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USA TODAY

Reformist Rowhani Surprises with Iran Election Win

In a sea of hard-liners, Rowhani's victory could be a win for reformist sentiment in Iran.

By Victor Kotsev and Jabeen Bhatti, Special for USA TODAY

June 16, 2013

ISTANBUL — The moderate-conservative candidate and victor in Iran's presidential election, Hasan Rowhani, is known for his negotiating skill over the country's nuclear weapons program and a reformist some hard-liners in Iran previously saw as too liberal and conciliatory, analysts say.

As a result, analysts predict Rowhani, who was declared the winner Saturday by Iran's interior minister, might take the country's top political post and bring hope to the country's liberal classes but not wield any real power, especially on the nuclear issue.

"A president Rowhani would probably try to persuade the supreme leader that a deal on the nuclear issue would be in the interest of the Islamic Republic, especially if Rowhani believes that it is the only way to avoid a war," said Bruno Tertrais, a senior researcher at Foundation for Strategic Research in Paris. "But (Supreme Leader) Khamenei will remain the ultimate decision-maker."

Even so, the win for the reformist-backed presidential candidate is surprising in a race that most believed would go to candidates backed by Tehran's ruling clerics, who promised economic recovery in a country impacted by Western-imposed economic sanctions.

The Interior Ministry said Rowhani took 50.7% of the more than 36 million votes cast, well ahead of Tehran Mayor Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf with about 16.5%. Hard-line nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili came in third with 11.3%, followed by conservative Mohsen Rezaei with 10.6%.

On Sunday, Iran's president-elect said the country's dire economic problems cannot be solved "overnight," as he took his first steps in consulting with members of the clerically dominated establishment on his new policies.

Iran suffers from more than 30% inflation as well as 14% unemployment linked to Western sanctions for Tehran's suspect nuclear program.

The semi-official ISNA agency said Rowhani discussed inflation and unemployment as well as possible members of his cabinet with Ali Larijani, speaker for Iran's conservative dominated parliament.

"Today, we took the first step for cooperation between two branches of power," Rowhani was quoted as saying. Rowhani will take office in August and needs parliament to approve his proposed nominees for 18 ministries.

In a sea of hard-liners, Rowhani's victory could be a win for reformist sentiment in Iran, observers say. During his candidacy, he attracted thousands to his rallies over his calls for an end to the repressive atmosphere prevailing in Iran — including the lifting of economic sanctions that have crippled the economy and led to a spike in food and fuel prices — and his pledge to open the door to more individual liberties and better relations with the West.

"We won't let the past eight years go on," Rowhani told crowds attending a pre-election rally. "(President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's administration) brought sanctions for the country and they are proud of it. I'll pursue a policy of reconciliation and peace, we will also reconcile with the world."

Still, even as his words lean liberal, Rowhani's background is firmly based in the political establishment of Iran.

A cleric, Rowhani first studied religion before graduating with a law degree in 1972, eventually earning a master's degree in law at Caledonian University in Glasgow, Scotland. He was swept up in the 1979 Iran's Islamic Revolution as a firm opponent to the shah and became an ally and part of the inner circle of revolutionary leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, serving in various roles in the government following Khomeini's ascension to power.

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Regardless, some Iranians hold out hope that he will fulfill his promises due to his background as a skilled negotiator and conciliator. Rowhani served as head of the Supreme National Security Council during the presidency of Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani from 1989 to 1997. Following that, he was the country's top nuclear negotiator with the West from 2003 to 2005 during the administration of reformist leader Mohammad Khatami as the U.S. and other European allies grew concerned over Iran's nuclear program. He negotiated a temporary suspension in Iran's uranium enrichment activities.

When hard-liner Ahmadinejad — who is barred from seeking a third term — took office in 2005, Rowhani resigned after arguments with the new leader.

Since then, Rowhani has remained in the background of reformist causes until earlier this year when the Guardian Council approved his candidacy and he earned the backing of Khatami and Rafsanjani who represent the liberal strain of Iranian politics.

Some Iranians remain hopeful that Rowhani's win could sway Iran to become more open and liberal.

"It's a victory for those who are moderate and a ray of hope for those who are reformist," said Ali Sanaei, 37, an Iranian author and expatriate based in Istanbul.

However, others say that it doesn't change the power structure in which the country's ruling clerics — led by Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and the military through the Revolutionary Guard — hold the real control.

Unlike in 2009, when reformist and opposition leaders challenged conservative leader Ahmadinejad's bid for second term in elections that saw massive protests and mass arrests including those of opposition leaders Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mahdi Karroubi, observers say that a Rowhani win is not a threat to Iran's current establishment.

Alireza Nourizadeh, a Iranian scholar, literary figure and senior researcher and director at the Center for Arab and Iranian Studies in London, says he doesn't buy into the Rowhani's spiel.

"He has always pretended to be a moderate, played the game really well and convinced voters he is a reformist by promising a different kind of conversation and behavior in the future," he said. "But I know this man — he's the same man that served in the Supreme National Military Council for 24 years and called for the execution of student protesters (during the 1999 protests)."

Contributing: *The Associated Press*

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2013/06/15/iran-election-hasan-rowhani/2426131/>

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RT (Russia Today) – Russia

Iran ready to Halt 20% Uranium Enrichment, West Must Reciprocate – Lavrov

June 18, 2013

Iran has confirmed it is prepared to halt its enrichment of 20-percent uranium, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said, urging Western nations to end their sanctions against Tehran.

"For the first time in many years, there are encouraging signs in the process of settlement of the situation with the Iranian nuclear program," he said in the interview to Kuwait's KUNA news agency, that was published on Russian Foreign Ministry's website.

"Without going into details, the Iranians confirm the most important [point]: Their readiness to stop 20 percent uranium enrichment at its current levels," Lavrov said. *"This could become a breakthrough agreement, significantly alleviating existing problems, including concerns about the possibility of advanced uranium enrichment to a weapons-grade level."*

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Such a move *"implies significant reciprocal steps by the Six,"* the minister added, referring to the group of world powers seeking to peacefully resolve the issue of Iran's nuclear program.

"The international community must adequately respond to the constructive progress made by Iran, including gradual suspension and lifting of sanctions, both unilateral and those introduced by the UN Security Council. It would be a shame not to take advantage of this opportunity," Lavrov concluded.

News of Iran's possible concessions over its nuclear program comports with promises made by Iranian President-elect Hassan Rowhani, who vowed to make the program more transparent.

Still, the moderate cleric stressed on Monday that Tehran would not consider halting the country's uranium enrichment activities entirely. Rowhani insisted that Iran's nuclear activities are *"within the framework of law,"* and dubbed the international sanctions *"baseless."*

Despite numerous accusations by Israel and the US that it is secretly conducting military nuclear research, Iran has maintained that its nuclear program is only for civilian purposes.

At his first media conference since winning the presidential elections, Rowhani – who previously headed Iran's delegation during nuclear talks with the six world powers – said that Tehran's nuclear activities *"are already transparent,"* but *"the only way to end the sanctions is to increase the transparency and trust"* between Iran and the international community.

Washington has been expecting changes in Iran's hardline stance on the nuclear issue following the country's presidential elections. White House Chief of Staff Denis McDonough said Sunday on 'Face the Nation' that Washington is ready to work with the new administration in Tehran, *"If he lives up to his obligations under the UN Security Council resolution to come clean on this illicit nuclear program."*

But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu remained unconvinced: *"The international community must not become caught up in wishes and be tempted to relax the pressure on Iran to stop its nuclear program,"* he said.

President-elect Rowhani will assume office in August. He believes that he can heal the "old wound" of troubled US-Iran relations if Washington stops interfering in Tehran's internal affairs and permanently ends its "bullying" practices towards Iran.

<http://rt.com/news/iran-lavrov-uranium-enrichment-868/>

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Bloomberg Businessweek

Rohani Pledges to Make Iran Nuclear Program More Transparent

By Ladane Nasseri

June 18, 2013

Iranian President-elect Hassan Rohani said he will make the country's nuclear program more transparent as he seeks to ease tension with the U.S. and reduce "brutal" sanctions that have crippled the economy.

Rohani, in the first news conference since his surprise first-round win last weekend, said yesterday he will pursue a policy of moderation to improve Iran's relations with regional countries and beyond. He takes office in August.

"We will try to win back trust," Rohani said. *"We can make it clear to the whole world that the measures and activities of the Islamic Republic of Iran are totally within international regulations and mechanisms."*

Rohani, 64, won more than 50 percent of the vote to succeed President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, whose anti-Israel rhetoric and questioning of the Holocaust made Iran a pariah and helped prompt more sanctions. All six Iranian candidates for president were approved by Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, 73, who retains the power over national security, especially the country's nuclear program.



Past presidents have been able to influence the tone of Iran's foreign policy.

The election of Rohani, a "more moderate Iranian president is positive, particularly in relation to the incumbent," said Raza Agha, chief Middle East and Africa economist at VTB Capital in London.

"Whether actual change can emerge will depend on how Mr. Rohani manages the powers that be," Agha wrote in an e-mailed analysis. His work "will be made easier if the international community is more receptive."

Obama, Putin

U.S. President Barack Obama, after meeting yesterday with Russian President Vladimir Putin, said the two leaders share "cautious optimism" that Iran's election may open a new avenue for ending the standoff over the Islamic republic's nuclear program.

While Iran was open to mend relations with the U.S., Rohani said a condition for direct talks is a pledge not to "interfere in Iran's domestic affairs," to scrap "bullying policies" and to acknowledge the nation's rights.

"It's a very old wound so we need to think of somehow healing it," he said of Iran's relations with the U.S. government. "We don't want to see further tension, so wisdom tells us that both nations need to think more about the future and try to find solutions to past issues."

"If we see goodwill, we can also take some confidence-building measures," he said.

Moving Forward

In Washington, State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki told reporters Iran needs to offer a substantive proposal, and not campaign pledges, for nuclear talks to resume.

"There are a number of promises that were made during this election," Psaki said yesterday at a briefing. "The question is, what happens moving forward? And we will see."

Israel and the U.S. say they think Iran is trying to develop nuclear weapons capability. Both have threatened to attack Iran should other means fail to stop the Islamic republic from trying to obtain nuclear weapons. Iranian officials say Iran, a signatory to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, is entitled to conduct nuclear work and maintains its program is solely for energy generation and medical research.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu urged the world to maintain its pressure on Iran, saying Khamenei, not Rohani, holds the nuclear strings. "We do not delude ourselves" over Rohani's win, and Iran's nuclear program must be stopped no matter how, Netanyahu said June 16.

'Dynamic' Talks

Rohani said talks were the only way to resolve the dispute and that negotiations with six world powers, which have failed to yield a concrete outcome, must become "more dynamic."

"Sanctions and threats will not be solutions," he said yesterday. "The solution is only through talks and dialogue and mutual confidence. This is possible."

Today, Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Araghchi said Rohani may adopt different "tactics, means and strategies," while seeking to safeguard Iran's national interests and rights.

"The principles and values of the Islamic Revolution are immutable," Araghchi told reporters in Tehran today. "The rights of the Iranian nation are the benchmark, and any government will be duty-bound to safeguard those rights."

The sanctions have fueled a currency devaluation and helped to send the Iranian economy into recession. Gross domestic product is set to contract for a second year in 2013, according to the International Monetary Fund.



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Rohani said “salvaging” the economy by boosting local production and “funneling investment in the right direction” were at the top of his agenda. He is also seeking to curb unemployment that left a quarter of Iranians age 15 to 29 without jobs in the Iranian year ended March 20.

<http://www.businessweek.com/news/2013-06-17/rohani-pledges-to-make-iran-s-nuclear-program-more-transparent>

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Washington Post

U.S. Military Team in Jordan Planning ways to Deal with Syria’s Chemical Weapons

By Ernesto Londoño
June 18, 2013

Months before the Obama administration said it had concluded that the Syrian government has used chemical weapons against rebels, the Pentagon began drawing on the expertise of obscure military experts to develop plans to reduce the risks from Syria’s massive stockpile of the banned munitions.

U.S. military officials were sent to Jordan to develop a range of options to keep the lethal agents from falling into the hands of extremists among the opposition or being spread throughout the region by foreign fighters aligned with the Syrian government.

According to U.S. military officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe planning, the team is evaluating scenarios that range from deploying an international coalition to secure the weapons sites to bombing storage facilities to stop the arms from falling into the wrong hands.

Part of this effort involves a \$70 million program to train Jordanian security forces to identify and secure chemical weapons sites inside Syria, where one of the world’s largest stockpiles is scattered at sites across the country. Plans are also being studied for using trusted rebel groups to secure the weapons.

