



USAF COUNTERPROLIFERATION CENTER
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MAXWELL AFB, ALABAMA

Issue No. 1005, 01 June 2012

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Washington Post

U.N. Report: Iran Gaining Ground with Controversial Uranium Plant

By Joby Warrick

May 25, 2012

Iran is expanding the capacity of its controversial underground nuclear facility, a U.N. report said Friday, as its leaders move to increase production of a more purified form of enriched uranium in defiance of Western demands for a freeze.

U.N. inspectors who visited the plant near the city of Qom earlier this month saw hundreds of newly installed centrifuges amid steady progress in boosting the capability of the facility, which has come to symbolize international concerns about Iran's possible pursuit of nuclear weapons.

They also discovered traces of a form of uranium that is closer to the kind needed to make weapons-grade fuel than the Iranians have previously acknowledged making. The particles were believed to have resulted from a technical glitch, but officials from the International Atomic Energy Agency were continuing to investigate the matter.

Evidence of the plant's expansion is likely to add to worries about Iran's nuclear ambitions, while enhancing the country's bargaining position going into a new round of nuclear talks scheduled for June, weapons experts said.

"Iran is dealing itself more cards for the negotiations," said Joshua Pollack, a government consultant on nuclear issues and a contributor to ArmsControlWonk.com. "The West is piling on sanctions while they're adding more [centrifuges] underground. We'll see who blinks first."

The IAEA report, a summary of findings from the agency's inspections inside Iran, documented a jump in the country's overall production of enriched uranium, suggesting that the country is continuing to recover from a disastrous computer virus two years ago and other technical setbacks.

"The machines seem to be operating better, and overall they're enriching more efficiently," said David Albright, a former IAEA inspector and president of the Institute for Science and International Security.

The trace particles of a form of more highly enriched uranium were discovered during IAEA tests of environmental samples collected during a previous inspection at Qom in February. The particles were found to have been enriched to 27 percent purity. Although that is a level higher than Iran has previously acknowledged making, it is still well below the 90 percent level needed for nuclear weapons.

When pressed about the anomaly, Iran said a spike in enrichment levels could happen "for technical reasons outside the operator's control," the report said.

IAEA officials have taken additional samples while an investigation continues, though several nuclear experts asserted that the unusual particles could have resulted from ordinary fluctuations in the enrichment process.

Iran contends that it needs the enriched uranium to fuel nuclear power plants, while Western governments suspect Iran's nuclear activities are a cover for a secret weapons program.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/un-report-iran-gaining-ground-with-controversial-uranium-plant/2012/05/25/gJQAelqEqU_story.html

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London Guardian – U.K.

Iran Has Enough Uranium for Five Nuclear Weapons, Claims US Thinktank

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Institute for Science and International Security says uranium output up by a third but needs more refining for use in bombs

By Damien Pearse and agencies
Saturday, 26 May 2012

Iran has significantly increased its output of low-enriched uranium and if it was further refined could make at least five nuclear weapons, according to a US thinktank.

The Institute for Science and International Security, which tracks Iran's nuclear programme, made the analysis on the basis of data in the latest quarterly report of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

The UN watchdog's report, published on Friday, showed Iran pressing ahead with its uranium enrichment work in defiance of UN resolutions calling on it to suspend the activity.

It said Iran had produced almost 6.2 tonnes of uranium enriched to a level of 3.5% since it began the work in 2007 – some of which has subsequently been further processed into higher-grade material.

This equates to nearly 750 kg more than in the previous IAEA report issued in February, and the thinktank said Iran's monthly production had risen by roughly a third.

"This total amount of 3.5% low enriched uranium hexafluoride, if further enriched to weapon grade, is enough to make over five nuclear weapons," its analysis said.

But the thinktank added that some of Iran's higher-grade uranium had been converted into reactor fuel and would not be available for nuclear weapons, at least not quickly.

Enriched uranium can be used to fuel power plants, which is Iran's stated purpose, or to provide material for bombs, if refined to a much higher degree. The west suspects that may be Iran's ultimate goal despite the Islamic Republic's denials.

Iran began enriching uranium to a fissile concentration of 20% in 2010, saying it needed this to fuel a medical research reactor. It later expanded the work sharply by launching enrichment at an underground site, Fordow.

It alarmed a suspicious west since such enhanced enrichment accomplishes much of the technical leap towards 90% – or weapons-grade – uranium.

The IAEA report said Iran had added another 350 enrichment centrifuges to the existing 700 at Fordow, which is buried deep under rock and soil to protect it against any enemy attacks.

Although not yet being fed with uranium, the new machines could be used to further boost Iran's output of uranium enriched to 20%.

The Institute for Science and International Security said Iran still appeared to be experiencing problems in its testing of production-scale units of more advanced centrifuges that would allow it to refine uranium faster, even though it had made some progress.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/may/26/iran-uranium-nuclear-weapons>

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Press TV – Iran
Sunday, May 27, 2012

Iran Plans to Build Two New Nuclear Power Plants

Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Fereydoun Abbasi says the Islamic Republic intends to construct two new nuclear power plants alongside its existing facility in the southern coastal city of Bushehr.

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During a speech at the physics faculty of Tehran University on Saturday afternoon, Abbasi said that Iran is to build two new nuclear power plants, adding that the country will begin construction of one of them, a 1,000-megawatt nuclear power plant, in Bushehr next year (starting March 21, 2013).

The senior Iranian nuclear official said his country does not have experience in building nuclear plants and foreign assistance will therefore help the Islamic Republic achieve such an objective.

Meanwhile, Abbasi highlighted that virtual (non-nuclear) fuel for the 40-megawatt heavy water nuclear reactor in Arak will be shipped to the central Iranian city next week. He said that nuclear fuel will be loaded into Arak nuclear reactor next year.

The AEOI director further said Iran has the expertise to build 10- and 20-megawatt (MW) pool-type nuclear research reactors, stressing that Iran is self-sufficient in the nuclear fuel cycle.

The Bushehr power plant was officially launched by Iranian officials in September 2011, and began operations by generating electricity at 40 percent of its capacity.

The 1,000-megawatt plant had already been connected to the country's national power grid with the power of 60 MW on September 3, 2011. It reached the capacity of 190 MW on September 27, 2011, and one day later it raised the capacity to 300 MW.

The initial construction of the facility began in 1975 by German companies, but the work was halted following the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

In 1995, Iran and Russia reached an agreement to complete the project, but power generation was delayed several times due to a number of technical and financial problems.

Bushehr plant, Iran's first nuclear power plant, operates under the full supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

<http://presstv.com/detail/2012/05/27/243391/iran-build-new-power-plants/>

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FARS News Agency – Iran

May 27, 2012

AEOI Head: Iran Not Convinced by IAEA to Allow Parchin Site's Visit

TEHRAN (FNA) - Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Fereidoun Abbasi announced that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) could not convince Tehran to allow the agency's inspectors to visit the Parchin military site.

Abbasi said on Saturday that Iran has not been convinced and "no documents or reason has been presented to us" to persuade us to arrange a visit to Parchin military site.

"The agency is interested in visiting Parchin due to pressure from countries that want the agency to investigate the issue," he added.

Also in April, Abbasi had said that the UN nuclear watchdog should explain why it intends to send its inspectors to the Parchin military site because the AEOI has no station or activity in there and the site has already been inspected by the IAEA.

Abbasi pointed to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)'s concern about Iran's refusal to allow an inspection of Parchin, and noted, "If we enter another country, would they allow us to visit (inspect) wherever we want?"

"We (AEOI) have no site in Parchin; Parchin has been repeatedly accused (by the IAEA of running suspected military nuclear activities) despite the fact that it has gone under inspection in the past," Abbasi said.



He reminded that the IAEA should have a strong argument to convince Iranian officials, including the defense minister, that inspection of Parchin is necessary, and said, "Our military commanders are rational people (and would allow IAEA access to Parchin if they are presented with a good reasoning), but the point is that we in the Atomic Energy (Organization of Iran) have not been convinced by the IAEA inspectors of the goal of such a visit."

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9102113662>

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Al-Akhbar - Lebanon

Iran Delays Launch of Observation Satellite

Tuesday, May 29, 2012

By Agence France-Presse (AFP)

Iran announced on Tuesday it has delayed the launch of an experimental observation satellite that was supposed to have happened a week ago, saying it would now take place sometime within the next 10 months.

The country's space agency chief, Hamid Fazeli, announced the new window for launch to the official Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA).

He gave no explanation for the delay.

The head of Iran's aerospace industries, Mehdi Farahi, had told IRNA on May 14 that the Fajr satellite would be launched on May 23.

Iranian Defense Minister Ahmad Vahidi subsequently confirmed the planned May 23 date, but said it was not excluded that the launch be put back by up to a month.

It is to be the fourth satellite sent into space since 2009 by Iran, whose space program has attracted the concern of international community, which suspects Tehran is seeking to develop long-range ballistic missiles capable of carrying conventional warheads or nuclear ones.

The same technology used in space launch rockets can also be used in ballistic missiles. Iran denies the charges.

<http://english.al-akhbar.com/content/iran-delay-observation-satellite>

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The Daily Star – Lebanon

Enrichment 'Not a Step towards a Bomb': Ahmadinejad

May 30, 2012

By Mohammad Davari

TEHRAN: Iran's enrichment of uranium to 20 percent "is our right" and "is not a step towards a bomb," President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said Wednesday in an interview with the satellite television network France 24.

The enrichment activity, which world powers are trying to curb in fraught talks with Iran, "is one of our rights in terms of international law," Ahmadinejad said.

"There have been lies about our programme... Enriching uranium to 20 percent is not a step towards a bomb," he said, speaking Farsi through translators.

Ahmadinejad added that the heads of the UN nuclear watchdog should make world powers "provide us with uranium at a 20 percent enrichment level, but so far they have not done so."

As a result, he said, Iran "decided to move forward on our own" with enrichment.



His remark in Farsi on Iran being supplied with 20 percent enriched uranium was rendered differently when translated into English for the channel.

Ahmadinejad hinted, however, that Iran could be open to stopping 20 percent enrichment -- if world powers offered significant concessions.

"If others do not wish for us to fully benefit from this right, they need to explain to us why. And also they have to say what they are willing to give to the Iranian people in exchange."

The UN Security Council has issued six resolutions demanding Iran suspend all uranium enrichment. It has also imposed four sets of sanctions on Iran, which Western powers have hardened with their own harsh economic sanctions.

The five permanent UN Security Council member nations plus Germany -- the so-called P5+1 group -- are especially intent on getting Iran to stop enrichment to 20 percent as it is just a few technical steps short of bomb-grade 90-percent uranium.

The West suspects Tehran is developing nuclear weapon capability.

Iran, which insists its nuclear programme is peaceful, enriches uranium to 3.5 percent for its Bushehr atomic energy plant in the south of the country, and says it needs 20 percent uranium to create medical isotopes in its Tehran research reactor.

"Why should the 20 percent enrichment create doubt? The Western powers have nuclear bombs. Should we trust them? Which is more dangerous: an atomic bomb or the 20 percent (enrichment)?" Ahmadinejad asked.

The 20 percent enrichment issue is at the heart of the talks with the P5+1 that are to resume June 18-19 in Moscow.

