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UPI

Russian arms make move on Syria costly

Monday June 18, 2012-06-18

BEIRUT, Lebanon, June 18 (UPI) -- Despite U.S. protests, Russia is supplying Arab ally Syria with "defensive weapons" the Moscow insists have no relevance to the Damascus regime's brutal efforts to crush a 15-month-old pro-democracy uprising.

That may well be true -- for now, at least.

But most of the Russian weapons systems -- including upgraded MiG-29 interceptor jets, BUK-M2E air-defense missiles, Bastion coastal defense batteries armed with supersonic anti-ship cruise missiles -- ensure that any Western-led military intervention to halt the Syrian bloodbath would be costly.

"I would like to say these mechanism are really a good means of defense, a reliable defense against attacks from air and sea," Anatoly P. Isaykin, general director of Russia's state arms exporter Rosoboronexport, told The New York Times last week after U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton accused Moscow of shipping attack helicopters to Syria.

"This is not a threat but whoever's planning an attack should think about this," Isaykin said.

There seemed little doubt that Isaykin's comments were intended to warn off the Americans, British, French and others who increasingly see military intervention to be necessary to head off a full-blown civil war in Syria that could ignite neighboring Lebanon, Iraq and Jordan.

Moscow, Syria's main arms supplier during the Cold War, has become the principal protector of Syrian President Bashar Assad's minority regime as part of Russian President Vladimir Putin's drive to re-establish Moscow as a pivotal player in the Middle East.

"Russian leaders will use the Syrian crisis as an opportunity to show that their country is still a force to be reckoned with in the Middle East," Oxford Analytica observed in a recent report.

"They will also press their case that overthrowing the current Syrian regime would lead to further instability in the region -- which might even spread to the former Soviet Union.

"As a result, Russia will do its utmost to prevent the fall of President Assad," Oxford Analytica concluded.

Thus, it's instructive to look at what weapons systems the Russians have shipped to Syria, one of the top five purchasers of Russian weaponry, over the last couple of years. These included:

2,000 anti-tank missiles for Syria's aging but upgraded T-72 tanks. Some 800 tanks have already been upgraded under a \$500 million contract.

200 SA-17 surface-to-air missiles, usable only on ships, helicopters and vehicles, delivered without shoulder-fired launchers due to U.S. and Israeli pressure. Israel says two batteries have been deployed along the Lebanese border, while a third is in training.

36 Pantsir S-1E mobile air-defense systems, armed with 500 SAMs.

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Two K-300 Bastion coastal defense batteries armed with an estimated 73 Yakhont supersonic anti-ship cruise missiles capable of knocking out large vessels. The Syrians have already tested these batteries.

In January, Syria signed a \$500 million deal to buy 36 Yak-130 advanced jet training aircraft built by Russia's Irkut Defense Corp. that can also double as light attack aircraft, usually as part of Russian armored divisions. Deliveries are expected to start in 2013.

Since Syrian insurgents don't have tanks or aircraft, of these systems, only the Yak-130 could be considered useful to the regime in combating insurgent forces.

Syria's main adversary in the region is Israel, its southern neighbor, and considered the overwhelming military force in the Middle East.

There are other military contracts systems that Syria is pursuing with Russia. They're worth an estimated \$4 billion and include:

Modernization of the final 200 T-72s under the \$500 million contract with Russia to upgrade 1,000 of the tanks.

200 more SA-19 air-defense missiles, more SA-18 Igla, and eight BUK-M2E air-defense missile batteries worth \$1 billion.

Supersonic 9M123 Chrysanthemum self-propelled anti-tank missile systems made by Russia's KBM.

Upgrading 24 MiG-29s, and S-125 Pechora-2 surface-to-air missiles.

These sales are vital for Russia's defense industry, a vast enterprise during the Cold War but now much-reduced and, like every other defense industry, heavily dependent on exports to maintain production lines.

Russia also doesn't want to lose its naval maintenance base at the Syrian port of Tartus, its only military facility outside the former Soviet Union and its only foothold in the Mediterranean.

A visit by a Russian naval flotilla headed by the aircraft carrier Admiral Kuznetsov in January was seen as a display of Russian support for Assad's embattled regime.

http://www.upi.com/Business_News/Security-Industry/2012/06/18/Russian-arms-make-move-on-Syria-costly/UPI-28411340040618

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RT

Used weapons giveaway in Central Asia concerns Russia

Monday June 18, 2012-06-18

As US and NATO forces prepare to withdrawal from Afghanistan, speculation is rife that the Pentagon may provide used weapons to some Central Asian countries, thus complicating Russia's military cooperation in the region.

While the handover of used military equipment by the Pentagon to Central Asian republics after the withdrawal of the ISAF forces from Afghanistan does not conflict with the CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organization) agreements, it



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could complicate Russia's military-technical cooperation with the former Soviet partners, defense expert Vladimir Kudelev told Interfax-AVN on Friday.

"There is no conflict with the CSTO agreements here because basically we are talking about second-hand auxiliary equipment currently being used as materiel and technical support by the International Security Assistance Force," said Kudelev, the leading scientist at the Russian Institute of Oriental Studies.

After the withdrawal of US and NATO troops from Afghanistan in 2014, the military equipment used by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) may be transferred to Central Asian countries, *Asia-Plus*, citing *Kommersant* newspaper, reported.

The Pentagon is negotiating weapon transfers with the governments of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

Some weapons will be transferred to these countries without charge and some – for safekeeping. It has also been reported that the US is negotiating on the possible transfer of medical equipment, communications and fire-fighting equipment.

A source in the Kyrgyz Defense Ministry said the issue was raised in March during a meeting between US Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta and his Kyrgyz counterpart Talaibek Omuraliev.

Meanwhile, Afghan authorities are trying to persuade US military officials to leave the maximum amount of equipment behind for their national army and police, the Afghan president's administration told the newspaper.

According to Russian diplomats, the transfer of NATO troops to Central Asian countries contradicts the agreements within the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).

In December, the leaders of the CSTO, which include Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, agreed that the military bases of third countries can be placed on the territory of the organization's participants only following unanimous consent of all participants.

The subject could be discussed between President Vladimir Putin and US President Barack Obama, who are scheduled to meet on the sidelines of the G20 meeting Los Cabos, Mexico, held on June 18-19.

<http://rt.com/politics/us-afghanistan-central-asia-084>

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National Journal

Key Senator Calls House Missile Defense Provision a “Cold War” Vestige

By Elaine M. Grossman

Friday June 15, 2012

WASHINGTON -- The chairman of the U.S. Senate's Armed Services Committee on Thursday called a House initiative to deploy a missile defense site on the nation's East Coast before 2016 "a replay of an old Cold War debate" (see *GSN*, June 4).

"There's no military need for it," Senator Carl Levin (D-Mich.) told reporters during a breakfast question-and-answer session.

"We've got coverage of the United States with this European system," said the lawmaker, referring to plans for a NATO-backed defensive network to address potential ballistic missile threats from the Middle East. He also cited the existing Ground-based Midcourse Defense sites in Alaska and California, which the Defense Department has said are sufficient to meet antimissile requirements.

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The House on May 18 passed a fiscal 2013 defense authorization bill calling for a missile defense installation on the East Coast to be built and operating by Dec. 31, 2015.

In the lead-up to establishing the new defenses, the Defense secretary must by the end of 2013 complete an evaluation of potential locations, the legislation directed. The measure allocates \$100 million to begin planning work in the upcoming budget year, which begins Oct. 1.

"The committee is aware that a cost-effective missile defense site located on the East Coast of the United States could have advantages for the defense of the United States from ballistic missiles launched from the Middle East," the House Armed Services Committee said in a report accompanying the 2013 authorization bill.

The panel also asked that the Pentagon provide Congress an "interim analysis on feasibility and cost" by Feb. 1, 2013.

With Levin's Senate committee having included no similar requirement in its version of the 2013 defense spending policy bill, the Michigan Democrat said the House initiative to create an East Coast site "will be one of the big issues when we get to conference."

The idea of an East Coast site "has no basis in military requirement" and was "put in the House bill as a [congressional] mandate, workable or not," he said.