As part of the planning in the United States, a Maryland-based Army unit that specializes in handling chemical munitions has conducted training exercises with the 82nd Airborne Division, the Army’s rapid-response force for global crisis and the troops who would likely be first to deploy if a large ground force is required.

The specialized training in containing and disposing of chemical weapons, which has gone largely unnoticed, reflects an effort by the Army to look beyond the waning years of counterinsurgency missions in Afghanistan and Iraq to develop strategies to confront emerging threats like the one posed by Syria.

“As we widen our aperture from counterinsurgency against opponents with a limited range of capabilities in Iraq and Afghanistan to full-spectrum decisive action operations against threats with some high and asymmetric capabilities across the globe, we are training to detect and mitigate chemical and biological weapons threats,” Maj. Gen. John W. Nicholson Jr., commander of the 82nd Airborne Division, said in an interview. “While we could theoretically secure such stockpiles, we would need other specialists to come in and accomplish the destruction of these stockpiles.”

The Obama administration’s decision to quietly provide weapons to selected rebel groups was based at least in part on its conclusion that the government of President Bashar al-Assad has used chemical weapons in the civil war. But even evidence cited by the administration and other Western governments does not indicate that the Syrian forces have used them on a wide basis.

Even if the weapons are not used in a large operation, U.S. officials say the final disposition of Syria’s quantities of sarin and other chemical weapons poses a vexing dilemma. In an era in which all but a handful of countries have renounced chemical weapons, the U.S. military’s relatively few chemical-weapons experts have suddenly become highly sought after.

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"The United States and our allied partners have spent a lot of time thinking through the long-term disposition of these weapons when the day comes that Assad does leave power," a senior U.S. defense official said.

The United States, which once possessed one of the largest stockpiles of chemical weapons, has extensive experience in safely handling and disposing of chemical munitions. The United States stopped producing chemical weapons during the Nixon administration and was one of the chief proponents of a 1997 treaty designed to rid the world of chemical weapons.

Since then, Army personnel have destroyed weapons such as sarin, tabun and mustard gas at plants built in remote areas of the country. The work has been painstaking and fraught with risk. Engineers and chemists who come into contact with the munitions wear protective suits. Army officials designed unique assembly-line processes for each type of munition. Last year, the military eliminated the stockpiles at all but two facilities, wiping out 90 percent of the country's chemical weapons.

"To put the nail in the coffin on something all of us fear has been incredibly fulfilling," said Col. John Lemondes, the chemical stockpile elimination program manager at the U.S. Army Chemical Materials Activity, the agency that has done the lion's share of the work.

Drawing in part on that work, the Army created the 20th Support Command, a unit based in Edgewood, Md., that specializes in weapons of mass destruction, including chemical munitions. Its deployable team of experts has trained with the 82nd Airborne Division this year.

"Our soldiers are trained, equipped and ready to provide wherever the nation decides to send us out," spokesman Christopher Bush said.

Testifying before Congress last spring, Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said that securing Syria's chemical weapons would take a "significant intervention" if it occurred amid fighting.

"If we had confidence in the opposition," Dempsey said, "then they could secure it." If U.S. troops took on the mission, he added, it would be in a "non-permissive environment." The challenge would be compounded, the chairman added, because Syrians "have been moving it and the number of sites is quite numerous."

Michael Eisenstadt, a chemical weapons expert at the Washington Institute, said there's likely much that the West does not know about Syria's chemical weapons program, which the Assad regime has not formally acknowledged.

"Our experience with weapons of mass destruction intelligence is very mixed," he said. "We should not assume that what we know about the Syrian program is true. We can't assume we have good knowledge."

http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-military-team-in-jordan-planning-ways-to-deal-with-syrias-chemical-weapons/2013/06/18/f295e5ae-d4fc-11e2-b05f-3ea3f0e7bb5a_story.html

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NBC News.com

Rohani once Approved of Hiding Iran Atomic Work

By Louis Charbonneau, Reuters

June 19, 2013

UNITED NATIONS (Reuters) - Years before he became Iran's president-elect, Hassan Rohani spoke approvingly about concealing his nation's nuclear program and said that when Pakistan got atomic bombs and Brazil began enriching uranium, "the world started to work with them."

The comments offer an intriguing window into the past thinking of Rohani, widely seen as a moderate or pragmatic conservative, whose surprise victory in weekend elections to succeed President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was perceived by the United States and other Western powers as positive - at least at first glance.

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Rohani has said he intends to pursue constructive interaction with the world and "more active" negotiations over Iran's nuclear program, after his predecessor's belligerence was met with painful international sanctions and military threats from Israel and the United States.

Western powers suspect Iran of seeking to develop nuclear weapons, allegations Tehran denies.

Ultimate decisions on Iran's nuclear program will remain in the hands of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Western diplomats familiar with Rohani's work as chief nuclear negotiator from 2003 to 2005 told Reuters the 64-year-old cleric was no pushover and had always been firmly committed to Iran's nuclear program.

He was secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council from 1989 to 2005. It was in the autumn of 2004 that Rohani gave a sweeping speech to Iran's Supreme Cultural Revolution Council called "Beyond the Challenges Facing Iran and the IAEA Concerning the Nuclear Dossier."

In that speech, that is available on the blog Armscontrolwonk.com, Rohani said Iran did not want nuclear weapons.

"As for building the atomic bomb, we never wanted to move in that direction and we have not yet completely developed our fuel cycle capability. This also happens to be our main problem."

But he argued in favor of a kind of nuclear fait accompli to force the West to accept Iran's enrichment capabilities. He also referred to Pakistan's successful acquisition of nuclear weapons in a positive light.

"If one day we are able to complete the (nuclear) fuel cycle and the world sees that it has no choice, that we do possess the technology, then the situation will be different," Rohani said.

"The world did not want Pakistan to have an atomic bomb or Brazil to have the fuel cycle," he said. "But Pakistan built its bomb and Brazil has its fuel cycle, and the world started to work with them. Our problem is that we have not achieved either one, but we are standing at the threshold."

'CALCULATED MANNER'

Rohani also discussed the decision by Iran to conceal its nuclear activities in the late 1980s and 1990s, when it relied on an illicit nuclear procurement network connected to the father of Pakistan's atomic weapons program, Abdul Qadeer Khan, to purchase enrichment centrifuge technology.

"This (concealment) was the intention," Rohani said. "This never was supposed to be in the open. But in any case, the spies exposed it. We did not want to declare all this."

He said that in retrospect, it might have been a better idea not to hide the nuclear activities and that if Iran had disclosed them from the beginning, "we would not have any problems now, or our problems would have been far less than they are today."

In a paper published in 2006 by Brandeis University, Middle East analyst Chen Kane said Rohani's speech was likely motivated by a desire to justify Tehran's decision to cooperate with the U.N. International Atomic Energy Agency.

In 2003, the IAEA launched an investigation into Iran's nuclear program after it came to light that Iran had hidden its uranium enrichment plant at Natanz and other nuclear facilities.

Rohani, who in later years criticized Ahmadinejad for his confrontational approach to the nuclear issue, spoke in 2004 in favor of a quiet and calculating strategy with the West. He recommended accepting an enrichment freeze as negotiated with Britain, France and Germany - the "EU3" - and ending it at some point.

"I think we should not be in a great rush to deal with this issue," he said. "We should be patient and find the most suitable time to do away with the suspension."

"If we decide to start enrichment in the face of opposition by the West, we must find the best time and the most favorable conditions, and if we decide to work with the West, we must utilize all our capabilities and everything that is

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in our power to achieve our objectives," he said. "We should not rush into this. We must move very carefully, in a very calculated manner."

In a 2006 speech quoted in Kane's article, Rohani described Ahmadinejad's move in that same year to begin enriching uranium against the wishes of Western powers as "some success," but noted that that "we have been forced to pay a hefty price."

Editing by Peter Cooney.

http://www.nbcnews.com/id/52249531/ns/business-stocks_and_economy/t/rohani-once-approved-hiding-iran-atomic-work/

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Press TV – Iran

Thursday, June 20, 2013

Russia to Fulfill S-300 Systems Contract with Syria: Lavrov

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov says Moscow will honor its contract to deliver S-300 air defense missile systems to the Syrian government.

"We respect all our contracts and are honoring all our contractual obligations [vis-à-vis Syria]," Lavrov said in an interview with Russian-language news channel Rossiya 24.

He added, "As yet, the contracts are not finished, they have not been delivered in full."

Lavrov further noted that Russia would block all demands for the resignation of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's government at the forthcoming Geneva conference.

The Russian foreign minister stated that those calls were a "direct affront to us" from certain Persian Gulf states.

Lavrov also repeated Russia's strong objection to a no-fly zone to be implemented over Syria.

He also cautioned Western states arming militants fighting against the Syrian government, stressing that most weapons would fall into the hands of armed men from the al-Qaeda-linked al-Nusra Front.

During an interview with Lebanon's al-Manar TV in late May, Assad said Damascus is already in possession of the first batch of S-300 missile defense systems from Russia.

He noted that the second shipment of the Russian systems will be delivered to Syria soon. The Syrian president pointed out that Syria would respond to any Israeli aggression against the country.

Russia says that the shipment of the S-300 missile defense systems is aimed at deterring foreign intervention in Syria.

Syria has been gripped by turmoil since March 2011 and the foreign-sponsored militancy has taken its toll on the lives of many people, including large numbers of Syrian soldiers and security personnel.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/06/20/309999/russia-to-honor-s300-deal-with-syria/>

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Channel NewsAsia – Singapore

N Korea in Fresh Vow to Build up Nuclear Deterrent

North Korea made a fresh vow to build up its nuclear deterrent in the face of "threats of war" from the United States and a "policy of confrontation" from the South.

June 15, 2013

By Agence France-Presse (AFP)

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SEOUL: North Korea on Saturday made a fresh vow to build up its nuclear deterrent in the face of "threats of war" from the United States and a "policy of confrontation" from the South.

An editorial in Pyongyang's ruling party daily, the Rodong Sinmun, said "reckless" war exercises by the US and South Korea could spark a nuclear war at any moment.

"As long as the United States and South Korean puppets continue with nuclear threats and threats of war against us, we will... strengthen nuclear deterrence through every possible means," it said.

South Korean President Park Geun-Hye was no different from her predecessor in taking up a policy of confrontation, the editorial said, accusing the South of deliberately sabotaging planned high-level talks.

"Unless there is a fundamental switchover in the policy of confrontation of the South's ruling forces, dialogue and improvement in relations between the North and the South cannot be realised forever," it said.

The two Koreas had agreed to hold their first high-level talks in six years in Seoul on Wednesday and Thursday, but they were called off at the last minute following a dispute over protocol.

The talks initiative had been seen as a step forward after months of soaring military tensions, with the North conducting its third nuclear test in February, but its collapse has instead resulted in a sizeable backwards stride.

The editorial was dedicated in commemoration of a landmark summit between the two Koreas on June 15, 2000, which led to a short-lived reconciliation and exchanges between the two Koreas.

Glyn Davies, the US pointman on North Korea policy, said Friday that the United States was exasperated with Pyongyang after it snubbed attempts by President Barack Obama's administration to reach out in 2009 and again in 2012.

"The United States will not accept North Korea as a nuclear-armed state. We will not reward the DPRK for the absence of bad behavior," Davies said, using the North's official name of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Davies repeated US calls on North Korea to take steps to end its nuclear weapons program in line with previous agreements.

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/n-korea-in-fresh-vow-to/711050.html>

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The London Daily Telegraph – U.K.

North Korea Offers Talks with the US

North Korea has offered to enter into talks with the United States – but insisted it would not give up its nuclear weapons.

By Malcolm Moore, Beijing

16 June 2013

In a statement on its state newswire, North Korea's Defence Commission said Washington could pick "a date and a place" for the talks, which it said would "ease tensions" and "achieve regional peace and security".

But it said there should be "no preconditions" for the talks, and "the legitimate status of [North Korea] as a nuclear weapons state will go on and on without vacillation whether others recognise it or not."

It suggested that any talks over denuclearisation would have to include a commitment by the US to also give up its nuclear weapons – something highly unlikely to be taken seriously in the US.

"Our denuclearisation is the denuclearisation of the entire Korean Peninsula, including South Korea, and the most thorough denuclearisation aimed at completely ending the United States' nuclear threats against us," the statement said.

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In March, North Korea wrote its nuclear weapons plan into law as a top policy goal and Pyongyang has restarted facilities at its Yongbyon plant to produce plutonium for nuclear warheads.

The US said on Sunday that it was open to talks, but that the North must live up to its UN obligations.

The White House said it has "open lines of communication" with Pyongyang, but it will judge North Korea by its actions rather than its words.

The North Korean statement came less than a week after North Korea scuppered the first high-level meeting with the South in six years, after squabbling over which officials would take part.

