's most decorated commanders and who was himself working at the PLA's General Staff Department, the operational command centre, when Xi was at the Central Military Commission in 1979. "This is why Xi is coming to power using a very strong voice on the Diaoyu Islands ... like Deng," he says.

Indeed, the crisis with Japan seemed to exactly span Xi's ascension to commander in chief, on November 15.

On December 13, the 75th anniversary of the Nanjing massacre, a low-flying China Marine Surveillance Y-12 twin-propeller plane penetrated Japanese airspace - the first such episode since Japan began monitoring half a century ago - and took a snapshot of the largest of the disputed islands out of its left window, a photo that was published widely in the Chinese state media the following day.

On January 10, with Xi firmly in control but now up against the more assertive Japanese administration of Shinzo Abe, Chinese and Japanese surveillance and fighter planes tangled above disputed oil fields north of the Senkakus. On January 14, the *PLA Daily* reported that the General Staff Department had ordered all units to prepare for battle, in what may have been the first such warning since Deng's debacle in Vietnam.

On January 30, a PLA Navy frigate locked its missile-control radar on a Japanese Self-Defence Forces ship, according to Japanese accounts that were backed by the US but denied by China. Western military officials and diplomats have told me that they have evidence, including from electronic intercepts, that shows that the movements of Chinese boats and ships were micromanaged by the new taskforce chaired by Xi.

The world still knew nothing of these dangerous confrontations when Captain Fanell gave his remarkable speech in San Diego the following day, January 31.

Asia's two heavyweights - America's key ally and its global rival - were one itchy trigger finger away from exchanging live fire on the water, while Chinese J-10 and Japanese F-15 fighters were buzzing overhead, according to Western military sources.

"If you are the Japanese captain, you would have an incredibly uncomfortable choice to make very quickly," says a Western diplomat who has been following the dispute closely. "You're seconds away if that thing decided to fire."

What had been hypothetical musings about the PLA's combat capability took on a more urgent tone.

But the spectre of war is not the only possible explanation for Xi's sabre rattling and demands for combat readiness. For even as Japanese leaders and US officials were publicising their concerns about a region on the brink of naval conflict, it became clearer that Xi and his close military confidants remained squarely focused on domestic politics. Indeed, General Liu Yuan - the same reputedly hawkish princeling general, who is close to Xi and who had blasted corruption in the military - counselled that war with Japan would be disastrous.



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At the same time, another top-level document emerged: a speech delivered in December by Xi himself, in which he gave thundering confirmation that the PLA's primary function is to defend the regime, not China. This was the lesson learnt from the Soviet Union's collapse, he said.

"In the Soviet Union, where the military was depoliticised, separated from the party and nationalised, the party was disarmed," Xi warned, according to an extract of his speech that was published by journalist Gao Yu and broadly corroborated by other sources. Nobody in the vast Soviet Communist Party, Xi averred, "was man enough to stand up and resist".

There is little doubt the Communist Party has been sharpening its identity in a post-communist world by defining itself against the West, fanning nationalist fervour, and promising a restoration of China's ancient grandeur. Xi thus has little choice but to keep pumping enormous resources into the war machine if he is to justify his party's continuing monopoly on power. In recent weeks the PLA Navy has sent flotillas to the far reaches of the South China Sea.

Ultimately, however, Xi's speech affirmed that the PLA's primary task is to defend the Communist Party against internal political threats - and desist from taking part in coups - rather than prepare to face external military threats. The recent drums of war may be a sign of weakness more than strength.

China's provocations against Japan were "evidence of profound domestic insecurity rather than rational policy", says a Beijing diplomat who closely studies China's military machinations.

"It is the fact of party control," he says, "that makes the PLA weak. Everything else - the corruption, the risk aversion, the hierarchy - is a symptom of that."

Then, too, there is the very real risk that if China or Japan miscalculates over the Senkaku Islands and actually does spark a war, China may lose - even without direct US intervention.

The PLA is gaining the hardware but there are growing doubts about China's actual fighting capabilities in some sections of the Chinese military, foreign diplomatic corps and US academia. They believe the PLA lacks the co-ordination, command structures, training and incentives to be a professional fighting force.

"Our assessment is they are nowhere near as effective as they think they are," a Beijing-based defence attache from a NATO country says.

"When Xi tells his troops to be ready for war, it's really an admission that they're in disarray. He's saying, 'You guys are drunk, fat and happy, siphoning off all the money into private accounts, and you need to get real.'"

<http://www.smh.com.au/world/all-the-toys-but-can-china-fight-20130426-2ikmm.html>

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