Senators Kelly Ayotte (R-N.H.) and Joseph Lieberman (I-Conn.) considered offering an amendment to Levin's bill during committee debate that called for a Pentagon study of the East Coast antimissile site concept. The measure also would have required the Defense Department to assess the environmental impact for three potential missile defense locations on the East Coast and begin initial planning, but it stopped short of demanding actual deployment, Levin spokeswoman Tara Andringa said on Friday.

The amendment was dropped at the committee level. Levin on Thursday said he was not yet certain if such a measure would be offered on the Senate floor.

Floor debate and a vote on the legislation could occur as early as July, he said, speaking at a Defense Writers Group event.

One detractor of the East Coast site idea is forecasting that a review of the concept -- minus a deployment mandate -- is probably what will emerge from an eventual House-Senate conference to resolve differences in the two defense authorization measures.

"When in doubt, study an issue. That's what the conferees are likely to do," said John Isaacs, executive director of the Council for a Livable World.

"This can be seen as a camel's nose under the tent" toward ultimately deploying a third U.S. site or, alternatively, "tossing a sop when the Senate has no intention to go along" with the House move toward fielding, Isaacs told *Global Security Newswire* on Thursday. He added: "We hope for the latter."

Washington Post "In the Loop" columnist Al Kamen recently poked fun at the House initiative by launching a reader contest to nominate where on the East Coast interceptors might be situated.

"Where should the missiles go?" Kamen wrote last month. "Maybe we could circle Manhattan with interceptors to protect the job creators on Wall Street? Or group them at the Baseball Hall of Fame in central New York to protect the national pastime? Hide them within the Epcot theme park in Orlando? Put a few in Chincoteague to protect the wild ponies?"

To the House Armed Services Committee, though, the concept is no laughing matter.

In their recent legislative report, panel lawmakers asserted that some widely respected organizations and individuals -- to include the Institute for Defense Analyses, the National Academies, and a previous military head of U.S. Northern Command -- had examined "the potential contribution" of an East Coast site.

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“Certain of these studies have recommended that work begin on the development and deployment of such a site,” according to the House document, which did not specify which reviews supported or rejected the idea.

Speaking with reporters on Thursday, Levin also said the United States “should consider going far lower” than the 1,550 strategic nuclear warhead ceiling established for each side by the U.S.-Russian New START agreement, which entered into force last year.

“I can’t see any reason for having as large an inventory as we are allowed to have under New START, in terms of real threat, potential threat,” he said.

<http://www.nationaljournal.com/nationalsecurity/key-senator-calls-house-missile-defense-provision-a-cold-war-vestige-20120615>

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The Hill

Chill in the air as president, Putin put a gloss on summit

By Ian Swanson, Jeremy Herb, and Julian Pecquet

Monday June 18, 2012

Mounting tensions between the United States and Russia were on full display Monday when President Barack Obama and Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke with reporters after a meeting on the margins of the Group of 20 summit.

Putin and Obama met in one of the villas of the Las Esperanza resort in Los Cabos that afforded gorgeous views of the ocean, “but the mood was not cheerful,” according to a White House pool report.

Putin spoke briefly, and barely commented on Syria, where Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has accused Russia of sending attack helicopters to help President Bashar Assad hold on to power.

“We also discussed international affairs, including the Syrian affair,” Putin said. “From my perspective, we’ve been able to find many commonalities pertaining to all of those issues. And we’ll now further develop our contacts both on a personal level and on the level of our experts involved.”

The leaders released a 1,600-word statement after their meeting touting their cooperation on everything from the Iranian nuclear showdown to worldwide nonproliferation efforts.

But that effort belied the chill between the two.

On Syria, Obama said the leaders “agreed that we need to see a cessation of the violence, that a political process has to be created to prevent civil war and the kind of horrific deaths that we’ve seen over the last several weeks.” He also said the two had agreed to work with other international actors to try to find a resolution.

When Putin invited Obama to come to Moscow, Obama responded by saying he looked forward to visiting Russia again, but the pool report said “he turned so quickly toward the interpreter that you had to wonder.”

Neither side mentioned the so-called Magnitsky bill moving through Congress. The legislation, named after a Russian lawyer who died while in police custody, would sanction Russian officials implicated in human-rights abuses. Russia has objected to the bill and the Obama administration opposes it, but lawmakers plan to link it to a bill providing permanent normal trade relations between the two countries.

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Asked if the meeting was important for the Russians, a Russian diplomat said: “Yes, but even more for the Americans,” according to a pool report.

As the photographers, reporters and television crews that make up the pools left the room, Obama and Putin remained seated without their interpreters — “and they just stared straight ahead. No interacting or chit chatting,” the pool report said.

The highly anticipated meeting was the first between Obama and Putin since the latter regained his country’s presidency in March. Putin snubbed Obama in May by skipping the G-8 summit at Camp David.

Republicans have been calling Obama’s “reset” with Russia a failure amid clashes on Syria, missile defense plans for Europe and a host of other issues. Republican presidential hopeful Mitt Romney has even labeled Russia America’s “No. 1 geopolitical foe.”

The joint statement, a bland mishmash of generic statements — whole paragraphs were copied and pasted in the wrong font and even the wrong color — led with the White House’s determination not to let the crisis in Syria delay Congress from establishing normal trade relations with Russia as it joins the World Trade Organization next month.

Tensions over Syria are bound to continue.

Russia has twice vetoed stronger action from the United Nations Security Council and stood by Assad, to Washington’s dismay.

Obama administration officials have repeatedly chided Russia for backing the Syrian leader, and last week Clinton sparked an uproar with her charge that Russia was sending new helicopters to the Syrian army — a statement later clarified to note they were refurbished helicopters initially sold years ago.

But hawks in Congress have criticized the Obama administration for not taking stronger action in Syria. Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), Obama’s most vocal critic on the issue, has called for an international coalition led by the United States to use airstrikes to establish safe havens for the Syrian opposition.

At a speech to the American Enterprise Institute delivered during Obama’s meeting with Putin, McCain said the Kremlin is supporting Syria over “nostalgia” for the “old Russian empire.”

“They’re harming themselves dramatically, and I don’t quite understand that,” McCain said, adding that he suspected Russia was also worried the Arab Spring would spread to other parts of the world.

“The administration now appears to be placing its hopes in the Russian government to push Assad from power in a Yemen-like transition,” McCain said. “This is the same Russian government that continues to provide heavy weapons and moral support to Assad.”

Monday’s meeting was the first between Putin and Obama since 2009, when Putin was Russia’s prime minister. Obama had his “live mic” moment in March 2012 with then-Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, during which he said that he would have “more space” on missile defense after the American election.

Medvedev responded that he would “transmit this information to Vladimir.”

Republicans have hammered Obama over the remark ever since, accusing Obama of having a “secret deal” with the Russians to weaken missile defense.

Obama said after Monday’s meeting with Putin that on missile defense, the two leaders “resolved to continue to work through some of the difficult problems involved there,” the largest of which is the U.S.-backed missile shield in Europe.



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<http://thehill.com/blogs/global-affairs/un-treaties/233401-chill-in-the-air-as-president-putin-put-a-gloss-on-summit>

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Los Angeles Times

Iran slams world powers' plan for limiting its nuclear program

Monday June 18, 2012

MOSCOW -- Iran on Monday offered up a blistering critique of a proposal by six world powers to rein in Tehran's nuclear program, marking another setback in efforts to find a diplomatic solution to the dispute.

In its first detailed analysis of the proposal, Iranian chief negotiator Saeed Jalili enumerated a lengthy list of objections in a five-hour negotiating session at a Moscow hotel and expounded at length about Iran's grievances with the West dating back to 1968.

The meeting, the third this year between Iran and the six powers, "was intense, it was tough," said Michael Mann, a spokesman for the European Union's foreign policy chief, Catherine Ashton. He said that the Iranians had finally engaged on the offered proposal, but "it was not discussed in quite the way we had hoped at this stage."

He said that both sides would "reflect" overnight and then would gather again Tuesday to consider their next step and weigh whether it still made sense to schedule another round of talks.