Ahmadinejad said that, as much as Iran would like to see the nuclear dispute resolved, "we do not expect to see a miracle" in Moscow.

"We have solid proposals that will be presented at the right time," he said. "Iran deserves a change in behaviour (by the West). The language used against us is not the right language to use."

The last round of talks, in Baghdad last week, nearly collapsed as it became clear that there was a gulf between the two sides.

While Ahmadinejad often asserts Iran's position in the nuclear dispute, all decisions on the matter are ultimately up to the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has in recent years put limits on the president's authority.

Khamenei will on Sunday commemorate the death of the Islamic republic's founder, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, with a closely watched speech that could give insight into his view on the developing showdown between Iran and the West.

The United States and its ally Israel -- the sole, if undeclared, nuclear weapons power in the Middle East -- have warned that military action against Iran was an option if diplomacy fails.

"Why does no one in the Western governments protest when they (Israel) threaten us?" Ahmadinejad protested in the interview.

"We are not afraid of their threats. The Iranian people have shown they know how to deal with such situations," he said.

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2012/May-30/175161-enrichment-not-a-step-towards-a-bomb-ahmadinejad.ashx#ixzz1wY8OPDAD>

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Press TV – Iran



Iran Produces Software to Detect and Neutralize Flame Virus

Wednesday, May 30, 2012

The head of Information Technology Organization of Iran says the country's experts have managed to produce antivirus software that can spot and remove the newly detected computer virus Flame.

Ali Hakim Javadi said Wednesday that the antivirus defense was produced by the MAHER center, the Iranian national computer emergency response team.

Javadi said the indigenous antivirus software is capable of detecting the virus and cleaning up the infected computers.

He rejected reports that a top Russian virus-hunting agency was the one that detected the malware, saying it was first spotted by the MAHER center.

He said that the malware was different from other viruses and was more destructive than Stuxnet.

Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Moshe Ya'alon strongly hinted Tuesday that Israel was involved in creating the computer virus to sabotage Iran's nuclear activities.

Ya'alon expressed support for the creation of the virus and similar tools, arguing that it was reasonable for anyone who sees Iran as a threat to take such steps.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/05/30/243814/iran-detects-neutralizes-flame-virus/>

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RT – Russia

Russia to Build Second Reactor for Iran - Rosatom

30 May 2012

Russia's state nuclear energy corporation Rosatom says it is ready to help Iran build another power generating unit at the Bushehr nuclear power plant in Iran.

Rosatom's deputy head, Nikolay Spassky said Moscow will offer Iran support on the project *"if this is not prohibited, if this brings benefit and if we get a calculated project."*

The UN Security Council has permitted the expansion, so there is *"nothing new in raising the issue of Russia's possible role in the construction... preliminary consultations on the issue are underway,"* added Spassky.

Iran's atomic chief Fereidoon Abbasi Davani said earlier this week that the country plans to start building a second power plant with a capacity of 1,000 MW by 2014. Davani said foreign contractors would be needed for the construction.

Meanwhile, the full capacity launch of Iran's Bushehr nuclear power plant, the first in the country, may be postponed from May to June, RIA Novosti news agency quoted a source in Russia's civilian nuclear power corporation Rosatom as saying. *"An approval from the Iranian party to launch the plant at 100 per cent capacity has not yet been received,"* the source added.

Earlier, Atomstroyexport, Bushehr's Russian contractor and an engineering company of Rosatom, said the plant would be operational by the end of 2012. According to the contractor, Bushehr successfully reached 90 per cent of its nominal capacity in routine trials in early May.

The construction of Bushehr has taken more than three decades. Russia signed a contract with Iran in February 1998 to complete the plant, first began by German companies back in 1975. According to the contract terms approved by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Moscow will operate the plant, supply its fuel and take away all the spent fuel for the next two or three years, but will eventually hand over full control to Tehran.



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The country hopes to generate 20,000 MW of nuclear-powered electricity in the next decade, according to a parliament bill.

Iran's nuclear program faces strong opposition from the US, which alleges that the country is pursuing atomic weapons, while Tehran insists its activities are intended solely for peaceful purposes.

<http://rt.com/business/news/iran-nuclear-power-russia-559/>

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Daily Ha'aretz – Israel

Dennis Ross: Saudi King Vowed to Obtain Nuclear Bomb after Iran

Former U.S. official publicly confirms Saudi pledge, which would destroy nuclear non-proliferation regime.

By Chemi Shalev

May 30, 2012

Former senior U.S. diplomat Dennis Ross confirmed for the first time on Tuesday night that Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah has explicitly warned the U.S. that if Iran obtains nuclear weapons, Saudi Arabia will seek to do so as well.

"If they get nuclear weapons, we will get nuclear weapons," Abdullah told Ross during a meeting between the two in April 2009. Ross said he responded to the King's assertion with a lengthy appeal against nuclear proliferation, but after hearing him out, the king responded by repeating the same line: "If they get nuclear weapons, we will get nuclear weapons."

Ross' on-the-record confirmation of Abdullah's threat was made in a joint public appearance with Washington Institute researcher David Makovsky at New York's 92nd Street Y. The two co-authored a book on the Middle East peace process entitled *Myths, Illusions, and Peace: Finding a New Direction for America in the Middle East*.

Ross' direct quote of the Saudi king appears to be the first public confirmation of the Saudi position and the threat of a Middle East nuclear arms race if Tehran acquires a nuclear bomb. It was reported previously, though not confirmed, that Abdullah had made a similar assertion in his February 2007 summit in Riyadh with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

In June 2011, Prince Turki al-Faisal, a former Saudi intelligence chief and ambassador to Washington, warned senior NATO military officials that the existence of an Iranian bomb "would compel Saudi Arabia...to pursue policies which could lead to untold and possibly dramatic consequences."

In February of this year, the London Times quoted a "senior Saudi official" as saying that Riyadh would launch a "twin-track nuclear weapons program" should Tehran realize its ambition of obtaining a nuclear weapon.

The Saudi threat is one of the prime factors motivating Washington's campaign to stop Tehran's nuclear program. Extending the non-proliferation regime is one of U.S. President Barak Obama's most cherished foreign policy and national security goals, analysts in New York said Tuesday night.

Ross said that while it would be "unrealistic" to expect serious progress in the nuclear talks with Iran after only two rounds of negotiations, the U.S. and the other P5+1 countries should set a deadline for the conclusion of diplomatic contacts – and make Tehran aware of it.

He added that recent public statements, including those made by U.S. Ambassador to Israel Dan Shapiro, about the U.S. being "militarily ready" for an attack on Iran "are not coincidental" and are aimed at increasing pressure on Tehran. According to Ross, Iran is much more concerned about an American military attack than an Israeli one because "an Israeli attack is not regime-threatening, while an American attack is."

Ross also laid out a four-point plan for resolving the situation in Syria and reaching a "tipping point" that would see the ouster of President Assad. Ross said the Russians need to be brought on board to participate in the effort; the Alawites

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must be assured that there will be no acts of revenge by the Sunnis in a post-Assad era; the opposition Syrian National Council should be recognized as the alternative to the regime; and the U.S., together with Turkey and NATO, should set up "safe haven" areas in northern Syria.

Both Ross and Makovsky appeared to be impressed by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's statement on Tuesday to the INSS think tank that his aim is to prevent the establishment of a binational state, saying this new formula gives rise to optimism that Netanyahu will use his 94-seat majority in the Knesset to advance the peace process.

Ross, who resigned at the end of the year from his position in the Obama administration's National Security Council, lavished praise on the president's "unprecedented support" for Israel's security. Israel's security is "inviolable" in Obama's eyes, he said, adding that as someone who has worked with five previous U.S. administrations, he is of the opinion that Obama's level of support and cooperation with Israel is "better than all of his predecessors."

<http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/dennis-ross-saudi-king-vowed-to-obtain-nuclear-bomb-after-iran-1.433294>

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London Daily Telegraph – U.K.

Syria: West May Be Forced to Seize Bashar al-Assad's Toxic Gas Stockpile

International troops could be forced to intervene in Syria if the collapse of President Bashar al-Assad's regime were to leave stockpiles of his chemical weapons vulnerable to terrorists, western diplomatic sources have told the Daily Telegraph.

By Peter Foster, Washington, David Blair and Thomas Harding
30 May 2012

Syria possesses hundreds of tons of VX, Sarin and mustard gas. Western governments are concerned about the security of these munitions if Mr Assad's regime falls or loses control over the relevant sites.

"The thing that privately has got people very worried is chemical weapon stocks," said the diplomat. "Were it to be the case that the regime did start to lose control of the security environment, and it looked as though it wasn't able to secure those sites, then that would be a game-changer."

At present, the 14-month uprising probably does not pose an "existential threat" to the regime, added the diplomat. But if that changed, the international community would have to avert the threat of chemical weapons falling in dangerous hands.

Al-Qaeda, which has been blamed for recent suicide bombings in Syria, is understood to have moved operatives into the country from neighbouring Iraq. Hizbollah, the Shia extremist group, has a longstanding presence in Syria and a close alliance with Mr Assad.

"We could not tolerate the possibility of some of that stuff falling into the wrong hands," said the diplomat. "This uprising is not an existential threat to the Assad cartel, but if it was the case that they were starting to lose the plot and it looked as if their ability to secure those materials was questionable, then I think you'd see more very serious worries coming out of the Security Council."

Like Israel, Syria has not signed the Chemical Weapons Convention of 1997, nor is it a member of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, which verifies stockpiles of these weapons. Outside experts say that Syria's chemical weapons programme dates back to the 1970s and ranks among the most advanced in the Middle East. However, Mr Assad is not believed to possess any biological weapons.

The rationale for his arsenal is to counterbalance a nuclear-armed Israel on Syria's western flank and a NATO-allied Turkey on the northern frontier. Experts believe Mr Assad is highly unlikely to use these munitions against his domestic opponents. Whether Syria's armed forces are fully trained in their use is also questionable.

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Dina Esfandiary, a non-proliferation specialist at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, said that little was known about the full extent of Syria's chemical weapons stockpiles. "It's worrying because we don't know," she said. "We don't know exactly what Syria's capability is. We don't know how big their stockpiles are - or where they are. It would be difficult for everybody to secure them, particularly if factions within the country are fighting each other."

Ms Esfandiary added: "The risk of the agents falling into the hands of non-state actors is quite worrying."

America has identified "at least a dozen or so sites that have some very serious chemical weapon caches," said Mike Rogers, a Republican Congressman who chairs the House of Representatives Intelligence Committee. He told CNN that the attendant risk "keeps me up at night".

The al-Safir military complex, near the city of Aleppo, is understood to be one site where chemical weapons are stored. Satellite imagery of the location "offers substantive evidence that Syria maintains and continues to upgrade a chemical weapons programme", according to Jane's Intelligence Review.

Al-Safir is protected by SA-2 surface-to-air missiles and contains 16 storage bunkers, according to Jane's, which adds that Syria "continues to enhance its ability to deliver both conventional and chemical warheads". The country is believed to possess 700 Scud missiles, one of the biggest such arsenals in the Middle East.

