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Press TV – Iran

P5+1 Should Revive Iranian Nation ‘Lost’ Trust: Ambassador

Saturday, May 19, 2012

Iran’s Ambassador to Italy, Seyyed Mohammad Ali Hosseini, has urged the P5+1 group to take seriously the issue of “reviving the Iranian nation’s lost trust” during the upcoming nuclear talks.

“If the Western parties follow the Istanbul pattern in [the upcoming] talks and demonstrate their good will to us, there will be a possibility of reviving their [Iranians] lost trust,” Hosseini told Italy’s official news agency, ANSA, on Friday.

The latest round of the talks between Iran and the P5+1 group -- Britain, China, France, Russia, and the United States plus Germany -- over Tehran’s nuclear energy program was held in the Turkish city of Istanbul on April 14. Both sides hailed the discussions as constructive.

They also agreed to hold the next round of the talks in the Iraqi capital of Baghdad on May 23, 2012.

“The Istanbul negotiations pivoted principally on the approach of dialog and cooperation, and the [nuclear] Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is a basis on which the rights of the Islamic Republic of Iran to have peaceful nuclear technology are recognized,” the Iranian diplomat added.

He further noted that the “unreal remarks” made by some officials of the P5+1 countries are “in contradiction to” the constructive atmosphere prevailing after the Istanbul talks.

The US, Israel and some of their allies accuse Tehran of pursuing military objectives in its nuclear energy program.

Iran has repeatedly dismissed Western allegations over its nuclear activities, arguing that as a committed signatory to the NPT and a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency, it has the right to pursue nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/05/19/241935/p51-should-regain-iranians-trust/>

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Washington Post

U.S., Allies Accelerating Plans to Secure Chemical Arsenal as Syrian Crisis Worsens

By Joby Warrick
May 19, 2012

The Obama administration is accelerating its planning with Middle Eastern allies for a series of potentially fast-moving crises in Syria in the coming months, including the possible loss of government control over some of the country’s scattered stocks of chemical weapons, U.S. and Middle Eastern security officials say.

The planning, involving intelligence and military officials from at least seven countries, includes detailed arrangements for securing chemical arms with special operations troops in the event that parts of Syria are seized by militants, the officials said. Western and regional intelligence officials are increasingly concerned that Islamic extremists could attempt to seize control of whole towns and districts if the country slides into full-scale civil war.

The stepped-up preparations have coincided with increased military training in the region, including an unusually large multinational military exercise underway this month in Jordan, Syria’s southern neighbor. U.S. and Jordanian officials separately have been discussing possible permanent bases in the country for small units of Marines or special operations troops who could be deployed rapidly in a crisis anywhere in the region, from the Syria border to Iraq, according to current and former government officials familiar with the talks.

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“There’s a big worry that things could fall apart quickly,” said a former U.S. intelligence official who has been briefed about the contingency plans and spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the diplomatically sensitive preparations. “A big problem can turn up on your doorstep overnight.”

Western intelligence agencies made similar plans to safeguard chemical munitions in Libya last year during the uprising there, particularly during the chaotic final weeks as Libyan troops deserted their bases ahead of the rebels’ final advance on Tripoli.

The Libyan arsenal, consisting mainly of bulk containers of degraded mustard agent, was deemed less dangerous than Syria’s battlefield-ready stock of more powerful nerve agents. Libya’s chemical weapons depots remained intact during the uprising, though thousands of other weapons of all kinds — from rocket-propelled grenades to shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles — went missing.

While Syria’s arsenal of deadly nerve agents tops the list of worries, the planning group — which has included elements of the CIA and Joint Special Operations Command on the U.S. side — also has sought to map out a response to other emergencies, from pilot-rescue operations to massive refugee flights to border violence as tribes along the Syrian frontier are drawn into skirmishes with government forces or rival groups, the officials said.

“There are contingencies for everything, up to and including taking back a province that has been seized by al-Qaeda,” said a Middle Eastern intelligence official who has participated in the discussions.

While U.S. intelligence officials have conducted their own planning exercises for Syria, the increased coordination began early this year and intensified in recent months. An early advocate, Western diplomats say, was Jordan’s King Abdullah II, whose country has witnessed cross-border shootings in addition to masses of Syrian refugees since the uprising against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad began 14 months ago.

The process evolved into a series of bilateral discussions that grew to include Britain, Turkey, Israel, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, according to two Middle Eastern security officials who have participated.

“We drew on the lessons from Libya,” the second Middle Eastern official said. “Some of the countries involved have overlapping air defenses, so on a practical level there has to be coordination.”

The contingency planning for securing Syrian chemical weapons relies on early warning from U.S. spy agencies who have been closely monitoring Assad’s stockpiles for more than a year. Syria possesses one of the world’s largest arsenals of chemical munitions, including tons of nerve gases such as VX and sarin, as well as artillery shells and missile warheads for delivering them.

The weapons are kept in bunkers under heavy guard in at least five sites around the country, weapons experts say. While the stockpiles appear secure at the moment, they could be plundered or simply abandoned if Syria troops are beaten back by increasingly well-armed rebels or by al-Qaeda-allied militants who have been streaming into the country from Iraq in recent weeks, intelligence officials say.

It is against this backdrop that military forces from 19 countries gathered in Jordan last week for a military exercise dubbed Eager Lion 2012. The exercise, focused primarily on special operations and counterinsurgency training, was expected to draw as many as 12,000 troops to the Jordanian desert, making it one of the largest exercises of its kind in the region, Pentagon officials said.

U.S. and Jordanian officials have declined to link the training exercise to the crisis in Syria, a country with which Jordan maintains diplomatic relations. But Pentagon officials involved in the event stressed the importance of “strategic theater cooperation” among special operations troops.

The training “does not target anyone — none of the neighboring or world countries,” Jordanian Armed Forces training chief Major Gen. Awni El-Edwan told reporters.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/us-allies-accelerating-plans-to-seize-chemical-arsenal-as-syrian-crisis-worsens/2012/05/19/gIQA19yKbU_story.html



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Baltimore Sun

U.N. Nuclear Chief Holds Talks in Tehran, Hopes for Deal

By Fredrik Dahl and Marcus George, Reuters
May 21, 2012

VIENNA/DUBAI (Reuters) - The U.N. nuclear watchdog chief held rare talks in Tehran on Monday after voicing hope for a deal to investigate suspected atomic bomb research - a gesture Iran might make to try to get international sanctions relaxed and deflect threats of war.

International Atomic Energy Agency Director-General Yukiya Amano began discussions with the head of Iran's nuclear energy organization, Fereydoun Abbasi-Davani, a few hours after his pre-dawn arrival, according to ISNA news agency.

Amano, who was on his first trip to Iran since taking office in 2009, a period marked by rising tension between the IAEA and Tehran, was also due to meet Iran's chief nuclear negotiator, Saeed Jalili and Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi on Monday. There was no word on the course of the talks by mid-afternoon.

"I really think this is the right time to reach agreement. Nothing is certain but I stay positive," Amano, a veteran Japanese diplomat with long experience in nuclear proliferation and disarmament affairs, said before departure from Vienna airport. He added that "good progress" had already been made.

But while Amano scheduled Monday's talks with Iran at such short notice that diplomats said a deal on improved IAEA access in Iran seemed near, few see Tehran going far enough to convince the West to roll back swiftly on punitive sanctions when its negotiators meet global power envoys in Baghdad on Wednesday.

"We are not going to do anything concrete in exchange for nice words," a Western diplomat said of the Baghdad meeting, the outcome of a big power session with Iran in Istanbul last month that ended a diplomatic freeze of more than a year.

Two days after seeing Amano, Jalili will hold talks in the Iraqi capital with Catherine Ashton, the European Union foreign policy chief heading a six-power coalition comprised of the five U.N. Security Council permanent members - the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China - plus Germany.

By dangling the prospect of enhanced cooperation with U.N. inspectors, diplomats say, Iran might aim for leverage for the broader talks where the United States and its allies want Tehran to curb works they say are a cover for developing atomic bombs.

Pressure for a deal has risen. Escalating Western sanctions on Iran's economically vital energy exports, and threats by Israel and the United States of last-ditch military action, have pushed up world oil prices, compounding the economic misery wrought by debt crises in many industrialized countries.

HOPE VIES WITH MISTRUST

Some diplomats and analysts said Amano, given a recent history of mistrustful relations with Iran, would go to Tehran only if he believed a framework agreement to give his inspectors freer hands in their investigation was close. Iran has been stonewalling IAEA requests for better access for four years.

"Amano would not have travelled to Tehran had he not been provided with assurances that progress could be made. If he returns to Vienna empty-handed, the embarrassment will be more damaging for Tehran than the agency," said Ali Vaez, senior analyst at the International Crisis Group.

"However, if the IAEA is satisfied with Tehran's cooperation, Iranian negotiators will have a new trump card to play at the negotiating table in Baghdad."



The U.N. watchdog is seeking access to sites, nuclear officials and scientists and documents to shed light on work in Iran applicable to developing the capability to make nuclear weapons, especially the Parchin military complex outside Tehran.

Two meetings between Iran and senior Amano aides in Tehran in January and February failed to produce any notable progress. But both sides were more upbeat after another round of talks in Vienna last week, raising hopes for a deal.

"We need to keep up the momentum. There has been good progress during the recent round of discussions between Iran and the IAEA," Amano said, stressing that he did not expect to visit Parchin during his short, one-day stay in Tehran.

"We regard the visit ... as a gesture of goodwill," Salehi said. He hoped for agreement on a "new modality" to work with the IAEA that would "help clear up the ambiguities".

DOUBTS

Yet while an Iranian agreement on a so-called "structured approach" outlining the ground rules on how to address the IAEA's questions would be welcome, it remains to be seen how and when it will be implemented in practice.

"We'll see if the Iranians agree to let the agency visit Parchin. I have my doubts, no matter what any agreement says on paper," said one Western envoy ahead of Amano's visit to Iran and the meeting with world powers, the P5+1, in Baghdad.

Such a deal would also not be enough in itself to allay international concerns. World powers want Iran to curb uranium enrichment, which can yield fuel for nuclear power plants or for nuclear bombs, depending on the level of refinement.

Iran, to general disbelief from its Israeli and Western adversaries, insists its nuclear program is intended only to generate electricity and produce isotopes for cancer treatment.

Unlike its arch-enemy Israel, assumed to harbor the Middle East's only nuclear arsenal, Iran is a signatory to treaties that oblige it to be transparent with the IAEA.

ISRAEL SCEPTICAL

Leaders of the Group of Eight, worried about the effect of high oil prices on their faltering economies, turned up the heat on Iran on Saturday, signaling readiness to tap into emergency oil stocks quickly this summer if tougher new sanctions on Tehran threaten to dry up supplies of crude.

Israel, convinced a nuclear-armed Iran would pose a mortal threat, has - like the United States - not ruled out air strikes to stop Iran's atomic progress if it deems diplomacy has failed.

In Baghdad, the powers' main goal is to get Iran to stop the higher-grade uranium enrichment it started two years ago and has since expanded, shortening the time needed for any weapons bid.

Iran says it needs uranium enriched to a fissile concentration of 20 percent for its medical isotope reactor. Enrichment to 5 percent of fissile purity is suitable for power plant fuel, while 90 percent constitutes fuel for bombs.

An adviser to Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said there were hopes the Baghdad meeting would be successful but Tehran would not decide its nuclear destiny under pressure.

The IAEA wants Iran to address issues raised by an agency report last year that revealed intelligence pointing to past and possibly ongoing activity to help develop nuclear explosives.

Iran says the intelligence is fabricated, and has so far resisted requests for inspectors to examine Parchin, maintaining that it is a purely conventional military installation outside the writ of nuclear inspectors.

Additional reporting by Justyna Pawlak in Brussels, William Maclean in London, Marcus George in Dubai, Patrick Markey in Baghdad and Ori Lewis and Dan Williams in Jerusalem; Editing by Mark Heinrich.



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<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/nation-world/sns-rt-us-iran-nuclearbre84k0a9-20120521,0,3343400,full.story>

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News Tribune – Tacoma, WA

UN Nuclear Chief: Deal with Iran Reached on Probe

Despite some remaining differences, a deal has been reached with Iran that will allow the U.N. nuclear agency to restart a long-stalled probe into suspicions that Tehran has secretly worked on developing nuclear arms, the U.N. nuclear chief said Tuesday.

