



USAF COUNTERPROLIFERATION CENTER
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MAXWELL AFB, ALABAMA

Issue No. 1015, 17 July 2012

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Welcome to the CPC Outreach Journal. As part of USAF Counterproliferation Center's mission to counter weapons of mass destruction through education and research, we're providing our government and civilian community a source for timely counterproliferation information. This information includes articles, papers and other documents addressing issues pertinent to US military response options for dealing with chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) threats and countermeasures. It's our hope this information resource will help enhance your counterproliferation issue awareness.

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Financial Times

Fears grow over Syria's chemical arms

July 15, 2012

By James Blitz

How concerned should the world be about President Bashar al-Assad's possession of chemical and biological weapons?

As the civil war between the regime and rebel groups inside Syria intensifies, the question is one that is increasingly on the minds of senior government officials in the US, Europe and the Middle East.

Any discussion of the chemical and biological stocks Syria possesses – and where they are located – presents difficulties. Syria is not a signatory to the international Chemical Weapons Convention and has never declared what its stocks might be. Nine years after the 2003 Iraq war – in which the US and Britain wrongly claimed that Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction – many will want to scrutinise any claim made by western intelligence agencies about WMD stocks in Arab states.

Still, independent experts say there is no doubt that, in the 1980s, the Soviet Union helped Syria develop a chemical weapons arsenal as a strategic counter weight against Israel. Russia has never denied its role in this. Intelligence agencies now believe Mr Assad possesses one of the largest chemical weapons stockpiles in the world, including mustard gas as well as VX and sarin nerve agents.

Last Friday, worries about the fate of the arsenal intensified, with the US stating that the regime has started moving its chemical weapons stocks. Western officials are unclear why the regime is doing this. It may be that the Assad regime is seeking to safeguard the arsenal and move it away from the scene of fighting. Even so, as the death toll in the conflict grows, few can guarantee what the ultimate fate of the arsenal will be.

As they work through scenarios in this conflict, western governments have three fundamental concerns. The first is that the Assad regime might use chemical weapons against the rebels. Given

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the pressures the regime is under, such desperation is not inconceivable. But it has risks. In 2007, an accident at a chemical weapons facility involving mustard gas killed several Syrians. More significantly, any use of chemical weapons would almost certainly unite the international community behind the need for immediate military intervention.

The second fear is that the Assad regime loses its grip on the weapons and they fall into the hands of militant Lebanese Shia group Hezbollah. The possibility that this could happen – and that Hezbollah acquires the Scud missiles that can launch them – is of significant concern to Israel. No less worrying is the risk that the stocks fall into the hands of the growing number of foreign fighters linked to al-Qaeda who are now operating against the regime on Syrian territory.

The third concern is that as fighting intensifies there could be an explosion where chemical weapons are based, releasing them into the atmosphere. Syria is thought to have five manufacturing plants and about 20 more storage sites. The question of what would happen if there were an explosion at one of these sites will have been examined by plumologists – scientists who study the likely effects of the release of dangerous chemicals under a range of wind conditions.

Given this situation, the options for action by western governments are small. There have been many news articles suggesting that the US and Israel have contingency plans to enter Syria and secure the chemical weapons, with Jordanian troops braced to play a role.

There is no doubt that such contingency plans are being thought through in the Pentagon and in Israeli military establishment. But some western government officials say such an operation is only likely to be carried out in extremis. “Syria’s air defences will always be a huge obstacle to such an external intervention,” says one. In western capitals, therefore, the hope is that the Syrian crisis results in a transition where some kind of executive grip on these chemical weapons stocks can be maintained.

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/02f97808-ce63-11e1-bc0c-00144feabdc0.html#axzz20jhpqyAH>

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One India

Abdul Kalam wants to destroy all nuclear weapons!

July 15, 2012

New Delhi, Jul 15: Making a strong plea for a world free from nuclear weapons, former president Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam on Saturday said 'universal pressure' should be built to ensure destruction and non-proliferation of such arms.

"Universal pressure should be built for a nuclear-free world," Kalam said while addressing a gathering at the historic Gaiety Theatre here.

"Nuclear energy is required for power but nuclear weapons lead to mass destruction and should be destroyed," he said.

At the 'Fundamental Duties to Strive Towards Excellence' colloquium, he said in response to a question that 'there are more than 10,000 nuclear weapons in the world and USA and Russia have signed a treaty for reduction of nuclear weapons and it is hoped that both the countries would abide by the treaty'.

Lauding the role of scientists in achieving food sufficiency and raising foodgrains production to 250 million tonnes, the leader underlined the need for a second 'Green Revolution' to meet the increased demand of 340 million tonnes by 2020.

"We need to prepare an exhaustive plan taking into account factors like water, power, fertilisers, pesticides, seeds, crops, finance, storage, warehouse and stakeholders for synchronised action to achieve the target," he said.