The evidence suggests that Syria has adapted these weapons to deliver chemical warheads. In 2007, an explosion at another plant killed 15 scientists and engineers as they tried to load a chemical warhead on to a Scud.

North Korea is known to have helped Syria's missile programme and may have aided the development of chemical weapons. Mr Assad could also have received help from Iran, his closest ally.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/9300947/Syria-West-may-be-forced-to-seize-Bashar-al-Assad-toxic-gas-stockpile.html>

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Bloomberg News

Iran Clean-Up Won't Hamper IAEA's Bomb Hunt at Parchin

By Jonathan Tirone

June 1, 2012

Iran's clean-up of a site allegedly used for nuclear-weapons experiments won't obstruct United Nations atomic inspectors' ability to carry out a probe, according to current and former officials.

Satellite photos published last month by a Washington-based research institute showed razed structures and streams of water running out of a building at the Parchin military complex thought to house a test-blast chamber. The UN International Atomic Energy Agency reported in November that the Persian Gulf nation used the facility for atomic-bomb tests.

"There very likely were experiments there related to nuclear weapons" and the IAEA "may be able to disprove Iran's cover story," Mark Fitzpatrick, a former U.S. diplomat who now runs the International Institute for Strategic Studies' nuclear disarmament program, said by phone yesterday. "Even if the IAEA goes there and doesn't find anything incriminating, they want to pull on the threads of Iran's story and see what unravels."

Parchin, 30 kilometers (18 miles) southwest of Tehran, is the military base where IAEA inspectors said they have "credible" evidence showing Iran built a container inside of which scientists studied blast patterns useful for assembling a nuclear weapon. Iran says the evidence given to the IAEA was falsified by intelligence agencies.

Access to the site has topped the Vienna-based agency's agenda in recent negotiating rounds with Iranian authorities. IAEA inspectors are concerned that Iran is covering up atomic work and making the detection of nuclear particles more difficult, senior international officials said May 25 on condition of anonymity because of the topic's sensitivity.



Focus Questioned

The IAEA's decision to focus on Parchin to the exclusion of other people and places in Iran has stirred debate among former nuclear non-proliferation officials.

IAEA investigators should zero in on Iran's Physics Research Center instead of Parchin, Olli Heinonen, the IAEA's former top inspector in Iran, said in a May 9 analysis he co-wrote with David Albright, another ex-inspector and director of the Institute for Science and International Security. Fitzpatrick wrote a report called "The Parchin Trap" in March.

The clean-up at Parchin began after the IAEA published its suspicions in November, a senior Western official said on the condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to comment publicly. No activity had been observed around the site for years before satellite photos showed water and rubble strewn around the locality.

Contamination Concerns

"Uranium contamination inside the building and equipment may be dispersed over a large area," said Robert Kelley, who led the IAEA's nuclear inspections in Iraq before the 2003 war. "If Iran washes down all this equipment and allows the water to run across the parking lot into a ditch, then all the uranium will end up concentrated."

While Kelley isn't convinced that the IAEA's Parchin intelligence is credible, inspectors will find atomic particles if the Iranians did experiment with nuclear material at the site, he wrote in an analysis for the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

The IAEA and Iran were expected to sign an agreement "quite soon" to broaden inspectors' access to suspected nuclear sites, including Parchin, Director General Yukiya Amano said May 22 after he returned from Tehran.

Skepticism that the deal will be signed in the near future is growing, according to the senior Western official.

Iran backed off earlier statements that a trip to Parchin could be arranged when Fereidoun Abbasi, head of the Islamic republic's Atomic Energy Organization, said on May 27 that the IAEA hadn't convinced him of the need to visit.

"No documents or reason has been presented to us," he said, according to state-run Fars news agency. "The agency is interested in visiting Parchin due to pressure from countries that want the agency to investigate the issue."

The IAEA's 35-member board of governors convenes its quarterly meeting next week in the Austrian capital, where Amano is expected to update diplomats on the status of the accord.

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-06-01/iran-clean-up-won-t-hamper-iaea-s-bomb-hunt-at-parchin.html>

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London Telegraph – U.K.

US Denies Reports it Parachuted Soldiers into North Korea

The United States military has denied reports attributed to the head of its special forces in South Korea that his men have been parachuted into North Korea to gather intelligence on the regime's network of underground military facilities.

By Julian Ryall in Tokyo
29 May 2012

Brigadier General Neil Tolley was quoted in a Japan-based foreign affairs magazine as telling a conference in Tampa, Miami, last week that elite US troops are conducting "special reconnaissance" missions in the North.

The Diplomat magazine reported that the troops have been dropped behind North Korean lines to identify and map the locations of Pyongyang's extensive network of underground bases.



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The network includes munitions factories and underground artillery positions, all of which are linked by hundreds of miles of tunnels that have been excavated all the way up to the heavily fortified Demilitarised Zone that separates the two Koreas.

"The entire tunnel infrastructure is hidden from our satellites," Tolley was quoted as saying. "So we send (South Korean) soldiers and US soldiers to the North to do special reconnaissance.

"After 50 years, we still don't know much about the capability and full extent" of the underground facilities, Tolley was reported as saying on the website of the magazine of the National Defense Industrial Association.

The sites reportedly include 20 airfields that are partly underground and thousands of artillery emplacements.

He added that the special forces troops were dispatched with minimal equipment in order for them to be able travel quickly and keep the risk of detection by North Korean troops to a minimum.

The US and South Korea are aware of four invasion tunnels that were excavated beneath the DMZ and were apparently intended to allow the North to avoid the static defences and to have thousands of troops emerge without warning and within striking range of Seoul.

Some of the tunnels have since been turned into tourist attractions and visitors can descend a steep intersecting tunnel from the South Korean side and explore the invasion route.

One end terminates in a rock face where small holes had been drilled for the next round of demolition charges for the tunnel. The other is plugged with a concrete block with a small aperture that looks towards the exit in North Korea.

Tolley suggested that there may be more such infiltration routes beneath the border.

"We don't know how many we don't know about," he was quoted as saying.

A spokesman for US forces in South Korea has dismissed the media report.

"Some reporting has taken great liberal licence with his comments and taken him completely out of context," Colonel Jonathan Withington, of the public affairs office of US Forces Korea, said in a statement.

"No US or ROK (Republic of Korea) forces have parachuted into North Korea," he said. "Though special reconnaissance is a core special operations force mission, at no time have SOF forces been sent to the north to conduct special reconnaissance.

"The use of tunnels in North Korea is well documented," he added. "Several of the known tunnels along the DMZ are visited by tourists every day."

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/northkorea/9296940/US-denies-reports-it-parachuted-soldiers-into-North-Korea.html>

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Chosun Ilbo – South Korea

May 31, 2012

N.Korea Puts Nuclear Arms in Constitution

North Korea identifies itself as a nuclear power in its revised constitution, according to a copy displayed on the country's official web portal. The constitution was revised at last month's meeting of the rubber-stamp Supreme People's Assembly, and the preface details the accomplishments of former leader Kim Jong-il, claiming he changed the North into a "nuclear power and invincible military superpower."

The Supreme People's Assembly named Kim Jong-il "eternal chairman" of the National Defense Commission while appointing his son Kim Jong-un to the newly-created post of first secretary.

Issue No. 1005, 01 June 2012

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



North Korea has claimed it is a nuclear power since its second nuclear test in May of 2009 and used the expression to identify itself in various announcements. The expression was used in a statement announcing Kim Jong-il's death on Dec. 19 last year and has appeared in the North's media on a daily basis since then.

"The revision was the first change to the constitution since the second nuclear test in 2009 and Kim Jong-il's death late last year, and it must have been natural to use the expression 'nuclear power,'" said an intelligence official here. The inclusion of the phrase shows that Kim Jong-un wants to publicize the fact that North Korea has nuclear weapons and use them as a bargaining tool just as his father did, according to a source.

http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2012/05/31/2012053100646.html

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Yonhap News Agency – South Korea
May 31, 2012

U.S. to 'Never' Accept N. Korea as Nuclear State: State Dept.

By Lee Chi-dong

WASHINGTON, May 30 (Yonhap) -- The United States made clear Wednesday that it will never recognize North Korea as a nuclear state.

"The United States has long maintained that we will never accept North Korea as a nuclear power," a spokesperson for the State Department told Yonhap News Agency.

The official's comments came in response to a report that North Korea revised its constitution to describe itself as a nuclear power.

Earlier in the day, a North Korean Web site, monitored in Japan, carried the full text of the reclusive communist nation's amended constitution.

It shows three new sentences that highlight the works of its late leader Kim Jong-il, including "the transformation into a nuclear power."

The contents of the website, named "Naenara (my country)," have not been officially confirmed. It is also unclear when North Korea rewrote its constitution.

Pyongyang has carried out two underground nuclear tests, in 2006 and 2009, and has sought to be acknowledged as a nuclear state by the international community.

The department official said, speaking on the customary condition of anonymity, North Korea should comply with its international obligations under a 2005 agreement and U.N. Security Council resolutions that call on it to abandon all nuclear weapons.

"The leadership of the DPRK has a very stark choice," the official said. "They must take a hard look at their policies, stop provocative actions, put their people first -- ahead of their ambitions to be a nuclear power, and rejoin the international community."

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2012/05/31/39/0301000000AEN20120531000300315F.HTML>

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Defense News

Experts Wary of Pakistan Nuke Claims

Few Details Available on Naval Strike Capability

May 26, 2012



By USMAN ANSARI

ISLAMABAD — Days after Pakistan hinted that it possesses a sea-based second nuclear strike capability, Indian Defence Ministry officials remained silent on the matter, and outside observers were skeptical that the Navy had such a capability.

On May 19, the head of the Pakistan Navy, Adm. Asif Sandhila, inaugurated the Headquarters of the Naval Strategic Force Command (NSFC). A 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."

Beyond the announcement, Pakistan's Navy has said little about the office or about the service's capabilities.

In February, Sandhila told Defense News that the Pakistan Navy was mindful of India's plans to complete the sea-based arm of its nuclear triad, and was "taking necessary measures to restore the strategic balance" in the Indian Ocean region.

Christian Le Mière, a research fellow for naval forces and maritime security at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, said Pakistan's sea-based deterrent is "most likely" the widely speculated submarine-launched variant of the Babur/Hatf-7 (Vengeance-7) cruise missile.

"The Babur is already nuclear-capable and is expected to be used on submarines," he said. "I have not seen verifiable evidence of any tests for a submarine-launched version, but it is perfectly feasible that a [submarine-launched cruise missile] is now available."

Analyst Usman Shabbir, with 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 [missiles] use a similar system, and [the Navy] has operated both for a long time."

Shabbir speculated that the Babur/Hatf-7 missiles might be fired from torpedo tubes, similar to UGM-84 Harpoons.

But Le Mière believes there may still be some room for doubt.

"The phrase 'sea-based second strike' suggests a surface vessel could also be used if a submarine-launched version is not yet ready," he said. "But obviously, while a surface vessel is mobile, it is far less survivable and far more detectable than a sub."

As for Pakistan's neighbor to the east, Harsh Pant, international relations lecturer at the Department of Defence Studies at King's College in London, said India is neither alarmed nor disadvantaged by this development.