By GEORGE JAHN; Associated Press

Tuesday, May 22, 2012

VIENNA — Despite some remaining differences, a deal has been reached with Iran that will allow the U.N. nuclear agency to restart a long-stalled probe into suspicions that Tehran has secretly worked on developing nuclear arms, the U.N. nuclear chief said Tuesday.

The news from International Atomic Energy Agency chief Yukiya Amano, who returned from Tehran on Tuesday, comes just a day before Iran and six world powers meet in Baghdad for negotiations and could present a significant turning point in the heated dispute over Iran's nuclear intentions. The six nations hope the talks will result in an agreement by the Islamic Republic to stop enriching uranium to a higher level that could be turned quickly into the fissile core of nuclear arms.

Iran denies it seeks nuclear arms and says its reactors are only for power and medical applications.

By compromising on the IAEA probe, Iranian negotiators in Baghdad could argue that the onus was now on the other side to show some flexibility and temper its demands. Although Amano's trip and the talks in Baghdad are formally separate, Iran hopes progress with the IAEA can boost its chances Wednesday in pressing the U.S. and Europe to roll back sanctions that have hit Iran's critical oil exports and blacklisted the country from international banking networks.

It was unclear, though, how far the results achieved by Amano would serve that purpose, with him returning without the two sides signing the deal, despite his upbeat comments.

After talks in Tehran between Amano and chief Iranian nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili, "the decision was made... to reach agreement" on the mechanics of giving the IAEA access to sites, scientists and documents it seeks to restart its probe," Amano told reporters at Vienna airport after his one-day trip to Tehran.

Amano said differences existed on "some details," without elaborating but added that Jalili had assured him that these "will not be an obstacle to reach agreement." He spoke of "an almost clean text" that will be signed soon, although he could not say when.

Western diplomats are skeptical of Iran's willingness to open past and present activities to full perusal, believing it would only reveal what they suspect and Tehran denies - that the Islamic Republic has researched and developed components of a nuclear weapons program. They say that Tehran's readiness to honor any agreement it has signed is the true test of its willingness to cooperate

The United States is among those skeptics. In a statement released soon after Amano's announcement, Robert A. Wood, America's chief delegate to the nuclear agency, said Washington appreciated Amano's efforts but remained "concerned by the urgent obligation for Iran to take concrete steps to cooperate fully with the verification efforts of the IAEA, based on IAEA verification practices."

"We urge Iran to take this opportunity to resolve all outstanding concerns about the nature of its nuclear program," said the statement. "Full and transparent cooperation with the IAEA is the first logical step."

German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle also urged Iran to put professed good intentions into action.

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"Enduring and substantial cooperation by Iran with the International Atomic Energy Agency to clear up the open questions surrounding the Iranian nuclear program would be an important and at the same time overdue step in the right direction," he said in a statement.

On the Baghdad talks, "the aim is to make progress not just atmospherically but also on substance," he said, reflecting Western views that the feel-good effect achieved at a previous round in Istanbul last month must now be built upon with concrete steps aimed at reducing international concerns over Tehran's nuclear agenda.

For the six powers - the United States, Russia, China, Britain, France and Germany - a main concern is Iran's production of uranium enriched to 20 percent, which is far higher than needed for regular energy-producing reactors but used for one Iran says it needs for medical research. The U.S. and its allies fear the higher-enriched uranium could be quickly boosted to warhead-grade material.

U.S. officials have said Washington will not backpedal from its stance that Iran must fully halt uranium enrichment. But speculation is increasing that the priorities have shifted to block the 20 percent enrichment and perhaps allow Iran to maintain lower-level nuclear fuel production - at least for now.

Iranian officials could package such a scenario as a victory for their domestic audience. In Israel, it would likely be greeted with dismay and widen rifts between President Barack Obama's U.S. administration and Israeli officials who keep open the threat of military action against Iran's nuclear sites.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has warned against concessions, saying world powers should make "clear and unequivocal demands" that Iran stop all of its nuclear enrichment activity.

"Iran wants to destroy Israel and it is developing nuclear weapons to fulfill that goal," Netanyahu said at a conference in Jerusalem. "Against this malicious intention, leading world powers need to display determination and not weakness. They should not make any concessions to Iran."

Jalili, Iran's top nuclear negotiator who met with Amano and will also be the lead envoy at the Baghdad talks, said his country hopes for a new beginning when the talks start on Wednesday.

"We hope that the talks in Baghdad will be a kind of dialogue that will give shape to ... cooperation," Jalili said after arriving in Baghdad late Monday.

As part of any agreement, Amano and his agency are focused on getting Iran to let agency experts to probe various high-profile Iranian sites, including the Parchin military complex southeast of Tehran, where the agency believes Iran in 2003 ran explosive tests needed to set off a nuclear charge. The suspected blasts took place inside a pressure chamber.

Iran has never said whether the chamber existed, but describes Parchin as a conventional military site. Iran, however, has blocked IAEA requests for access to sites, scientists and documents needed for its investigation for more than four years.

Amano's talks included Jalili as well as Iran's foreign minister and other officials including the head of Iran's nuclear agency, Fereidoun Abbasi.

Iranian lawmaker Heshmatollah Falahtpisheh told The Associated Press on Monday that Tehran will likely accept more inspections of Parchin "if it feels there is good will within the (IAEA)."

But Falahtpisheh warned that this new openness will likely come with expectations that the West would in return ease international sanctions on Iran.

"In opening up to more inspections, Iran aims at lowering the crisis over its nuclear case," he said. "But if the sanctions continue, Iran would stop this."

A political analyst in Tehran, Hamid Reza Shokouhi, said Iran is carefully watching to see if the West shows more "flexibility and pays attention to Iranian demands" during Amano's trip.



"Then Iran will show flexibility, too," Shokouhi said.

But some Iranian media was critical of Amano and the IAEA, possibly reflecting internal divisions on how far to go compromise on nuclear issues.

In a sign of ebbing market worries, oil prices have steadily fallen since Iran and world powers resumed talks in April in Istanbul. Fears of supply disruptions because of military conflict or Iranian shipping blockades helped drive prices above \$106 a barrel earlier this year. Oil rose to slightly above \$92 per barrel Monday in New York.

<http://www.thenewstribune.com/2012/05/21/2152717/un-nuclear-chief-in-iran-on-key.html>

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China Daily – China

Iran Offers Package of Proposals in Baghdad Nuclear Talks: Report

May 24, 2012

(Xinhua)

TEHRAN, May 23 (Xinhua) -- Iranian delegation to Baghdad nuclear talks led by Iran's chief nuclear negotiator, Saeed Jalili, offered on Wednesday a five-pivot package of proposals to representatives of the UN Security Council's five permanent members (the United States, Britain, France, Russia and China) plus Germany, (P5+1), the official IRNA news agency reported.

The package encompasses proposals on Iran's nuclear program as well as other international issues, said the report.

It envisaged a step-by-step approach to resolve the dispute over Iran's nuclear program and the practical steps that the western governments should take in parallel, according to IRNA.

Representatives of P5+1 are expected to put forward their views on Iranian proposals.

The six world powers also offered proposals, but they presented their package verbally, said IRNA's report without elaborating on them.

On Wednesday, Iran denied the reports that the world powers submitted a proposal to Iran to reduce uranium enrichment during Baghdad nuclear talks.

"Any proposal to reduce uranium enrichment from 20 percent to 5 percent and in return to ease sanctions imposed on Iran, has not been presented by world powers," Talib Mahdi, a member of the Iranian delegation, told Xinhua on the sidelines of Baghdad nuclear meeting.

"Such proposal could be accepted by Iran because it would be a clear international recognition that Iran has the right to obtain nuclear energy," Mahdi said.

Earlier in the day, Michael Mann, spokesman of EU's foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton, told reporters that "We have presented a proposal to Iran stating that Iran to reduce its uranium enrichment from 20 percent to 5 percent in return for easing sanctions."

In the afternoon, representatives from Iran and the P5+1, in addition to EU, kicked off crunch talks aimed at defusing the long- running escalating crisis over Tehran's nuclear program.

The meeting was held in one of the palaces in the presidential complex in the heavily fortified Green Zone in central Baghdad that houses the Iraqi government offices and some foreign embassies, including the U.S. one.

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/xinhua/2012-05-24/content_5993311.html

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London Guardian – U.K.

Iran Nuclear Programme Talks Salvaged from Collapse

Last-ditch agreement reached in Baghdad to make another attempt at a compromise deal in Moscow next month

Julian Borger, diplomatic editor

Thursday, 24 May 2012

International talks over Iran's nuclear programme were salvaged from collapse in Baghdad with a last-ditch agreement to make another attempt at a compromise deal in Moscow next month.

After two days of intense talks in the Iraqi capital, Lady Ashton, the EU foreign policy chief, said: "It is clear that we both want to make progress, and that there is some common ground. However, significant differences remain. Nonetheless, we do agree on the need for further discussion to expand that common ground."

The common ground seems limited, beyond the desire to keep talks going to forestall the threat of Israeli military action. Ashton pointed to Iran's "readiness to address the issue of 20% enrichment" – a particular concern for the international community as 20%-enriched uranium is easier to convert into weapons-grade material. But diplomats at the talks said Iran's lead negotiator, Saeed Jalili, did not explicitly offer to curb 20% enrichment.

"It wasn't easy," one diplomat said. "Jalili said he was prepared to talk about 20% enrichment but then he came up with a bunch of peripheral issues like relations with Bahrain, and events in Syria."

After the talks, Jalili told CNN that progress at Moscow would require that "measures that damage the confidence of Iranians should be avoided", an apparent reference to punitive measures such as sanctions.

Responding to the mixed outcome of the talks, the foreign secretary, William Hague, said Iran needed to take "urgent, concrete steps". He added: "If Iran fails to respond in a serious manner, they should be in no doubt that we will intensify the pressure from sanctions, including the embargo on oil imports already agreed, and will urge other nations to do the same."

The UK remained fully committed to a diplomatic solution to the nuclear impasse, he said, but added "we must see significant progress from Iran" in Moscow.

At the outset of the talks, a six-nation group of senior diplomats presented what they termed a confidence-building package, calling on Iran to stop 20% enrichment, ship all its 20% uranium out of the country and stop operations at its underground enrichment plant at Fordow.

In return, the group – the US, UK, Russia, France, Germany and China – offered nuclear fuel plates for a research reactor, help with nuclear safety at Iranian reactors and spare parts for Iran's commercial airliners.

Jalili verbally presented counter-proposals, but they were considerably more vague. First was what he termed "the operationalisation of the fatwa", a reference to supreme leader Ali Khamenei's reported religious edict outlawing the development of nuclear weapons, although it was not clear how this would be put into effect.

His second point was international recognition of Iran's right to enrich uranium, and the third point dealt with regional issues like Bahrain and Syria.

Western diplomats argued that Iran's right to enrich uranium as part of a complete nuclear fuel cycle had been suspended until Tehran could convince the international community it had entirely peaceful intentions for its programme. The six-nation group argued that such issues would ultimately be addressed in a comprehensive settlement of the Iranian nuclear stand-off, but that the two sides should first carry out smaller, confidence-building steps.

Iranian state media reports criticised the package offered to Tehran on the grounds it did not include immediate relief from sanctions, but European diplomats claimed Jalili hardly mentioned sanctions inside the meeting "because he knew he would get no traction".

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As evening fell on the second night of talks, Jalili's delegation was threatening to end the negotiations without agreement on a time and venue for a further round, which would have signalled a breach in the tenuous diplomatic process begun in Istanbul last month, and a ratcheting up in tensions in the Gulf once more.

Ashton, and the Russian and Chinese delegations held separate meetings with the Iranian negotiator in the late afternoon to persuade him to agree to a further round in Moscow on June 18. His agreement was only evident in the dying minutes of the last plenary meeting.

Western diplomats conceded that less had been achieved than had been hoped, but claimed that the Baghdad meeting had met the minimum goal set by the six-nation group, of marking the start of the first serious and detailed negotiations about Iran's nuclear programme since January 2011.

A US negotiator said: "We are getting to the things that matter ... this is at least the beginning of a negotiation."

European diplomats said that the threshold for the Moscow talks would be substantially higher and that failure to reach a compromise there would have to be counted as a failure. "This cannot continue like this," one diplomat said. "The pace will get faster and the benchmark will get higher."