Diplomats for the six powers -- Britain, France, Russia, China, Germany and the United States -- cautioned that the objections may not be as much of a blow to the talks as it appears, noting that Iran sometimes turns conciliatory after public belligerence.

"They have reason to want these talks to continue too," said a senior Western diplomat who requested anonymity, which is common during such negotiations.

Nevertheless, the Iranian critique -- rolled out in a PowerPoint presentation -- extended a losing streak for efforts to resolve the dispute. Last month in Baghdad, the Iranians dashed hope for quick progress by complaining bitterly in a negotiating session about their treatment on the nuclear issue and catalogued grievances unrelated to the topic. Even a temporary halt in the talks could upset nervous oil markets and stir renewed talk about a possible Israeli air attack to end the threat Israel sees from the Iranian nuclear program.

http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/world_now/2012/06/iran-slams-world-powers-plan-for-limiting-its-nuclear-program.html

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U.S. News

Iran seeks 'sanctions relief' at nuclear talks

Monday June 18, 2012

MOSCOW (AP) — Iran became more adamant Monday that the world must ease the sanctions choking off its oil sales before it will curb activities that could be used to make nuclear arms, diplomats said. But with six world powers insisting that Tehran take the first conciliatory step, fears grew that talks in Moscow would fail.

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The diplomats said the Islamic Republic had asked the six world powers it is meeting to talk about "comprehensive sanctions relief," along with any consideration of their request that Tehran stop enriching uranium to a level just steps away from the purity needed to arm nuclear missiles.

But the six world powers — the United States, Britain, France, Russia, China and Germany — insist that any lessening of sanctions can come only after Tehran curbs that kind of enrichment, and the first of two days of talks ended Monday on a downbeat note.

The talks are being hosted by EU top foreign policy official Catherine Ashton and her spokesman, Michael Mann, spoke of "pretty tough" going, with Iran presenting arguments and objections that went over ground already covered in two previous inconclusive meetings in April and May.

The six nations had asked the Iranians to respond concretely to their demand to curb higher-level enrichment. While Mann said that topic was "addressed," he refused to qualify whether the Iranian response met the expectations of the world powers.

The United States and others suspect that Iran is enriching uranium to develop nuclear weapons. Tehran denies this, saying all of its nuclear goals are peaceful and it is enriching solely to make reactor fuel and medical isotopes. But fears have been fueled by Tehran's refusal to stop enriching or accept uranium from abroad.

While the Islamic Republic has previously mentioned lifting sanctions or staying pending ones, one of the diplomats said Monday's request was the most direct to date. That appeared to reflect the mounting pain caused by accumulating sanctions, particularly international embargoes on Iran's oil sales.

In addition to longer-term U.N. and other sanctions, Tehran is now being squeezed by the widening international embargo on its oil sales, which make up more than 90 percent of its foreign currency earnings.

Sanctions levied by the U.S. have already cut exports of Iranian crude from about 2.5 million barrels a day last year to between 1.2 and 1.8 million barrels now, according to estimates by U.S. officials. A European Union embargo on Iranian crude that starts July 1 will tighten the squeeze.

Comments by Ali Bagheri, the No. 2 on the Iranian delegation, reflected the gap between the two sides' priorities.

"We elaborated in detail ... the illegality of referring Iran's nuclear issue to the U.N. Security Council and issuance of U.N. Security Council resolutions," he told reporters, referring to Security Council demands — enforced by sanctions — that Iran stop enriching.

Diplomats from several nations meeting with Iran in Moscow depict the talks as significant. They say it could be the last in a series and if negotiators fail to make headway in persuading Tehran to stop higher-grade uranium enrichment, it's unclear if or when new talks would occur.

While Iran wants the other side to recognize its right to enrich and blink first by easing sanctions, the six nations say the onus is on Tehran to show it is ready to compromise.

Because it lives off its oil sales, Iran would be most immediately hurt by a lack of progress in Moscow followed by any long hiatus in new negotiations. But the White House also stands to lose.

Failed talks at Moscow with no immediate prospect of new meetings would expose President Barack Obama to criticism of weakness in dealing with Iran from Mitt Romney, his U.S. Republican presidential challenger, and from Israel, which has threatened to attack the Islamic Republic's nuclear installations should diplomacy fail.

It is unclear if the Jewish state would actually make good on such a threat. But any military move would likely draw in the U.S. and widen the conflict through much of the Mideast, spiking the price of oil upward and further hurting the already ailing world economy.



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The six nations formally are only prepared to ease restrictions on airplane parts for Iran's outmoded, mostly U.S.-produced civilian fleet and are offering technical help with aspects of Iran's nuclear program that cannot be used for military purposes.

While not budging on lifting existing sanctions or those already decided upon, diplomats familiar with the talks told the AP, however, the six are also prepared to guarantee that no new U.N. penalties will be enacted if Tehran compromises enough. The diplomats demanded anonymity because that possible offer has not yet been formally made.

For Iran, the main formal demand remains international recognition of its right to enrich and related issues — with increasing emphasis on sanctions relief.

The six are pressing the Islamic Republic to stop higher enrichment to 20 percent purity because at that level the material can be turned into weapons grade uranium much more quickly.

They also want Fordo, the underground Iranian facility where most of this enrichment is taking place, shut down and for Iran to ship out its higher-grade stockpile. Fordo is of special concern because it might be impervious to air attacks, a possible last-resort response to any Iranian bomb in the making.

An Iranian delegate, who demanded anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss Iran's position, told The Associated Press that his country was ready to compromise but only if the six accepted Tehran's right to enrich. In turn, he said Iran may agree to consider suspending 20 percent level enrichment as a voluntary, temporary measure. "Our minimum demand ... is for them to recognize our right to uranium enrichment," he said. "If this is not accepted by the other side, then the talks will definitely collapse."

<http://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2012/06/18/iran-6-power-nuke-meeting-begins>

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New York Times Opinion

Iran's High Card at the Nuclear Table

By William J. Broad

Thursday June 14, 2012

THE rising hostilities against Iran and its atomic complex — assassinations and cyberattacks, trade bans and oil embargoes, frozen assets and banking prohibitions, among other acts open and covert — have clearly done much to bring Tehran back to negotiations, which are to resume Monday. But the drama has also tended to overshadow a central fact: the Iranians have managed to steadily increase their enrichment of uranium and are now raising their production of a concentrated form close to bomb grade.

"Of course, Iran suffered at the beginning a little bit," Hossein Mousavian, a former Iranian official, now a research scholar at Princeton, said in an interview. "But over all, it recovered very fast. The covert war has not been successful."

The enrichment is a point of enormous pride to Iranians and a high card in an escalating game of brinkmanship that might one day turn deadly.

The quarterly reports of the International Atomic Energy Agency, whose inspectors fly regularly between Vienna and Tehran, detail the surprising progress and help explain the rising urgency as diplomats resume nuclear talks in Moscow, picking up where they left off last month in Baghdad. In theory, the overarching goal is to get Tehran to suspend its enrichment and clear up questions about whether it has pursued a secret program to develop nuclear arms.

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But as any Iranian diplomat will tell you, the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty sets no limits on enrichment purity. It simply bars nations from turning their civilian efforts to military ends — and Iran insists it is preparing uranium to fuel only reactors, not bombs.

Last month, atomic inspectors gave some credence to that claim, saying Tehran had turned nearly a third of its concentrated uranium into reactor fuel. Doves hailed the finding. Still, Iran now possesses enough enriched uranium that it could, with further processing, make at least four atom bombs.

And its supplies of concentrated uranium are rising fast, a trend that could eventually slash the time needed to produce a small nuclear arsenal.

Western experts sympathetic to Iran's position say the problem is the treaty's conspicuous loopholes, not the plucky Iranians.

"It allows nations to get to the red line of weaponization," said Yousaf M. Butt, a nuclear physicist with the Federation of American Scientists, a policy group in Washington that promotes arms control. "Iran is raising eyebrows. But what it's doing is a concern — not illegal."

The standoff with the West began in 2002 as Iran's secretive atomic effort was exposed publicly. Iranian officials evaded many questions and, in early 2006, ordered the start of uranium enrichment at a desert complex ringed by barbed wire and antiaircraft guns. They said their goal was to fuel reactors that made electric power.