"India had factored this reality into its force posture much before this acknowledgement," Pant said. "I do not see this changing the ground reality, insofar [as the] India-Pakistan nuclear posture is concerned. Despite what outsiders might think, nuclear deterrence in South Asia remains robust.

"The real problem remains the role of non-state actors," he added. "In that context, Pakistan's sea-based second strike capability is more reassuring, because the non-state actors will not have as easy access to it as the land- or air-based one."

He said, "Indian policymakers should welcome this development, as it removes the veil of secrecy over this issue."

New Delhi analyst Nitin Mehta also cast doubt on Pakistan's nuclear maritime capability.



“It is unlikely that Pakistan has the capability to design and develop a sea-based nuclear missile, since even China, which is known to be helping Pakistan in its nuclear capabilities, does not possess a credible submarine-launched missile,” he said. “Pakistan could be developing an undersea nuclear ballistic missile, but it cannot do it on its own.”

Other analysts are not certain the Pakistan Navy can afford to undertake the responsibility of the nation’s second-strike capability.

Brian Cloughley, a former Australian defense attaché to Islamabad, said the size of Pakistan’s submarine force is too small to carry out such a 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.

Pakistan has two refurbished 1970s-era Agosta-70 and three 1990s-era Agosta-90B subs. 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 beginning in 1999.

Le Mière believes Pakistan could, at a stretch, maintain a constant deterrent patrol.

“Once all the Agosta-90Bs are fitted with AIP, this should theoretically allow for one submarine deployed for most of the time, with another in refit and another in reserve,” he said. “In theory, this allows for constant patrols, but in reality, problems with boats usually lead to gaps if there is a three-boat fleet.”

Le Mière conceded, though, this would cause other problems.

“This would be the majority of the Pakistani fleet dedicated to nuclear strike, or certainly dedicating a significant portion of its arsenal to nuclear-tipped Baburs,” he said. “Hence, whether this second-strike capability will in fact be deployed in a form of near-constant at-sea deterrence is questionable until Pakistan is able to procure further submarines to fill the conventional role, as well.”

Cloughley said the interdiction of India’s fleet “must remain [the Navy’s] first priority,” and he 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.

Pakistan has a requirement for 12 to 14 subs 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.

Correspondent Vivek Raghuvanshi in New Delhi contributed to this report.

<http://www.defensenews.com/article/20120526/DEFREG03/305260001/Experts-Wary-Pakistan-Nuke-Claims>

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Daily News & Analysis –India

Pak's N-arsenal Deterred India from Carrying Out Attacks: Nawaz Sharif

Tuesday, May 29, 2012

By Press Trust of India (PTI)

LAHORE: Pakistan's nuclear arsenal deterred India from carrying out any attacks and made the country's defence impregnable, former premier Nawaz Sharif has claimed.



"India could have attacked Pakistan many times but due to Pakistan being an atomic power, India could not gather the courage to do so," said Sharif, who heads the main opposition PML-N party.

Pakistan emerged as a nuclear power after conducting a series of nuclear tests in 1998, when Sharif was the premier.

Addressing a gathering yesterday to mark the anniversary of Pakistan's nuclear tests, Sharif said that conducting the atomic explosions during his tenure made the defence of Pakistan impregnable.

Since then, this capability has discouraged "enemies" from casting an evil eye on Pakistan, he said.

Sharif recalled that when India conducted its nuclear test in May 1998, he was on an official visit to Kazakhstan.

He said he had then immediately decided that Pakistan would conduct a nuclear test.

It took 17 days for Pakistan to successfully carry out its nuclear tests on May 28, 1998, he said.

Sharif said he had rejected a economic aid package of Rs 15 billion and decided to go ahead with the nuclear tests.

Pakistan, by becoming a nuclear power, broke the "beggar's bowl", he claimed.

"It was not easy to test the nuclear bomb and I waited for 17 days," Sharif said, adding Pakistan's security was strengthened by the explosions.

"I was told that I would be blown away if I gave a befitting reply to the Indian atomic explosions. I conducted the explosions, the nation did not make me explode but (former military ruler Pervez) Musharraf blew up my government," he said.

http://www.dnaindia.com/world/report_pak-s-n-arsenal-deterred-india-from-carrying-out-attacks-nawaz-sharif_1695264

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DAWN.com – Pakistan

Pakistan Test-Fires Nuclear Capable Short-Range Missile

29 May 2012

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan successfully test-fired an indigenously developed short-range surface-to-surface multi-tube missile on Tuesday, DawnNews reported.

The Hatf IX (NASR) has a range of 60 kilometres and can carry nuclear warheads with high accuracy and possesses shoot and scoot attributes.

The test was witnessed by Director General Strategic Plans Division Lieutenant General Khalid Ahmed Kidwai (R), Chairman National Engineering and Scientific Commission (NESCOM) Irfan Burney, Commander of Army's Strategic Force Command Lieutenant General Tariq Nadeem Gilani, senior officers from the strategic forces and scientists and engineers working for strategic organisations.

Lieutenant General Kidwai said the test was a major development which would consolidate Pakistan's deterrence capability.

President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani congratulated the scientists working on the program over the success of the missile test.

India and Pakistan — which have fought three wars since independence from Britain in 1947 — have routinely carried out missile tests since both demonstrated nuclear weapons capability in 1998.

Pakistan's arsenal includes short-, medium- and long-range missiles.



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The neighbours were on the brink of nuclear conflict in 2002 over the disputed territory of Kashmir, but a slow-moving peace dialogue resumed last March after a three-year suspension following the November 2008 Mumbai attacks.

<http://dawn.com/2012/05/29/pakistan-test-fires-nuclear-capable-short-range-missile/>

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Deccan Herald – India

India Declined to Sell Nuclear Technology to Iran, Iraq and Libya

By Gulshan Luthra, Indo-Asian News Service (IANS)

30 May 2012

NEW DELHI: India declined to sell nuclear technology to Iran, Iraq and Libya in the 1980s in spite of being offered "huge" sums of money, said a leading defence journal.

According to a report in the current issue of India Strategic (www.indiastrategic.in), all the three countries offered "huge" sums in the early 1980s, but the then prime minister Indira Gandhi said a firm "No". Surprisingly, then Iraqi president Saddam Hussein was most upset and when his persistent efforts yielded no response, he went to the extent of sending only a junior minister for her funeral.

Iran asked for nuclear technology as well as a military training school for its officers somewhere in India, again offering substantial monetary compensation for both, but Indira Gandhi said India would not play its friends against one another.

India had in fact been training Iraqi Air Force pilots, thanks to the commonality of the Soviet aircraft with the two countries. The defence cooperation had begun before the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war, but Indian instructors, their number reaching 60 at one time, had no mandate except to continue the training programme in accordance with the relevant agreements.

"India and Iraq had strong military ties in the form of training and at one time, there were about 60 Indian Air Force (IAF) officers imparting training to their Iraqi friends on Soviet-supplied aircraft, common to both the countries. One of the Indian instructors was also given the highest possible award by President Saddam Hussein," India Strategic said.

Iran and Iraq were then in the thick of their long, eight-year war, which cost each side heavy casualties and meant no victory for any side. Gandhi's special envoy for the Gulf, Romesh Bhandari, in fact was then shuttling between the Iranian and Iraqi capitals of Teheran and Baghdad to forge peace.

Iraq in fact was supposed to host the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit in 1983, but as Iran was not willing to participate in it in Baghdad, where a new conference hotel - Rasheed - had been set up by Swedish companies, the venue was moved to New Delhi at Bhandari's suggestion.

Libyan leader Col Muammar Gaddafi also wanted nuclear technology and when India refused, he hassled the Indian companies and workers to pressure Gandhi. She did not budge, India Strategic report said.

<http://www.deccanherald.com/content/253243/india-declined-sell-nuclear-technology.html>

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Pakistan Tribune – Pakistan

Pakistan Test-Fires Nuclear-Capable Hatf-VIII Cruise Missile

31 May, 2012

By Pakistan News Service

Issue No. 1005, 01 June 2012

United States Air Force Counterproliferation Research & Education | Maxwell AFB, Montgomery AL
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RAWALPINDI: Pakistan on Thursday successfully tested the indigenously developed Hatf-VIII cruise missile. The nuclear-capable missile, with a range of over 350 kilometres, enables Pakistan to achieve strategic standoff capability on land and at sea.

The cruise missile with stealth capabilities is a low altitude, terrain hugging missile with high maneuverability and can deliver nuclear and conventional warheads with complete accuracy.

According to an ISPR statement, Ra'ad Missile has the range of over 350 km that can enable Pakistan to achieve strategic standoff capability on land and at Sea.

'Cruise Technology' is extremely complex and has been developed by only a few countries in the world. The state of the art Ra'ad Cruise Missile with Stealth Capabilities is a low altitude, terrain hugging missile with high maneuverability, and can deliver nuclear and conventional warheads with pin point accuracy.

A major additional feature of today's test was the effective employment of the National Command Authority's fully automated Strategic Command and Control Support System (SCCSS).

It has enabled robust command and control capability of all strategic assets with round the clock situational awareness in a digitized network centric environment to decision makers at National Command Centre (NCC).

The system has the added capability of real time remote monitoring of missile flight path.

The successful launch has been commended by the President, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, and Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee who have congratulated the scientists and engineers on their outstanding achievement.

AFP adds: Pakistan on Thursday tested a fourth nuclear-capable cruise missile since India launched a new long-range weapon capable of hitting China last month.

On April 20, India successfully test fired the Agni V capable of delivering a one-tonne nuclear warhead anywhere in rival China, marking a major advance in its military capabilities.

President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani congratulated the scientists working on the program over the success of the missile test.

India and Pakistan — which have fought three wars since independence from Britain in 1947 — have routinely carried out missile tests since both demonstrated nuclear weapons capability in 1998.

Pakistan's arsenal includes short-, medium- and long-range missiles.

<http://paktribune.com/news/Pakistan-test-fires-nuclear-capable-Hatf-VIII-cruise-missile-250270.html>

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

Borey Submarine Contract Signed - Shipbuilding Corp.

28 May 2012

Russia's Defense Ministry and United Shipbuilding Corporation (USC) have signed a contract for the delivery of five new Borey class (Project 955) strategic nuclear submarines, USC spokesman Alexei Kravchenko said on Monday.

"I have information that the contract for five subs has been signed," Kravchenko told RIA Novosti.

He did not specify when the contract was signed but said that the signing was confirmed on Monday.

On May 25, it was reported that the ministry and the USC failed again to agree final contract terms for Borey delivery, despite the intervention of President Vladimir Putin.



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Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov told journalists on Friday after a meeting with Putin that his ministry and the submarine manufacturer would return to talks in the future to agree a final price for the Borey boats in 2015.

At the end of Friday's meeting, Serdyukov and Trade and Industry Minister Denis Manturov left to sign the deal with no journalists present, and it was unclear how the final agreement looked and whether it would be signed.

Manturov told journalists earlier on Friday after the meeting with Putin that the contract would be signed Friday. He also said then that the Borey contract would be implemented in full.

"There will be five submarines and a design contract," he said on Friday. "The president made a considered decision that makes it possible to sign a contract with the Defense Ministry until 2020."