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/may/24/iran-nuclear-programme-talks-salvaged>

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Huffington Post

Iran Nuclear Program: Traces of Higher Enriched Uranium Found at Nuclear Site

By GEORGE JAHN, Associated Press

May 25, 2012

VIENNA -- The U.N. atomic agency has found evidence at an underground bunker in Iran that could mean the country has moved closer to producing the uranium threshold needed to arm nuclear missiles, diplomats said Friday.

The International Atomic Energy Agency has found traces of uranium enriched up to 27 percent at Iran's Fordo enrichment plant, the diplomats told The Associated Press.

That is still substantially below the 90-percent level needed to make the fissile core of nuclear arms. But it is above Iran's highest-known enrichment grade, which is close to 20 percent, and which already can be turned into weapons-grade material much more quickly than the Islamic Republic's main stockpile, which can only be used for fuel at around 3.5 percent.

The diplomats – who demanded anonymity because their information is privileged – said the find did not necessarily mean that Iran was covertly raising its enrichment threshold toward weapons-grade level. They said one likely explanation was that the centrifuges that produce enriched uranium initially over-enriched at the start as technicians adjusted their output.

Calls to Ali Asghar Soltanieh, Iran's chief delegate to the IAEA, were rejected and the switchboard operator at the Iranian mission said he was not available. IAEA media officials said the agency had no comment.

Iran is under several rounds of U.N. sanctions for its failure to disclose information on its controversial nuclear program. Tehran says it is enriching uranium to provide more nuclear energy for its growing population, while the U.S. and other nations fear that Iran doing that to have the ability to make nuclear weapons.

The latest attempts to persuade Iran to compromise and let U.N. experts view its nuclear program ended inconclusively Wednesday at a meeting in Baghdad. At the talks, six nations – the United States, Russia, China, Britain, France and Germany – failed to gain traction in efforts to persuade Tehran to freeze its 20 percent enrichment. Envoys said the group will meet again next month in Moscow.



Iran started enriching to 20 percent last year, mostly at Fordo, saying it needed the material to fuel a research reactor and for medical purposes. Still, its long-standing refusal to stop enrichment and accept reactor fuel from abroad has sparked fears it wants to expand its domestic program to be able to turn it toward making weapons.

Those concerns have increased since it started higher enrichment at Fordo, which is carved into a mountain. That, say Iranian officials, makes it impervious to attack from Israel or the United States, which have not ruled out using force as a last option if diplomacy fails to curb the Islamic Republic's nuclear program.

Even though Wednesday's talks were unproductive, diplomats saw hope in the promise of another meeting.

"It is clear that we both want to make progress and that there is some common ground," European Union foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton, who is formally leading the talks, told reporters. "However, significant differences remain. Nonetheless, we do agree on the need for further discussion to expand that common ground."

Saeed Jalili, Iran's top nuclear negotiator, offered a lukewarm assessment of Wednesday's negotiations, in light of European and American refusal to lift tough sanctions against Iran as Tehran had hoped.

"The result of the talks was that we were able to get more familiar with the views of each other," Jalili told reporters.

In Washington, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said significant differences remain between the two sides and that it's now up to Iran "to close the gaps."

"Iran now has the choice to make: Will it meet its international obligations and give the world confidence about its intentions or not?" Clinton said.

Iran went into Wednesday's talks urging the West to scale back on recently toughened sanctions, which have targeted Iran's critical oil exports and have effectively blackballed the country from international banking networks. The 27-nation European Union is set to ban all Iranian fuel imports on July 1, shutting the door on about 18 percent of Iran's market.

The diplomats said a confidential IAEA report on Iran's nuclear program to be released later Friday to the agency's 35-nation board will mention of the traces of 27-percent enrichment found at Fordo.

Iran already has around 700 centrifuges churning out 20-percent enriched uranium at Fordo. The diplomats said the report will also note that – while Iran has set up around 350 more centrifuges since late last year, at the site – these machines are not enriching.

While the reason for that could be purely technical, it could also serve as a signal from Tehran that it is waiting for progress in the negotiations.

The report is also expected to detail the state of talks between the U.N. nuclear agency and Iran that the agency hopes will re-launch a long-stalled probe into suspicions that Tehran has worked on nuclear-weapons related experiments – charges that Tehran denies.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/05/25/iran-nuclear-program_n_1545088.html

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Korea Herald – South Korea
May 19, 2012

U.S. House Passes Bill Recommending Tactical Nukes in S. Korea

WASHINGTON, May 18 (Yonhap) -- The U.S. House of Representatives on Friday passed the 2013 national defense authorization bill that recommends the redeployment of tactical nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula.

The non-binding amendment approved by the House reflects the Republican Party's push to get the incumbent Obama administration to take a firmer stance against North Korea's nuclear weapons threat.



The Republicans who control the House have also hinted that the redeployment of short-range, low yield nukes in South Korea and other parts of Northeast Asia could help nudge China into pressuring North Korea to give up its nuclear ambitions. Conservative lawmakers in Washington have been frustrated by China's reluctance to push North Korea on the nuclear issue.

Despite the passage of the amendment, both the U.S. State and Defense departments said Washington is committed to the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

The White House also said it could veto the bill, while Seoul officially said any deployment of nuclear weapons would run counter to the 1992 inter-Korean declaration on denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

South Korea's military added that such a move would work against ongoing efforts to get North Korea to give up its own nuclear weapons program.

Before the early 1990s, the U.S. stockpiled tactical nukes, such as the very short range Honest John surface-to-surface missile, nuclear artillery rounds, and bombs that could be dropped from attack aircraft, in the South to deter North Korean aggression.

The passage of the bill in the House follows the motion being approved by the House Armed Services Committee on May 9.

Congressional sources said another amendment that opposed recommending the redeployment of nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula forwarded by a Democratic lawmaker was rejected. (Yonhap News)

<http://view.koreaherald.com/kh/view.php?ud=20120519000056>

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Xinhua News – China

May 21, 2012

Senior U.S. Envoy Warns DPRK Against New Nuclear Test

- *Senior U.S. envoy warned DPRK against "further miscalculation" amid fears of a new nuclear test.*
- *The remark came amid growing speculation that Pyongyang might conduct its third nuclear test.*
- *The failed launch last month also scuttled a food aid deal between Pyongyang and Washington.*

SEOUL, May 21 (Xinhua) -- The top U.S. official for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) on Monday warned Pyongyang against "further miscalculation" amid fears of a new nuclear test.

"It is very important that North Korea (DPRK) not miscalculate again and engage in any future provocation, and that's the main message that we're conveying to North Korea (DPRK)," Glyn Davies, the U.S. special representative on the DPRK, told reporters after meeting with his South Korean and Japanese counterparts.

The remark came amid growing speculation that Pyongyang might conduct its third nuclear test following the botched attempt last month to launch a long-range rocket mounted with an observational satellite.

The launch, which Pyongyang said was to mark the birth centennial of the country's founding father Kim Il Sung, was seen as a cover for a long-range missile test and drew condemnation from the U.N. Security Council.

The failed launch also scuttled a food aid deal between Pyongyang and Washington, under which the former promised to halt nuclear and missile tests.

"Further miscalculation will be met with similar united action by the world community," Davies said without elaborating on the possibility of a nuclear test.

"We expect and hope that North Korea will make a different set of decisions, will cease devoting its resources to its nuclear program, and will instead open up itself to the outside world," he added.



Experts and government officials here have said the DPRK appears to be ready to conduct a nuclear test and is only awaiting a political decision. Its previous two tests in 2006 and 2009 were followed by missile tests.

Monday's trilateral talks, also joined by Lim Sung-nam of South Korea and Shinsuke Sugiyama of Japan, were aimed at ensuring all parties concerned have the "same understanding" of the situation and various contingency scenarios, according to the U.S. envoy.

Sugiyama described the meeting, the second such tripartite talks this year, as "fruitful" and "timely."

Davies is scheduled to leave for Beijing Tuesday to meet with his Chinese counterpart Wu Dawei. He will then visit Japan before returning home.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2012-05/21/c_131601856.htm

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Yonhap News Agency – South Korea
May 22, 2012

N. Korea Rules Out Nuke Test, but Vows to Bolster Nuke Deterrence, Satellite Program

SEOUL, May 22 (Yonhap) -- North Korea on Tuesday ruled out an imminent nuclear weapon test, but vowed to expand and bolster its nuclear deterrence as well as its sovereign right to launch satellites, while slamming the Group of Eight nations' condemnation of its failed long-range rocket launch in April.

In a remark given to Pyongyang's Korean Central News Agency, a spokesman for North Korea's Foreign Ministry said that the North didn't have a plan for a nuclear test from the beginning, because it sought to launch a scientific and technical satellite.

"From the beginning, we did not envisage such a military measure as a nuclear test as we planned to launch a scientific and technical satellite for peaceful purposes," said the official.

"Several weeks ago, we informed the U.S. side of the fact that we are restraining ourselves in real actions though we are no longer bound to the February 29 DPRK-U.S. agreement, taking the concerns voiced by the U.S. into consideration for the purpose of ensuring the peace and stability of the Korean Peninsula necessary for focusing every effort on the peaceful development."

The statement came one day after South Korea, the United States and Japan warned that North Korea will risk facing more sanctions and deepening its isolation if it conducted a nuclear test.

"I think it would be a serious miscalculation and mistake if North Korea worked to engage in a nuclear test," Glyn Davies, the U.S. special envoy for North Korea policy, said Monday in Seoul after talks with his South Korean and Japanese counterparts.

There has been speculation that the communist country may carry out a nuclear test to try to compensate for last month's botched rocket launch. The long-range rocket, which Pyongyang claimed was meant to put a satellite into orbit, exploded soon after lift-off on April 13. South Korea and the U.S. said it was a cover for testing the North's ballistic missile technology.

The North has a track record of carrying out a nuclear test following a long-range missile test. In 2006, the North conducted its first nuclear test, three months after the test-firing of its long-range Taepodong-2 rocket. The second nuclear test in 2009 came just one month after a long-range rocket launch.

The North Korean official went on to strongly hit back at a statement issued at a G8 summit in the U.S. last week, in which the global leaders warned that the North will face stronger punishment in case of further provocations that



threaten regional stability. The G8 leaders also urged the North to comply with its international obligations and abandon all nuclear and ballistic missile programs in a complete, verifiable, and irreversible manner.

The North's official then threatened to expand and bolster its nuclear deterrent, continue legitimately exercising its sovereign right to launch satellites to build an economic power and take other countermeasures for self-defense.

"Absolutely intolerable is G8's reckless political provocation to violate the sacred sovereignty of the DPRK (North Korea) steeped in the bad habit of supporting the U.S. hostile policy towards the DPRK in disregard of justice and truth. We will bravely frustrate all the obstructions of the hostile forces and continue legitimately exercising our sovereign right to launch satellites to meet the indispensable requirements for building an economic power," said the official.

"We had access to nuclear deterrence for self-defense because of the hostile policy of the U.S. to stifle the DPRK by force and we will expand and bolster it nonstop as long as this hostile policy goes on. If the U.S. persists in its moves to ratchet up sanctions and pressure upon us despite our peace-loving efforts, we will be left with no option but to take counter-measures for self-defense."

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2012/05/22/37/0401000000AEN20120522004900315F.HTML>

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Chosun Ilbo – South Korea

May 22, 2012

S.Korea to Build 500-600 More Missiles

South Korea plans to increase the number of ballistic and cruise missiles with a view to incapacitating North Korea's nuclear weapons and long-range missiles in an emergency. The government and military aim to spend some W2.5 trillion (US\$1=W1,170) over the next five years to secure 500-600 new cruise and ballistic missiles.

A government source on Sunday said, "Given the mounting threat of provocations from the North since Kim Jong-un took power, the Defense Ministry reported to President Lee Myung-bak last month a plan to increase missile capabilities in response to asymmetric threats from the North."

The military will boost the number of new Hyunmu-3 series cruise missiles, which have a range of between 500 and 1500 km and the Hyunmu-2 ballistic missiles, which have a 300 km range. Both were unveiled last month. They are supposed to incapacitate the North's nuclear weapons facilities, Rodong and Scud missile bases, biochemical weapons facilities, command facilities, and Air Force bases in the early stage of a war to prevent or minimize damage to South Korea.

The military wants to ask the government for a budget for these plans and implement it as soon as possible. Lee approved the plans when Defense Minister Kim Kwan-jin reported them on April 28, the source added.