South Korea had requested that ministers with decision-making power attend the meeting, while the North vaguely committed to a meeting of "senior officials". After dropping out of the talks, North Korea said any meeting would be indefinitely postponed.

China has put pressure on the North, and Xi Jinping, the new Chinese president, told Barack Obama at a recent meeting in California that Beijing is pushing for denuclearisation on the Korean peninsula.

The last set of senior-level talks between Pyongyang and Washington in February 2012 produced an agreement for the US to provide food aid in exchange for a freeze on missile tests and uranium enrichment. But they did not take long to collapse after the North fired a long-range missile two months afterwards.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/northkorea/10123401/North-Korea-offers-talks-with-the-US.html>

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The Chosun Ilbo – South Korea

June 17, 2013

N.Korea Urged China to Recognize It as Nuclear Power

Beijing rebuffed attempts by senior North Korean Army figure Choe Ryong-hae, who visited China last month, to get it to recognize North Korea as a bona fide nuclear power, a military source here said Sunday.

"We verified through numerous channels that Choe demanded that North Korea be recognized as a nuclear power during a meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping," the source said.

Choe apparently argued that the purpose of his country's nuclear weapons program was to counter what it perceived as a U.S. threat.

The source said, "We believe Choe was directed by [North Korean leader] Kim Jong-un to make the request."

But Xi, according to Chinese media reports, told Choe, "Our stance is very clear. No matter how the political climate changes, the countries involved must firmly maintain their goal of denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula."

Chinese Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman Gen. Fang Fenghui told his South Korean counterpart Gen. Jung Seung-jo in Beijing earlier this month that China made it clear to the North that its three principles for the peninsula are denuclearization, peace and stability, and negotiation and dialogue.

http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2013/06/17/2013061701452.html

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Yonhap News Agency – South Korea

June 17, 2013

N. Korea Slams U.S. for Stirring Nuclear Arms Race



SEOUL, June 17 (Yonhap) -- Just one day after North Korea proposed high-level talks with the United States, the communist country on Monday criticized U.S. efforts to develop its own nuclear arsenal, saying it is triggering an international arms race.

U.S. President Barack Obama has declared international efforts to reduce arms, but the country is still seeking to modernize its own nuclear weapons, the North's main newspaper Rodong Sinmun said in an article.

In response to U.S. nuclear development, other member countries of the United Nations Security Council are seeking to modernize their own nuclear warheads and vehicles, the newspaper said, arguing that the U.S. is stirring the international arms race.

The newspaper also denounced the U.S. for heavily meddling in Iran's nuclear activities while turning a blind eye to Israel's possession of nuclear weapons. "(The world) should end the U.S. policy to dominate the world through nuclear weapons possession," it said.

Analysts said the article's reference to Obama's Nobel Peace Prize-winning efforts to make the world nuclear free may have been to help induce the U.S. to accept the North's offer to talks.

On Sunday, the communist country proposed holding high-level talks with the U.S. over security issues, including denuclearization. There is little prospect of the talks taking place, with the U.S. saying that the North should first show sincere actions before sitting at the negotiating table.

Meanwhile, a pro-North Korea Web site reported a claim made by the female North Korean official who headed the three-person delegation to a working-level dialogue earlier this month that South Korea should recognize the North as a nuclear-armed country.

"(North Korea) became a nuclear possessor and (the South) should accept that nothing will change its status as a nuclear-possessing country," Minjok Tongshin, an pro-North Korea Internet outlet based in the U.S., quoted Kim Song-hye as having said in a round-table discussion with the news outlet in April.

Kim drew wide media attention as she came over to the South on June 9 as the female chief negotiator to the inter-Korean working-level talks ahead of high-level government dialogue scheduled three days later. The two countries, however, called off the high-level talks as they failed to agree upon the rank of top negotiators to be sent to the talks.

The female official at the North's Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of Korea, which is in charge of forming unification policy, also called on the South's Park Geun-hye administration to show sincerity in its pursuit of its "trust-building" policy toward the North.

President Park's so-called "trustpolitik" promises economic assistance and fence-mending in return for trustworthy actions and denuclearization efforts from the North. Park "should not be only repeating the Korean Peninsula trust (building) process but should show actual actions and sincerity," Kim was quoted as saying.

The official also noted that her country's possession of nuclear arms cannot be subject to any transactions.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2013/06/17/88/0401000000AEN20130617007600315F.HTML>

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The Hankyoreh – South Korea

N. Korea Alters Definition of “Denuclearization”

Defense Commission memo adds that “denuclearization” should include ending the nuclear threat from the US

By Gil Yun-hyung, staff reporter

June 17, 2013

The statement issued on June 16 by a spokesperson for North Korea's National Defense Commission is drawing attention for its redefinition of “denuclearization.”



In the statement, denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula was characterized as having the goal of “applying to the entire peninsula, including South Choson [Korea], and completely ending the US nuclear threat” rather than being “merely for the sake of ending the North Korean nuclear program.”

With its message, Pyongyang stressed that future denuclearization efforts should be aimed at removing not only its own nuclear weapons but the US’s as well.

North Korea has often said a removal of the US nuclear threat should accompany its own denuclearization efforts. The Joint Statement of September 19, 2005, which the US regards as a starting point for resuming the six-party talks on North Korea’s nuclear program, defines the goal of those talks as North Korea’s commitment to “abandoning all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs,” but also includes mention of the US affirming “that it has no nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula and has no intention to attack or invade” North Korea.

Similar calls were found in “The Choson [Korean] Peninsula and Nuclear Weapons,” a foreign ministry memo from April 21, 2010, that explained the details of North Korea’s nuclear policy for the outside world. In it, the ministry said the “mission of nuclear weapons” would continue “until the denuclearization of the Choson Peninsula and the world has been achieved.” It also stated principles of not using nuclear weapons against non-nuclear powers and participating in efforts toward non-proliferation.

A foreign ministry statement from January 23 said, “Even if there is dialogue to ensure peace on the Choson Peninsula, there will not be dialogue about denuclearizing the Choson Peninsula.”

Based on the previous statements, experts are reading the latest as a “fine-tuning” of Pyongyang’s line prior to any direct dialogue with Washington. It may also have the aim of squaring the latest dialogue offers with its 2012 constitutional amendment declaring North Korea to be a nuclear power and a late March announcement of policies aimed at “building nuclear power and the economy together.”

Choi Jong-kun, a professor of international security at Yonsei University, said Washington’s zero-tolerance position on North Korea’s nuclear program made it unlikely to accept Pyongyang’s position.

“North Korea’s new definition of denuclearization is presented in some sense as an arms reduction negotiation between two equal nuclear powers,” Choi said.

“If the US does respond, it is very likely to start very slowly working on one issue at a time at a very low level,” he added.

http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_northkorea/592105.html

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Yonhap News Agency – South Korea
June 18, 2013

State Arms Procurer Requests 11 Tln Won Budget for Next Year

By Kim Eun-jung

SEOUL, June 18 (Yonhap) -- South Korea's state arms procurement agency said Tuesday it has assigned 11.9 trillion won (US\$10.5 billion) for its weapons acquisition plan next year to enhance missile and combat capability, an increase of 17 percent from this year's budget.

The Defense Acquisition Program Administration (DAPA) submitted its 2014 budget draft to the Ministry of Strategy and Finance for deliberation and reported it to the parliamentary defense committee.

The proposal includes the purchase of multipurpose commercial satellites, high-altitude spy drones and ballistic missiles to establish the pre-emptive missile destruction system, the so-called "kill chain."

The missile system is designed to detect signs of impending missiles or nuclear attacks from North Korea and launch pre-emptive strikes to eliminate the threat.



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Defense Minister Kim Kwan-jin last week said the military plans to complete the missile program by 2020.

The DAPA included the additional purchase of PAC-2 missile interceptors and upgrading the current system to PAC-3 to deter North Korean missiles.

North Korea is believed to have over 1,000 missiles with varying capabilities as well as multiple launchers that can shoot rockets, putting South Korea well within its missile range.

The agency also plans to purchase air-dropped torpedoes to battle submarines and aerial refueling aircraft to extend the range of its F-15K and KF-16 combat jets.

The budget plan needs parliamentary approval before being implemented by the government in fiscal year 2014, which begins on January 1.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2013/06/18/2/0301000000AEN20130618005400315F.HTML>

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Global Post – Boston, MA

S. Korea Approves Purchase of Bunker-Busting Missiles from Europe

Kyodo News International

June 19, 2013

South Korea decided Wednesday to buy German bunker-busting air-to-ground long-range missiles to strengthen its air force in light of North Korean threats, the Defense Acquisition Program Administration said.

The plan to purchase Taurus KEPD 350s for South Korea's F-15K strike fighters was approved in a meeting presided over by Defense Minister Kim Kwan Jin.

The GPS-guided missile, manufactured by German company Taurus Systems, has a 500-kilometer range and is used by Germany and Spain.

The Taurus will be the first strategic weapon bought from Europe rather than the United States.

A spokesman for the state procurement agency said details have to be discussed with the supplier.

According to Yonhap News Agency, South Korea plans to buy about 170 missiles, costing about 2 billion won (\$1.8 million) each.

Missiles launched from South Korean airspace can hit strategic targets in North Korea with precision, including nuclear and missile bases, Yonhap said, adding the Taurus has a 480-kilogram warhead capable of penetrating up to 6 meters of reinforced concrete with an error rate of a mere 2 to 3 meters.

South Korea has reportedly been attempting to introduce long-range air-to-ground missiles since 2008, allowing its fighter jets to destroy North Korean ground targets, including nuclear facilities and artillery hidden in caves.

South Korea had expressed interest in Lockheed Martin's Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile, a rival to the Taurus, but the Pentagon did not approve the sale of the 370-km range missile to Seoul.

"At the beginning, we tried to push ahead with the acquisition program through competitions," the spokesman for the state procurement agency said, adding, "However, we had to make a decision quickly in light of North Korea's continuing threats."

<http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/kyodo-news-international/130619/s-korea-approves-purchase-bunker-busting-missiles-euro>

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Yonhap News Agency – South Korea
June 20, 2013

U.S. Reaffirms 'Nuclear Umbrella' for S. Korea before Obama's Berlin Speech

SEOUL, June 20 (Yonhap) -- The United States reaffirmed its pledge to preserve a "nuclear umbrella" protecting South Korea before a speech in Berlin by U.S. President Barack Obama, which called for slashing the number of deployed nuclear weapons, a diplomatic source said Thursday.

In his speech made in Berlin on Wednesday, Obama said he wants to negotiate with Russia to cut deployed nuclear weapons by up to a third.

"Despite President Obama's proposal for reducing nuclear weapons, the U.S. side conveyed its stance that it will continue to provide a nuclear umbrella to South Korea," the source said on the condition of anonymity.

Some 28,500 U.S. troops are stationed in South Korea, a legacy of the 1950-53 Korean War.

In a regular press briefing on Thursday, Seoul's foreign ministry spokesman Cho Tai-young "welcomed" Obama's proposal and took note of the reaffirmation of offering "strong and credible extended nuclear deterrence to allies."

"We will continue close consultations with the U.S. side over extended nuclear deterrence," Cho said.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2013/06/20/5/0301000000AEN20130620008500315F.HTML>

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The Economic Times – India

China Backs Barack Obama's Calls on Nuclear Disarmament

By Agence France-Presse (AFP)
20 June 2013

BEIJING: China on Thursday backed US President Barack Obama's calls for the US and Russia to slash their atomic arsenals, saying the two former Cold War rivals should bear the brunt of global nuclear disarmament.

"The US and Russia... should substantially reduce their nuclear arsenal in a verifiable and responsible manner," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said at a regular briefing in Beijing.

She added: "As the two countries have the largest nuclear arsenal, they should bear special and primary responsibility for nuclear disarmament."

Her remarks came a day after US President Obama called for the US and Russia's stash of strategic nuclear weapons to be cut down to around 1,000 and for stocks of tactical nuclear arms to be reduced.

Russia and the United States together hold about 90 per cent of the world's nuclear weapons, while China is the fourth biggest nuclear power, behind France, according to the May/June 2013 report by the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists published in the United States.

Russia's total inventory of 8,500 warheads slightly surpasses that of 7,700 in the US. France has 300 warheads, while China has 250 and the United Kingdom 225, the report said.

Russian officials on Wednesday reacted coldly to the call by Obama, saying the United States should address Moscow's concerns over missile defence first.

"How can we take seriously this idea about cuts in strategic nuclear potential while the United States is developing its capabilities" to intercept Russia's weapons, deputy prime minister Dmitry Rogozin asked.