The Russian Navy is to receive at least 10 new Borey class strategic nuclear submarines by 2020. The submarines, to be armed with Bulava ballistic missiles, are expected to constitute the core of Russia's strategic ballistic missile submarine force after 2018.

Then-prime minister Putin said last year that the procurement of new warships and submarines for the Navy would be a priority over the next decade. The Russian government has allocated five trillion rubles (\$156 bln) or a quarter of the entire armament procurement budget until 2020 for this purpose.

The signing of a contract for delivery of the Borey submarines has been repeatedly postponed due to the pricing dispute between the Defense Ministry and defense industry enterprises.

MOSCOW, May 28 (RIA Novosti)

http://en.rian.ru/military_news/20120528/173720635.html

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

Russian Ballistic Missiles to Cover Tracks

01 June 2012

Russia's mobile ballistic missile launchers are to be fitted with a new camouflage system that will cover their tracks on the ground, making it harder to detect them, Defense Ministry spokesman Vadim Koval said on Friday.

The new equipment not only effectively camouflages missile launchers when deployed, but can also promptly erase tracks on the ground to cover the movements of missile vehicles, as well as creating false trails to mislead enemy surveillance, Koval said.

The new equipment will cut the time required to camouflage the launchers many times over, he added.

The Teikovo ballistic missile site in Russia's Ivanovo Region will become the first missile unit to be equipped with new advanced camouflage at the end of the year, Koval said.

The unit, based 280 kilometers from Moscow, consists of Topol-M (SS-27 Sickle B) and Yars (RS-24) intercontinental ballistic missile systems.

Other Strategic Missile Forces detachments, including the Irkutsk and Novosibirsk units in Siberia, will also get similar equipment in the future.

MOSCOW, June 1 (RIA Novosti)

http://en.rian.ru/military_news/20120601/173787154.html

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DOTMIL Blog

U.S. General: As Long as Russia, China Have Nukes, So Will America

May 30, 2012

By John T. Bennett

Washington will not significantly shrink its nuclear weapons arsenal as long as Moscow and Beijing possess their own atomic arms that could target the United States, says the general who oversees America's nuclear fleet.

Senior U.S. officials do not view the Russians or Chinese "as enemies," says Air Force Gen. Robert Kehler, U.S. Strategic Command chief. Still, both possess long-range nuclear missiles that could hit U.S. cities or targets, meaning "we must be mindful" of a need to maintain a robust U.S. nuclear fleet, he told a forum Wednesday in Washington.

While it has been 67 years since the last nuclear attack--launched by the U.S. on Japan--"as long as nuclear weapons exist, we will maintain a safe and reliable nuclear deterrent," Kehler says.

The United States and Russia are shrinking their atomic arsenals under a deal reached last year. The United States has nearly 1,740 nuclear-tipped intercontinental ballistic missiles, sub-based ballistic missiles, and warheads for heavy aircraft, according to the Pentagon. Russia has around 1,490; under terms of the 2011 treaty, the U.S. is headed toward 1,500.

"At this level of reductions, it maintains a force able and ready," Kehler says.

The Strategic Command chief suggested Washington could eventually further shrink its nuclear fleet. But not today.

"I feel we are not at a place to go to zero," Kehler says.

Asked about a report from earlier this year that Obama administration and Pentagon officials are studying options to shrink the atomic fleet to just 300 ICBMs, Kehler would say only that a Pentagon study on further reductions is not yet complete.

President Obama talks often of his vision of a "nuclear-free world," and has pushed hard for nuclear weapons reductions between the Cold War foes. More pragmatic Obama administration officials simply want nuclear arsenal cuts because they feel the nation has more than enough and it would perhaps free up billions of dollars.

The sticking point to Obama's goal is the Russians, who "seem to be going the other way," says Michele Flournoy, Obama's former Pentagon policy chief, citing a renewed emphasis on nuclear arms in military doctrine and increased atomic weapons spending.

"Even though a second Obama administration might see it as possible to do more reductions," Flournoy says, "the challenge is getting the Russians to that point."

Meantime, Kehler told the forum the Pentagon is examining options for a missile defense shield that would provide an umbrella over the East Coast. But officials see no pressing need for such a system, which would be mandated in a House-passed Pentagon policy bill working its way through Congress right now.

Kehler also endorsed keeping--for now, at least--all three legs of the so-called nuclear triad, which consists of bomber planes that carry nuclear bombs, submarine-fired atomic-tipped missiles, and ICBMs. Some military experts and lawmakers have floated the notion of eliminating at least one leg to save money, and because so many delivery platforms are unnecessary.

"In this set of [security] scenarios, we need a triad" to give the president the full list of options, Kehler says. "I don't believe we need a triad out of theological beliefs...[or] because we've always had a triad."

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

<http://www.usnews.com/news/blogs/dotmil/2012/05/30/us-general-as-long-as-russia-china-have-nukes-so-will-america>

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Star Tribune – Minneapolis, MN

NATO Airstrike Kills al-Qaida's No. 2 Leader in Afghanistan

By SEBASTIAN ABBOT, Associated Press

May 29, 2012

KABUL, Afghanistan - The U.S.-led NATO force in Afghanistan killed al-Qaida's second-highest leader in the country in an airstrike in eastern Kunar province, the coalition said Tuesday.

Sakhr al-Taifi, also known as Mushtaq and Nasim, was responsible for commanding foreign insurgents in Afghanistan and directing attacks against NATO and Afghan forces, the alliance said. He frequently traveled between Afghanistan and Pakistan, carrying out commands from senior al-Qaida leadership and ferrying in weapons and fighters.

The airstrike that killed al-Taifi and another al-Qaida militant took place Sunday in Kunar's Watahpur district, the coalition said. A follow-on assessment of the area determined that no civilians were harmed, it said.

The coalition declined to reveal the name of al-Qaida's top leader in Afghanistan "due to ongoing operations and security concerns."

The U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan was carried out because al-Qaida chief Osama bin Laden used the country as his base to plan the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks in New York and Washington.

Most of al-Qaida's senior leaders are now believed to be based in Pakistan, where they fled following the U.S. invasion. The terrorist organization is believed to have only a nominal presence in Afghanistan.

Many senior al-Qaida commanders have died in U.S. drone attacks in Pakistan's northwest tribal region, and bin Laden was killed by U.S. commandos in the Pakistani town of Abbottabad last May.

Bin Laden advised al-Qaida militants to leave Pakistan's North and South Waziristan tribal areas because of the threat of drone attacks, according to letters seized from the compound where he was killed. The documents were later released by the U.S.

In one of the letters, bin Laden recommended they go to Afghanistan's Kunar province because of "its rougher terrain; too many mountains, rivers, and trees that can accommodate hundreds of brothers without being spotted by the enemy," according to the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, which published the documents.

Elsewhere in Afghanistan, two would-be suicide bombers riding in a vehicle packed with explosives in eastern Nangarhar province were killed when the vehicle exploded prematurely, said a local government official, Shakrulla. Three others in the vehicle were severely wounded. The explosion occurred on the main highway between Jalalabad city and Torkham, a town on the Pakistani border.

Associated Press writer Rahim Faiez contributed to this report.

<http://www.startribune.com/world/155303755.html>

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Press TV – Iran

'Flame' Virus Discovered as New Cyber Weapon

Wednesday, May 30, 2012

Shortly after news of a sophisticated malware dubbed "flame" hit Iran's servers, an emergency response unit at Iran's telecommunications ministry announced that it had come up with an anti-virus program against it.

On Monday, Netanyahu's deputy hinted at an Israeli involvement but was short of assuming responsibility.



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One industry expert called the flame malware a masterpiece of programming, sophisticated enough to change its characteristics and develop according to orders. Therefore It is hard to detect because it only acts on an order from a remote computer and is not always active.

Only 15 powers are thought to possess this technology. The US and Israel are among them.

In recent months, the pressure on Iran was stepped up.

Iran has maintained that its nuclear program is strictly civilian. Israel is on the other hand, is not a signatory to treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and is thought to possess 200 to 300 nuclear warheads.

The flame virus is the latest known attack in the ongoing cyber warfare by Israel and the West against Iran. Analysts say cyber warfare is one of the three options at the disposal of Israel and West. The other two: a military strike; a dangerous and unlikely option at the moment, or simply allowing negotiations to produce a settlement.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/05/30/243739/flame-new-cyber-weapon/>

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Foreign Policy

Flame Thrower

Stuxnet was a monster computer virus. Flame is 20 times larger -- and it's been out there, listening, for years.

BY TIM MAURER, DAVID WEINSTEIN

MAY 29, 2012

Welcome to the new frontier of cyber-espionage, and remember this name: "Flame" -- a mysterious new cyber spy tool that hit the headlines on Monday, May 28. Its code is 20 times larger than Stuxnet, the mysterious computer worm that temporarily crippled Iran's Siemens nuclear centrifuges, and it "might be the most sophisticated cyber weapon yet unleashed" according to Kaspersky Lab, a Russian-based cybersecurity firm. Kaspersky published the findings of its analysis on Monday in addition to the Iranian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT) and Budapest University. Most of the infected systems are located in the Middle East, with Iran, Israel, Palestine, Sudan, Syria, Lebanon, and Hungary topping the list. Flame stands out in the various ways through which it "exfiltrates" data, including surreptitiously recorded audio data captured by internal microphones. However, unlike Stuxnet, Flame was designed to spy -- not destroy.

The variety of spy tools that Flame employs is astonishing. According to Kaspersky, "of course, other malware exists which can record audio, but key here is Flame's completeness -- the ability to steal data in so many different ways." It also takes snapshots of instant messages and records a user's keystrokes. Flame is remotely controlled through a command and control server and it's highly dynamic. In other words, it has been updated remotely since it was first launched at least as early as March 2010 and its "creators are constantly introducing changes into different modules" which expand its functionality. Now that it has been detected, the Iranian CERT apparently offers infected users a removal tool.

According to the *Washington Post*, some analysts see the United States and Israel behind Flame. Kaspersky will only go so far as to say that it's likely the work of a nation-state rather than a private entity or hacking group because of the sophistication and the geographic location of the infected systems, For now, the perpetrator's identity remains unknown. Flame was designed to avoid being detected, hiding in large amounts of code and using a programming language unusual for malware. Victims include individuals, private companies, educational institutions, and state-related organizations. Other details are also unclear at this point, however, such as how Flame accesses a system in the first place. Kaspersky considers Flame an operation likely to have been run in tandem with Stuxnet.

Unlike Stuxnet, Flame was designed for a non-destructive purpose. That said, both types of code essentially consist of three elements, according to Herb Lin, chief scientist at the National Research Council: a vulnerability, access, and payload. Think of a computer system as a walled-in garden. The first objective is to find a hole in the wall to get into

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the garden. A vulnerability in the computer system -- the hole -- will allow that access to the system. Once inside the garden, there are basically two ways it plays out determined by the payload. A cyber-espionage payload -- like Flame -- walks around making copies and taking pictures of what's in the garden. By contrast, a cyber-warfare payload -- like Stuxnet -- destroys what's in the garden.