The United Nations Security Council ordered an enrichment halt. Iran refused and, in late 2006, faced the first of four rounds of sanctions. By early 2008, the atomic inspectors began reporting steady buildups of enriched uranium.

Iran's stockpile might have grown faster but for waves of cyberattacks, which reportedly began around this time.

Abruptly, Iran upped the ante in early 2010 by announcing that it would start re-enriching some of the processed uranium to raise its purity from about 5 percent to 20 percent. Iran said it wanted the concentrated material to make fuel for a research reactor in Tehran.

The White House scoffed. "We do not believe they have the capability," Robert Gibbs, the press secretary, told reporters.

Iran not only succeeded, but also announced in 2011 that it would triple the amount of uranium enriched to 20 percent and slowly move the operation to a second enrichment plant known as Fordo. The once secret bunker, deep inside a mountain near the holy city of Qum, is considered largely invulnerable to bombing.

Ray Takeyh, an Iran specialist at the Council on Foreign Relations, said a crisis never erupted because the Iranians made their moves so gradually. The international community, he noted, "gets acclimated."

Today, the immediate goal of negotiators (from China, France, Germany, Russia, Britain and the United States) is to get Iran to halt its 20 percent production — a far cry from the original demand for zero enrichment. Iranians boast that their intransigence has given their atomic manufacturing a sense of inexorability and legitimacy.

As if tensions weren't high enough, experts say that Tehran might raise the stakes further by re-enriching some of its growing supply of 20 percent uranium to even higher levels of purity.

ON June 4, the Institute for Science and International Security, a group in Washington that closely follows the Iranian program, warned in a new report that Iran's cryptic actions at its Fordo plant suggested possible plans to make uranium that is highly enriched — that is, purified above 20 percent.

If so, the West might cringe. But Iran's justification could be the same as that of Belgium, France and the Netherlands. The countries, all signers of the nonproliferation treaty and subject to regular atomic inspections, use highly enriched uranium to make the radioactive isotope molybdenum-99, which is widely used in medicine for diagnostic scans and cancer treatments.



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A peaceable ending is still possible, said Daniel H. Joyner, author of "Interpreting the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty." He suggested that Iran could keep its atomic complex but export the enriched uranium to foreigners who would ensure that added processing would result exclusively in peaceful uses.

"If not for pride and saber rattling, we know how the negotiation has to turn out," he said in an interview. "In the end, the compromise is not going to please everybody — which is how you know it's the right answer."

Dr. Mousavian, who was once chairman of the foreign relations committee of Iran's National Security Council before running afoul of the government, said he, too, saw the potential for peace. His new book, "The Iranian Nuclear Crisis: A Memoir," offers a detailed plan.

He said that Tehran was willing to come to an agreement but that he feared the Obama administration would be stymied by a desire, in an election year, to avoid Republican charges that the United States had backed down.

"The deal is very much possible," he said. "Iran is ready. But if you want to keep the sanctions forever, want to keep playing games, there will be consequences."

His book ends with a stark warning: Absent a compromise, Dr. Mousavian writes, "we can expect a real confrontation."

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/17/sunday-review/irans-high-card-at-the-nuclear-negotiation-table.html>

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Reuters

Frustration mounts at deadlock in Iran nuclear talks

By Yeganeh Torbati and Thomas Grove

Tuesday June 19, 2012

MOSCOW, June 19 (Reuters) - Iran and world powers blamed each other on Tuesday for the lack of progress in talks on Tehran's nuclear programme, which has dimmed hopes of a breakthrough to avert the threat of a new Middle East war.

On the second and final day of talks in Moscow, frustration mounted over the failure to move any closer to ending a decade of negotiations over Iranian work which the United States and its allies fear is designed for building nuclear weapons.

If talks collapse, nerves could grow on financial markets over the danger of higher oil prices and conflict in the Middle East because Israel has threatened to bomb Iranian nuclear sites if diplomacy fails to stop Tehran getting the bomb.

"We did not come to Moscow only for discussions. We came to Moscow for a resolution. But we believe the opposite side is not ready to reach a resolution," an Iranian diplomat said.

Iran says its nuclear programme has only non-military purposes but the United States, Russia, China, Britain, France and Germany want Tehran to stop enriching uranium to levels that bring it close to acquiring weapons-grade material.

Iran's negotiators want relief from economic sanctions and are pushing the six powers to acknowledge its right to enrich uranium, something they refuse to do until Tehran allows United Nations inspections of its work.

A spokesman for European Union foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton, who is leading the world powers' delegation, said Monday's talks had been intense and tough.

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A Western diplomat made clear late on Monday Iran needed to do more to address proposals made by the six powers at the last round of talks.

"Our key requirements are: stop, shut and ship," said the Western diplomat, who was present at the talks.

He was referring to demands for Iran to stop producing higher-grade uranium, ship any stockpile out of the country and close down an underground enrichment facility, Fordow.

But an Iranian official said Tehran's delegation had made detailed proposals on the first day of talks and the six powers had responded with one-line answers that lacked any depth.

"Our feeling is that the agenda this group is following is not suitable for the arguments that Iran was making," he said. "We believe we are at a crossroads. And today the other side has to choose a path."

RUSSIA HAS HOPES

Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov, who leads Russia's delegation at the talks, said diplomacy could still be salvaged.

"I don't think anything will break down. We will have a reasonable outcome," Ryabkov told Reuters.

The Moscow talks follow two rounds of negotiations since diplomacy resumed in April after a 15-month hiatus during which the West cranked up sanctions pressure and Israel repeated its threat to bomb Iranian nuclear sites if diplomacy failed.

"We haven't reached an agreement but it is more complex than that. We haven't got to the end of the conversation," said one Western diplomat present at the talks in the Russian capital.

A series of United Nations Security Council resolutions since 2006 have demanded Iran suspend all its enrichment-related activities. Tehran denies planning to build nuclear weapons and says its programme is purely for civilian purposes.

Rather than halt enrichment - a process which refines uranium for use as fuel or, if done to a much higher level, nuclear bomb material - Iran has increased its activities.

Experts said a breakthrough was unlikely, with the six powers - known as P5+1 because the group consists of the five members of the U.N. Security Council plus Germany - wary of making concessions that would let Tehran draw out the talks and gain the time needed to develop nuclear weapons capability.

An EU embargo on Iranian oil takes full effect on July 1 and new U.S. financial sanctions some days before that. Iran's crude oil exports have fallen by some 40 percent this year, according to the International Energy Agency.

Increasing the pressure, Israel - widely believed to be the only nuclear-armed country in the Middle East - has said time is running out before Iran's nuclear facilities, some of which are deep underground, become invulnerable to air strikes.

"ONE POSITIVE SIGN"

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Western diplomats said one positive sign to emerge from Monday's talks was that Tehran was willing to discuss their most pressing concern: higher-grade uranium.

In early 2010, Iran announced it had started enriching uranium to 20 percent purity, a level much higher than what is needed for power generation and seen by some experts as a dangerous step towards being able to make bomb material.

The six powers want a substantive response to their offer of fuel supplies for Tehran's research reactor and relief in sanctions on the sale of commercial aircraft parts to Iran.

Diplomats said the powers had also suggested, at a meeting in Baghdad in May, that they suspend introducing new sanctions at the United Nations level while diplomacy is taking place, but only if their demands on high-grade uranium are met.

Displaying unity after meeting on the sidelines of a G20 summit in Mexico on Monday, Russian President Vladimir Putin and U.S. President Barack Obama again called for Tehran to prove its nuclear programme is not aimed at developing weapons.

Obama said the two leaders agreed on the need for a diplomatic solution to the standoff and that there was still time to resolve the matter through diplomatic means.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/06/19/us-iran-nuclear-talks-idUSBRE85H0C420120619>

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Wired

Iranian Missile Engineer Oversees Chavez's Drones

By Robert Beckhusen

Monday June 18, 2012

The manager of Venezuela's drone program is an engineer who helped build ballistic missiles for Iran. The engineer's identity raises new questions about the purposes behind Venezuela's drone program. But it's also only one part of a mystery involving drones shipped from Iran to Venezuela while hidden in secret cargo containing possibly more military hardware than just 'bots.