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<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international-business/china-backs-barack-obamas-calls-on-nuclear-disarmament/articleshow/20683198.cms>

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Global Post – Boston, MA

Denuclearized North Korea was Kim Jong Il's 'Dying Wish,' Says Diplomat

North Korean leaders Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il wanted to banish nuclear weapons from the Korean peninsula, Pyongyang claims, as it seeks to secure international talks.

By Geoffrey Cain and News Desk

June 20, 2013

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea's founding father, Kim Il Sung, and his son and successor, Kim Jong Il, both wanted to banish nuclear weapons from the Korean peninsula, a North Korean diplomat claimed Wednesday as he renewed his government's call for international talks.

"The denuclearization of the Korean peninsula was the dying wish of Chairman Kim Il Sung and General Secretary Kim Jong Il," First Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kye Gwan told a meeting with Chinese officials in Beijing, according to a statement.

"North Korea is willing to have dialogue with all sides and attend any kind of meeting, including six-party talks, and hopes to peacefully resolve the nuclear issue via negotiation."

Kim Il Sung died of a heart attack in 1994. His son Kim Jong Il stepped up to power by propagating a nuclear development program — culminating in the first regional stand-off the same year the Great Leader passed away. Washington pressured Pyongyang to give up its program, and since then, this pattern of war threats has been sparked every few years.

In newly conciliatory mood, North Korea on Sunday offered to hold high-level talks with the US — though American officials called on the regime to take concrete steps toward denuclearization before they would agree. Meanwhile North Korea's attempt to restart talks with South Korea fell flat after a dispute about which delegates would attend.

The same day that the North Korean minister met his Chinese counterpart, diplomats from South Korea, the US and Japan held a summit in Washington, DC, to discuss a joint response to North Korea's overtures.

The allies agreed that to demonstrate its offer is serious, North Korea should not only stick to the terms of its denuclearization agreement with the US, but go above and beyond them. That pact, signed in February 2012 in exchange for US food aid, required North Korea to stop enriching uranium and put a moratorium on nuclear and missile tests.

Pyongyang knows that its nuclear program remains its most powerful bargaining chip, however. Andrei Lankov, a North Korea expert at Kookmin University, has told GlobalPost several times that the program is a part of the regime's overall strategy for survival, rather than regional domination. By threatening South Korea and the world, North Korea can get aid and concessions. It can keep its constant state of military emergency alive by pointing to the need for nuclear weapons to fend off a hypothetical, American-led invasion.

Despite the war-clanging, North Korea's state-run Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) has intermittently insisted it ultimately wants a denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. But the government's terms are unacceptable to Washington and Seoul: the regime will let down its arms once it has, some experts say, unified the Korean peninsula under its rule. Such a scenario is incredibly unlikely.

The United Nations is next month expected to discuss imposing further sanctions on North Korea as punishment for carrying out its third unauthorized nuclear test, in February.

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<http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/asia-pacific/north-korea/130620/denuclearized-north-korea-kim-jong-il-kim-il-sung>

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The Economic Times – India

India to have Shield from Missiles of 5,000km Range

Press Trust of India (PTI)

June 16, 2013

NEW DELHI: India's missile defence system is set to get a big boost as it is developing capability to intercept enemy missiles fired from a distance of up to 5,000km, in effect tackling any possible threat from countries such as China.

The capability is being developed by DRDO as part of the Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) shield, whose first phase is ready for deployment possibly in Delhi.

Development of the first phase of the BMD programme has been completed, DRDO chief Avinash Chander told PTI in an interview.

Under this, the BMD shield can tackle enemy missiles fired at from ranges up to 2,000 km.

Taking this forward, the DRDO is enhancing the capability of BMD in phase-II to deal with threat from missiles of longer range of up to 5,000km.

"We are planning to soon carry out the first trial of the phase-II of the programme under which we will test our capability to destroy an incoming ballistic missile fired at us from 5,000 km range," said Chander, who took over charge earlier this month.

"Such a capability meets our immediate threat perception," he said when asked if it would cover the threat of such missiles being fired from countries such as China.

Under the phase II of the programme, all the components of such a missile shield including the radar and interceptor missiles would be new and will have extended ranges, the DRDO chief said.

"The phase II missiles would be totally different from phase-I. In this programme, you need to travel more and intercept further away," Chander said.

While giving details of the programme, he said the phase-I of the shield is ready for deployment.

Asked which city would be the first to be protected by the missile shield, he said, "The first choice for such a deployment would be the capital, New Delhi, as it is the heart of the country."

http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2013-06-16/news/40009112_1_ballistic-missile-defence-missile-shield-capability

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

Russia to Adopt New ICBM Targeting System by 2020 – Source

18 June 2013

MOSCOW, June 18 (RIA Novosti) – By 2020, all units of Russia's Strategic Missile Forces (SMF) will be equipped with an advanced targeting system capable of guiding ballistic missiles through US missile defenses, a Defense Ministry source said Tuesday.

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Some media outlets earlier reported that Russia had been developing a third-generation command-and-control system to improve the launch and targeting procedures for ballistic missiles. The project, dubbed Vozzvaniye (Proclamation), will allow rapid retargeting of missiles in real time after the launch.

"These reports are correct: all SMF units will be equipped with this system by 2020," the source, who asked to remain unanimous due to the confidential nature of the subject, told RIA Novosti.

The officials said the new system would be compatible with existing Topol-M and Yars ballistic missiles, as well as with the future heavy liquid-fuel ICBM slated to replace the Voyevoda (SS-18 Satan) missile.

The Voyevoda, in service since 1967, is equipped with outdated electronic components and cannot be integrated into the new system, the source said.

According to open sources, the SMF currently operates at least 58 silo-based SS-18 Satan ballistic missiles, 160 road-mobile Topol (SS-25 Sickle) missile systems, 50 silo-based and 18 road-mobile Topol-M (SS-27 Sickle B) systems, and 18 RS-24 Yars systems.

http://en.rian.ru/military_news/20130618/181736200/Russia-to-Adopt-New-ICBM-Targeting-System-by-2020--Source.html

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FARS News Agency – Iran
Wednesday, 19 June 2013

Russia to Start Building Prototype of New Heavy ICBM in 2014

TEHRAN (FNA) - Russia will begin construction of a prototype of a heavy liquid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) in 2014, a Defense Ministry source said.

In 2011, the Russian military announced plans to build the missile by 2018. It is expected to replace the Voyevoda (SS-18 Satan) ICBM, which has been in service since 1967.

"The construction of a full-size prototype of this missile will begin next year," the source said, adding that the design of the missile was approved in 2012, RIA Novosti reported.

All of Russia's recent ICBM projects, both sea-launched (Bulava) and ground-based (Topol-M, Yars), have been solid-fuel this far.

Russia's Strategic Missile Forces commander Col. Gen. Sergei Karakayev said last year that the new ICBM would have a launch mass of about 100 tons with a better payload-to-launch-weight ratio than in a solid-fuel missile. As a result, the missile would carry more powerful warheads, including MIRVs with decoy elements.

Combined with advanced ICBM targeting system, which is currently being developed in Russia, the missile will be able to penetrate the most sophisticated missile defenses anywhere in the world, Russian experts and officials believe.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9203184468>

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ITAR-TASS News Agency – Russia
20 June 2013

US Proposal to Cut Strategic Offensive Potentials Can't be Taken Seriously - Russian Deputy Premier

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ST PETERSBURG, June 20 (Itar-Tass) - Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin said the USA's proposal to cut strategic offensive potentials cannot be taken seriously as long as missile defense system is developed.

"How can we possibly take this thesis about cutting the strategic nuclear potentials seriously, when the USA is building up the potential to intercept this strategic potential?" Rogozin told reporters, "obviously, the top political leadership cannot take these assurances seriously."

He underlined that defense and offensive systems were interconnected things: "An arms race entails a race of defense armaments and vice versa. Misunderstanding it means lying openly, dissembling, bluffing or showing one's complete unprofessionalism."

Rogozin reminded that Russia demands legal guarantees that the missile defense system is not aimed at Russia. "But I wish to speak not from a diplomat's point of view, but from the point of view of the person responsible for the development of the defense sector, that we'll trust not so much public political guarantees as Russia's technical opportunities to ensure its own safety. It's the best guarantee when we know that we have a potential to respond to any aggression," he said.

The deputy prime minister underlined that at present, the USA's missile defense envisions four stages. "There emerges this question: just four stages? Perhaps, they'll be followed by the fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth stages," he suggested.

Head of the committee for international affairs under the Federation Council upper house of the Russian parliament Mikhail Margelov believes the discussion of the U.S. proposal is only possible in a distant future.

Firstly, the missile defense problem is the first obstacle to such a discussion. "Obama's proposal is closely linked with the problem of missile defense in Europe in the first place; because this system potentially can upset the strategic deterrence balance," Margelov told Itar-Tass.

Also, there is a problem of the "nuclear club," which includes other countries beside the USA and Russia. "On top of that, other countries are seeking to enter this club, secretly or openly, and since the USA and Russia are not the only nuclear weapons states, it is obvious that the issues of cutting stockpiles of nuclear weapons are not only for these two countries," he stated.

On Wednesday, U.S. leader Barack Obama suggested cutting the U.S. and Russian nuclear potentials by one-third compared with the present level, set by the 2010 treaty on measures for the further reduction and limitation of strategic offensive arms.

<http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/778008.html>

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RT (Russia Today) – Russia

Nuclear Cuts can only be Discussed Together with Missile Defense – Lavrov

June 20, 2013

Talks between Russia and the US on reduction of strategic nuclear weapons must include defense systems, like global ballistic missile defense, says Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.

"The strategic missile defense systems affects strategic stability. It has been and will be affected, at least in the foreseeable future by Americans' plans to create non-nuclear strategic weapons that would possibly be more humane than nuclear bombs, as they would lack the radiation effect, but that would far surpass the existing strategic nuclear weapons by their combat effectiveness", Lavrov said in an interview with the Rossiya-24 news channel.

The minister said that Russia suggests holding talks on strategic stability as a whole and to consider all factors that could affect this process.



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He says Russia's stance is that future cuts must be discussed not in the bilateral Russia-US talks but together with other nations that possess nuclear weapons.

The Foreign Minister said that even without its European elements the planned US ballistic missile defense remains a global system laid on the Russian border and that Russian concerns over the process remain.

"Americans have decided to scrap the fourth stage of their missile defense deployment in Europe and to compensate by placing additional interceptors in Alaska. They also plan to set up one more defense position on the East Coast. We have analyzed this as a whole and this cannot remove our concerns because the system remains global and the deployment of its components is planned and actually takes place on our borders," Lavrov explained.

At the same time he said that Russia was positive about US suggestions of greater transparency of the missile defense plans.

The minister reiterated Russia's position that all attempts to shift the strategic balance would not be left unanswered.

Lavrov's interview confirmed and detailed Russia's stance on President Barack Obama's suggestion to cut US and Russian nuclear arsenals by one third, voiced during Wednesday's speech in Berlin.

Earlier, President Putin's top aide said that Russia was ready to discuss the nuclear cuts with the United States only if other nuclear states also take part in the process.

President Putin himself said in a speech on Wednesday that concerns remained both over the anti-missile shields deployed by the United States and NATO, adding that the development of high-precision non-nuclear weapons could upset the strategic balance.

"We cannot afford to disrupt the balance of the system of strategic deterrence, to reduce effectiveness of its nuclear forces. Therefore, the development of the system of space defense will remain a key direction for the military industry," Putin said.

<http://rt.com/politics/together-missile-lavrov-defense-001/>

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Chicago Tribune

France to Maintain Nuclear Arsenal after Obama Call

By Reuters

June 20, 2013

PARIS (Reuters) - France is not ready to reduce its nuclear arsenal for now, Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said on Thursday, a day after U.S. President Barack Obama offered to cut deployed weapons as part of a global push to lower stockpiles.

Speaking in Berlin, Obama urged Russia to help build on the "New START" treaty that requires both countries to cut stockpiles of deployed nuclear weapons to 1,550 each by 2018.

"Barack Obama is proposing to Russia that together they reduce. That's fine but that is not how we see things," Le Drian told France Info radio, saying France had already narrowed its arsenal to just under 300 warheads.

"The real issue is nuclear proliferation ... it's the future risk of Iran getting a nuclear weapon," he added.

Moscow gave Obama's call for a cut in deployed arsenals of one third a frosty reaction, saying it could not take such proposals seriously while Washington was beefing up its own anti-missile defenses.

Obama's vision of a "world without nuclear weapons" set out in a speech in Prague in 2009, three months into his presidency, earned him the Nobel Peace Prize. But his mixed results so far have fuelled criticism that the prize may have been premature.

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Reporting by Emmanuel Jarry; writing by Mark John; editing by Catherine Bremer.