The Hyunmu-3 cruise missile can hit targets with 1-3 m accuracy, and the Hyunmu-2 ballistic missile with 50 m accuracy. Each of the new missiles costs about W4 billion.

http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2012/05/22/2012052200636.html

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Yonhap News Agency – South Korea

May 22, 2012

S. Korea to Map Out Plan to Counter Bioterrorism

SEOUL, May 21 (Yonhap) -- South Korea plans to set up a five-year plan to better protect itself from possible biological terrorist attacks, the country's public health and safety agency said Monday.



The 2013-2017 plan calls for extensive research and development (R&D) to create vaccines and antidotes, quick detection and precise diagnosis of harmful agents, and the collection of related information through international cooperation, the Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (KCDC) said.

It said that the plan calls for utilizing the latest nano-biotech and advanced convergence technologies to effectively cope with threats, and stockpile vaccines and drugs.

As part of the countermeasure initiative, the KCDC plans to authorize clinical tests on anthrax so drugs can be developed locally by 2013.

In addition, Seoul said it wants to enhance nationwide monitoring for harmful agents by developing advanced detection kits.

The public health agency said that it will continuously receive input from experts in the field and push forward necessary R&D to protect the country and people from potential biological attacks.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2012/05/21/39/0302000000AEN20120521000300320F.HTML>

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London Guardian – U.K.

North Korea 'Upgrades Rocket Launch Site'

US thinktank claims satellite pictures show work at Musudan-ri site reflects North Korean intention to expand rocket programme

Associated Press in Washington

Wednesday, May 23, 2012

North Korea is upgrading its old launch site in the north-east to handle larger rockets including space launch vehicles and intercontinental missiles, according to a US thinktank.

The US-Korea Institute at Johns Hopkins University said satellite pictures showed work upgrading the Musudan-ri site began last summer and reflected North Korean determination to expand its rocket programme.

The US and other nations are worried such rockets could be developed to deliver nuclear weapons.

North Korea on Tuesday vowed to push ahead with its nuclear programme because of what it called US hostility. The international community is pressing the country not to carry out what would be its third nuclear test, following a failed attempt in mid-April to launch a satellite into space.

That launch, using its biggest rocket to date, the Unha-3, was from a more sophisticated site at Sohae on the country's north-west coast.

An aerial image of Musudan-ri on the opposite coast taken on 29 April shows the initial stages of construction of a launchpad and rocket assembly building that could support rockets at least as big as the Unha-3, the institute said. A crane is visible where the launch pad is being built 1.1 miles from the old one. At the current pace of construction, the facilities should be operational by 2016-17, the institute claimed.

"This major upgrade programme, designed to enable Musudan-ri to launch bigger and better rockets far into the future, represents both a significant resource commitment and an important sign of North Korea's determination," said Joel Wit, editor of the institute's website, 38 North.

The institute said the assembly building showed similarities to one at the Semnan launch complex in Iran, which has a long history of missile co-operation with North Korea. But, officials there said it was premature to conclude the two nations co-operated in designing the new facility.

South Korea's national intelligence service said on Tuesday that it could not comment on whether it had detected any new activity at the Musudan-ri launch site.



USAF COUNTERPROLIFERATION CENTER
CPC OUTREACH JOURNAL
MAXWELL AFB, ALABAMA

The upgrade could be of particular concern to Japan, as rockets launched from the site in the past have flown east over that country. The flight path from Sohae heads south over the Pacific Ocean in the direction of south-east Asia, avoiding Japan and South Korea.

The April rocket launch drew UN security council condemnation, as the launch violated an existing ban. Similar technology is used for ballistic missiles. North Korea, however, is not believed to have mastered how to wed a nuclear device to a missile.

The leading US envoy on North Korea, Glyn Davies, who this week is meeting counterparts from Japan, South Korea and China, warned on Monday that the north conducting an atomic test would unify the world in seeking swift, tough punishment. Both of its previous nuclear tests, in 2006 and 2009, followed rocket launches.

A separate analysis of satellite images of a site that North Korea has used for its nuclear tests suggests work has increased there over the past month. James Hardy, IHS Jane's Asia-Pacific specialist, said in a statement there had been heightened activity at the north-eastern Punggye-ri site, including use of mining carts, excavation equipment and a large amount of debris taken from inside a tunnel and piled around its entrance. The most recent image was from 9 May.

In its statement on Tuesday North Korea made no direct threat of a nuclear test and said it was open to dialogue. An analyst, Koh Yu-hwan at Seoul's Dongguk University, said the statement, from North Korea's foreign ministry, was a message that "the US should come to the dialogue table [with North Korea] if it wants to stop its nuclear test".

The 2006 and 2009 long-range rocket launches that preceded North Korea's previous nuclear tests were from Musudan-ri. Citing earlier satellite imagery of the site, the US-Korea Institute said land-clearing for the new facilities there began last autumn, and work had proceeded at a fast pace for eight months.

The latest image, from a commercially operated satellite, shows four concrete footings on one side of the launchpad that appear to be for a gantry that would prop up a rocket at launch. It has bigger dimensions than the gantry at the more sophisticated launch site at Sohae.

On another side of the launchpad there is a deep "flame trench" to capture the blast from a rocket. Slightly further away, on either side of the launchpad, are two separate buildings designed to enclose the fuel and oxidiser tanks that would funnel propellant into the rocket.

Satellite imagery also shows that about 70 homes, five larger buildings and many sheds in the nearby village of Taepodong have been razed and foundations laid for a large T-shaped structure that appears intended for assembling rockets. A road is under construction that would lead from this building to the launch site, 1.2 miles away.

The building's dimensions are larger than at the comparable structure at Sohae, and the existing one at Musudan-ri, the institute said.

A US state department spokesperson declined to comment on the institute's findings, describing it as an intelligence matter.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/may/23/north-korea-rocket-launch-site>

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Times of India – India

Strategic Karwar Naval Base Set for Major Expansion

By Rajat Pandit, Tamil News Network (TNN)

May 20, 2012

Issue No. 1004, 25 May 2012

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



NEW DELHI: With the mammoth aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya slated to reach Indian shores early next year, the government is finally scrambling to launch the long-delayed expansion of the strategic Karwar naval base in coastal Karnataka at a cost of around Rs 13,000 crore.

The Phase-IIA expansion of Karwar base, which gives the country both strategic depth and operational flexibility on the western seaboard, is being sent to the Cabinet Committee on Security for the final nod after defence minister A K Antony approved it last week, sources said.

Defence secretary Shashikant Sharma also visited Karwar recently to take a look at the naval base, which can currently base 11 major warships and 10 smaller ships after Phase-I completion at a cost of Rs 2,629 crore.

Navy will be able to berth 32 major warships and submarines, and various other ships, including 10 of the 80 fast-interceptor craft (FICs), to be acquired for coastal security force Sagar Prahari Bal, after Phase-IIA is completed by 2018-19.

INS Vikramaditya, or the 44,570-tonne Admiral Gorshkov being refitted by Russia for \$2.33 billion, will be inducted much before that. With the congested Mumbai harbour not capable of handling INS Vikramaditya, some warships may have to be shifted out from Karwar to accommodate the carrier.

The six Scorpene submarines, being built at Mazagon Docks for Rs 23,562 crore and slated for induction in the 2015-2020 timeframe, will also be housed at Karwar. With its natural cover and depth of water, the base is ideal for stealthy submarine operations.

Karwar is India's third major naval base after Mumbai and Visakhapatnam on the west coast, while Pakistan has five at Gwadar, Ormara, Karachi, Pasni and Jiwani.

Under Phase-IIA, Karwar will get an airbase, armament depot, dockyard complex and missile silos, apart from additional jetties, berthing and anchorage facilities. The eventual aim is to base 50 frontline warships at Karwar after Phase-IIB is completed.

This is critical for strategic needs since the Navy is steaming ahead on its modernization path with 44 warships, six Scorpene submarines, 95 FICs and 106 smaller ships like barges, tugs and vessels already on order.

In tune with the "maritime capability perspective plan", another 45 warships are in the pipeline. These include six stealth submarines, seven stealth frigates, 16 coastal anti-submarine vessels, four massive landing platform docks and eight mine counter-measure vessels.

Overall, as first reported by TOI, Navy's ongoing conventional warship, submarine and maritime aircraft acquisition programme as well as proposed projects will together cost well over Rs 3,00,000 crore over the next 15 years.

On the strategic front, Navy plans to have three SSBNs (nuclear-powered submarines with long-range nuclear missiles) and six SSNs (nuclear-powered attack submarines) in the long term. The first SSBN INS Arihant will become operational in first half of 2013.

http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-05-20/india/31787627_1_strategic-karwar-naval-base-major-warships-scorpene-submarines

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Indian Express – India

India to Go for New Age Agni-VI

By Hemant Kumar Rout

23 May 2012

BALASORE: The country will go for the maiden development trial of Agni-VI missile in the next two years.



Being developed by the DRDO, the new generation ICBM Agni-VI will have a strike range of 8,000 to 10,000 km. Sources said the drawing and designing work of the most advanced missile had been started.

“It will be a three-stage missile and taller than the Agni-V. The design is just taking shape and other sub-systems are under development. If everything goes as per the programme, the missile will be ready by mid-2014,” said the source.

A defence scientist associated with the project said unlike the bulky Agni-III, the new generation Agni-VI missile will be more trendy and sleek, so that it can be easily carried to any place and deployed as and when required.

While the length of the missile would be reportedly around 40 metres as against Agni-V’s 17.5 metre, its diameter will be 1.1 metre, which is almost half of Agni-V. The missile’s launch weight would be around 55 tonne.

The Agni-VI is said to be the latest and most advanced version among the Agni series of missiles. It will have the capability to be launched from submarine and from land-based launchers.

The DRDO is also working on integrating Agni-V with submarine.

The new missile will also carry more number of warheads than any other version. While Agni-V can carry up to three nuclear warheads, sources said the next missile in the series carries even up to 10 nuclear warheads, capable of hitting multiple targets simultaneously.

Apart from the missile’s ground version, the DRDO is also simultaneously working out its underground variant.

The submarine launched version of the missile will arm the Arihant class submarines of the Indian Navy. This missile with a strike range of 6,000 km can carry a payload of one tonne.

“We are seriously contemplating to enhance the reach of our strategic missiles and development of Agni-VI will be a step forward to accomplish the goal,” added the scientist.

<http://expressbuzz.com/states/orissa/india-to-go-for-new-age-agni-vi/394512.html>

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Defense News

Pakistan Acknowledges Sea-Based Nuclear Deterrent

May 23, 2012

By USMAN ANSARI

ISLAMABAD — Pakistan has acknowledged the existence of a sea-based nuclear deterrent with the recent inauguration of the Headquarters of the Naval Strategic Force Command (NSFC) by the head of the Navy, Adm. Asif Sandhila.

A May 19 press release by the military’s Inter Services Public Relations stated the NSFC “will perform a pivotal role in development and employment of the Naval Strategic Force,” and was “the custodian of the nation’s 2nd strike capability.”

Mansoor Ahmed, lecturer at Quaid-e-Azam University’s Department of Defence and Strategic Studies, and who specializes in Pakistan’s nuclear and missile programs, said this is all but specific confirmation of the widely speculated submarine-launched variant of the Babur/HATF-VII (Vengeance-VII) cruise missile.

Analyst Usman Shabbir of the Pakistan Military Consortium think tank said Pakistan has been working on its sea-based deterrent for some time.

“When the Babur was first revealed in 2005, it was claimed that it is mainly designed to be deployed from submarines. There was at least that speculation,” he said.



The Navy “has pretty good experience in using similar systems, for example, both submarine-launched Harpoon and Exocet use a similar system, and [the Navy] has operated both for a long time.”

Shabbir speculates that the launch method may be similar to the UGM-84 Harpoon’s method of being fired from torpedo tubes.

However, other analysts are not so certain the Navy can afford to undertake the responsibility of the nation’s second-strike capability.

Former Australian defense attaché to Islamabad Brian Cloughley said the size of Pakistan’s submarine force is too small to carry out this task.

“Pakistan’s current submarine fleet is not adequate in numbers [although well-trained] to be able to undertake detection and effective interdiction of the Indian fleet, given its size — which is increasing, even if slowly,” he said.

Currently, Pakistan’s submarine flotilla comprises two refurbished 1970s-era Agosta-70s and three 1990s-era Agosta-90B submarines. The latter are equipped with air independent propulsion (AIP) or are in the process of being retrofitted with the AIP module, and incrementally entered service from 1999.