According to *El Nuevo Herald*, the Spanish-language sister paper of *The Miami Herald*, US officials believe Iran shipped drones to Venezuela hidden in cargo containers. The date and specific port are not known, but Venezuela only received six drones — in a shipment of 70 containers carrying each more than 24,000 pounds of cargo. The cargo was camouflaged as material "from Venirauto (Venezuelan-Iranian Automotive) through a Chilean company," a source told the newspaper.

The containers were headed for a Venezuelan air base and the location for the M2 drone project, named after the Mohajer, a light surveillance drone manufactured by Iran. The supervisor, Ramin Keshavarz, is member of the Revolutionary Guards and former employee of Iran's Defense Industry Organization, a firm embargoed by the United States for overseeing Iran's ballistic missile program. The stealthy cargo, the Iranian missile engineer, and more than a



million pounds of unaccounted weight, was not all. “Excessively high” amounts of money are paid for the drone program, much higher than the total cost of the ‘bots.

Also under investigation is a Parchin Industries site in Morón, Venezuela. Parchin is believed to make fuel for Iran’s mid-range missiles and has been accused by the International Atomic Energy Agency of conducting explosive tests inside a containment chamber located in Iran. Morón also houses a joint Iranian-Venezuelan gunpowder factory. Venezuela is also testing six Iranian drone models, with three under “special suspicion” for being not what they seem: the Justiciero, Vengador and Venezolano drones. In other words, US officials believe these drones could be more than *just* drones.

Last week, Venezuela’s president and potentate Hugo Chavez acknowledged the drone program. “Of course we’re doing it, and we have the right to. We are a free and independent country,” Chavez said. He added that Venezuela does not “have any plans to harm anyone,” and that it is just one of many programs built “with the help of different countries including China, Russia, Iran, and other allied countries,” he said.

The drones also appear to be primarily used for surveillance, with limited — if any — ability to carry weapons. The Mohajer, which is used by Venezuela, does not carry weapons but can guide missiles by laser. And drones are meant to loiter, not travel long distances, which means it’s exceedingly unlikely that Venezuela and Iran will be able to team up and invade the United States with a fleet of robotic aircraft any time soon.

Or even reach Florida. The maximum range — about 1,200 miles — of an (unnamed) Venezuelan drone revealed in March might reach Florida, but no further, and even the former possibility is theoretical. Chavez also weighed in on the concerns. “Pretty soon someone is probably going to say there’s an atomic bomb on the tip of it,” he joked.

To understand Chavez’s comment, and to whom it’s directed, it’s important to note one common but poorly supported explanation for why Venezuela and Iran cooperate with each other. The explanation has Iran using Venezuela as a forward base against the United States. In this view, Venezuela is a location to store Iranian military assets, possibly even missiles. Therefore, it’s just a matter of time before Iran either lets loose with the hidden nukes, or provokes another Cuban Missile Crisis.

But the evidence for any military relationship — beyond defense projects like drones — is circumstantial, at best.

Venezuela and Iran have other reasons to cooperate. For one, it suits rhetoric from both Venezuela and Iranian leaders. Chavez’s political identity is partly defined by a demagogic opposition to the United States. Iran does not share Chavez’s socialist policy goals, but there is a common foe. And Iran uses Chavez as means to build international support against the sanctions.

But could the drone program also be a way to *subvert* the sanctions? Venezuela doesn’t have to be housing materials directly related to Iran’s nuclear program. Relocating ballistic missile development, which indirectly ties into a potential nuclear weapon, could bypass the embargo. It’s also another way to avoid the prying eyes of IAEA inspectors.

It’s also possible the secret, unaccounted cargo is not so subversive after all. A Venirauto office is reportedly located next to the air base where the containers were first spotted. In January 2011, a nearby arms depot exploded. But there is also speculation the site could be the location of a sensitive military project. But it couldn’t be a drone project, or could it? Adding to the mystery, a drone factory built at the site was never put into operation.

<http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2012/06/mystery-cargo>

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BBC News

Fears grow for fate of Syria's chemical weapons

By Jonathan Marcus

Monday June 18, 2012

There are growing concerns - shared both in neighbouring countries and among key western governments - about the security of these weapons should the regime fall.

There are even persistent reports in the US that preparations are being made to secure such stocks in the event of a regime meltdown.

One aspect of the problem is the scale and scope of Syria's chemical weapons programme.

Leonard Spector, executive director of the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies based in Washington, notes that: "Syria has one of the world's largest chemical weapon arsenals, including traditional chemical agents, such as mustard, and more modern nerve agents, such as Sarin, and possibly persistent nerve agents, such as VX.

"Syria is thought to have a number of major chemical weapon complexes, some in areas of current conflict, such as the Homs and Hama regions. The bases are said to be guarded by elite forces, but whether they would stay at their posts if the Assad regime collapses cannot be predicted."

Conceivably, the Assad government could use some of these agents against rebel forces or even civilians in an effort to intimidate them into submission"

An additional concern is the manner in which the different kinds of chemical weapons are stored.

Mr Spector notes that while the mustard agent is believed to be stored in bulk form, rather than in individual munitions, other agents are thought to be in "binary" munitions, in which two innocuous solutions combine when the munition is fired to create the chemical warfare agent.

These might be more easily transported and used than the bulk agent.

Mr Spector adds: "US officials believe Syria's chemical arms are stored in secure bunkers at a limited number of sites and have not been dispersed into the field."

Beyond the intelligence services there is little hard and fast detail on Syria's chemical weapons programme.

Unlike Libya, which had signed the Chemical Weapons Convention and was in the process of dismantling its stocks when Muammar Gaddafi's regime collapsed, Syria has not joined the convention and thus has never made any formal declarations of its stocks.

Indeed as Charles Blair, a Senior Fellow at the Federation of American Scientists underlines, Libya is not a terribly useful precedent when considering the potential problems surrounding Syria's chemical arsenal.

Libya's arsenal was much smaller; stocks of mustard agent were essentially old; locations of stockpiles were known and the Libyan authorities were co-operating in their destruction.

Crucially too, says Mr Blair, there are huge differences in the two countries' potential abilities to deliver chemical weapons.

Fighters of the Free Syrian Army are dedicated to the downfall of President Bashar al-Assad

"Libya was able to deliver its sole CW agent via aerial bombs only - a militarily ineffective manner in this case," he says.



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"Syria, by comparison, is thought to possess a variety of platforms for chemical weapons delivery - an open-source CIA report lists aerial bombs, artillery shells and ballistic missiles."

There is considerable discussion as to the nature of the threat Syria's weapons pose. Leonard Spector says that there are multiple dangers.

"Conceivably, the Assad government could use some of these agents against rebel forces or even civilians in an effort to intimidate them into submission," he says.

"Or insurgents could overrun one of the chemical weapon sites and threaten to use some of these weapons, in extremis, if threatened with overwhelming force by the Syrian army."

The scenario that is causing the greatest concern, he says, is the possible loss of control over Syria's chemical arsenal leading to the transfer of chemical weapons to Hezbollah, in Southern Lebanon, or to al-Qaeda.

Special forces

Components of both organisations are now operating in Syria as one of the groups challenging the Assad regime, he says.

Such a link-up between al-Qaeda-affiliated groups and weapons of mass destruction has haunted US military planners for more than a decade.

In the face of such concerns there has been considerable pressure, not least from Washington, for the US to come up with plans to secure the Syrian weapons in the event of the collapse of the regime.

There has been a succession of press reports displaying various degrees of bravado suggesting US Special Forces are being readied to swoop in and take over Syria's chemical weapons infrastructure.

The reality is more complex. Such a mission would require significant numbers of "boots on the ground" in highly volatile circumstances.

Neighbouring Israel carries out regular drills in case of a chemical weapons attack

As Charles Blair makes clear: "The Iraq experience demonstrates the difficulty of securing highly sensitive military storage facilities."