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/sns-rt-us-obama-berlin-francebre95j0bc-20130620,0,3128476.story>

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Global Security Newswire

Top U.S. Nuclear Commander Eyes More Trident Subs, Not Less

June 17, 2013

By Elaine M. Grossman, *Global Security Newswire*

WASHINGTON -- The top U.S. combat commander for nuclear arms last week said he would like to see the Navy buy more than its planned complement of 12 new ballistic missile submarines, despite mounting indications that even that number might be unaffordable.

The so-called SSBN(X) is set for initial fielding in 2031 and is to eventually replace all of today's Ohio-class vessels, which carry nuclear-armed Trident D-5 missiles.

Gen. Robert Kehler, who heads U.S. Strategic Command in Omaha, Neb., said on Wednesday that despite Navy plans on the books to buy a dozen of the new-design submarines, each fitted with 16 ballistic missiles, no final decision on vessel quantity must be made in the near term.

However, in a surprise twist, he added that from his perspective, even more than 12 SSBN(X) submersibles could be needed.

"Do we have to make a decision today on how many we eventually buy, and as I would say selfishly, beyond 12?" the Air Force four-star general said at a breakfast event on Capitol Hill. "The answer is no, you don't have to make a decision today."

Kehler is not the first senior Defense official in recent days to talk up the idea of protecting from expected deep Pentagon budget cuts what is considered the nation's most survivable leg of the nuclear triad -- sea-based warheads -- leaving atomic-armed bombers and ground-based ballistic missiles seemingly more vulnerable to the budget ax.

His words come, though, as the naval service itself has questioned the effort's affordability.

Despite advocating for the new submarine effort, the Navy recently warned that it might lack sufficient funds to buy the vessels at an estimated total cost of \$90 billion and, at the same time, meet its objective of retaining a 300-ship surface fleet.

In a May cover letter to Congress accompanying Navy shipbuilding plans, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel flagged the cost concerns, saying that in the long term "there will be resourcing challenges ... largely due to investment requirements associated with the SSBN(X) program."

Kehler, in testimony last month before a House panel, addressed lawmaker worries about an anticipated dip to just 10 operational ballistic missile submarines for more than a decade -- mostly in the 2030s -- during the transition to 12 replacement vessels.

"I think the ultimate number of submarines that we procure is still an open question," the general told the House Armed Services Strategic Forces Subcommittee on May 9. "I think you have a lot of time here to decide how many submarines we eventually deploy."

Some issue specialists warn that budget considerations could force either a smaller submarine fleet or a less ambitious ballistic-missile vessel design.

"As budgets tighten, speculation is growing that the Navy will not be able to afford" its current plans, Tom Collina of the Arms Control Association wrote in an analysis early this month..

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He cited recent comments by Representative Randy Forbes (R-Va.) that the Navy's 30-year shipbuilding plan is "an exercise in wishful thinking" and by Senator John McCain (R-Ariz.), who called service blueprint "a fantasy."

Kehler last week suggested that while the program of record may be to buy 12 submarines – and that this number appeared about right for planning purposes – evolving threats and military needs could alter that figure. However, he did not overtly account for a revision downward.

"Once we are replacing Ohio ... then I believe the nation will have a number of decision points, at which the nation can decide if we need to purchase more than 12," the strategic commander said.

"What that number looks like and why -- whether that's reacting to a future world situation, whether that's reacting to other decisions that might be made along the way -- that is not a decision you have to make immediately," he told the event audience. "Nor do I believe that we should think upfront that 12 is all we would ever purchase."

On Sunday, Collina -- who directs research at his organization -- cast skepticism on the general's forecast.

"Given the downward trend for both defense dollars and the U.S. nuclear arsenal, I would doubt that 12 SSBN(X) subs will ever be built, and certainly no more than that unless you believe budgets and the arsenal will increase dramatically," he told *Global Security Newswire*. "There is no need to have more than 10 subs in the 2030s, since the requirement is for 10 operational subs, and at that point they will all be operational. It's only later, when some subs are in overhaul, that you would need 12 total. But that is a long way off."

Collina's guess is that "if the Navy is forced to choose, it would rather have a 300-boat fleet than 12 SSBN(X)s," he said. "If the president reduces the requirement for nuclear weapons in general, and subs in particular, then the Navy would be off the hook."

<http://www.nti.org/gsn/article/top-us-nuclear-commander-eyes-more-trident-sub-not-less/>

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Politico.com

Newt Gingrich Warns EMP Attack Could End It All

By JUANA SUMMERS

June 19, 2013

As Washington decides what to do about potential nuclear threats from North Korea and Iran, Newt Gingrich returned to Capitol Hill on Tuesday to point out what he called an equally grave danger: an electromagnetic pulse.

Addressing members of the Electromagnetic Pulse Caucus, the former Republican House speaker from Georgia said the fallout from a high-altitude nuclear blast known as an EMP — which could damage or destroy American power grids and electronics — could deal society a deathblow.

"This could be the kind of catastrophe that ends civilization — and that's not an exaggeration," Gingrich said at an event led by Rep. Trent Franks (R-Ariz.), who founded the caucus.

Gingrich has long warned of the threat that an EMP attack could pose to the United States, and he says Americans aren't taking the threat seriously.

"The reason I began focusing on this a decade ago is there are very few events you can't recover from. You can recover from 9/11, you can recover from Pearl Harbor. This is really different," Gingrich said. "This creates such a collapse of our fundamental productive capacity that you could literally see a civilization crash and tear itself apart fighting ... internally."

A science fiction novel called "One Second After" told a cautionary tale of the doomsday scenario that would unfold if such an attack hit the U.S., frying electrical circuits and knocking out power. In the introduction to the book, Gingrich suggested that an EMP attack would "throw all of our lives back to an existence equal to that of the Middle Ages."

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"Millions would die in the first week alone," he wrote in the foreword of the novel released in 2009.

And he told attendees of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee's policy conference that the U.S. was facing "some catastrophic problems" because of the specter of an EMP attack on the United States, and that the United States lacked a national security strategy to counter those threats. In the May 2009 speech, Gingrich suggested a pre-emptive attack on Iranian and North Korean missiles that he believed could be used to position a nuclear weapon above the United States and trigger an EMP attack.

Skeptics have dismissed Gingrich's EMP alarm-sounding as another one of the "big ideas" that erupted from the mind of the former House speaker on the campaign trail, a flock of ideas that at times included a moon colony and using children as janitors so they could work their way out of poverty.

Speaking on Capitol Hill, Gingrich and Franks argued back against naysayers.

"I just think anybody who tells you, 'Oh, we've got it under control' is by definition kidding themselves," Gingrich said flatly.

And some members of Congress fear the scenario he's hypothesized could actually come to fruition, and they want to see new defenses put in place for the nation's power grid.

On Tuesday, Franks introduced legislation in the House that he hopes will spur industry and government partnerships to address the vulnerabilities of the power grid from an EMP.

"It's known that our grid is vulnerable. It's an invitation. If our grid is not vulnerable, nothing mitigates the threat more than that," Franks said.

Franks warned that increased provocations from North Korea and Iran made it more necessary than ever for the U.S. to prepare for a potential EMP attack

"The real problem is that we have essentially become victims of our own capability, of our own sophistication, where we've engineered our electric grid to the point of great vulnerability," Franks said. "[Electromagnetic pulse] has the potential to be the ultimate cybersecurity threat because it can take our source of power completely away from us."

<http://www.politico.com/story/2013/06/electromagnetic-pulse-newt-gingrich-emp-attack-93002.html>

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The Moscow Times – Russia

Obama Renews Calls for Nuclear Reductions

19 June 2013 | Issue 5151

The Associated Press

BERLIN — President Barack Obama renewed his call Wednesday to reduce U.S. and Russian nuclear stockpiles and said he wanted to reignite the spirit that Berlin displayed when it fought to reunite itself during the Cold War.

"Today's threats are not as stark as they were half a century ago, but the struggle for freedom and security and human dignity, that struggle goes on," Obama said at the city's historic Brandenburg Gate before a crowd of 6,000 invited guests under a bright, hot sun. "And I come here for this city of hope because the test of our time demands the same fighting spirit that defined Berlin a half-century ago."

Obama called for a one-third reduction of U.S. and Russian nuclear stockpiles, saying it is possible to ensure American security and a strong deterrent while also limiting nuclear weapons.

But President Vladimir Putin voiced concern Wednesday about U.S. missile defenses and high-precision conventional weapons, signaling that the nuclear cuts proposed by Obama are likely to face obstacles.

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For Obama, addressing the issue in a major foreign policy speech indicated a desire to rekindle an issue that was a centerpiece of his early first-term national security agenda.

The U.S. president discussed nonproliferation with Putin when they met Monday on the sidelines of the Group of 8 summit in Northern Ireland. During Obama's first term, the U.S. and Russia agreed to limit their stockpiles to 1,550 as part of the New START Treaty.

In St. Petersburg on Wednesday, Putin reiterated Moscow's concerns about antimissile shields the U.S. and NATO are deploying and said the development of high-precision, long-range conventional weapons could upset the strategic balance.

"These weapons are approaching the level of strategic nuclear arms in terms of their strike capability. States possessing such weapons strongly increase their offensive potential," Putin said at a meeting on defense issues.

Putin did not mention Obama's speech, which began shortly after he spoke.

In Moscow, Putin foreign policy aide Yuriy Ushakov said plans for any further arms reduction would have to involve countries beyond Russia and the U.S.

"The situation is now far from what it was in the '60s and '70s, when only the U.S.A. and the Soviet Union discussed arms reduction," Ushakov said.

Obama's calls for cooperation with Moscow come at a time of tension between the U.S. and Russia, which are supporting opposite sides in Syria's civil war.

Material from Reuters is included in this report.

<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/obama-renews-calls-for-nuclear-reductions/481984.html>

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Imperial Valley News – Imperial Valley, CA

Nuclear Weapons Employment Strategy of the United States

Wednesday, 19 June 2013

Written by White House

Washington, DC - Today, the President announced new guidance that aligns U.S. nuclear policies to the 21st century security environment. This is the latest in a series of concrete steps the President has made to advance his Prague agenda and the long-term goal of achieving the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons.

Following the release of the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) and ratification of the New START Treaty, the President directed the Department of Defense (DOD), the Department of State, Department of Energy, and the intelligence community, to conduct a detailed analysis of U.S. nuclear deterrence requirements and policy in order to ensure U.S. nuclear posture and plans are aligned to address today's security environment. This review was based on the principle that a robust assessment of today's security environment and resulting Presidential guidance must drive nuclear employment planning, force structure, and posture decisions.

The President's new guidance:

- affirms that the United States will maintain a credible deterrent, capable of convincing any potential adversary that the adverse consequences of attacking the United States or our allies and partners far outweigh any potential benefit they may seek to gain through an attack.
- directs DOD to align U.S. defense guidance and military plans with the policies of the NPR, including that the United States will only consider the use of nuclear weapons in extreme circumstances to defend the vital interests of the United States or its allies and partners. The guidance narrows U.S. nuclear strategy to focus on

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- only those objectives and missions that are necessary for deterrence in the 21st century. In so doing, the guidance takes further steps toward reducing the role of nuclear weapons in our security strategy.
- directs DOD to strengthen non-nuclear capabilities and reduce the role of nuclear weapons in deterring non-nuclear attacks.
 - directs DOD to examine and reduce the role of launch under attack in contingency planning, recognizing that the potential for a surprise, disarming nuclear attack is exceedingly remote. While the United States will retain a launch under attack capability, DOD will focus planning on the more likely 21st century contingencies.
 - codifies an alternative approach to hedging against technical or geopolitical risk, which will lead to more effective management of the nuclear weapons stockpile.
 - reaffirms that as long as nuclear weapons exist, the United States will maintain a safe, secure and effective arsenal that guarantees the defense of the U.S. and our allies and partners. The President has supported significant investments to modernize the nuclear enterprise and maintain a safe, secure, and effective arsenal. The administration will continue seeking congressional funding support for the enterprise.

After a comprehensive review of our nuclear forces, the President has determined that we can ensure the security of the United States and our allies and partners and maintain a strong and credible strategic deterrent while safely pursuing up to a one-third reduction in deployed strategic nuclear weapons from the level established in the New START Treaty. The U.S. intent is to seek negotiated cuts with Russia so that we can continue to move beyond Cold War nuclear postures.

This analysis did not set out to address weapons forward deployed in Europe in support of NATO. The role of nuclear weapons in NATO was examined as part of the last year's Deterrence and Defense Posture Review, which affirmed Allies' support for further U.S.-Russian nuclear reductions, and underscored that any changes in NATO's nuclear posture must be an Alliance decision.