Cloughley said interdiction of India’s fleet “must remain [the Navy’s] first priority,” and considers “conversion of the present assets to take Babur not only costly but a most regrettable diversion of budget allocation.”

“I would go so far as to say that, in present circumstances, it would be a grave error if such a program were to go ahead,” he added.

The Navy, however, has a requirement for new submarines and wants to increase their number. The Agosta-90B design has been superseded twice, once by the DCNI Scorpene, and briefly by a paper design called the Marlin before it was absorbed into the Scorpene family.

There is a confirmed requirement for 12 to 14 submarines to meet Navy expansion plans. This would allow for a constant war patrol of at least one deterrent-tasked submarine, leaving other submarines to carry out more traditional tasks.

However, Cloughley is still certain that Pakistan does not require such a capability.

“[Pakistan] has plenty of nuclear-capable SSMs and strike aircraft, and does not need a Navy-oriented second-strike capability,” he said.

<http://www.defensenews.com/article/20120523/DEFREG03/305230004/Pakistan-Acknowledges-Sea-Based-Nuclear-Deterrent?odyssey=nav%7Chead>

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

Moscow Reiterates Missile Defense Threats

21 May 2012

Moscow recapitulated its position on European missile defense Monday, saying it will reserve the right to retaliate unless it receives legal guarantees that a NATO missile defense will not be directed at it.

“In response to our strong demand to provide the Russian Federation legal guarantees that the system will not be aimed at Russia we have received no guarantees,” said Valentina Matviyenko, speaker of the upper house of the Russian parliament, the Federation Council.

Russia has not closed the issue and is in ongoing dialog with NATO, she added.



Moscow has often heard assurances that the European missile defense system is not aimed against it, she said, adding that “we will not be guided by empty declarations but by the system’s military-technical specifications.”

“So far no one has provided us any serious arguments in favor of placing missile defense elements in Europe near the Russian borders,” Matviyenko said.

NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen on Sunday announced the “first step” in the European missile defense system.

Nikolai Makarov, chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces, said in early May that Russia does not exclude a preemptive strike against a NATO missile defense system in Europe as a last resort.

The United States and NATO agreed to develop the system at a summit in Lisbon in 2010, but talks between Russia and the alliance have floundered over NATO’s refusal to grant Russia legal guarantees that the system would not be aimed against Russia’s strategic nuclear deterrent.

NATO and the United States insist that the shield would defend NATO members against missiles from North Korea and Iran and would not be directed at Russia.

KRAKOW, May 21 (RIA Novosti)

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20120521/173585672.html>

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ITAR-TASS News Agency – Russia

21 May 2012

3 RF RVSN Units Start Preparation for Rearmament with Yars System

MOSCOW, May 21 (Itar-Tass) — Three formations of the Russian Strategic Missile Troops (RVSN) have started preparations for the rearmament with the Yars missile system with the RS-24 intercontinental ballistic missile (ICMB) equipped with multiple re-entry vehicles (MIRV), RVSN Commander Lieutenant-General Sergei Karakayev told journalists on Monday.

Answering a question about the progress of the RVSN rearmament with new missile systems in 2012, the commander said that “the second missile regiment armed with the Yars mobile missile system will be fully manned this year at the Teikovo missile formation (Ivanovo Region).”

“The work aimed at putting on combat duty the third division of this regiment will be launched in June,” Karakayev said. “Thus, in 2012, the rearmament of the Teikovo missile formation with the Yars mobile missile system will be completed.”

According to the commander, “the rearmament with the Topol-M missile system of the sixth stationary missile regiment of the Tatishchevo (Saratov Region) formation continues.” “To date, the second phase of the regiment’s rearmament has been completed by putting on combat duty of another launcher,” he specified. “Another four launchers will be put on combat duty by the end of the year.”

“When the regiment’s rearmament is over in 2012, the program of the RVSN equipment with the Topol-M missile system will be completed,” the commander said.

“In addition, preparations have begun in the Irkutsk, Novosibirsk and Kozelsk (Kaluga Region) rocket formations for securing the missile regiments’ rearmament with the Yars missile system,” Karakayev said. “In the latter regiment the Yars missile system will be deployed in silos.”

Earlier, speaking about plans for 2012, the Strategic Missile Troops’ Command declared the intention to begin the work on the rearmament with the Yars missile system in two missile formations – in Novosibirsk and Kozelsk.



"The rearmament with the Yars missile system of several more missile formations is planned in the future," the RVSN commander said.

"Thus, in recent years, the share of modern armaments in RVSN has increased to 30 percent," Karakayev said. "In the future, the Strategic Missile Troops' quality characteristics will be improved by their equipping with modern missile weapons, the use of new missile defence systems that are being created within the frame work of the State Armaments Program for 2011 - 2020."

<http://www.itar-tass.com/c154/425782.html>

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RT – Russia

'New Russia Weapons to Counter NATO's Strategic Fist' - Expert

23 May 2012

By Robert Bridge, RT

In light of America and NATO's blunt refusal to cooperate with Russia on a missile defense shield in Eastern Europe, Russia has put the development of new offensive weapons on the fast track.

Vladimir Kozin, the leading researcher at the Russian Strategic Research Institute (RSI), praised the test launch on Wednesday of a new intercontinental ballistic missile, saying it is an important step to further perfecting Russia's strategic offensive weapons

"The new missile project is a step in the right direction at a time when the United States is engaged in...large-scale modernization of its strategic and tactical nuclear potentials, and amid the continuing deployment of the European and global missile defense systems," he said.

The researcher said the US system targeted Russia's *"national interests and defense nuclear potential,"* a view held by many Russian military analysts.

Defense Ministry spokesman Vadim Koval said the first launch of the prototype missile, which successfully hit a target on the far eastern Kamchatka Peninsula, took place at the Plesetsk launchpad in northern Russia.

"The launch was conducted using a mobile launch vehicle by RVSN combat units and the Aerospace Defense Forces," the spokesman said.

Meanwhile, Kozin, who is a member of the Experts Council of the Kremlin's Interagency Group for Interaction on Missile Defense with NATO, pointed to NATO's recent summit, where it was decided to *"form a sort of Chicago triad – a radically new decision to combine nuclear and conventional weapons, together with the missile defense system, into one strategic fist."*

Such a development, says Kozin, presents a real threat to Russia and its allies.

"Such a combination carries even more threats for Russia and its allies and friends, than a separately operating missile shield," according to the top-ranking missile researcher. *"Washington, as NATO's May summit demonstrated, continues to neglect the Russian leadership's concerns about the absolutely unjustified assembly of a multi-layered missile defense structure near the Russian borders, as well as Russia's proposals to form a less provocative, but more efficient missile defense structure."*

Russia must take adequate counter-measures and develop advanced means to penetrate the US-NATO missile defense infrastructure and, concurrently, to depreciate their nuclear-missile potentials, he added.

<http://rt.com/politics/russia-nato-missile-defense-europe-013/>

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

Russian Press - Behind the Headlines, May 24

Moskovsky Komsomolets

Missile Launched in Russia a Snub for U.S.

An intercontinental ballistic missile developed for the Missile Strategic Forces was successfully launched on Wednesday from the Plesetsk Space Center in the Arkhangelsk Region. This launch, unlike most others, can be seen as a triumph for Russian missile developers, a victory that may equip our politicians with a weighty argument in their difficult dialogue with the United States on anti-missile defense issues.

Official information on the launch is scant. The Defense Ministry merely stated that “The Missile Strategic Forces and Aerospace Defense Troops have carried out a trial launch from a mobile unit. The dummy warhead arrived at the designated area on the Kamchatka Peninsula. The objectives set were achieved.”

The first test launch of the missile in September 2011 was abortive: the rocket fell within ten kilometers of the launch facility. The Defense Ministry reluctantly conceded failure, blaming the industry which “conducted launches as part of research work to develop new missiles.”

One cannot help but wonder which “new samples” these were. Usually we are told about the Topol-M, Yars and Bulava, which can be called “new samples” only tentatively. But neither the military nor the developers were in a hurry to give the details and, therefore, different stories circulated.

Experts at once dismissed the version that it was a fundamentally new development. Most agreed that the new missile “is a further development of the existing systems in service.” One of the leading experts on nuclear armaments told *Moskovsky Komsomolets* that it might be a hard-fuel missile of the Topol-M or Yars class with a payload increased to 1.5 metric tons and a firing range of 10,000 to 11,000 kilometers and fitted out with a new penetration aid. The improved characteristics might have been achieved by the upgrading of the engine or a more efficient solid fuel.”

Another expert told *Moskovsky Komsomolets* that “one of the missile’s new features is the use of a new fuel that cuts the boost phase time when the missile is most vulnerable to detection. The missile travels the boost leg of its trajectory so quickly that the opponent has no time to calculate its path and cannot destroy it as a result. Therefore, we can say our penetration capability will be seriously improved.

“For Russian politicians this means that their current fears of a global U.S. missile shield likely to undercut Russia’s strategic nuclear potential with time can soon be forgotten and laid to rest. Provided, of course, the new upgraded missile is not a one-off but will be supplied to the army in sufficient quantities to dismiss all fears about a U.S. anti-missile system, even if these fears are entertained only by our politicians.”

MOSCOW, May 24 (RIA Novosti)

RIA Novosti is not responsible for the content of outside sources.

<http://en.rian.ru/papers/20120524/173650192.html>

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London Guardian – U.K.

Design Contracts to Be Announced for Next-Generation Submarines

Move signals government’s determination to press ahead with replacement programme for Trident nuclear missile system

By Patrick Wintour, political editor

Sunday, 20 May 2012

Issue No. 1004, 25 May 2012

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



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The government will this week signal its intention to press ahead with a replacement programme for the Trident missile system with the announcement of £350m of contracts to start the initial design for the next generation of nuclear-deterrent submarines.

The announcement does not guarantee a decision in 2016 to go ahead with a full replacement, but it suggests Conservative ministers are keen to send a signal that they are not pulling back from the project.

There have been reports that a Ministry of Defence review led by the Liberal Democrat defence minister Nick Harvey will call for a scaled-down replacement, costing less than the estimated £20bn for a full replacement.

The new submarines are due to come into service in 2028, replacing the Vanguard-class submarines that currently carry the UK's nuclear deterrent. The subs will carry a new nuclear propulsion system that will make the craft more durable and cost-effective.

Government sources said this was "an important step towards renewing our nation's nuclear deterrent into the 2060s". It is expected that the contracts, which will be awarded exclusively to British companies, will sustain and create 1,900 jobs in the UK's submarine-building industry.

The Royal Navy has been operating continuous sea deterrent patrols for more than 40 years and the successor submarines will allow Britain to continue doing so well into the future with cutting-edge equipment.

The Liberal Democrats, though committed to keeping a nuclear deterrent, are examining different options. Instead of spending £20bn rebuilding Trident, they want to investigate whether cheaper alternatives – such as launching a warhead from aircraft or from Astute-class submarines – could be adopted.

The Vanguard submarines cannot be detected at sea and can launch missiles at a range of 6,000 miles. Astute-class submarines have to get closer to their target.

Harvey has argued that Britain's deterrent policy since the 1970s has been based on a principle that the nation would possess the nuclear capability to overwhelm opposing air defences and destroy an enemy government and military command centre. In Britain's case, the principal theoretical threat is still Moscow.

However, cabinet and defence officials are considering whether Britain's deterrent threat should be more limited, arguing that Britain could still inflict unacceptable damage on an enemy by wiping out smaller cities or military facilities. This would require less firepower, but it is arguable whether it would affect the choice of missile carrier.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2012/may/20/design-contracts-next-generation-submarines>

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U.S. News & World Report

DOTMIL Blog

NATO, Defying Russia, Moves Forward With Missile Shield

By John T. Bennett

May 21, 2012

NATO leaders have agreed to activate a new missile defense shield in three years—openly defying Moscow, which claims the system is aimed at Russian targets.

The transatlantic leaders agreed Sunday to make a sophisticated system operational by 2015 in order to "provide real protection for parts of NATO Europe against ballistic missile attack," Ivo Daalder, U.S. ambassador to NATO, told reporters.

Officials expect to make the system initially capable in 2015, before declaring it fully capable three years later.

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The envisioned system has helped contribute to increasingly icy relations between Washington and Moscow. U.S. officials say the system is designed to intercept Iranian missiles aimed at both European targets and U.S. interests in the region. Moscow believes it could instead take down Russian missiles should they be fired.

Washington has secured agreements from Poland, Romania, and Turkey to place elements of the envisioned shield on their soil. Daalder announced Spain also has agreed to host part of the system.