He argues that in Syria the challenges are likely to be greater "because no foreign army stands poised to enter the country to locate and secure chemical weapons manufacturing and storage facilities".

Of course, as Leonard Spector points out, details of US contingency planning are not known.

"The most desirable plan would be to urge the weapons' current custodians to remain in place during any transition of power, and to place the sites under the supervision of an international contingent that could monitor the weapons' security, as decisions were made about how to manage or destroy them in the future," he says.

However, he adds: "For the US to attempt to secure the sites in the face of armed resistance by Syrian forces would be extremely demanding, given the number of the sites involved and their considerable size."

Of course if the Assad regime were to go, a whole new set of issues emerges.

Would any new Syrian government agree to join the convention and agree to eliminate its chemical weapons stocks?

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Or, as Leonard Spector notes, would they instead "insist on retaining them as a counter to Israel's nuclear capabilities and as a bargaining chip in future negotiations with Israel over the Golan Heights?"

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-18483788>

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Reuters

Syria faces ire over fresh Russia arms shipment

Tuesday June 19, 2012

LONDON/MOSCOW June 19 (Reuters) - A cargo ship now moving off the north-west coast of Scotland is believed to be carrying Russian weaponry to Syria, according to an insurer which says it has withdrawn coverage for the vessel. Britain said it was aware of a consignment of refurbished Russian-made attack helicopters heading for Syria, but did not say if it was referring to the same vessel.

Russia has faced increasing Western criticism over arms supplies to Syria, where the United Nations says government forces have killed more than 10,000 people in a crackdown. Last month, the U.S. described the delivery of heavy Russian weapons in a shipment as "reprehensible".

Ship tracking data showed on Tuesday that the Curacao-flagged cargo ship *Alaed* set off from the Russian port of Baltiisk in the province of Kaliningrad on June 11.

London-headquartered ship insurer Standard Club said it had been contacted about the vessel it had been covering, but did not say by whom.

"We were made aware of the allegations that the *Alaed* was carrying munitions destined for Syria and have already informed the ship owner that their insurance cover ceased automatically in view of the nature of the voyage," the insurer said.

Moscow-based Russian ship management and operator group Femco, operating the *Alaed*, offered no comment when contacted several times by Reuters about the ship and its cargo. But it said it would post comment on its website later in the day with "true information".

Insurers would be obliged to withdraw coverage for any shipments violating European Union sanctions, including an arms embargo on Syria. Without insurance, the vessel could be forced either to dock at a port, drop its run to Syria or find a provider outside the European Union.

The *Alaed* was last seen off the coast of Scotland and declared as heading for the Russian port of Vladivostok where it was due to arrive on July 24, tracking data showed on Tuesday.

A British Foreign Office spokeswoman said London was aware of "a ship carrying a consignment of refurbished Russian-made attack helicopters heading to Syria", but did not say whether she was referring to the *Alaed*.

"We are working closely with international partners to ensure that we are doing all we can to stop the Syrian regime's ability to slaughter civilians being reinforced through assistance from other countries."



A Moscow-based defence analyst said the Alaed was carrying helicopters that were bought by Syria during the Soviet era and had been sent back to Russia for repair in the Baltic Sea exclave of Kaliningrad.

"I am sure based on open source material that the ship is carrying 12-15 helicopters that were repaired in Kaliningrad and are on their way to Syria," said Ruslan Aliyev, who works at defence think tank CAST, referring to an order of M-25 helicopters.

"They were old helicopters bought by (Assad's late father and predecessor) Hafez al-Assad, I believe at the end of the 1980s."

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said on June 12 that the United States was "concerned about the latest information we have that there are attack helicopters on the way from Russia to Syria." She said such a sale "will escalate the conflict quite dramatically."

The accusation angered Moscow, which says it is fulfilling existing contracts for air defence systems, for use against external attacks, and not delivering offensive weapons. Under pressure over continuing arms trade with Syria, President Vladimir Putin said earlier this month that the weapons its sends could not be used in civil conflicts.

The Russian Foreign Ministry said last week that Russia had sent no new helicopters to Syria but had repaired helicopters delivered to its government "many years ago". It gave no specifics about when any helicopters were repaired or sent back to Syria.

SHIPMENT HALT URGED

A source close to Russia's arms exporting monopoly Rosoboronexport said last week that Clinton may have been referring to helicopters that were sent to Russia in 2009 for repairs and may have been on the way back to Syria.

The source said at least nine Mi-25 helicopters were sent to Kaliningrad to be repaired by Oboronservis, owned by the Defence Ministry.

A spokesman for insurer Standard Club said the company informed about termination of cover was Femco.

A rights group reported that the Professor Katsman ship had docked at the Syrian port of Tartous last month with a cache of heavy weapons for Assad.

<http://in.reuters.com/article/2012/06/19/syria-weapons-ship-idINL5E8HJ9FS20120619>

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AsiaOne

Korea, US boost missile defense cooperation

By Choi He-suk

Monday June 18, 2012

The South Korean and US militaries will increase cooperation in countering North Korea's missile threats, a Defense Ministry official said on Sunday.

The US forces will share intelligence and provide support for an air and missile defense system South Korea plans to launch in December, the official said.



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The increase in Seoul-Washington collaboration in missile defenses is thought to have resulted as part of a compromise in the negotiations over extending the range of ballistic missiles South Korea is able to develop.

Seoul is still restricted from developing ballistic missiles with ranges longer than 300 kilometers, leading the military to believe its ability to strike back at North Korea is severely limited.

The North, however, has been focusing on missile technology for some time, giving it an estimated lead of several years over South Korea.

As a result, North Korea fields a wide range of ballistic missiles with the largest models capable of striking Japan and even western parts of the US

As such South Korea has been calling for an extension of the limit in order to secure missile technology capable of striking any location in North Korea.

According to the missile defense system plans, revealed after the two-plus-two South Korea and US defense and foreign affairs ministerial talks in Washington, Seoul's military will bring in an early-warning radar in November, and launch an air and missile defense cell the following month.

The radar used in the air and missile defense system will be the Green Pine Block-B ground-based early-warning radar produced by Israel's ELTA Systems Ltd., which has a detection range of about 500 kilometers.

Under the new system, the Air Force's missile defense and the capabilities of the Master Control and Report Center will be combined to provide comprehensive cover for North Korean missile with shorter ranges.

Once a ballistic missile is detected, the air and missile defense cell will relay interception orders to relevant units.

The interceptor missiles used by the system will include the PAC-2 Patriot that has a range of about 30 kilometers and the Cheolmae-2. The Cheolmae-2, developed by the Agency for Defense Development, has a range of about 15 kilometers.

In addition to ground units, the air and missile defense system will also be linked to the Navy's Aegis destroyers equipped with SM-2 anti-air missiles.

Unlike the US missile defense system that can detect and destroy long-range missiles, the South Korean system will be a "low-tier defense system" that focuses on ballistic missiles whose trajectory is within an altitude of 100 kilometers.

North Korea fields a variety of ballistic missiles with ranges varying from several hundred kilometers to the Taepodong-2, Pyongyang's longest-range missiles with an estimate range of more than 6,000 kilometers.

According to the US, Pyongyang's long-range rocket that failed in April shares the projection system with the Taepodong-2. The rocket, which Pyongyang claimed carried an observation satellite, reached an altitude of 151.4 kilometers before failing and falling into the West Sea on April 13.

<http://news.asiaone.com/News/AsiaOne%2BNews/Asia/Story/A1Story20120618-353511.html>

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Korea Times

North Korea likely to wage war after guerrilla raid

By Lee Tae-hoon

Tuesday June 19, 2012

Pyongyang's military provocations have always been a great concern for Seoul as seen from North Korea's torpedoing of a South Korean warship and its artillery shelling of Yeonpyeong Island in 2010.

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As the poverty-stricken regime's ambition to unify the Korean Peninsula through an armed conflict is a no secret, it is natural for the affluent South to think of the worst-case scenario: a full-scale war.

In this regard, Lee Choon-kun, a senior security expert at the Korea Economic Research Institute said Tuesday that the North will most likely carry out guerrilla warfare before launching a full invasion.