As we continue to implement the NPR, we are focused on maintaining and improving strategic stability with both Russia and China.

In sum, this review was essential to advance the policies laid out in the NPR. The resulting strategy will maintain strategic stability with Russia and China, strengthen regional deterrence, and reassure U.S. allies and partners, while laying the groundwork for negotiations with Russia on how we can mutually and verifiably reduce our strategic and nonstrategic nuclear stockpiles and live up to our commitments under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

The President has directed DOD to use the new guidance to begin the process of updating and aligning its directives and contingency plans in order for this policy to be implemented over the course of the next year.

<http://www.imperialvalleynews.com/index.php/news/national-news/4614-nuclear-weapons-employment-strategy-of-the-united-states.html>

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Denver Post

New MERS Virus Spreads Easily, Deadlier than SARS

By MARIA CHENG, Associated Press (AP) Medical Writer

June 19, 2013

LONDON—A mysterious new respiratory virus that originated in the Middle East spreads easily between people and appears more deadly than SARS, doctors reported Wednesday after investigating the biggest outbreak in Saudi Arabia.

More than 60 cases of what is now called MERS, including 38 deaths, have been recorded by the World Health Organization in the past year, mostly in Saudi Arabia. So far, illnesses haven't spread as quickly as SARS did in 2003, ultimately triggering a global outbreak that killed about 800 people.

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An international team of doctors who investigated nearly two dozen cases in eastern Saudi Arabia found the new coronavirus has some striking similarities to SARS. Unlike SARS, though, scientists remain baffled as to the source of MERS.

In a worrying finding, the team said MERS (Middle East respiratory syndrome) not only spreads easily between people, but within hospitals. That was also the case with SARS, a distant relative of the new virus.

"To me, this felt a lot like SARS did," said Dr. Trish Perl, a senior hospital epidemiologist at Johns Hopkins Medicine, who was part of the team. Their report was published online Wednesday in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

Perl said they couldn't nail down how it was spread in every case—through droplets from sneezing or coughing, or a more indirect route. Some of the hospital patients weren't close to the infected person, but somehow picked up the virus.

"In the right circumstances, the spread could be explosive," said Perl, while emphasizing that the team only had a snapshot of one MERS cluster in Saudi Arabia.

Cases have continued to trickle in, and there appears to be an ongoing outbreak in Saudi Arabia. MERS cases have also been reported in Jordan, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Tunisia. Most have had a direct connection to the Middle East region.

In the Saudi cluster that was investigated, certain patients infected many more people than would be expected, Perl said. One patient who was receiving dialysis treatment spread MERS to seven others, including fellow dialysis patients at the same hospital. During SARS, such patients were known as "superspreaders" and effectively seeded outbreaks in numerous countries.

Perl and colleagues also concluded that symptoms of both diseases are similar, with an initial fever and cough that may last for a few days before pneumonia develops.

But MERS appears far more lethal. Compared to SARS' 8 percent death rate, the fatality rate for MERS in the Saudi outbreak was about 65 percent, though the experts could be missing mild cases that might skew the figures.

While SARS was traced to bats before jumping to humans via civet cats, the source of the MERS virus remains a mystery. It is most closely related to a bat virus though some experts suspect people may be getting sick from animals like camels or goats. Another hypothesis is that infected bats may be contaminating foods like dates, commonly harvested and eaten in Saudi Arabia.

Doctors around the world have struggled to treat patients. "We need more information from other countries to find out what the best treatment is," said Dr. Clemens Wendtner, who treated a MERS patient who later died in Munich. "Our patient got everything possible and it still didn't help him."

Other experts said there are enough worrying signs about MERS that it can't yet be written off, despite the relatively small number of cases it has caused.

"As long as it is around, it has every opportunity at the genetic roulette table to turn into something more dangerous," said Michael Osterholm, an infectious diseases expert at the University of Minnesota.

WHO Director-General Dr. Margaret Chan has previously called MERS the single biggest public health threat and acknowledged officials were "empty-handed" regarding prevention measures.

"We understand too little about this virus when viewed against the magnitude of its potential threat," she said last month in Geneva.

At a meeting this weekend in Cairo, WHO will meet with other experts to discuss MERS and to possibly develop guidelines for next month's Ramadan, when millions of Muslim pilgrims will be visiting Saudi Arabia.

http://www.denverpost.com/arcade/ci_23494972/new-mers-virus-spreads-easily-deadlier-than-sars

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Russia Beyond the Headlines (RBTH) – Russia
OPINION/Commentary

Russia-US: No Compromise over Missile Defense yet

The missile defense controversy will remain in the Russian-American relationship for a long time, unless the presidents of the two countries manage to find a reasonable compromise at their meeting slated for this September.

June 17, 2013

By Yevgeny Buzhinsky, special to RBTH

Missile defense and the Syrian issue are expected to top the agenda for the meeting between the presidents of Russia and the United States on the sidelines of the G8 summit in Lough Erne, Northern Ireland, on June 17–18.

It is hard to say what new benefits Barack Obama can offer Vladimir Putin in exchange for Russia taking a softer stance on missile defense. Most likely, Obama will try to convince his Russian counterpart that U.S. defenses in Europe are not aimed at Russia, and that the capacity of the U.S. missile defense to have impact on the Russian nuclear containment potential is limited.

In the meantime, the recent exchange of messages between the two heads of state revealed that Russia and the United States remain divided on this issue. Russian representatives have been making repeated statements that Russia wants additional guarantees –namely, a legally binding agreement stipulating that U.S. defenses are not aimed against Russia.

The U.S. will hardly meet Russia's requirements. For one thing, 11 years after they unilaterally withdrew from the 1972 ABM Treaty, there is no sense in them renewing it, especially given the progress in their missile defense program. The U.S. Senate – controlled by the Republicans – will never pass any sort of treaty limiting missile defense, which the Republicans have already made clear.

On the other hand, we should understand why the United States is ready to seek compromise over missile defense. It is crucial for Obama – both personally and politically – to go on with the campaign for Russia and the United States to cut their nuclear stockpiles.

However, it seems that the ambitious program to reduce the nuclear threat that he announced in Prague in May 2009 is not the main reason for this; nor is the resolution that the Senate adopted when ratifying the New START, which requires Obama to begin negotiations with Russia, with the aim of reducing the Russian stockpile of non-strategic nuclear weapons.

One gets the impression that Obama wants to make it into history books as the politician that made the reduction of the nuclear threat his chief foreign policy priority and succeeded in implementing most of his plans, thus proving that he is worth his Nobel Peace Prize.

Does Russia need to further reduce its nuclear arsenal, especially its non-strategic weapons? I am sure it does not. First, the New START stipulates limitations on strategic offensive arms – both warheads and carriers – that suit Russia.

Furthermore, these figures are used as benchmarks by the program for the modernization and development of Russian strategic nuclear forces. To further cut the nuclear stockpile (for example, to 1,000 warheads, something that leading U.S. experts insist on) amid active efforts by the United States to build up its missile defense capacity would be illogical, to say the least.

When it comes to the reduction in non-strategic nuclear potential, the situation is even more obvious.

The thing is that non-strategic nuclear weapons play completely different roles in the Russian and U.S. military doctrines. With an ally in the north, a near-ally in the south and oceans to the east and west, the United States does not require this class of nuclear weapons to defend its national territory. The American non-strategic nuclear weapons perform mostly a political function, cementing the so-called transatlantic link.

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The European segment of the U.S. global missile defense system will eventually be able to replace non-strategic nuclear weapons as this cementing element. Therefore, Washington can quite easily meet Russia's requirement to concentrate its non-strategic nuclear arsenal in its national territory as a precondition for beginning negotiations for Russia to reduce its nuclear arsenal.

However, Russia's non-strategic nuclear weapons are an important means of nuclear containment, because Russia borders on many states that either possess nuclear arsenals or seek to build them.

Therefore, efforts to encourage the Russian president to further cut the nuclear arsenal in exchange for the transparency of missile defense programs – especially mutual transparency – obviously have no chance of succeeding.

My guess is that the missile defense controversy will remain in the Russian-American relationship for a long time, unless the presidents of the two countries manage to find a reasonable compromise at their meeting slated for this September. Obama's agreement to refrain from deploying defenses in Poland and the Baltic and North Seas may cause Russia to take a softer stance.

Naturally, the resolution of the missile defense issue must not be made contingent on the beginning of some process to further cut nuclear arsenals.

Lt. Gen. Yevgeny Buzhinsky (retired) is the senior vice president at The Center for Policy Studies in Russia (PIR Center).

http://rbth.ru/opinion/2013/06/17/russia-us_no_compromise_over_missile_defense_yet_27173.html

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Foreign Policy
OPINION/Turtle Bay

Hidden Report Reveals How Iran Dodges Nuclear Watchdogs

Posted By Colum Lynch
Monday, June 17, 2013

Iran continues to evade U.N. sanctions on its nuclear program by changing its supply routes, erecting new front companies, and shopping the world for lower grade parts not explicitly prohibited by the U.N. Security Council, but still capable of contributing to the assembly of a nuclear power reactor. That's according to a "confidential" unpublished report by a U.N. Security Council panel monitoring sanctions on Iran, exclusively published by *Turtle Bay*.

The 45-page report - which summarizes the U.N. panel's work over the past year - documents several cases in Europe and the Middle East where Iranian agents have sought to procure a host of industrial products -- including valves, carbon fiber, and bellows -- that can be used in a nuclear facility. The equipment, however, is not explicitly prohibited from being sold to Tehran, making it easier to get similar items through customs.

"The panel continues to be told by many states that Iran is seeking items that fall below established control thresholds but could be used for prohibited activities," the report states. "All of the nuclear related cases investigated by the panel during its current mandate involve items that are not to be found among the [control] lists" that states are banned from supplying Tehran.

Iran reacted sharply to the report, telling *Turtle Bay* that the panel's findings are flat wrong. "The reports by the Panel of Experts are erroneous and lack credible authenticated information," Alireza Miryousefi, the spokesman for the Iranian mission to the United Nations, said in an emailed statement. "From our standpoint we should not give any value to those reports."

The Iranian official reiterated Tehran's long-standing claim that Iran has no intention of developing a nuclear weapon and that the U.N. Security Council has no right to bar the country from exercising its rights under the 1970 Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty to develop a civilian nuclear program. "Iran's activities are purely for peaceful purposes," he said.

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"Iran's nuclear issue was unjustifiably put on the agenda of the Security Council." Iran, he added, does not recognize U.N. Security Council resolutions prohibiting its right to enrich uranium "as fair and legitimate."

Western diplomats dismissed Iran's denials as untrue and said the panel's report - portions of which were previously mentioned by Reuters -- underscores the need to expand the range of items that Iran should be prohibited from purchasing. Under the terms of June 2010 U.N. resolution expanding sanctions on Iran, states are empowered to bar the export to Iran of any items that "could contribute to enrichment-related, reprocessing or heavy water-related activities or to the development of nuclear weapon delivery systems." But governments have enforced that provision with vastly varying degrees of vigilance.

In all, the report, which has been approved by the U.N. Security Council sanctions committee but has not been made public, details eleven cases of Iranian sanctions violations. That includes an effort by an Iranian entity -- the Modern Industries Technique Company, which is responsible for the design and construction of the Arak light water nuclear research reactor -- to acquire from Germany 1,767 valves, which can be used for a variety of functions in nuclear facilities, including, for instance, by channeling coolants into a reactor.

When German authorities began scrutinizing the deals, the company's Iranian agent, Pentane Chemistry Industries, commissioned a firm in another country to supply the valves. The panel recommended that Pentane be added to a list of companies subject to U.N. sanctions.

"This procurement involved the use of front companies in other third countries and false end-user documentation," according to the report. "The Panel concluded that Iran's procurement of these valves is an activity prohibited" by UN Security Council resolutions.

But in a separate case, the U.N. could not establish that a naturalized Swedish citizen of Iranian origin who sought to acquire lower-grade valves that could be used in a nuclear program had violated U.N. sanctions. The individual founded a company called Petroinstrument HB to handle the exports. But the company's activities were brought to the attention of Swedish authorities in 2010 and 2011 by two Swedish banks. "The panel noted that the attempted exports were accompanied by multiple techniques to evade effective export controls, including obscuring the end use or end user of the valves by means of false end user certificates, and attempting the acquisition of technology that falls below established control thresholds."

Olli Heinonen, the former deputy director general for safeguards at the International Atomic Energy Agency, said that nuclear proliferators, from Pakistan to Iran, have long sought to avoid international scrutiny by purchasing equipment that was not covered by control lists. The down side, he said, is that it may take longer to enrich uranium. And there is a greater risk that equipment will break down, or require more frequent maintenance. But a patient proliferator can ultimately succeed in acquiring nuclear fuel.