The alliance sent a monetary message directly to Russian leaders, agreeing to devote \$1 billion to support the Moscow-opposed shield.

"This decision ... now means that NATO has, for the first time," Daalder said, "a territorial missile defense capability."

The missile agreement comes after Obama administration officials sounded a defiant tone toward Moscow in the days before the summit.

"There is nothing I can imagine that will keep us from deploying the system as planned," Ellen Tauscher, a U.S. special envoy for strategic stability and missile defense, told reporters earlier this month.

Barry Pavel, a former White House and Pentagon official, says NATO officials had little choice but to move forward with plans for the system.

"The key question is this: 'Is there really any chance for progress on this issue with the Russians?'" Pavel says. "The Russians know this system is not aimed at them. If it was, we'd have interceptors in northern Europe, not southern Europe. This thing would be in Greenland, Estonia and England."

"The Russians know this," Pavel says. "The Russians simply want to use this as a political tool."

Russian officials so far have been silent about the agreement.

John T. Bennett covers national security and foreign policy for U.S. News & World Report.

<http://www.usnews.com/news/blogs/dotmil/2012/05/21/nato-defying-russia-moves-forward-with-missile-shield>

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AOL Defense

Military Debates Who Should Pull the Trigger for a Cyber Attack

By Sidney J. Freedberg Jr.

May 22, 2012

VIRGINIA BEACH, VA: The American military is intrigued by the offensive uses for cyber-warfare, but it is struggling to figure out how to do it. What impact can cyber weapons have on the battlefield? What organizations should take the lead? And who makes the decision to pull the trigger?

"We've been thinking 90% defense, 10% offense. That's bass-ackwards for us," said the outspoken Gen. James "Hoss" Cartwright, the recently retired vice-chairman of the Joint Staff, speaking at last week's Joint Warfighting Conference in Virginia Beach, co-hosted by the US Naval Institute and the industry group AFCEA. "The offense always has the advantage."

In an era where vital equipment is increasingly connected to the web, the potential consequences of a cyber attack have moved beyond the theft of data. "If your enemy's pacemaker has an IP address" – and such devices already exist – "yeah, I think we can kill him," said Maj. Gen. Steven Smith, head of the Army's Cyber Directorate, during a panel at the conference.

At the same time, cyber attacks can do things that conventional weapons can't. "It has effects we've never had the opportunity to do before," said Lt. Gen. Richard Mills, a deputy commandant of the Marine Corps, speaking at the

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same panel. Instead of just bombing the enemy headquarters, he said, "you can get inside your opponent's command and control system."

The trick with such subtler attacks, however, is you may not be sure whether or not they actually worked. "How do you know, when you launch an offensive cyber tool, that you've achieved the results you want?" asked Bernard McCullough, a retired Navy vice-admiral also on the panel. "I'd submit to you that we don't understand that." The effects of some cyber attacks may be literally visible from space, like a power grid going down, but other effects may be invisible, like planting false information or disrupting the flow of intelligence data over the enemy's network, and their effectiveness depends as much on the reactions of the human beings using the target network as on any technical details. The best way to understand whether your cyber-attack is succeeding is to watch what's happening inside the target network, but the more damaging your attack, the more likely the enemy is to realize something's wrong and close the holes that gave you access in the first place. Or a cyber-attack by one command could, unwittingly, shut down an enemy system another US force was trying to exploit.

Lt. Gen. Mills argued that while cyber is unique, it still needs to be integrated into conventional military command and planning structures much like artillery: "It's a very valuable arrow in the quiver of the tactical commander on the ground."

The crucial unresolved question, however, remains what commander should have the authority to let that arrow fly. One audience member called out, "It's the guy who's getting shot at," but that simple test isn't always easy to apply.

"When I left, I couldn't tell you who was the operational commander responsible" – Cyber Command, Strategic Command, or the regional "combatant commands" – said McCullough, the retired admiral. "If you don't give the weapons release authority to the lowest [level], you're going to watch the target go by while we're debating."

Some aspects of cyber-warfare suggest that it could require a lower threshold than the decision to fire a conventional "kinetic" weapon: Even a warning shot can ricochet and kill someone by accident, but – web-enabled pacemakers aside – attacks on computer networks historically have no lethal effects. Other aspects of cyberwar, however, suggest a higher threshold is required: You fire a bullet and it's gone, but a computer virus can spread beyond its intended target to damage neutral parties, even the US, or the enemy can isolate the code that attacked them, analyze it, copy it, and throw it right back as a cyber-weapon of their own.

So the political and strategic ramifications of an ill-considered cyber-attack are hard to calculate, making the decision to launch one immensely tricky. "Should that be given to a battalion commander?" asked Brig. Gen. Burke Wilson of Air Force Space Command. "Should that be a POTUS [presidential] decision?" Legally, even the basic question of "what constitutes a 'use of force' in cyber" has not yet been "effectively answered," said Cyber Command's top lawyer, JAG officer Col. Gary Brown, at an earlier talk in March.

The military is thinking hard about these problems of organization and authority. "We're kind of doing this with some urgency so we can align it" with the 2014 budget request due in February, said the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Martin Dempsey, during his own appearance at the Joint Warfighting Conference. But, the military's top officer said frankly, they don't have the answers yet: "That's all ongoing."

Traditional divisions of labor, whether geographic or functional, simply don't map neatly onto the amorphous, global nature of cyber warfare. The respective roles of the four armed services, charged by law to "train, organize, and equip" all US forces, are unresolved, Dempsey said. It's still an open question whether the US Cyber Command will remain a subordinate element – in military jargon, a "sub-unified command" – of Strategic Command, which also oversees space operations and long-range nuclear weapons, or become an independent "unified command" with global responsibilities. (Cartwright said he thought Cyber Command should stay where it is). Nor has Dempsey decided how exactly each of the geographically defined theater commands – Pacific Command, European Command, and so on – should incorporate cyber capabilities on a regional level, though he did say one model was how Special Operations forces have become increasingly closely integrated to conventional operations since 9/11.



"We need cyber to be wired into the whole force," Dempsey said. "In the future, cyber will become *both* a standalone warfighting instrument with global reach *and* a ubiquitous enabler of the joint force." In other words, cyber forces should be capable both of operating on their own, like strategic bombers on long-range missions deep into enemy airspace, or in close conjunction with other combat arms, like those same bombers providing close air support to ground troops in Afghanistan. Right now, however, the military is at a stage with cyber more comparable to the early, awkward days of aviation in the 1920s, when everyone knew this new technology could have awesome effects but no one was quite sure how.

<http://defense.aol.com/2012/05/22/military-debates-who-should-pull-the-trigger-for-a-cyber-attack/>

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Military Times

USAF Outlines Nuke Inventory Modernization

By Marcus Weisgerber - Staff writer

Friday, May 25, 2012

The Air Force is moving ahead with plans to modernize its inventory of nuclear weapons and delivery systems, a top service general said.

The Air Force plans to maintain and modernize its Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missiles and extend the life of the air-launched cruise missile (ALCM) so both last until at least 2030, according to Maj. Gen. William Chambers, assistant chief of staff for strategic deterrence and nuclear integration at the Pentagon.

The ALCM improvement programs include the guidance and flight control system and warhead arming components.

At the same time, the Air Force plans to modernize the B-2 stealth bomber and keep flying the B-52 bomber "until a replacement capability comes online," Chambers said.

"The B-52 has recently seen some of the highest readiness rates in its 60-year history," he said during a May 24 speech sponsored by the National Defense Industrial Association. "It remains one of our most flexible airframes and one of the least expensive to operate."

Replacements for the Minuteman III and ALCM also are in the works.

The Air Force also has "dual capable plans ready as the F-35 program matures," Chambers said. This would allow the Joint Strike Fighter to launch nuclear weapons, like today's F-15E and F-16 fighter jets.

Service officials have made "significant strides in assessing and modernizing the nation's nuclear command-and-control network," and have established a baseline nuclear command, control and communications architecture, Chambers said.

"We're focused on a very prioritized investment strategy concentrating on our senior leadership aircraft, our bomber fleet and multiple cryptographic improvements," he said.

<http://www.militarytimes.com/news/2012/05/defense-air-force-outlines-nuclear-modernization-052512/>

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China Post – Taiwan

US Hacked al-Qaida Websites: Clinton

Friday, May 25, 2012

By Kimberly Dozier, Associated Press (AP)



USAF COUNTERPROLIFERATION CENTER
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TAMPA, Florida -- The U.S. State Department has launched a different sort of raid against al-Qaida — hacking into al-Qaida websites in Yemen.

In a rare public admission of the covert cyber war against extremists, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton says cyber experts based at the State Department hacked Yemeni tribal websites, replacing al-Qaida propaganda that bragged about killing Americans.

“Within 48 hours, our team plastered the same sites with altered versions of the ads that showed the toll al-Qaida attacks have taken on the Yemeni people,” Clinton said Wednesday.

In response, “Extremists are publicly venting their frustration and asking supporters not to believe everything they read on the Internet,” she said.

Clinton described the cyber effort as part of a larger, multipronged attack on terrorism that goes beyond attacks like the Navy SEAL raid that killed Osama bin Laden to include the propaganda battle, and the longer, slower campaign of diplomats working alongside special operations troops to shore up local governments and economies and train local forces.

Clinton was speaking alongside Adm. Bill McRaven, head of the U.S. Special Operations Command, at a conference of hundreds of U.S. and international special operations commanders — the two senior leaders sending a tacit message to their sometimes warring tribes of troops and diplomats that they have to get along.

Yemen is considered both a model and a test case of that effort. U.S. diplomats have been working to stabilize the fledgling government of President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi, who replaced ousted Yemeni strongman Ali Abdullah Saleh. Saleh stepped down in February as part of a U.S.-backed power-transfer deal brokered by Gulf Arab countries aimed at ending political unrest in the country after a yearlong uprising.

Hadi has faced the twin challenges of Saleh loyalists refusing to relinquish their government and military posts, and of al-Qaida attacks in the south, where the group has established a large safe haven from which to attack Yemeni troops.

The White House responded by issuing an executive order last week threatening sanctions against individuals who challenge Hadi's government. It also dispatched a new batch of special operations forces to train Yemen's army to help withstand al-Qaida attacks that have killed hundreds of Yemeni troops.

Yemen's al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) is considered one of al-Qaida's most dangerous offshoots.

Yemen was the launching pad for three foiled al-Qaida attacks on U.S. targets: the Christmas 2009 attempt to down an American airliner over Detroit with an underwear bomb and the sending of printer cartridges packed with explosives to Chicago-area synagogues in 2010. In the past month the CIA thwarted yet another plot by AQAP to destroy a U.S.-bound airliner using a bomb which could have been undetectable by conventional airport scanners.

Clinton says the cyber-attack was launched by an interagency group of specialists, including diplomats, special operators and intelligence analysts, housed at the State Department. Called the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications, its experts patrol the Internet and social media to counter al-Qaida's attempts to recruit new followers.

“Together, they will work to pre-empt, discredit and outmaneuver extremist propaganda,” Clinton said.

Offensive attacks on extremist sites are generally attributed to the Pentagon's U.S. Cyber Command, though seldom acknowledged publicly.

<http://www.chinapost.com.tw/international/americas/2012/05/25/342239/US-hacked.htm>

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The Hindu – India
OPINION/Op-Ed

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May 23, 2012

The Disingenuous Debate on Iran

By Suvrat Raju

Amidst the ominous discussions on proliferation that surrounded U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's visit to India earlier this month, most people could be forgiven for having missed a simple fact: Iran is not making a nuclear bomb.

The level of unanimity on this question is surprising. Leon Panetta, the U.S. Defence Secretary, testified to the U.S. Congress in February that “the intelligence has been very clear ... [it] does not show that they have made a decision to proceed with developing a nuclear weapon.” At the end of April, Israel's serving military chief publicly concurred with this. Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, has issued a *fatwa* declaring that “the production ... and use of nuclear weapons are ... forbidden in Islam” and has reiterated this position in several public statements.

Right to enrich

The Iran conflict is more subtle and has to do with a technology called enrichment. Nuclear reactors use a form of uranium called uranium-235. Naturally occurring uranium is dominated by another form called uranium-238. The process of increasing the proportion of uranium-235 in a natural mixture is called enrichment. This is commonly done in centrifuges, which use the same physical principle as washing machines to separate these components. Several countries have enrichment facilities, including India that operates one near Mysore.