"Guerrilla tactics would be the best choice for the North to throw South Korea into chaos and make it collapse," he said in a forum hosted by the Army.

"Once the South plunges into chaos due to guerrilla raids in the southern part of the county, the North will be able to launch a full-scale invasion."

He said dozens to hundreds of North Korean special forces troops would infiltrate the South and wage guerrilla offensives in southern areas where reserve troops are chiefly responsible for rounding up the enemy.

"It will be difficult to distinguish them as they would wear South Korean military uniforms," Lee argued.

"The U.S. forces will also find it helpless to assist the South in mopping up the highly skilled and camouflaged North Korean guerrilla fighters. Moreover, Korea's superior weapons systems will be of no use in guerrilla warfare."

He pointed out that the South had to mobilize a whole corps for a two-month long manhunt of 10 North Korean soldiers in 2006 after finding a North Korean spy submarine had infiltrated the East Coast.

Lee predicted that the North would threaten to use a nuclear bomb if it finds the situation unfavorable and the South would have to prepare for a counterattack

"Ironically, the North's possession of nuclear weapons will prevent its territory from becoming a battle ground," he said.

He emphasized that Seoul should reconsider the country's plan to reduce the Army to 387,000 soldiers by 2030, saying the ground troops should be maintained at 420,000.

Lee also called for beefing up military training for reserves and maintaining their number at 2.2 million

http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2012/06/116_113390.html

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New York Times Opinion

At 50, the Cuban Missile Crisis as Guide

By Graham Allison

Friday June 15, 2012

Fifty years ago, the Cuban missile crisis brought the world to the brink of nuclear disaster. During the standoff, President John F. Kennedy thought the chance of escalation to war was "between 1 in 3 and even," and what we have learned in later decades has done nothing to lengthen those odds. Such a conflict might have led to the deaths of 100 million Americans and over 100 million Russians.

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The main story line of the crisis is familiar. In October 1962, a U.S. spy plane caught the Soviet Union attempting to sneak nuclear-tipped missiles into Cuba, 90 miles off the U.S. coast.

Kennedy determined at the outset that this could not stand. After a week of secret deliberations with his most trusted advisers, he announced the discovery to the world and imposed a naval blockade on further shipments of armaments to Cuba.

The blockade prevented additional materiel from coming in but did nothing to stop the Soviets from operationalizing the missiles already there. A tense second week followed during which Kennedy and the Soviet premier, Nikita Khrushchev, stood “eyeball to eyeball,” neither side backing down.

Saturday, Oct. 27, was the day of decision. At the last minute, the crisis was resolved without war, as Khrushchev accepted a final U.S. offer pledging not to invade Cuba in exchange for the withdrawal of the Soviet missiles.

Every president since Kennedy has tried to learn from what happened in that confrontation. Ironically, half a century later, with the Soviet Union itself only a distant memory, the lessons of the crisis for current policy have never been greater.

Today, it can help U.S. policy makers understand what to do — and what not to do — about a range of foreign policy dilemmas, particularly the standoff with Iran over its nuclear program.

The current confrontation between the United States and Iran is like a Cuban missile crisis in slow motion. Events are moving, seemingly inexorably, toward a showdown in which the U.S. president will be forced to choose between ordering a military attack and acquiescing to a nuclear-armed Iran.

Those were, in essence, the two options Kennedy’s advisers gave him on the final Saturday: attack or accept Soviet nuclear missiles in Cuba. But Kennedy rejected both. Instead of choosing between them, he crafted an imaginative alternative with three components: a public deal in which the United States pledged not to invade Cuba if the Soviet Union withdrew its missiles; a private ultimatum threatening to attack Cuba within 24 hours unless Khrushchev accepted that offer; and a secret sweetener that promised the withdrawal of U.S. missiles from Turkey within six months after the crisis was resolved.

Looking at the choice between acquiescence and air strikes today, both are unacceptable. An Iranian bomb could trigger a cascade of proliferation, making more likely a devastating conflict in one of the world’s most economically and strategically critical regions. A preventive air strike could delay Iran’s nuclear progress at identified sites but could not erase the knowledge and skills ingrained in many Iranian heads.

The truth is that any outcome that stops short of Iran having a nuclear bomb will still leave it with the ability to acquire one down the road.

The best hope for a Kennedyesque third option today is a combination of agreed-on constraints on Iran’s nuclear activities that would lengthen the fuse on the development of a bomb; transparency measures that would maximize the likelihood of discovering any cheating; unambiguous (perhaps secretly communicated) threats of a regime-changing attack should the agreement be violated; and a pledge not to attack otherwise. Such a combination would keep Iran as far away from a bomb as possible for as long as possible.

The Israeli factor makes the Iranian nuclear situation an even more complex challenge for American policy makers than the Cuban missile crisis was. In 1962, only two players were allowed at the main table. Fidel Castro, the Cuban prime minister, sought to become the third, and had he succeeded, the crisis would have become significantly more dangerous. Precisely because the White House recognized that the Cubans could become a wild card, it cut them out of the game. Kennedy informed the Kremlin that it would be held accountable for any attack against the United States emanating from Cuba, however it started.

Today, the threat of an Israeli air strike strengthens President Barack Obama’s hand in squeezing Iran to persuade it to make concessions. But the possibility that Israel might actually carry out a unilateral airstrike without U.S. approval

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must make Washington nervous, since it makes the crisis much harder to manage. Should the domestic situation in Israel reduce the likelihood of an independent Israeli attack, U.S. policy makers will not be unhappy.

It has been said that history does not repeat itself, but it does sometimes rhyme. Five decades later, the Cuban missile crisis stands not just as a pivotal moment in the history of the Cold War but also as a guide for how to make sound decisions about foreign policy.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/16/opinion/at-50-the-cuban-missile-crisis-as-guide.html>

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American Forces Press Service

Reduction Focus Shifts From Nukes to Bio Threats

By Cheryl Pellerin

Wednesday June 13, 2012

WASHINGTON, June 13, 2012 – The 21-year-old program to reduce weapons of mass destruction in the former Soviet Union is shifting focus from nuclear to biological threats and from Russia to Southeast Asia and Africa, the assistant secretary of defense for global strategic affairs told a Senate panel yesterday.

Madelyn R. Creedon said the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program, established in 1991, is gradually shifting to more of a biological threat reduction effort as the program adapts to take on emerging weapons of mass destruction, or WMD, threats in other regions.

“With all the work that's gone on in Russia over the better part of the last 20 years,” she added, “a tremendous amount has been accomplished” in reducing the threat from legacy WMD programs of the former Soviet Union.

Creedon testified before the Senate Armed Services subcommittee on emerging threats and capabilities, which met to review President Barack Obama’s fiscal year 2013 \$3 billion budget request for programs at the departments of Defense and Energy that seek to stem the flow of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons.

“We do continue to do a variety of work with Russia and in time that will phase down a bit,” Creedon said. “But we also value the relationship with Russia and in that context are seeking an extension of the umbrella agreement that allows for the work in Russia.”

An extension of the agreement, which expires in 2013, would allow work to continue “in some of the areas of sustainment, chemical weapons and some small amount of additional destruction work,” she added.

“We also continue to work in the states of the former Soviet Union,” said Creedon, adding that large biological security programs are ongoing in Kazakhstan, with similar programs in Ukraine.

During the Cold War, the Soviet Union military industrial complex transformed viruses and bacteria to weapons of war, and industrial-scale biological weapons facilities were built to win the germ war arms race, according to the Defense Threat Reduction Agency website.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, newly independent republics faced the challenge of dealing with deadly pathogens at sites left unprotected and vulnerable to theft.

Now, Creedon said, “we are beginning to shift focus in the biological program to Africa and the Middle East, so in time we will transition over to those areas of the world as well.”

During 2011, Creedon testified, the CTR program built new nonproliferation partnerships in Africa, the Middle East and South Asia. Each country’s agreement will be based on its needs and requirements.



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For countries like Kazakhstan that are more advanced in such biological work, Creedon added, “you look at things like, how many collections of dangerous pathogens do they have? How are they secured? Should they be consolidated? Should you combine veterinary pathogens and human health pathogens, or does it make more sense to keep them apart?”