"At the end of the day it's a trade off," he told *Turtle Bay*. "In Iran the performance of centrifuges are much lower than [the father of the Pakistani nuclear weapons program] A.Q. Khan's. The reason is they use lower quality materials. They know they have certain limitations and adjust their operational procedures to account for that, but they can still enrich uranium. It will be more expensive and take more time but you will still get there."

The report documents several other cases involving the seizure of dual use items, including "process control equipment" that was "reportedly for use in the Iranian nuclear program." The equipment, which was shipped by parcel to an individual in Tehran by an unnamed company, was not included in international control lists regulating the international trade. The recipient, according to the report, was a senior official at the Iranian Simatec Development project, which has been linked by "several states" to the Kalaye Electric Company, an Iranian entity that conducted research for Iran's nuclear program.

Among other key highlights of the U.N. panel report

*The report also describes a split among the U.N. experts over the role of Iran in an arms smuggling operation that was thwarted by Yemeni officials. In January, Yemeni Coast Guard and U.S. Navy vessels seized an Iranian vessel, the *Jihan*,

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en route to Yemen. (The vessel has also been inspected by authorities from a third unidentified country). "Five members of the panel found that all available information placed Iran at the center of the operation," the report noted. But three experts from China, Russia and Nigeria dissented, arguing that there was inadequate evidence to prove Iran's complicity, according to a U.N. based diplomat briefed on the matter.

*The report also addresses ongoing speculation about Iranian nuclear cooperation with North Korea. The panel's conclusion? It has no idea. "Assessments of Iran-DPRK cooperation are contradictory," the report states. "Some experts continue to believe that DPRK provides scientific and material support to Iran. Others have concluded that cooperation between the two states is limited to expertise. The Panel has sought information from States and the DPRK Panel regarding such cooperation. Although there are reports of Iranian officials present at launches of DPRK missiles, the Panel has seen no evidence of specific technical cooperation."

* The panel found that Iran had made some progress in developing an indigenous ballistic missile program, it still remains reliant on foreign suppliers. Iran continues to violate U.N. resolutions by launching its ballistic missiles but that "no significant, new missile capabilities were demonstrated by Iran during the mandate period."

"Since November 2011, there has been no additional information reported by the IAEA regarding Iran's alleged activities on integrating a nuclear payload onto a ballistic missile," the report added. "Although Iran's nuclear fuel cycle capabilities are well established in many areas, Iran's reliance on procurement abroad continues to provide the international community with opportunities to limit Iran's ability to maintain and expand certain activities."

Longtime Washington Post correspondent Colum Lynch reports on all things United Nations for Turtle Bay. He has also played a key part in the Post's diplomatic reporting on the Iraq war, the International Criminal Court, the spread of weapons of mass destruction, and U.S. counterterrorism strategy.

http://turtlebay.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/06/17/heres_how_iran_dodges_nuclear_watchdogs_from_shady_front_companies_to_false_ids

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The Japan Times – Japan
OPINION/Commentary

Cruise Missile Threat in Asia

By Michael Richardson
June 18, 2013

SINGAPORE – Cruise missiles that are difficult to detect, increasingly fast and capable of carrying nuclear warheads are spreading, especially in Asia, complicating arms control and raising the risk of catastrophic conflict.

Until recently, most concerns have focused on the actual or potential spread of nuclear-tipped ballistic missiles in China, North Korea, India and Pakistan — the four Asian states known to have atomic arms. Ballistic missiles, launched by rocket engines, follow an arc-like trajectory, attaining hypersonic speeds on the downward leg of their guided journey towards a target.

Until now and probably for some time yet, all long-range ballistic missiles, with atomic warheads small enough to fit on them, are deployed exclusively for strategic nuclear deterrence. The five official nuclear weapon states — United States, Russia, China, Britain and France — use their long-range ballistic missiles, whether launched from land, air or sea, to deter possible attacks by other nuclear-armed nations.

Arms control treaties and agreements have tended to focus chiefly on ballistic missiles. However, another type of weapon, the cruise missile, is multiplying. It is proving to be even more difficult to control, partly because in many cases the same highly accurate missile is designed to carry either a conventional high explosive warhead or a nuclear warhead.

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This dual role makes it impossible for a nuclear-armed nation facing a cruise missile attack against its territory or warships to know whether the incoming weapons are conventional or nuclear, an uncertainty that could trigger a nuclear response. Dual-role ballistic missiles of less than intercontinental range pose a similar problem.

The U.S. Air Force Global Strike Command reported last month that both China and North Korea were developing nuclear-capable cruise missiles. The U.S. and Russia lead the world with nuclear-capable cruise missiles, weapons launched from long-range bombers or submarines. But India and Pakistan are also developing such missiles. They each have several different types, with different ranges, in service or being flight tested.

Cruise missiles, powered by jet engines, travel low and fast over land or water, making them difficult to detect. They are also relatively small, compared to long-range ballistic missiles.

There are about 1,140 of the nuclear version of the U.S. AGM-86 air-launched cruise missile in America's nuclear arsenal. In addition, there are about 460 nuclear-capable AGM-129A advanced cruise missiles. The U.S. Air Force says that the streamlined design of the AGM-129A, combined with radar-absorbing material and several other features, make it virtually impossible to detect on radar.

The range of the U.S. AGM-129 A is officially put at almost 3,220 km. However, the nuclear-ready version of Russia's Raduga Kh-101 air-launched cruise missile, which is due to become operational this year, is designed to have a maximum flight distance of just over 9,650 km, which puts it in the range category of an intercontinental ballistic missile.

The new Chinese and North Korean cruise missiles appeared on a slide of an unclassified briefing given by Lt. Gen. James Kowalski, head of the U.S. Air Force Global Strike Command, on May 7. The slide shows nuclear weapon modernizations in eight of the world's nine states known to have atomic arms. Only Israel is not shown.

The Chinese cruise missile is the CJ-20 carried by the long-range H-6 bomber. Hans Kristensen, a nuclear weapons specialist with the Federation of American Scientists, said the listing was the first he had seen in an official U.S. publication crediting a Chinese air-launched cruise missile with nuclear capability.

U.S. defense officials say that a Chinese extended range H-6 bomber using the CJ-20 in a land-attack operation could strike targets all over Asia and eastern Russia as well as the U.S. military base hub on Guam island, in the western Pacific. Two-thirds of Russian territory, east of the Ural mountains, is in Asia.

The nuclear-capable North Korean cruise missile listed on the briefing slide is the KN-09 for coastal defense. It reportedly has a range of just 100 to 120 km.

America's AGM-86 nuclear-tipped cruise missiles travel at just over two-thirds the speed of sound.

Meanwhile, India is looking to its supersonic Brahmos cruise missile, a joint venture with Russia, as the key new weapon that will give it a strategic advantage over its neighbor and long-time rival, Pakistan. The Brahmos is the only known supersonic cruise missile system in service. Its designer, BrahMos Aerospace of Russia, says it travels at two to three times the speed of sound, or approximately one kilometer per second.

In October, India and Russia agreed to produce more than 1,000 Brahmos missiles for the Indian Air Force, Navy and Army. The two sides also decided to jointly develop a hypersonic version of the missile that would fly more than five times the speed of sound.

The Indian missile, which can be launched from the sea, air or land, has a range of about 300 km. It can carry a conventional or nuclear warhead. The high speed of India's Brahmos cruise missile means it has the potential to carry out prompt strikes on extremist camps inside Pakistan, to be followed by a punitive invasion by the Indian armed forces.

Because India is so much bigger and stronger than Pakistan, the latter has developed short-range ballistic missiles with low-yield nuclear warheads to deter such attacks. Although still to be verified, Pakistan claims it has miniaturized nuclear warheads so that they will also fit on cruise missiles. India also says that its cruise missiles are nuclear-capable.



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The short-warning time should either country use such weapons against the other means that escalation into an all-out nuclear exchange could result.

Shyam Saran, convener of India's National Security Advisory Board, said in April that in a crisis with Pakistan, India would not be the first to use nuclear weapons. He warned that even if India was attacked with relatively small, or tactical, nuclear arms, it would "engage in nuclear retaliation that will be massive and designed to inflict unacceptable damage on its adversary."

There is a wider warning here for Asian countries with tactical nuclear-tipped cruise or ballistic missiles in operation or planned. If ever used, such weapons could open a Pandora's Box of horrendous consequences, proving that a limited nuclear war is a contradiction in terms.

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

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2013/06/18/commentary/cruise-missile-threat-in-asia/#.UcJlpZQo5Dx>

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The Christian Science Monitor

OPINION/Briefing

How Russia Views Nuclear Disarmament - and Why it may Resist

In his speech today in Berlin, President Obama called for the US and Russia to cut their strategic nuclear arsenals by a third. But the proposal may meet a chilly reception in Moscow.

By Fred Weir, Correspondent

June 19, 2013

MOSCOW

President Barack Obama is urging Russia to move decisively beyond the cold war paradigm by negotiating a new round of arms reductions that would slash the numbers of nuclear weapons deployed by the US and Russia by one-third. It's a bold proposal that builds on a lot of historical success in the field of arms control. But it's not likely to be met with much enthusiasm in Moscow, where President Vladimir Putin has made anti-Americanism a central theme of his third presidential term, and the Russian military is extremely dubious about any further cuts in their already-overstretched nuclear deterrent.

Why is Obama proposing this idea now?

He's pitching it as part of the Global Nuclear Zero, a grand scheme supported by Mr. Obama and about 300 other world leaders to promote policies that will decrease and eventually eliminate atomic weapons from the Earth.

Even if it should prove unrealizable, it's an alluring idea that Obama may hope will focus public support and drive practical efforts to reduce the nuclear danger and build greater trust – especially between the US and Russia, who still own well over 90 percent of the world's existing nuclear weapons. During the cold war, the US and USSR signed a series of landmark arms-control treaties that tamed the nuclear "balance of terror" and went a long way toward stabilizing relations between two confrontational superpowers that held enough mega-tonnage between them to destroy the world many times over.

Early in his first term, Obama ended a long diplomatic chill with the Russians by engaging them in successful negotiations for the New START strategic arms reduction accord, which cut nuclear missile forces on both sides by almost half. Obama hopes to repeat that hat trick and arrest the current slide in US-Russia relations by enticing Moscow into a new, publicly popular round of nuclear arms-slashing.

How many nuclear weapons are there?

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Under the terms of the New START treaty, the US and Russia are each allowed 1,550 strategic nuclear warheads, which means weapons that have intercontinental reach because they're based on long-range bombers, submarines, and missiles. Under Obama's fresh proposal, both sides would have to scale down to about 1,000 each.

But that's just the tip of the atomic iceberg. In addition, both sides maintain hundreds of "tactical" nuclear warheads, which are much harder to identify because they tend to be small and portable: for use in artillery shells, depth charges, short-range missiles, and other ordnance that's difficult to distinguish from conventional counterparts. According to the nonpartisan Arms Control Association, the US has about 500 of those, deployed on ships and at US military bases around the world, while Russia maintains around 2,000.

Seven other nuclear-armed powers, who have never been included in any arms control deals, hold significant numbers of warheads and increasingly sophisticated means of delivering them. They include Britain with an estimated 225, France with 300, China with 240, Pakistan and India with about 100 each, Israel with perhaps 80, and North Korea with less than 10.

Do the Russians view the basic issue differently from the US?

Very differently. Whereas the US divides its nuclear weapons among a "strategic triad" of bombers, missiles, and submarines, Russia's strategic weapons are mostly concentrated on a few hundred aging, land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles. The Russians feel they are more vulnerable to a crippling "first strike," and therefore need larger numbers of weapons to maintain a sufficient level of deterrence.

Moreover, the nuclear component in Russia's armed forces remains the only credible guarantee that Russia would win a war against any aggressor. Russia's conventional military remains a shambles, despite an urgent ten-year, \$700 billion rearmament program initiated by President Vladimir Putin.

The US, on the other hand, spends about 7 times more than Russia on military effort, maintains a huge technological lead, and deploys vast, globe-girdling conventional forces that have no credible peers in today's world. Hence, the Americans can afford to talk up the idea of more drastic nuclear cuts, whereas Russia is likely to be far more cautious.

What about missile defense?

This is the main deal-breaker, from the Russian point of view.

When the US and the USSR began negotiating limits to their nuclear arsenals nearly half a century ago, they first signed the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, which banned defensive weapons. That formalized the doctrine of "mutual assured destruction" – or MAD – meaning any nuclear attack by either side would bring a rapid, annihilating counterstrike.

In other words, the ABM deal was a suicide pact that effectively prevented either side from developing the capacity to launch a devastating first strike and hope to fend off retaliation with defensive weaponry. That left no alternative but to negotiate reductions in offensive missile forces down to stable and mutually acceptable levels.