The catch is that the same centrifuges can technically be used to enrich uranium to a point where it becomes suitable for a weapon. The Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) grants its signatories the right to use enrichment in civilian settings, but gives only five countries the right to military applications. To implement this, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) closely monitors civilian nuclear complexes.

Even though Iran is in substantive compliance with the NPT, and the IAEA has detected no diversion of nuclear material, the U.S. has decided that Iran must halt its enrichment programme. It pressured the U.N. Security Council into passing multiple resolutions on this, which Iran ignored, declaring that it had a right, under the NPT, to use enrichment for civilian purposes. This is what has led to the current stand-off.

Unverified evidence

The American demand is based on the allegation that Iran conducted studies on weaponisation before 2003. The only evidence they have offered in support are electronic files that they claim to have gleaned from a laptop, which, they say, was smuggled out of Iran by a source.

In the absence of independent corroboration, the previous head of the IAEA, Mohamad ElBaradei, was sceptical. In his recent memoir, he says that “a typical reaction that was echoed by multiple nuclear experts” was that “I can fabricate that data.” However, under its current head, Yukiya Amano, the IAEA changed tracks and declared in a November 2011 report — with no further material evidence — that the American information was “credible.”

This should be viewed in the light of cables — disclosed by WikiLeaks—from the U.S. mission in Vienna. One of these, titled “IAEA Leadership Team Transition and U.S. influence,” described Mr. Amano's ascent to the helm of the IAEA as a “once-a-decade opportunity.” A later cable revealed that “Amano reminded [the] Ambassador ... that he was solidly in the U.S. court on every key strategic decision ... [including] Iran's alleged nuclear weapons program.”

Hans Blix, another former chief of the IAEA, warned Mr. Amano that “the agency should not risk its own credibility by relying on data that it cannot verify fully.” The IAEA's willingness to accept unverified U.S. intelligence is particularly strange given recent history. In 2002, British and American intelligence agencies alleged that Iraq had purchased uranium from Niger. George Bush used this as a justification for the war in his 2003 “State of the Union” address. It was later found that these allegations were based on crude forgeries.



Deal scuttled

The history of the Iraq conflict is also useful for understanding another aspect of the current stand-off. In the late 1990s, the U.N. dispatched teams to examine Iraq's nuclear and chemical weapons programmes. It now seems clear that these teams were infiltrated by American spies, who used this opportunity to gather information on Iraq's conventional military capabilities. So, Iran has been understandably circumspect about giving the IAEA a free rein and has balked at granting it access to non-nuclear facilities such as the Parchin military complex. The assassination of several Iranian scientists, presumably by Israeli agents, after their role in the nuclear programme was revealed to the IAEA, has only reinforced these concerns.

The American attitude towards negotiations has been revealing. Earlier this week, while Mr. Amano was in Teheran on a rare visit and two days ahead of major negotiations, the U.S. Senate tightened its sanctions on Iran. This is part of a pattern. In 2009, then Brazilian President, Lula da Silva, mediated a major deal, in which Iran agreed to relinquish control over a large part of its uranium stockpile, in return for help with its research reactor in Tehran. This was precisely what U.S. President Barack Obama had earlier demanded from Mr. Lula, in a leaked letter. However, one day after Iran agreed, the U.S. rejected the deal and announced a fresh round of sanctions! Mr. ElBaradei, who viewed these tortuous negotiations at close quarters, summarised this by writing that “nothing would satisfy, short of Iran coming to the table completely undressed.”

About hegemony

Neither Israel — the most belligerent state in the region — with hundreds of nuclear weapons, nor the U.S. with thousands can expect to be taken seriously when they claim that Iran threatens their security. However, Iran does threaten their hegemony in West Asia. So, Iran's nuclear programme has become a pretext to pressurise a recalcitrant regime. The concomitant demonisation of Iran in the popular media, including an Orientalist debate on whether Iran is a “rational actor,” is part of a push towards an ultimate objective of “regime-change.”

Unfortunately, the discourse in India has been defined by short-term realist considerations including the country's immediate business interests and oil needs. However, India's long-term interests are crucially reliant on the principle that is at stake here: is the international system based on the equity of nations, or is international law a tool that powerful states can use to impose their will on others?

Suvrat Raju is a theoretical physicist at the Harish-Chandra Research Institute, Allahabad.

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/article3446670.ece>

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Los Angeles Times
OPINION/Op-Ed

The Least Bad Option on Iran

An interim nuclear deal could buy time, which is the essential point.

By Chuck Freilich
May 23, 2012

It is a bad outcome — but it is the least bad of the available options.

When world powers meet with Iran on Wednesday in Baghdad, they may reach an interim nuclear deal. Its precise outline is unknown, but it reportedly includes Iran's agreement to cease weapons-grade uranium enrichment, ship its existing stockpile abroad for conversion into reactor fuel, and accept heightened inspections of its nuclear infrastructure. In exchange, Iran would be allowed to continue enrichment at low levels, and the punishing new American banking sanctions and European Union oil sanctions due on July 1 would be eased.



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Iran has strategic reasons for wanting nuclear capability and has so far rejected all inducements to give up the effort. It has dangled the prospect of a diplomatic resolution in the past, only to renege, repeatedly using artifice and deceit, apparently in the attempt to gain time to complete development. It may be doing so again; however, the crushing weight of international sanctions — those in place and those that are imminent — may have finally changed Iran's strategic calculus.

Still, the purported deal is no more than a stopgap measure. It would not resolve the issue.

Iran would be able to claim that it had forced the West to back off from the long-standing demand that it cease all enrichment activity and to accept its "right" to do so.

In practice, Iran would become a "nuclear threshold state," with its nuclear infrastructure intact, a reserve of fissile materials and the potential "breakout capability" to build a bomb quickly. The deeply buried mountain facility outside Qom, which Israel believes may already put Iran's nuclear production inside a "zone of immunity," would continue to exist.

Perhaps worst of all, there is the risk that with the immediate danger removed, the West would lower its guard and in effect "declare victory," turning its attention elsewhere. Ramping up serious multinational sanctions again would prove difficult.

Nonetheless, the interim deal would gain time, and that is the essential point. No other option, including a successful military attack, could achieve more. Iran has already developed the know-how and infrastructure needed to make a bomb; were a military attack to destroy all of its nuclear facilities, it could rebuild within a few years. An attack may still prove to be necessary, but if the few years can be achieved through diplomacy, this is obviously preferable.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu deserves credit for successfully forcing the international community to finally address the Iranian nuclear threat seriously. For 15 years Israel has argued that the only measures that might, conceivably, force Iran to compromise are those that the West is now belatedly imposing. Netanyahu's implied threats of military action were designed primarily to encourage those severe sanctions rather than to indicate an actual intention to attack. No one prefers a diplomatic resolution more than Israel; it would pay the price in international opprobrium after an attack, no matter its motives, and it would bear the brunt of retaliation by Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas.

In Baghdad, Iran must be made to understand that this is its last opportunity to reach a deal. In the absence of this agreement, the full force of the sanctions must go into effect as planned on July 1.

Moreover, any concessions made by the West should be for a limited time and contingent on a final agreement providing for a full cessation of Iran's nuclear program. We can also hope that the processes of change underway in the region, which began with the Iranian demonstrations of 2009, may return to Iran and sweep away the mullahs, the best long-term solution to the threat Iran presents.

In the meantime, the least bad option may be good enough.

Chuck Freilich, a senior fellow at Harvard's Kennedy School, was a deputy national security advisor in Israel during Labor and Likud governments.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/commentary/la-oe-freilich-iran-nuclear-israel-20120523,0,5130013.story>

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Washington Post
OPINION/Fine Print

Nuclear Weapons Just Don't Make Sense

By Walter Pincus
May 23, 2012

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Nuclear weapons are terror weapons, and basically unusable.

That's one reason why no rational strategy, other than deterrence, has ever been developed to justify them. Events in the past 10 days make my case.

On Tuesday, the British government — in the midst of an austerity program that includes cutting education, health and retirement programs — announced contract awards of \$595 million to begin design of replacements for its four nuclear submarines that carry Trident sub-launched ballistic missiles.

Currently, these submarines each have 16 missiles, each with three, independently guided warheads whose power is roughly eight times that of the Hiroshima bomb. Based in Scotland, one is on patrol at all times.

Where are they aimed? The British once had a "Moscow criterion," enough nuclear warheads to wipe out the former Soviet Union's capital or a similarly sized city. Since Britain got rid of its nuclear bombs in the 1990s, and the Cold War has ended, targeting has become more abstract.

Conservative Party Defense Secretary Philip Hammond said in a statement Tuesday that the first nuclear sub contracts "symbolise an important step towards renewing our nation's nuclear deterrent into the 2060s."

No mention of who would be deterred after 2060.

This is not the final word on the British nuclear program. The Conservative's coalition partners, the Liberal-Democrats, have not signed up to the replacement program, which could cost upwards of \$31 billion to complete.

The Lib-Dem minister of state for the Armed Forces, Nick Harvey, has been reviewing alternatives and is set to present a report to Prime Minister David Cameron by year's end. There's talk of a less-ambitious program involving nuclear cruise missiles and newer attack submarines.

Plans, however, indicate that the British government won't make a final program decision until 2016, a year after parliamentary elections. But modernization of its nuclear force will start by 2028.

Britain is not the only country modernizing. The United States has a multi-billion-dollar program to upgrade its three major nuclear warheads and a more costly effort to build new land, sea and air strategic delivery systems. France is modernizing its nuclear bombs and missiles as well as its strategic submarine, though it is reducing numbers. Russia and China are modernizing, too. It is ironic that these five countries meeting in Baghdad to dissuade Iran from moving toward a nuclear weapon are all modernizing their stockpiles.

Meanwhile, on Sunday in Chicago, NATO had its say on nuclear weapons in the results of its year-long review of its deterrence and defense posture. The document notes, "The circumstances in which any use of nuclear weapons might have to be contemplated are extremely remote."

It added that the allies "will ensure that all components of NATO's nuclear deterrent remain safe, secure, and effective." Safe and secure has been an issue since 2010 when demonstrators broke into a Belgium nuclear weapons storage site.

There also is movement within the alliance to rethink U.S. weapons in Europe. Germany plans to retire its nuclear-capable fighter bombers next year, and the replacements will not have that capability, taking that country's air force out of the mix. One of the largest storage sites for some 50 or more U.S. B61 tactical nuclear bombs is at a Turkish air base. Turkey no longer permits U.S. aircraft there, but the nuclear bombs remain.

What are the targets? There could be a bulls-eye on Iran, but overall it seems that Russia is the only one around.

In Washington, the administration and Congress are in the midst of dealing with the life extension plan for the B61s, which make up the 200 or so nuclear bombs assigned to NATO and based in four European countries as well as Turkey. The modernization program has run into technical and financial problems. Three basic models, two strategic, are to be compressed into one bomb, with added safety and security elements. In addition, its accuracy is to be increased. Meanwhile, the cost has grown to \$4 billion and may go higher.

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Complicating matters is that congressional committees with authority over the B61 program have taken different positions on the administration plan to slow down the B61 program two years by spending just \$369 million next year.

The House last week, following the lead of its Armed Services Committee, raised the program's budget to \$435 million in the fiscal 2013 defense authorization bill. That will keep the program on its original schedule.

Meanwhile, the Senate Appropriations Committee reduced the request by \$30 million because of the program's problems and said the money could not be spent until there is an established cost baseline and schedule.

As I said at the start, there is little rational when it comes to nuclear weapons.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/nuclear-weapons-just-dont-make-sense/2012/05/23/gJQAeADoIU_story.html

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Foreign Policy

OPINION/Briefing Book

Are We Focusing on the Wrong Nuclear Threat?

Americans are wringing their hands about the grave threat that a nuclear Iran would pose to the United States. But the numbers tell a different story.

BY VICTOR ASAL AND BRYAN EARLY

May 24, 2012

As a contentious new round of high-stakes nuclear talks between Iran and world powers wraps up in Baghdad, it is important to think critically about how much of a threat Iran poses to the United States. According to former senator Rick Santorum, for example, a nuclear Iran would have "carte blanche to spread a reign of terror around not just the Middle East, but here in America ... [and] across Western civilization." Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney has argued that "if the Iranians are permitted to get the bomb, the consequences will be as uncontrollable as they are horrendous." Several leading U.S. senators penned an op-ed in March stating that "the prospect of a nuclear-armed Iran is a threat to the entire world, including particularly the U.S."