But cyber-espionage tools differ in terms of their payload though. Stuxnet's cousin, Duqu, was designed (like Flame) to spy, not destroy. The security firm, Symantec, considered Duqu "a threat nearly identical to Stuxnet, but with a completely different purpose ... Duqu's purpose is to gather intelligence data and assets from entities such as industrial infrastructure and system manufacturers, amongst others not in the industrial sector." Duqu and Stuxnet were therefore very similar in the vulnerabilities exploited but differed in the payloads used. In other words, Duqu and Stuxnet used the same hole in the wall but behaved differently once inside, whereas Duqu and Flame accessed the garden differently but were sent with a similar mission. There is another important difference between Duqu and Flame. As Kaspersky highlights, the "intelligence gathering operation behind Duqu was rather small-scale and focused. We believe there were less than 50 targets worldwide for Duqu -- all of them, super-high profile. Flame appears to be much, much more widespread than Duqu, with probably thousands of victims worldwide."

This shows that while cyber-espionage and cyber-warfare differ in intent, the gap is very small. Replace a non-destructive payload with a destructive one using the same vulnerability and access and the story changes very quickly. In fact, Symantec, also described Duqu as "the precursor to a future Stuxnet-like attack ... looking for information such as design documents that could help them [the attackers] mount a future attack on various industries, including industrial control system facilities." This also explains why Michael Hayden, former director of the National Security Agency and the Central Intelligence Agency, has called them "operationally indistinguishable."

But Flame is not the new Stuxnet, and it's important not to lump them together. However, as Stuxnet and Duqu have showcased, the question about Flame is whether the information-sharing was an end in itself or only the means to a future attack that remains yet to be discovered or launched.

The answer to this question might take a while to uncover. "Consider this: it took us several months to analyze the 500k code of Stuxnet," notes Kaspersky. "It will probably take year [sic] to fully understand the 20MB of code of Flame."

Tim Maurer is a research associate in the technology and public policy program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies and a non-resident fellow at the Global Public Policy Institute in Berlin. David Weinstein is a graduate student at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service in its Security Studies Program.

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/05/29/flame_thrower?page=full

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New York Times

Researchers Find Clues in Malware

By NICOLE PERLROTH

May 31, 2012

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SAN FRANCISCO — Security experts have only begun examining the thousands of lines of code that make up Flame, an extensive, data-mining computer virus that has been designed to steal information from computers across the Middle East, but already digital clues point to its creators and capabilities.

Researchers at Kaspersky Lab, which first reported the virus Monday, believe Flame was written by a different group of programmers from those who had created other malware directed at computers in the Middle East, particularly those in Iran. But Flame appears to be part of the state-sponsored campaign that spied on and eventually set back Iran's nuclear program in 2010, when a digital attack destroyed roughly a fifth of Iran's nuclear centrifuges.



“We believe Flame was written by a different team of programmers but commissioned by the same larger entity,” Roel Schouwenberg, a security researcher at Kaspersky Labs, said in an interview Wednesday. But he would not say which governments he was speaking of.

Flame, these researchers say, shares several notable features with two other major programs that targeted Iran in recent years. The first virus, Duqu, was a reconnaissance tool that researchers say was used to copy blueprints of Iran’s nuclear program. The second, Stuxnet, was designed to attack industrial control systems and specifically calibrated to spin Iranian centrifuges out of control.

Because Stuxnet and Duqu were written on the same platform and share many of the same fingerprints in their source code, researchers believe both were developed by the same group of programmers. Those developers have never been identified, but researchers have cited intriguing bits of digital evidence that point to a joint American-Israeli effort to undermine Iran’s efforts to build a nuclear bomb.

For example, researchers at Kaspersky Lab tracked the working hours of Duqu’s operators and found they coincided with Jerusalem local time. They also noted that Duqu’s programmers were not active between sundown on Fridays and sundown on Saturdays, a time that coincides with the Sabbath when observant Jews typically refrain from secular work.

Intelligence and military experts have said that Stuxnet was first tested at Dimona, an Israeli complex widely believed to be the headquarters of Israel’s atomic weapons program.

According to researchers at Kaspersky Lab, which is based in Moscow, Flame may have preceded or been designed at the same time as Duqu and Stuxnet. Security researchers at Webroot, an antivirus maker, first encountered a sample of Flame malware in December 2007. Researchers believe Duqu may have been created in August 2007. The first variant of Stuxnet did not appear on computers until June 2009.

Like Duqu, Flame is a reconnaissance tool. It can grab images of users’ computer screens, record e-mails and instant-messaging chats, turn on microphones remotely, and monitor keystrokes and network traffic. Even if an infected device is not connected to the Internet, Flame is capable of spreading to other devices by looking for Bluetooth-enabled devices nearby or Internet-connected devices in a local network, according to researchers at Kaspersky Lab.

Flame also shares a quirkier trait with Duqu: an affection for American movie characters. Flame’s command for communicating with Bluetooth-enabled devices is “Beetlejuice.” An e-mail that infected an unnamed company with Duqu last year was sent by a “Mr. Jason B.” — which researchers believe is a reference to Jason Bourne of the Robert Ludlum spy tales.

It will take more time for computer security researchers around the world to discover more. Flame contains 20 times more code than Stuxnet and is much more widespread than Duqu. Researchers at Kaspersky Lab said they have detected Flame on hundreds of computers and predict that the total number of infections could be more than a thousand.

Unlike Duqu and Stuxnet, security researchers say, Flame is remarkable in that it has been able to evade discovery for five years — which was impressive given its size. Most malware is a couple hundred kilobytes in size. Flame is 20 megabytes. “It was hiding in plain sight,” said Mr. Schouwenberg. “It was designed in such a way that it was nearly impossible to track down.”

Researchers noted that Flame spreads through more conservative means. Researchers say that while Stuxnet had the ability to replicate autonomously, Flame can spread from machine to machine only when prompted by the attacker.

Iran confirmed Tuesday that computers belonging to several high-ranking officials appear to have been penetrated by Flame.

Researchers are still trying to figure out whether the virus has Stuxnet-like sabotage capabilities.



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Already, some evidence suggests Flame may be capable of wiping out a computer's hard drive. Researchers at Symantec, an American security firm that has also studied the virus, said Flame references a specific file previously associated with a separate virus, called Wiper, which Iranian officials said had erased data on hard drives inside its oil ministry last month. Researchers are trying to learn whether Wiper was not a virus but one of Flame's command modules.

"This is the third such virus we've seen in the past three years," Vikram Thakur, a Symantec researcher, said in an interview Tuesday. "It's larger than all of them. The question we should be asking now is: How many more such campaigns are going on that we don't know about?"

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/31/technology/researchers-link-flame-virus-to-stuxnet-and-duqu.html>

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London Guardian – U.K.

Obama 'Sped Up Cyber-Attacks on Iran's Nuclear Programme'

US president accelerated pace of computer sabotage in 2010 even after Stuxnet leak, according to New York Times report

By Peter Beaumont

Friday, 1 June 2012

President Barack Obama's administration has taken direct responsibility for a rapid acceleration in cyber-attacks against Iran's nuclear programme.

According to anonymous senior administration sources quoted in the New York Times, Obama decided to speed up a programme first launched by his predecessor, George W Bush, codenamed Olympic Games, whose aim was to use computer viruses to attack Iran's nuclear enrichment programme.

The decision to reveal Obama's role in the cyberwar against Iran follows hard on the heels of the highly political disclosure in an election year that the president had taken a personal role in approving terrorist targets for US drone strikes.

And the depiction of his key involvement in two major clandestine military operations follows photographs last year showing him, as commander-in-chief, awaiting news of the death of Osama bin Laden.

The revelations on Iran appear designed to neutralise Republican accusations that he has been weak over the issue of Iran's nuclear programme.

According to the New York Times, Obama took the decision to accelerate the pace of computer sabotage against Tehran in 2010 even after details about one of the cyberweapons developed to attack Iran, the so-called Stuxnet worm, accidentally leaked on to the internet because of a programming error.

That worm had been designed to target Iran's Natanz plant.

At a meeting in the White House situation room within days of the worm's "escape", Obama asked his advisers, including Leon Panetta, the head of the CIA, whether the effort should be wound up because it had been compromised.

According to sources in the room at the time, Obama asked: "Should we shut this thing down?" before deciding instead to push ahead with the attacks. The Natanz plant was hit twice more by versions of the worm, which damaged up to 1,000 high-speed centrifuges then enriching uranium.

The revelation of Obama's involvement in ordering cyber-attacks on Iran in a joint programme also involving Israel, follows the disclosure earlier this week that Iran had recently been hit by a massive new virus named Flame, 20 to 40 times larger than Stuxnet, found infecting PCs in Iran.

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According to Kaspersky Lab – a Russian-based computer security firm that has studied both Stuxnet and Flame – the first Stuxnet attack on Iran took place around June 2009, but its existence did not emerge until almost a year later, appearing to fit precisely the timeline proposed by the New York Times' sources.

Indeed, some experts have said there are sufficient similarities between the two worms to suggest they have the same source.

The timing of the disclosure to David E Sanger, who boasts of access to Obama and his closest officials, is significant in a presidential election year.

In recent weeks, Republican candidate Mitt Romney has tried to portray the Obama administration as weak and muddled on foreign policy, most recently over the crisis in Syria.

The recent highly sympathetic media disclosures appear to have been carefully calculated to counter this suggestion.

The programme was first launched in 2006 under President Bush, who had been advised that a cyberweapon might be more effective than sabotage – the CIA had introduced faulty materials into Iran's nuclear procurement networks.

The goal then was to secretly access Natanz's industrial computer controls, which had been designed by the German company Siemens, to acquire a detailed blueprint of how it worked.

That achieved, a joint US-Israeli operation set about building a worm to attack the plant's computer systems and make its centrifuges run out of control.

As was suggested at the time, Stuxnet appears to have been introduced into the Iranian plant with contaminated thumb drives.

"That was our holy grail," one of the architects of the plan said, referring to how the plant was physically accessed. "It turns out there is always an idiot around who doesn't think much about the thumb drive in their hand."

American sources quoted also blame Israel for the eventual discovery of the worm, which had been intended to remain secret, after the US's Israeli partners had modified Stuxnet and made a programming error that caused it to escape and replicate in cyberspace.

The disclosures also throw fresh light on the rapid development of US cyberwarfare capability and reveal its willingness to use cyberweapons offensively to achieve policies.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/jun/01/obama-spod-up-cyberattack-iran?newsfeed=true>

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The Diplomat – Japan

Diplomat Blogs

OPINION/The Editor

Iran Surprises on Uranium

By Jason Miks

May 28, 2012

Iran may have enriched uranium to higher level than expected, according to the latest report by the International Atomic Energy Agency, which I received a copy of at the weekend.

Is this further sign that Iran isn't negotiating in good faith? That remains to be seen, and Iran for its part indicated to the IAEA that the production of such particles "above the target value" may "happen for technical reasons beyond the operator's control."

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“The Agency is assessing Iran’s explanation and has requested further details,” the report says. “On 5 May 2012, the Agency took further environmental samples from the same location where the particles in question had been found. These samples are currently being analyzed.”