But President George W. Bush withdrew unilaterally from the ABM treaty in 2002, and developed plans for globe-girdling missile-defense installations. That effort – and particularly the NATO branch of missile defense in Europe – is viewed by the Russians as an attempt to break out of MAD and potentially neutralize Russia's nuclear-missile deterrent.

Though the Obama administration has made key concessions to Moscow's concerns, the Russians still say they want ironclad guarantees that US anti-missile systems will never be used against them. Without that, the Russians may be loathe to discuss any further cuts to their offensive arsenal.

Fred Weir has been the Monitor's Moscow correspondent, covering Russia and the former Soviet Union, since 1998. He's traveled over much of that vast territory, reporting on stories ranging from Russia's financial crash to the war in Chechnya, creeping Islamization in central Asia, Russia's demographic crisis, the rise of Vladimir Putin and his repeated returns to the Kremlin, and the ups and downs of US-Russia relations.

<http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Europe/2013/0619/How-Russia-views-nuclear-disarmament-and-why-it-may-resist>



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Foreign Policy
OPINION/National Security

The Case for Overkill

Obama's wrong: America does need thousands of nukes.

BY MATTHEW KROENIG

JUNE 19, 2013

On Wednesday, President Obama gave a speech at the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, calling for the United States and Russia to reduce the size of their deployed nuclear arsenals by one-third to around 1,000 strategic warheads. The call for further cuts has been greeted with enthusiasm in many quarters, but these proposed nuclear reductions could potentially be highly damaging to U.S. interests.

In his speech, the president argued that such cuts would be consistent with the goal of maintaining "a strong and credible strategic deterrent," but this argument rests on a contested theory about how nuclear deterrence works. The Obama administration, and many scholars and experts, believe that a secure, second-strike capability is sufficient for deterrence and that anything more is "overkill." Therefore, they believe that nuclear warheads in excess of a "minimum deterrent" threshold can be cut with very little loss to our national security.

However, there are those who argue that maintaining a nuclear advantage over one's opponents enhances deterrence. As Paul Nitze argued during the Cold War, it is of "the utmost importance that the West maintain a sufficient margin of superior capability.... The greater the margin (and the more clearly the Communists understand that we have a margin), the less likely it is that nuclear war will ever occur."

For decades, this debate was largely theoretical -- neither camp marshaled systematic evidence in support of its views -- but, recently, I methodically reviewed the relationship between the size of a country's nuclear arsenal and its ability to achieve its national security objectives. I found strong evidence that, when it comes to nuclear deterrence, more is better.

In an analysis of 52 countries that participated in nuclear crises from 1945 to 2001 (think the Cuban Missile Crisis), I found that the state with the greater number of warheads is over 17 times more likely to achieve its goals. In addition, there is qualitative evidence from these crises that leaders in nuclear-armed states pay close attention to the nuclear balance of power, that they believe nuclear superiority enhances their position, and that a nuclear advantage often translates directly into a geopolitical advantage. For example, during the Cuban Missile Crisis, Secretary of State Dean Rusk argued, "One thing Mr. Khrushchev may have in mind is that... he knows that we have a substantial nuclear superiority.... He also knows that we don't really live under fear of his nuclear weapons to the extent... that he has to live under ours."

Even if Russia agrees to match the president's proposed cuts, the nuclear reductions would attenuate our advantages vis-à-vis Russia and eat into our margin of superiority against other nuclear-armed states, such as China, possibly increasing the likelihood that the United States will be challenged militarily and reducing the probability that we achieve our goals in future crises.

If there is at least some reason to believe that reductions could harm America's strategic deterrent, then certainly those in favor of reductions provide concrete evidence that the benefits of reductions outweigh these costs, right? Alas, they do not.

Supporters of further cuts argue that reducing the role of nuclear weapons in U.S. policy will help us stop the spread of nuclear weapons to other countries. They argue that our large nuclear arsenal makes it difficult (if not hypocritical) to tell, say, Iran that it cannot have nuclear weapons, or to demand that other non-nuclear countries (such as Brazil and Turkey) help us pressure Iran. Therefore, they argue, we can generate goodwill and strengthen our nonproliferation efforts by cutting our own nuclear arsenal.

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This argument makes sense at a superficial level, but on closer inspection it falls apart. As Iran's leaders decide whether to push forward with, or put limits on, their nuclear program, or as Brazilian and Turkish leaders think about getting tougher with Iran, they likely consider many things, but it is implausible that the precise size of the U.S. nuclear arsenal is among them. The evidence backs this logic up; the United States has been cutting the size of its nuclear arsenal since 1967, but there is no reason to believe that we have ever received any credit for doing so, or that these cuts have contributed to any breakthroughs on important nonproliferation problems. In short, we can't stop other countries from building nuclear weapons by getting rid of our own.

Finally, proponents of cuts claim that nuclear reductions will lead to cost savings in a time of budget austerity, but, at least in the short term, nuclear reductions will actually result in cost increases, not decreases. Cutting arsenal size means pulling missiles out of silos, erecting buildings in which to store them, dismantling retired warheads, and decommissioning nuclear facilities. All of this costs money. Only if we think we can maintain a diminished nuclear posture indefinitely is it plausible to think there might be marginal cost savings to be had over the long run. But this would be an unwise bet given that U.S. competitors, including China, are moving in the opposite direction, expanding and modernizing their nuclear forces.

Since there are potential strategic costs and no identifiable benefits to further reducing the size of the U.S. nuclear arsenal, the United States should refrain from making any additional nuclear reductions. It must not go below the 1,550 warheads agreed to in New START (and it should take its sweet time getting down to that number). In addition, the United States should maintain the "hedge" of weapons it keeps in reserve at current levels and halt the transfer of warheads from storage to retirement and elimination. Finally, the Obama administration must follow through on its promise to fully invest in modernizing U.S. nuclear infrastructure so that it does not lose the capability to sustain a safe, secure, and effective nuclear arsenal for decades to come.

Some may find this argument provocative, but it is actually quite anodyne; I recommend simply that the United States maintain the status quo. What *is* provocative is slashing America's nuclear arsenal to 60-year lows in the face of evidence suggesting that doing so will harm our national interests.

Matthew Kroenig is an assistant professor and international relations field chair in the Department of Government at Georgetown University. He is the author of "Nuclear Superiority and the Balance of Resolve: Explaining Nuclear Crisis Outcomes," published in the January 2013 issue of International Organization.

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/06/19/the_case_for_overkill

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The Diplomat – Japan
OPINION/Flashpoints

The Economics of Nuclear Arms Reductions

By Zachary Keck
June 20, 2013

In an important speech today at Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, U.S. President Barack Obama called for further reductions to the U.S. and Russian nuclear arms stockpiles.

In the relevant part of the speech, President Obama declared:

“After a comprehensive review, I’ve determined that we can ensure the security of America and our allies, and maintain a strong and credible strategic deterrent, while reducing our deployed strategic nuclear weapons by up to one-third. And I intend to seek negotiated cuts with Russia to move beyond Cold War nuclear posture. At the same time, we’ll work with our NATO allies to seek bold reductions in U.S. and Russian tactical weapons in Europe.”

Under the New START agreement signed by Russia and the U.S. during Obama’s first term, Russia and the U.S. pledged to cut their deployed strategic nuclear forces down to 1,550 warheads by 2018 (although the actual number might be



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slightly higher because bombers are counted as one warhead even if they carry more than that.) The treaty did not address tactical nuclear weapons, which the U.S. and Russia deploy in Europe.

Assuming Obama was talking about reducing strategic stockpiles by one-third from the New START Treaty, this would leave the U.S. and Russia with roughly a 1,000-1,100 deployed strategic forces.

Most experts in the arms control community agree that the U.S. could maintain a credible deterrent at this level or lower. Indeed, before becoming Defense Secretary, Chuck Hagel signed his name onto a report that suggested looking into reducing America's strategic forces down to 450 warheads.

Proponents of further nuclear weapon reductions often point to a number of strategic and security benefits that would supposedly come from reducing nuclear stockpiles, including lowering the chance of an accidental nuclear launch or nuclear terrorist attack, and reducing the incentive non-nuclear weapon states have to pursue their own nuclear forces.

Whatever the merits of these arguments, the most compelling argument for why Russia and the U.S. should further reduce the size of their nuclear arsenal is economic in nature. Indeed, economic-based arguments for further arms reductions would almost certainly be the most effective means of persuading the principal opponents of a new nuclear agreement—Republicans in Congress and the Russians.

As I've argued before, the enormous costs of maintaining a nuclear arsenal are too often neglected in nuclear debates. Calculating the total costs of a nation's arsenal is an immense task, but one notable effort calculated that America's nuclear weapons program cost US\$5.8 trillion from 1940 to 1996. According to the Arms Control Association, a non-profit organization dedicated to reducing nuclear weapon stockpiles, the U.S. currently spends about US\$31 billion annually on simply maintaining its existing nuclear weapons arsenal.

Modernizing U.S. nuclear forces and delivery systems will be immensely expensive as well, and threaten to erode America's conventional military capabilities in a time of greater austerity. According to a September 2012 report by Ploughshares Fund, when modernization efforts are included, the U.S. nuclear arsenal will cost US\$640 billion over the next decade, more than doubling the current annual price tag. It's worth noting that actual costs of nuclear and other defense programs often far exceed anticipated costs.

Although cost estimates are harder to come by for Russia's nuclear forces, Moscow is also planning on modernizing its forces. Furthermore, it is likely to be as constrained or more constrained fiscally than the United States.

By pledging to reduce stockpiles down to 1,000 deployed strategic forces, the U.S. and Russia could lighten the burden their nuclear forces will have on government budgets. In fact, in the March 2013 Arms Control Association report cited above, the organization estimated that bringing nuclear forces down to this level would save American taxpayers around US\$58 billion. This figure could be increased if the U.S. decided to remove its 150-180 tactical nuclear weapons from Europe.

Given the growing conventional challenges both countries face from China's military, this could be money well saved.

Zachary Keck is Assistant Editor of The Diplomat. He has previously served as a Deputy Editor for E-IR and as an Editorial Assistant for The Diplomat.

<http://thediplomat.com/flashpoints-blog/2013/06/20/the-economics-of-nuclear-arms-reductions/>

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New Statesman – U.K.
OPINION/The Stagers

Dropping Trident Will Lead to a Richer, Safer Britain

The Labour Party should consider the non-renewal of the trident nuclear weapons system as part of its future defence and security policy, writes Nick Brown.

By Nick Brown

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It is not possible to envisage a situation where Britain would, independently, use its nuclear weapons system without the support of our NATO allies. In the instance that Britain did use nuclear weapons, international law dictates that this would be in response to nuclear weapons being used against us, in which case the Trident system would have failed to have fulfilled its main purpose; that of a deterrent. Our membership of NATO provides us with collective protection under its nuclear umbrella, with the Trident system acting as an unnecessary duplicate of this.

The nature of international politics is changing. The threats faced today are not the same as in the second half of the 20th century. International instability is caused by factors such as terrorism, cyberwarfare, economic, political and social upheaval, as well as environmental issues. Many of these are key development issues which pose a threat to international security. An independent nuclear deterrent does nothing to address any of these factors. It distracts attention and diverts resources from the real challenges facing the world today and in the future.

In the current economic circumstances, and with large cuts to government budgets including the defence budget, it is difficult to justify spending nearly £100bn on a new nuclear weapons system, which we cannot use, which does not protect Britain from the threats to international security today and which does nothing to address these.

Britain under the Labour Government can rightly, and proudly, make claim to have played a leading role in promoting the international development agenda, both domestically and internationally. This helped to raise Britain's standing on the world stage and increase our respect and influence abroad. 'Soft' power is an increasingly important aspect of international relations. By making a commitment to non-renewal of our independent nuclear weapons system and increasing our attention to new and emerging threats, Britain (and the Labour Party) can remain at the forefront of the international development cause, as well as taking a forward-thinking approach to our own defence and security policy.

By non-renewal of our independent nuclear weapons system, Britain will be setting an example to other nations who are either developing or aspire to have nuclear weapons. It would allow Britain to play a leading role in securing new nuclear weapons free zones, including in Africa and the Middle East. We should be realistic about the capacity for the UK to project military power across the globe and make greater efforts to lead by example rather than through force and coercion. The best way of achieving this would be through making a clear statement of intent through non-renewal of Trident and a redefinition of our defence and security policy towards new and emerging threats, including the need to address development issues which span national borders.

Nick Brown is Labour MP for Newcastle upon Tyne East and the former chief whip.

<http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2013/06/labour-needs-drop-trident-richer-safer-britain>

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