It is not just politicians who hold these views. A recent CNN poll revealed that more than three-quarters of the American public sees Iran and North Korea as "serious" threats while only 44 percent feels the same way about Russia. Indeed, fear of the Iranian threat in the United States is more widespread today than fear of the Soviet threat was in 1985, even though at that time the Soviet Union possessed the largest nuclear arsenal in the world and today Iran doesn't have a single nuclear weapon.

Which raises an obvious question: Does the dominant perception of the Iranian threat actually square with reality? To answer that question, we designed the Nuclear Annihilation Threat (NAT) Index -- a way of systematically and empirically assessing the existential threat that nuclear-weapon states (NWSs), and potential nuclear-weapon states, pose to one another. What we found is striking: Although Israel is right to see Iran as an existential danger, the United States has blown the Iranian threat to itself all out of proportion -- and Iran is unlikely to find existential security in a nuclear weapon. In addition, both Israel and the United States should be focusing much more aggressively on the threat posed by Pakistan.

Unlike any other weapon, nuclear weapons can jeopardize a nation's very existence. We use the term "existential threat" to denote the capability of one state to completely annihilate another. In concrete terms, a nuclear attack on one U.S. city would be catastrophic, but it would not destroy the United States. A similar nuclear attack on Tel Aviv, on the other hand, would potentially kill 42 percent of the Israeli population and most likely spell the end of the Jewish state. By focusing exclusively on existential dangers, we seek to understand how nuclear weapons affect the core survival motivations that drive states' behavior. While this may be a narrow perspective, we think that isolating this unique characteristic of nuclear weapons yields important insights.

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Our NAT Index is a relational metric that draws on four factors in determining the existential threats that nuclear-armed countries pose to one another: 1) the potential damage a country's nuclear arsenal could cause to a target's population; 2) the ability of a country to strike a target with ballistic missiles; 3) the presence of a strategic rivalry between the two countries; and 4) the risk of state failure in the country that is hypothetically attacking a target. The NAT Index can also be used to identify which nuclear-armed countries pose the greatest existential threats overall and which are the most vulnerable.

Pakistan's nuclear arsenal, for example, is capable of inflicting higher levels of proportional damage to a country the size of Israel than a country the size of China because of geographic and demographic differences. Countries that are rivals of North Korea and are within range of its ballistic missiles face a greater existential threat from Pyongyang than those that are not. We factor in the risk of state failure because an unstable country's leaders and governmental policies can change on a dime and destabilized regimes can lose command and control of their nuclear weapons, exposing the arms to theft or unauthorized use.

While our index accounts for the heightened existential risks created by rivalries, we do not assume that nuclear-armed allies pose no risks to one another. From a realist perspective, the military power of other states can never be safely ignored -- especially with respect to weapons that possess such uniquely destructive power. Beyond realism's admonishment that today's allies could become tomorrow's rivals, the risks of nuclear weapons accidents and misuse exist between both rivals and allies. While it may appear odd to consider Britain as a potential nuclear threat to the United States, remember that Pakistan is also a U.S. ally. In accounting for the threats that even allies' nuclear weapons pose, our analysis reflects the view that all nuclear weapons -- no matter who possesses them -- present a grave international security threat.

We coded our NAT Index using the most recent publicly available data. To account for the potential nuclear destruction a country could inflict on a target, we compared the number of nuclear weapons the state possesses to the number of population centers over one million people in the target country. Assuming that it would take four nuclear weapons to ensure destruction of a population center, we noted whether a state could destroy less than 25 percent of a target's urban centers, 25 to 75 percent of them, or more than 75 percent of them. We classified a country as being able to strike a target with its ballistic missiles if it possesses *known* ballistic missile capabilities that would allow it to strike any part of a target's territory. States engaged in strategic rivalries were identified via a highly regarded international relations data set on the subject. Lastly, we coded the country as constituting a state failure threat if it was identified as being at critical risk in Foreign Policy's 2011 Failed States Index. Like any effort to systematically analyze nuclear threats, the results of our analysis are shaped by the assumptions we make and the data we use. We thus encourage readers to learn more about our methodology we use in the appendix we have provided.

Using the method of aggregation displayed below, our NAT Index produces a measure of the existential threat a state poses to a target state on a scale from .05 (minimal threat) to 9 (maximal threat).

NUCLEAR ANNIHILATION THREAT INDEX

FOR EACH PAIR OF NUCLEAR WEAPON STATES:

Annihilation threat index = (potential nuclear destruction x ballistic missile capability x strategic rivalry) + (potential nuclear destruction x state failure risk)

The NAT Index suggests that American fears about the existential threats posed by Iran and North Korea being on par with those posed by Russia are misplaced. Our results in Table 1 indicate that China and Russia constitute the largest existential threats to the United States, while North Korea actually represents the smallest annihilation threat. Intuitively, this makes sense given the large size of the Chinese and Russian nuclear arsenals and their advanced delivery capabilities. In contrast, the small nuclear arsenal possessed by North Korea could only threaten a small number of U.S. cities (even if Pyongyang's ballistic missiles actually worked) but does not jeopardize the United States'



existence. When we simulate Iran going nuclear by assuming that it acquires 10 nuclear weapons (roughly the size of North Korea's arsenal) and that it will be able to deliver those weapons via ballistic missiles, we find that Iran represents a minimal existential threat to the United States.

TABLE 1: U.S. NUCLEAR ANNIHILATION VULNERABILITY RANKING
High Vulnerability Scores Denote the Greatest Threat to the U.S.

| COUNTRY | U.S. NUCLEAR VULNERABILITY |
|----------------|----------------------------|
| China | 6 |
| Russia | 6 |
| France | 3 |
| Pakistan | 3 |
| United Kingdom | 3 |
| India | 1 |
| Israel | 1 |
| Iran* | 0.5 |
| North Korea | 0.5 |

*Signifies Iran's threat if we simulate its possession of a small nuclear arsenal.

Israeli fears of Iran going nuclear, on the other hand, are well-justified. In the current strategic environment, captured in Table 2, Pakistan represents the greatest existential threat to Israel because of its nuclear capability, domestic instability, and hostility to Israel (not to mention the greater hostility that violent jihadi groups in the country harbor toward the Jewish state). India and North Korea, meanwhile, constitute the smallest annihilation threats. When we include Iran in our rankings, however, it emerges as Israel's greatest existential threat.

TABLE 2: ISRAELI NUCLEAR ANNIHILATION VULNERABILITY RANKING
High Vulnerability Scores Denote the Greatest Threat to Israel

| COUNTRY | ISRAELI NUCLEAR VULNERABILITY |
|----------------|-------------------------------|
| Iran* | 6 |
| Pakistan | 4.5 |
| China | 3 |
| France | 3 |
| Russia | 3 |
| United Kingdom | 3 |
| United States | 3 |
| India | 1.5 |
| North Korea | 1.5 |

*Signifies Iran's threat if we simulate its possession of a small nuclear arsenal.

We can also look at the overall threat each NWS poses by averaging its annihilation threat scores vis-à-vis other nuclear-armed states. When we do this, we find that Pakistan -- because of its high risk of state failure and its central location relative to other nuclear weapons states -- poses the greatest annihilation threat to other members of the nuclear weapons club. North Korea, by contrast, poses the smallest annihilation threat to other nuclear weapons states. When we integrate Iran into the analysis in Table 3, it poses a similarly small annihilation threat to the other



NWSs in aggregate despite the significant threat it poses to Israel. This may explain why countries such as Britain and France view the prospect of Iran going nuclear as more of a policy concern than a major threat.

TABLE 3: AGGREGATE NUCLEAR ANNIHILATION THREAT RANKINGS
 High Scores Denote the Greatest Threats Posed to Other NWSs

| CURRENT STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT | | SIMULATING IRAN GOING NUCLEAR | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| COUNTRY | ANNIHILATION THREAT | COUNTRY | ANNIHILATION THREAT |
| Pakistan | 4.44 | Pakistan | 4.61 |
| China | 3.75 | China | 3.67 |
| United States | 3.75 | United States | 3.67 |
| Russia | 3.38 | Russia | 3.33 |
| France | 3.00 | France | 3.00 |
| United Kingdom | 2.88 | United Kingdom | 2.89 |
| India | 2.69 | India | 2.72 |
| Israel | 1.50 | Israel | 2.00 |
| North Korea | 0.94 | Iran | 1.67 |
| | | North Korea | 0.94 |

Looking instead at the average vulnerabilities of NWSs, the consequences of Iran going nuclear are even more striking. The rankings in Table 4 indicate that, in the current strategic environment, Russia faces the greatest existential threat, while Britain and France face the lowest threats. Israel does not face a major existential threat under existing conditions.

Yet if Iran goes nuclear under our scenario, Israel will become one of the most vulnerable nuclear-armed states. Iran, for its part, will actually become the most existentially vulnerable NWS if it goes nuclear. This does not necessarily imply that acquiring nuclear weapons would negatively affect Iran's national security, but it does suggest that Iran would be joining the nuclear weapons club as one of its weakest, most at-risk members.

TABLE 4: AGGREGATE NUCLEAR ANNIHILATION VULNERABILITY RANKINGS
 High Scores Denote the Greatest Vulnerability to Other NWSs

| CURRENT STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT | | SIMULATING IRAN GOING NUCLEAR | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| COUNTRY | ANNIHILATION VULNERABILITY | COUNTRY | ANNIHILATION VULNERABILITY |
| Russia | 3.31 | Iran | 3.44 |
| India | 3.19 | Israel | 3.17 |
| China | 3.00 | Russia | 3.06 |
| North Korea | 3.00 | India | 2.94 |
| Pakistan | 2.94 | North Korea | 2.83 |
| United States | 2.94 | Pakistan | 2.83 |
| Israel | 2.81 | China | 2.78 |
| France | 2.56 | United States | 2.67 |
| United Kingdom | 2.56 | France | 2.39 |
| | | United Kingdom | 2.39 |



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So what do these findings tell us about the current strategic environment and the potential fallout from Iran obtaining nuclear weapons? First, they indicate that the primary existential threat to the United States emanates from China and Russia -- not rogue states such as Iran and North Korea. This supports the notion that nuclear arms reduction agreements like New START offer the United States significant national security benefits.

Second, our findings suggest that more U.S. and international attention should be given to the existing nuclear threat posed by Pakistan than the still-hypothetical threat posed by Iran. Stabilizing Pakistan to prevent its collapse and using strategic trade controls to limit its access to ballistic missile and nuclear weapons technologies should be priorities in the international community.

Third, our results help explain the relative passivity of some NWSs about allowing Iran to march ever closer to obtaining nuclear weapons -- and Israel's horror at the proposition. That said, Iran would become the world's most existentially vulnerable NWS if it went nuclear. Nuclear weapons would not enhance Iran's security as much as some may think, and that should make its leaders think twice about acquiring a nuclear capability.

Our findings underline the challenges that a nuclear Iran poses for the United States. On the one hand, it is clear that Iran would not pose an existential threat to the United States any time soon, even if it obtained nuclear weapons. On the other hand, it is equally clear that a nuclear-armed Iran would pose a large existential threat to one of America's closest allies in the Middle East. It could also fundamentally alter the relationships that Iran has with its non-nuclear neighbors and drive some of those countries toward proliferating. Similarly, North Korea poses a minimal existential threat to the United States but a serious threat to U.S. allies in Asia. North Korea, in fact, may represent even more of a policy conundrum for the United States because it is in more serious danger of state failure than Iran.

Today's myopic focus on Iran, moreover, is distracting many (but clearly not all) from paying closer attention to the serious nuclear threat posed by Pakistan. In Foreign Policy's Failed States Index, Pakistan is ranked 12th in terms of the risk of state failure and is the only nuclear-armed country labeled in "critical" condition. One recent Nuclear Threat Initiative study noted that the country faces "immense threats, both from insiders who may be corrupt or sympathetic to terrorists and from large-scale attacks by outsiders." For the United States and its allies, a more sustained focus on Pakistan and its extant nuclear weapons is imperative even as the United States and Israel try to neutralize the Iranian threat while avoiding a war.

Victor Asal is an associate professor in the political science department at the University at Albany -- SUNY and **Bryan Early** is an assistant professor in the political science department and public administration & policy department at the University at Albany -- SUNY.

[http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/05/24/are we focusing on the wrong nuclear threat?page=full](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/05/24/are_we_focusing_on_the_wrong_nuclear_threat?page=full)

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