One of the most interesting sections in the IAEA’s previous report on the issue, which came in November, was that covering the possible military dimensions of Iran’s nuclear program. It stated that it was unclear that modeling studies alleged to have been conducted in 2008 and 2009 involving spherical geometries, “consisting of components of the core of an HEU nuclear device subjected to shock compression, for their neutronic behavior at high density, and a determination of the subsequent nuclear explosive yield,” could be useful for “anything other than a nuclear explosive.”

The new report similarly has a section devoted to possible military dimensions, and again notes that the IAEA has identified a number of outstanding issues. In addition, the report says that the agency requested Tehran provide it with early access to a specified location within the Parchin site.

“As previously reported, during the second round of talks in Tehran and in response to the agency’s request, Iran provided the agency with an initial declaration in connection with the issues identified in Section C of the Annex to the Director General’s November 2011 report,” it said. “Iran’s declaration dismissed the agency’s concerns in relation to the aforementioned issues, largely on the grounds that Iran considered them to be based on unfounded allegations.”

According to a U.S. analyst cited by Reuters, there isn’t anything inherently “nefarious” in the discovery of the uranium sample, and the U.S. has said the Iranian explanation could be accurate. But as the enhanced enrichment accomplishes “much of the technical leap” towards 90 percent (weapons-grade) uranium, Western concerns are understandable. Meanwhile, the head of Iran’s atomic energy agency reportedly said that he was unconvinced the IAEA needed to inspect Parchin.

At this stage in the game, the “of course that’s nonsense” response just doesn’t cut it.

Jason Miks is editor of The Diplomat. He is also managing editor of the US-based Center for International Relations’ International Affairs Forum.

<http://the-diplomat.com/the-editor/2012/05/28/iran-surprises-on-uranium/>

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Gulf News – U.A.E.
OPINION/Editorial

Iran Needs to Be More Transparent

Development of peaceful nuclear power programme hinges on international trust

By Gulf News

May 29, 2012

Iran needs to offer international transparency on its nuclear programme. It has stated many times that it does not want nuclear weapons, and that its nuclear programme is completely peaceful, but it has refused to cooperate on so many points with the international community and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that suspicions have to be aroused.

The latest surprise was the announcement of plans to build a new nuclear power station only days after a bruising round of talks between Iran and the UN Security Council and Germany (P5+1) which failed to come to a definitive conclusion, although the inconclusive outcome is seen as positive in that the process of negotiating did not break down completely.

The plans for a second nuclear power station will need international help. Iran’s existing nuclear power plant at Bushehr was started by German engineers before the revolution, and completed with Russian help.



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The new Darkhovin plant was started by French engineers before the revolution, and although there are indigenous Iranian plans for the site, Iran's nuclear authorities want international companies to join the project. This will need a much better international atmosphere than Iran has managed at present.

<http://gulffnews.com/opinions/editorials/iran-needs-to-be-more-transparent-1.1028924>

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Washington Times
OPINION/Commentary

PAYNE: Zero Nuclear Sense

Is reckless disarmament the plan for second Obama term?

By Keith B. Payne

Tuesday, May 29, 2012

A report recommending deep U.S. nuclear reductions - to levels as low as 10 percent of the current arsenal - was released recently by an apparently self-appointed Global Zero Nuclear Policy Commission. This report was led by James Cartwright, a retired Marine general and former vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Other contributors include folks closely associated with the "nuclear zero" campaign that President Obama embraced early in his administration. The White House has since elevated the campaign for nuclear zero to the pinnacle of the U.S. nuclear-policy agenda, and a supportive report led by a former top-ranking military officer is sure to gain considerable visibility.

It is difficult to know whether Gen. Cartwright's report is meant to serve as the icebreaker for the Obama administration's intended nuclear agenda following the 2012 election or a stalking horse so far to the anti-nuclear left that the administration's post-election plans can appear moderate by comparison. Whatever the intent, the immediate response from Gen. Norton Schwartz, the Air Force's chief of staff, was not sympathetic: "I don't agree with his assessment nor the study." This response is well-deserved, even understated. The report's recommendations for deep reductions within 10 years rest on a set of assertions contrary to obvious facts and no small amount of unwarranted idealism regarding international relations.

For example, while the report calls for a realistic understanding of the post-Cold War security situation, it begins with, "Security is mainly a state of mind, not a physical condition." Why this fatuous statement? Because if security is just a state of mind, old-fashioned security concerns can be banished easily by new thinking. But security is not mainly a state of mind; it often is predominantly a physical condition. Nations usually feel insecure because they are under threat or attack. Just ask the survivors of invasions, various genocidal campaigns and aerial bombardment or the folks in Syria who must dodge government attacks to survive. Real threats often underlie fears, and they require real solutions. Those who chalk this all up to "mainly a state of mind" and resist real solutions to real security problems often later are called "victims."

This false start is well-suited for a study that calls for realism but studiously avoids it with regard to friends and foes. For example, the study asserts that allies will be assured of their security by the United States without the traditional "nuclear umbrella": "Non-nuclear forces are also far more credible instruments for providing 21st century reassurance to allies whose comfort zone in the 20th century resided under the U.S. nuclear umbrella." This is a critical claim because one of the reasons the United States has nuclear capabilities is to provide a nuclear umbrella that covers key allies. If it is unnecessary, the need for U.S. nuclear weapons to do so vanishes. The claim, however, contradicts readily available evidence. Key allies, including some NATO allies, South Korea and Japan, stress again and again the importance they attach to a credible U.S. nuclear umbrella. In 2006, immediately following a North Korean nuclear test, Japanese leaders sought assurances from U.S. officials of the credibility of the U.S. nuclear umbrella. The former defense ministers of NATO members Poland, Latvia and Lithuania recently stressed that "any possible reduction in America's nuclear capabilities" in Europe would be contrary to "Europe's security and NATO's cohesion."

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U.S. officials surely can try to change allies' thinking on this matter, and if security truly is "mainly a state of mind," that should take care of the need. But so far, many allies confronted by Russia, China or emerging nuclear powers North Korea and Iran do not believe that their security problems are mainly in their minds. They confront real external threats and want the assurance of security that resides in the U.S. nuclear extended deterrent. As John Adams said, facts are stubborn things.

The study's portrayal of contemporary and potential foes is similarly divorced from reality. For example, it frequently repeats the points that Russia and China are not enemies and that the risk of a nuclear confrontation with Russia or China is a thing of the past. Consequently, the nuclear balance supposedly no longer is a salient factor in U.S. relations with Russia or China, and it is "increasingly improbable" to be so ever again.

If these characterizations of the present and predictions of the future could be taken to the bank, the report's recommendation would make more sense. Unfortunately, anyone who cares to check will find that virtually all open Russian and Chinese discussions of nuclear weapons and their vigorous nuclear modernization programs point to the great continuing salience of nuclear weapons in their relations with the United States and others. Proponents of deep nuclear reductions may wish this were not true, but as the saying goes, if wishes were horses, beggars would ride.

The report's claim that nuclear weapons are a thing of the past in Russian and Chinese thought again contradicts easily available evidence. Nuclear weapons are the centerpiece of Russia's foreign policy. Indeed, Russian leaders list modernization of nuclear capabilities as Russia's highest military priority, Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev recently commented publicly that the use of nuclear weapons remains a real possibility, Russia crudely threatens U.S. friends and allies with pre-emptive nuclear strikes, and, according to open official Russian commentary, Russia's nuclear-war exercises posit the U.S. as the opponent.

The report's forecast of ever-rosy U.S. nuclear relations with Russia and China is equally imbalanced. We should hope optimistically that such idealistic and surprise-free forecasts will be realized, but hope is no foundation for a realistic strategy when the past gives no reason for such idealism.

The report acknowledges as an afterthought that the future may not be as friendly as it forecasts, and thus the United States "may feel more secure if it possesses the capacity to build up its nuclear forces." Here again, security is about feelings, not physical reality. More important, the report's recommended deep U.S. force reductions, including the elimination of intercontinental ballistic missiles and tactical nuclear weapons and limits on the nuclear infrastructure, would severely constrain the nation's capability to rebuild its nuclear forces if the future is not rosy. A realistic strategy is not one that only grudgingly acknowledges the possibility of a darker future and undercuts the capability to respond.

Finally, the report recommends U.S. unilateral nuclear reductions if necessary because this would "encourage" Russia and China "to consider comparable unilateral actions." Here we see the oldest and most discredited promise in the arms-control playbook: If the United States reduces forces unilaterally, the Russians and Chinese will see the folly of their ways and follow our good example. One would have thought this canard would never surface again after Jimmy Carter's secretary of defense, Harold Brown, rightly observed, "When we build, they build; when we cut, they build." But no, it is revived yet again in a report that cries for realism in U.S. planning.

Arguments for deep U.S. nuclear reductions and nuclear zero always highlight the risks involved in maintenance of a robust nuclear arsenal and claim there would be few if any risks in its elimination. Deep nuclear reductions supposedly won't threaten the U.S. capability to assure friends or deter enemies because friends and foes alike see little or no continuing salience for nuclear weapons. Before deciding to build U.S. strategy and forces on this view, as is recommended in the report by Gen. Cartwright and colleagues, it would be useful to do a reality check and realize that almost none of the pertinent leaderships outside Washington appear to believe this stuff. That is the reality.

Keith B. Payne is head of the Graduate Department of Defense and Strategic Studies at Missouri State University and a former deputy assistant secretary of defense.

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2012/may/29/zero-nuclear-sense/>



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Korea Times – South Korea

OPINION/Editorial

May 31, 2012

N. Korea as Nuclear State

Completely different approach needed

North Korea has identified itself as a nuclear state in the preface of its revised constitution, casting a dark cloud over the stalled six-party denuclearization talks on the Stalinist country's nuclear weapons program. The constitution was revised at last month's meeting of the rubber-stamp Supreme People's Assembly and the foreword says former leader Kim Jong-il changed the North into a "nuclear power and invincible military superpower."

North Korea's stubborn and wayward pursuit of nuclear weapons, which has continued over the past decades, disregarding international calls to halt the weapons program, is deplorable enough and now the denuclearization talks are as good as dead.

The United States, one of the six nations participating in the talks, made clear that it will never recognize the North as a nuclear state. The other participating nations in the talks are South and North Korea, China, Japan and Russia.

South Korea, for its part, made clear its stance of not accepting North Korea as a nuclear state. "Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is our coherent principle. North Korea should observe the joint declaration on the nuclear-free peninsula," a South Korean foreign ministry official was quoted as saying.

It's not difficult to understand the reason why North Korea has inscribed its status as a nuclear weapons state in its constitution. More than anything else, North Korea is apparently seeking to be treated as a nation possessing nuclear weapons outside the framework of the nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). At present, there are two kinds of nuclear states; one group includes the United States, Russia, China, Britain and France that are exceptionally recognized as nuclear powers within the framework of the NPT and the other group includes Israel, India and Pakistan that didn't join the pact but have been recognized as de-facto nuclear states. Indeed the North wants to change the current "NPT plus 3" formula into the "NPT plus 4."

It's also easy to infer that the reclusive country will increase its leverage during negotiations, not only by using nukes as a bargaining tool but in seeking to push for disarmament talks as a nuclear-armed country. North Korea also appears eager to go head to head with the United States by simultaneously developing long-range missiles that could hit mainland America, thereby limiting the chances of the superpower pursuing military intervention in the Korean Peninsula.