Kalam, who also interacted with students, called for a second freedom struggle for 'economic prosperity' and said that lawyers, who played an important role in the freedom movement, must take the lead to bring about this change.

Exhorting students to strive for excellence in whatever field they choose for themselves, he asked them to 'exploit their full potential, have passion to chase their dream and enhance their capabilities'.

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On the role of teachers and family in the upbringing of children, he said that parents should be instrumental in giving a 'spiritual home' while teachers should be role models and inspire the young.

The former President asked the youth to respect and celebrate differences, and have tolerance for others opinion, culture and belief systems while displaying 'honesty and integrity' in action.

Praising the role of Judiciary, he said that it has brought revolutionary changes through judgements, which have addressed environmental and social issues.

He cited the use of CNG gas for automobiles and shifting of polluting industries of Delhi as examples of this. Automobiles are emitting 30 billion tonnes of Carbon dioxide and efforts should be made to develop new technologies like those used by the Delhi Metro to reduce pollution, he said.

Referring to politics, Kalam said, "There are good people in politics but electoral politics have overtaken the developmental politics across the world."

Later, he launched the Himachal Chapter of 'What Can I Give Mission' at Baddi University.

"Everyone should be prepared to give something to the society and this spirit would greatly revolutionise the mindset of the common man who would help in utilising the potential of the citizens for development of the nation," he said at the event.

Addressing the youth, Kalam urged them to enrich themselves with knowledge, create great ideas, which help the nation and also devote their energy to ensure a corruption-free society.

In reply to a question on what inspired him to become a scientist, he recollected, "Box A diagram made by my teacher about 'how a bird' flies and the lucid manner he explained the art of flying motivated me to become a scientist.

"I decided to choose a career in flying, took physics as subject, did aeronautic engineering and learned space technology and started flying in space," he said.

<http://news.oneindia.in/2012/07/15/abdul-kalam-urges-to-destroy-all-nuclear-weapons-1035724.html>

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Huffington Post

Iran Nuclear Ships Called For By Parliament

July 15, 2012

By ALI AKBAR DAREINI

TEHRAN, Iran -- A Iranian parliamentary committee has approved a bill requiring the government to design nuclear-powered merchant ships and provide them with nuclear fuel, an Iranian news agency reported Sunday.

The bill appears to be a symbolic gesture to bolster Tehran's argument that it has a right to enrich uranium for peaceful purposes. The West suspects Iran's nuclear program is aimed at developing weapons technology, a charge Tehran denies.

Nuclear-powered vessels other than warships are rare, and the International Atomic Energy Agency has said in the past that nuclear-powered merchant ships would be uneconomical.

Lawmaker Mohammad Bayatian was quoted by the semi-official Mehr news agency as saying sanctions are forcing Iran to use different fuel for its oil tankers and other large vessels, to avert the need to refuel during long voyages. Some countries refuse to provide fuel to Iranian ships in line with Western sanctions.

Iran is seen to be far from a capability to build nuclear-powered ships. Iran says it is designing a nuclear submarine.

The West has raised concerns that Iran might cite submarine and other nuclear-powered vessel construction as a justification for producing weapons-grade 90 percent enriched uranium.

Nuclear submarines are powered by fuel ranging from 20 percent purity to more than 90 percent. Many U.S. submarines use nuclear fuel enriched to more than 90 percent, the same level used to build atomic bombs.

Bayatian said the bill has been approved by a parliamentary committee and will be debated in the house next week. "Given the sanctions that enemies have imposed against our country, the bill must be enacted," he said.

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http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/07/15/iran-nuclear-ships-called_n_1674671.html

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Turkish Weekly

Iran Seeks to Establish Security in Region: Navy Cmdr.

July 16, 2012

Iran's Navy Commander Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari says the Islamic Republic seeks to establish security in the region and not disturb it, Press TV reported.

"We do not seek to disturb the security of the region, we want to establish security in the region...," Sayyari said Sunday.

The Iranian commander added that "we can stand against any threat and protect our interests and the country's maritime borders."

According to Press TV, over the past years, Iran has made important breakthroughs in its defense sector, attained self-sufficiency in producing important military equipment and systems and enhanced the preparedness of its forces by holding various drills.

In December 2011, Iran's Navy launched a massive 10-day Velayat 90 naval exercise, covering an area stretching from the east of the Strait of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Aden.

Different classes of submarines, including Tareq and Qadir, the newest ground-to-sea missile systems and torpedoes were employed in the maneuvers.

In June, the Pentagon admitted in a report that the "lethality and effectiveness" of Iran's missile systems has improved and Tehran would present a "formidable force" while defending its territory.

Tehran, however, has repeatedly clarified that its military might is merely based on the nation's defense doctrine of deterrence and poses no threat to other countries.