In accordance with the CTR’s historical focus, DOD tries to consolidate such biological sites according to a country’s requirements, and monitors each site’s security.

In countries with more advanced facilities, Creedon said, including Kazakhstan and Ukraine, DOD checks the biological safety level of the facilities and determines whether they meet international health regulations and standards.

“We also look at the overall disease surveillance capabilities of the country, because ... it's a national security requirement to make sure that our troops in the area, our families in the area, are protected,” she added.

“We want to make sure, particularly in countries that have a naturally occurring incidence of diseases that could be weaponized, that we know whether or not an outbreak is manmade or ... natural, Creedon said.

As the biological program expands, Creedon said, “these are the things that we're going to look at with respect to each country, each agreement.”

In the United States, such programs are vetted across federal agencies through a process led by the White House staff, she added. International agencies as well as the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Department of Health and Human Services are included.

Testifying at the same hearing was Kenneth Myers III, director of the Defense Threat Reduction Agency and the U.S. Strategic Command Center for Combating Weapons of Mass Destruction.

He told lawmakers CTR and other nonproliferation programs “are based upon a cooperative relationship with a country, based upon a nonviolent environment where those programs can be carried out.” Myers is also associated with the Joint Forces Headquarters for Elimination, established this year by Stratcom.

“The standing Joint Force Headquarters is designed to be able to provide the same type of capability in a nonpermissive environment,” he said, “or one in which we are not permitted a cooperative opportunity to reduce weapons of mass destruction.”

<http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=116727>

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BBC News

Rolls-Royce awarded £1bn contract for UK nuclear submarines

Monday June 18, 2012

The MoD says the investment will secure 300 jobs and fund the refurbishment of the firm's plant at Raynesway, Derby.

The deal - part of plans to replace the Vanguard fleet which carries Trident nuclear missiles - has been criticised by the Scottish National Party.

But the defence secretary said it would ensure UK sovereign nuclear capability.

"Having balanced the MoD's books we can now invest in vital strategic capabilities to meet the present and future defence needs of the UK," Philip Hammond said.

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"This contract will secure hundreds of highly skilled jobs for UK industry, while retaining our sovereign nuclear capability.

"The Raynesway site has played a key part in the production and maintenance of our nuclear deterrent for more than 50 years. This regeneration will make sure it continues to do so for many years to come."

Angus Robertson, the Scottish National Party's (SNP) leader in Westminster, said: "People in Scotland do not want Trident. Church leaders, the Scottish Trades Union Council, the Scottish Government and the Scotland's Parliament are all against weapons of mass destruction being in our waters.

"Despite this the UK government is prepared to send £1bn of taxpayers' money on a needless programme and then expect the people of Scotland to accept weapons of mass destruction being dumped here," he said.

New submarines

Britain's nuclear weapons system is currently made up of four Royal Navy submarines, based at the Faslane naval base on the Clyde, which can deploy Trident ballistic missiles carrying nuclear warheads.

Announcing the latest investment, the Ministry of Defence said replacing the existing infrastructure at Rolls-Royce with state-of-the-art nuclear reactor core production facilities would cost about £500m.

A further £600m will be spent on producing new reactor cores for the Astute and Successor Class submarines. The Ministry of Defence has already set aside £3bn to begin work on the new submarines to replace the four Vanguard class boats.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-18491299>

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The Telegraph

Nuclear weapons supercomputer reclaims world speed record for US

Monday June 18, 2012

The new IBM cluster system, Sequoia, took number one spot in the world's fastest 500 supercomputers, a closely-watched measure of international technological prowess.

The machine, which runs the Linux operating system and was first announced in 2009, has been installed across 4,500 square feet of the US Department of Energy's Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California, to carry out simulations of nuclear weapons tests.

"Supercomputers such as Sequoia have allowed the United States to have confidence in its nuclear weapons stockpile over the 20 years since nuclear testing ended in 1992," the laboratory said in a statement.

Sequoia was measured at 16.32 petaflops, or 16 thousand trillion calculations per second, and is said to be capable of 20 petaflops. It unseated the reigning champion, the K Computer, built by Fujitsu in Japan, which is capable of more than 10 petaflops.

"While Sequoia may be the fastest, the underlying computing capabilities it provides give us increased confidence in the nation's nuclear deterrent," said National Nuclear Security Administration administrator Thomas D'Agostino.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/9338651/Nuclear-weapons-supercomputer-reclaims-world-speed-record-for-US.html>

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Austin Statesman

Texas A&M lands multimillion-dollar biosecurity center

By Laylan Copelin and Kirk Ladendorf

Monday June 18, 2012

The U.S. government on Monday designated the Texas A&M University System as one of three national biosecurity centers, a decision that will attract hundreds of millions of dollars in new investment and be a catalyst for the biopharmaceutical industry in Texas.

Texas A&M joins sites in Maryland and North Carolina as centers working to develop and manufacture drugs to fight bioterrorist threats, pandemic influenza and other infectious diseases.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced the award in Washington. The announcement was broadcast to an Austin audience of Aggies that included A&M System Chancellor John Sharp.

"What has just been announced is a once-in-a-generation research grant that will profoundly enhance the security of our nation," Sharp told the Austin group. "Simply put, this is one of the biggest federal grants to come to Texas since NASA was placed here some years ago."

Just as the Johnson Space Center put Houston at the center of space exploration in the 1960s, officials expect the A&M biosecurity center to elevate the state's biotechnology efforts.

"Texas will become the hub of the third coast in biopharmaceuticals," Sharp said.

While Texas is a well-known center for medical research, it is outside the nation's main drug development centers on the East and West coasts.

The \$285 million award includes about \$176 million in federal grants over five years — and the potential for much more over the 25-year duration of the contract. The initial \$176 million from the federal government is the largest share of about \$400 million in combined federal dollars designated for the three biosecurity centers.

Emergent Manufacturing Operations Baltimore LLC is receiving \$163 million over eight years for the Maryland center, and multinational drug company Novartis is getting \$60 million over four years for a center in North Carolina, according to federal officials.

Sharp noted that the Texas A&M System is the only university that was designated as a primary contractor for the job. Texas is chipping in for the A&M System's biosecurity center.

State government is expected to pledge \$40 million, including \$15 million from Texas' Emerging Technology Fund. The Texas A&M System will contribute \$20 million, and commercial interests will add \$50 million.

Monday's award could lead to the creation of 1,000 jobs and an economic impact of \$1.3 billion, mostly in construction, over the first five years, according to A&M officials.

The A&M System will collaborate with drug giant GlaxoSmithKline, one of the world's largest vaccine makers, to move some of its manufacturing operations to the College Station campus. Other subcontractors could include Lonza Houston, Kalon Biotherapeutics and the Texas Engineering Experiment Station.

The Center for Innovation in Advanced Development and Manufacturing at A&M will become operational by December 2015, according to Terry Fossum, chief science officer for the project.

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Once assembled, the research team will develop, test and find ways to quickly manufacture new vaccines and therapies for public health emergencies from pandemics to terrorist attacks, such as "dirty bombs" made with radioactive material.

"Establishing these centers represents a dramatic step forward in ensuring that the United States can product lifesaving countermeasures quickly and nimbly," said Kathleen Sebelius, the secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The idea for the three biosecurity centers came in the wake of the 2009 H1N1 influenza scare. At the time, according to federal officials, only one company had manufacturing facilities solely in the United States to produce the H1N1 vaccine.

The centers will make the U.S. less dependent on other countries for vaccines, according to federal officials.

Together, the three centers will be capable of producing a quarter of the nation's pandemic influenza vaccine within four months of the onset of an outbreak, according to the Department of Health and Human Services.

The award follows years of controversy over Gov. Rick Perry's financial support of his alma mater's push into biotechnology.

In 2009, the Texas Emerging Technology Fund awarded \$50 million toward the creation of the National Center for Therapeutics Manufacturing — known on campus as the NCTM — a critical factor in winning Monday's competition.

<http://www.statesman.com/business/technology/texas-a-m-lands-multimillion-dollar-biosecurity-center-2401437.html>

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