The inclusion of the phrase about being a nuclear state is also seen as a move to placate North Koreans who still harbor suspicions of the new leadership under Kim Jong-un who inherited power from his father.

Now the prospect for North Korea's nuclear weapons program is murky as the North and the international community continue to confront each other, engaging in inconclusive arguments.

In a nutshell, the time has come for the international community to consider a new approach toward North Korea, completely different from the existing six-way talks.

http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/opinon/2012/05/137_112101.html

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London Guardian – U.K.

OPINION/Julian Borger's Global Security Blog

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More Signs of a Clean-Up at Suspect Iran Site

New satellite images of razed buildings at Parchin suggest it is being 'sanitised'

By Julian Borger

Nine days have gone by since the head of the IAEA returned from Tehran to say he and the Iranians had agreed to agree about resuming investigations into alleged Iranian nuclear weapons work and that a deal would be signed "quite soon". Item number one of that deal was to be an IAEA visit to the Parchin military site, southeast of Tehran, where IAEA inspectors would like to see a building they think may have been used to test high-explosive components of a nuclear warhead.

As time has gone by, Amano's "decided to agree" formula looks more and more like the best possible spin on a negative outcome. Indeed, the IAEA board meeting was told yesterday that the agency's officials were "still looking for a date" to meet again with their Iranian counterparts. In other words, contact has broken down.

Events are moving considerably faster at Parchin, meanwhile. The Washington-based Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS) published a new satellite image showing activity at Parchin. Two out-buildings at the complex seem to have been razed to the ground and there are signs of earth-moving and the use of heavy machinery.

Earlier in the month, ISIS published another picture showing streams of water flowing out of the main building at the site, where the tests are suspected to have been carried out.

Incidentally, this is not the first time the Iranians have conducted a major clean-up of a site of interest to the IAEA. In 2004, the site of the former Physics Research Centre at Lavisan in Tehran, was also completely obliterated. As Jeffrey Lewis at Arms Control Wonk points out, it is now a rather lovely park.

In an earlier post, Lewis goes into detail about Parchin and what is alleged to have gone on there, questioning some of the computer-generated imagery currently in circulation. On the Nuclear Diner blog, Cheryl Rofer, who used to carry out environmental testing at Los Alamos, site of the US Manhattan Project, also discusses what might be left behind from warhead initiator testing.

All the above suggests that it might be some time between Amano's 'agreement to sign an agreement' on Parchin and the agreement itself. The issue did come up at the broader nuclear talks in Baghdad last week, but like so much else, the context is shrouded in confusion. One participant at the talks told me Iran seemed to be asking for compensation for an IAEA deal in the form of sanctions relief. Another participant has since said that the chief Iranian negotiator, Saeed Jalili, seemed to want to separate the IAEA talks and the broader talks with six major powers, which will resume in Moscow next month.

Stocks in the Moscow talks are at a low ebb. On the plus side, the new American negotiator, Wendy Sherman, broke the ice with Jalili at Baghdad by engaging him in conversation at the end of a plenary session, I am told - a sort-of impromptu bilateral. And Jalili did say that Iran's enrichment of 20%-enriched uranium might be up for discussion.

On the minus side, Jalili and his team barely glanced at the P5+1 proposed confidence-building deal that was handed to them at the beginning of the talks, and did not refer to it directly for the rest of the Baghdad meeting. After expressing interest in a long-running uranium fuel swap proposal in the run-up to Baghdad, Jalili claimed at the meeting that Iran had no use for foreign uranium fuel plates for the Tehran research reactor because it had made its own. (The plates were shown to IAEA inspectors last year, but western officials doubt they were the real thing.)

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad popped up yesterday to add to the negative vibes over Moscow. The talks are no longer Ahmadinejad's department since he lost a power-tussle with the Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, last spring, but he no doubt has a sense of which way the wind is blowing. A better guide, however, may be Khamenei's speech on Sunday to commemorate the death of Ayatollah Khomeini. If he doesn't mention the nuclear talks, it will probably be bad news. And even if he does, it won't necessarily be good news.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/global/iran-blog/2012/may/31/iran-nuclear-parchin-cleanup?newsfeed=true>



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Gulf Daily News – Bahrain
OPINION/Commentary

Nuclear Irony Is Lost on West...

By JAMAL KANJ
Thursday, May 31, 2012

IT is ironic that Western nations seeking to halt Iran's nuclear ambitions are the same countries that sold nuclear technology to it in the first place.

Iran worked with the US and Western nations since the 1950s to develop its knowledge in nuclear energy.

In 1975, German conglomerates Kraftwerk Union and Siemens started the construction on the now infamous Bushehr Nuclear Plant.

After completing more than 50 per cent of work and following the Iranian revolution, the Germans abandoned the project in an apparent dispute over payments with the new government.

In the mid-1990s, employing the same German-pressurised water reactor technology, Iran contracted Russia to complete the work.

The nuclear facility eventually became operational almost 30 years later to a fanfare of international condemnation and Israeli protestation.

Western countries, especially nuclear powers, have little to fear from Iran - even if it ever becomes a nuclear power.

Even Israel, which has been the most bellicose nation, cannot be strategically threatened by a nuclear Iran.

History has shown that military nuclear power was a deterrent rather than offensive weaponry. The only time a nuclear bomb was used, it was against a non-nuclear power.

Accordingly, in the absence of a balance of power, only non-nuclear regional entities could have genuine credible concerns from their nuclear neighbours, be it Iran or Israel.

However, Israel is upset at the prospect of another nation developing a deterrence to its nuclear hegemony.

Hence, the six major powers seeking to reign in Iran's nuclear programme - the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and Germany - are helping uphold Israel's absolute monopoly on nuclear technology in the region.

Meanwhile, Israeli officials are accusing Iran of using talks "to gain time".

This is interesting since "buying time", or negotiation for the sake of negotiation, is the same strategy Israel has exploited for 20 years in marathon talks with the Palestinians, while building more illegal settlements over the land up for negotiation.

It is rather discrediting for the US when, following the latest negotiations, instead of heading back to Washington, the US delegation flew directly to Tel Aviv to report to Israeli leaders on their meetings in Baghdad.

The US negotiating team, headed by Under-Secretary for Political Affairs Wendy Sherman and accompanied by National Security Council officials working on Iran's nuclear programme, met the Israeli defence minister and other senior officials for three hours to brief them on their talks with Iran.

The defence minister threatened last week to attack Iran, even if Tehran agreed to open up its nuclear facilities to greater UN inspection.

Obviously, Israel is not only interested in curtailing Iran's nuclear ambitions, but also its access to knowledge that might allow it to develop a nuclear programme in future.



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The five plus one should be guided by reason, not by Israel's irrational paranoia that foresees other nations' "potential" development and knowledge as a "security" threat.

If the West continues to ignore Israel's proven possession of nuclear weapons, public pressure will eventually force new democracies in the region to develop the same deterrence capabilities.

Therefore, rather than focusing on Iran, the five plus one should direct their efforts towards promoting a Middle East free of all weapons of mass destruction, imaginary or real.

Mr Kanj writes frequently on Arab world issues and is the author of Children of Catastrophe, Journey from a Palestinian Refugee Camp to America.

<http://www.gulf-daily-news.com/NewsDetails.aspx?storyid=331215>

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Los Angeles Times
OPINION/Opinion L.A.

Being Realistic about Iran's Nuclear Program

By Daniel Kadishson
May 31, 2012

The bell has rung on the first round of Iran negotiations with one positive outcome: We're not going to war, yet.

In his May 23 Times Op-Ed article, Chuck Freilich correctly wrote that the least bad outcome of these negotiations between Iran and world powers would have been allowing the country a minimal level of uranium enrichment in return for better inspections and the removal of higher-enriched uranium. Freilich was overly ambitious to think that such a deal could get done in the first round of negotiations, and wrong to assert that it represents only a stopgap solution and that Iran must eventually stop its uranium enrichment altogether. But he is closer to the mark than most in Congress.

In an ideal world, Iran would consent to a full, permanent suspension of uranium enrichment (zero centrifuges) as well as unrestricted inspections of all nuclear facilities. But the last nine years of Iranian declarations, the factional power struggles within the Iranian government and the political self-interest of Iran's leaders make it highly unlikely that they will agree to fully suspend enrichment.

But uranium enrichment need not lead inexorably to nuclear weapons. To ensure Iran does not pursue weaponization, U.S. negotiators should have a free hand to reach an agreement that allows Iran a token number of centrifuges in exchange for closure of the most dangerous facilities and unrestricted inspections in all remaining facilities. To prevent Iran from building a nuclear weapon, verification is more important than zero centrifuges.

Members of Congress who demand only that Iran agree to a complete, permanent suspension of all uranium enrichment and allow unfettered inspections in all facilities, and are trying to legislate that the U.S. can accept nothing less, are ignoring reality in a way that will likely lead to either an Iranian nuclear weapon or a new war.

Enrichment has become a central symbol of national pride for Iran. All levels of the government, from the supreme leader to the Iranian cabinet, have insisted they will not completely suspend uranium enrichment. Even with sanctions stifling their economy, there is no indication the Iranians are willing to turn 180 degrees.

A complete reversal of Iran's long-standing policy on uranium enrichment would represent such a significant concession that the Islamic Republic would be unlikely to make the more important compromise: allowing the additional inspections needed to verify the suspension and ensure that Iran's military is not moving forward with missile and explosive testing, which are as important to a nuclear weapon as enriched uranium.

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Iran has mastered uranium enrichment; our demands must adapt to this reality. It is better to let Iran openly have five centrifuges with international inspectors allowed unrestricted access throughout the country than to let Iran claim it has zero centrifuges and no nuclear military program without having the means to verify this.

U.S. negotiators should have bipartisan support from Congress to pursue any agreement that precludes Iran from building a nuclear weapon, but there are general principles that an agreement could follow: A token, face-saving number of centrifuges can be permitted at a facility that is not built under a mountain; all nuclear sites should maintain unlimited access for inspectors or international technicians at the site; uranium should be enriched to only 5% and the existing stockpile of higher-enriched uranium should be removed; and all military sites with suspected nuclear activity should be either shut down or opened to international inspectors immediately. Inspectors would be able to track exactly how much uranium is moved and, most important, keep constant tabs on Iranian scientists. Under this scenario, it would be almost impossible for Iran to "break out" and sprint for a weapon undetected; the U.S. would still have time to attack if Iran did decide to go for a bomb.

If U.S. politicians want to oppose this type of agreement, they first need to explain how their own proposal is both one that Iranian leaders can accept without becoming pariahs and more workable than one that allows a token enrichment capacity in return for a permanent, robust international inspections presence. On numerous occasions during the Cold War, Democrats and Republicans worked together to prevent countries from developing nuclear weapons; the situation with Iran calls for lawmakers once again to prioritize the nation over politics.

Daniel Kadishson has served as an energy policy adviser in Congress and as a U.S. Army analyst. The views in this article are his own.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/opinion-la/la-ol-iran-nuclear-blowback-20120530,0,7684937.story>

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