<http://www.turkishweekly.net/news/138440/iran-seeks-to-establish-security-in-region-navy-cmdr-.html>

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Tehran Times

5+1 group has acknowledged *Iran's nuclear rights*: Baqeri

July 15, 2012

The deputy secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council has said that the 5+1 group (the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and Germany) has acknowledged Iran's nuclear rights.

"The 15-month hiatus in talks and what happened during this period constituted this achievement for us that the Westerners acknowledged Iran's nuclear rights because in the negotiations that we held in Bahman (13)89 in Istanbul, they were not ready to acknowledge Iran's nuclear rights and were not ready to resolve (the dispute over) Iran's nuclear rights through cooperation," Ali Baqeri said in the city of Qom on Sunday in reference to the hiatus in talks between Tehran and the world powers, which began in Istanbul on January 22, 2011 and was broken on April 14, 2012 in Istanbul.

Baqeri added that after the talks in Istanbul in 2012, "Western countries sent some letters to Iran acknowledging the nuclear rights of the Iranian nation."

"It was necessary that they prove this in practice. Therefore, they put forward their proposals during the Baghdad meeting, and Iran's proposals were elaborated on in the Moscow meeting," he stated.

After the Istanbul talks, Iran and the six major powers met in Baghdad on May 23 and 24 and then in Moscow on June 18 and 19.

Baqeri also said, "Iran's deft use of various means to help realize inalienable rights of the Iranian nation is one of the components of the system's serious (efforts) after the 15-month hiatus."

Commenting on the role of the president in the nuclear issue, he stated, "The (nuclear) issue is not merely technical and does not concern only the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran because it is regarded as the main point of confrontation between the hegemonistic system and the Islamic Republic.

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Therefore, the relevant organizations have held joint meetings, and it has been agreed that all these institutions hold discussions under the aegis of the secretariat of the Supreme National Security Council, which is being supervised by the Supreme Leader, and major and strategic decisions will be implemented after the approval of the Leader and the president. Thus, the president has an important role in nuclear decisions.”

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/politics/99647-51-group-has-acknowledged-irans-nuclear-rights-baqeri>

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Xinua

Iran's Supreme Leader decides whether to close Strait of Hormuz: military official

July 15, 2012

TEHRAN, July 15 (Xinhua) -- The chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff of Iran's Armed Forces said Sunday Iran's Supreme Leader has the final say on closing the Strait of Hormuz, one of the most crucial waterways for shipping crude oil.

Iran's armed forces have contingency plans for every scenario, but whether to block the Strait of Hormuz will be decided by the Supreme Leader Seyyed Ali Khamenei, Major General Hassan Firouzabadi was quoted by Iran's Press TV as saying.

One day earlier, the commander of the navy of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Ali Fadavi reiterated the strategic Strait of Hormuz is in full control of Iranian military forces.

Iran is able to fully close the Strait of Hormuz, he emphasized Saturday, saying that nothing will happen as long as the security and interests of Iran are not endangered, but if the United States seeks to "damage" the security of the region, all parties will suffer alike.

Tensions over Iran's nuclear program have been mounting recently after three rounds of nuclear talks held earlier this year between Tehran and six world powers, namely the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council plus Germany, failed to bear concrete results.

The United States and Israel has said repeatedly that a nuclear Iran is intolerable and they would do whatever necessary, including military attacks, to prevent Tehran from getting that capability.

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Iranian leaders, including Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, said Iran will resolutely respond to any military attack and make the "enemies regret their actions."

Since the end of last year, Iran has launched a series of military drills and tested a number of missiles with various ranges. It also threatened to close the Strait of Hormuz if its interests are affected.

The United States has been saying it will never allow the Strait of Hormuz to be blocked and that the critical waterway must stay open.

The Western powers, fearful that Iran may use its nuclear program as a cover to develop nuclear bombs, have recently tightened sanctions on Tehran, including the European Union's oil embargo that came into effect since July 1, trying to force Iran to give up its uranium enrichment activities.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2012-07/15/c_131717017.htm

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AHRAM

Hormuz alarm bells

July 14, 2012

By: Ahmed Eleiba

Although talks in Istanbul last week failed between experts and technicians of the P5+1 -- the third such meeting in the past two months after talks in Baghdad and Moscow -- a significant development occurred on the eve of talks, a source close to the talks told the Russian newspaper Kommersant. Iran proposed a plan to build a nuclear-fuelled submarine, in an attempt to legitimise its uranium enrichment project, and argued that using nuclear material as vessel fuel is a peaceful use of nuclear energy.

The Iranian project to manufacture a nuclear submarine would not be a problem for the Iranian Revolutionary Guard (RG) that owns production capabilities, whether or not they need it. But the reasons why the Islamic Republic is pursuing this project have puzzled Western states.

For Iranian expert Ali Nourzadah, director of the Arab-Iranian Studies Centre, the answer is obvious. Iran's Supreme Guide Sayed Ali Khamenei has a flawed vision about his country's ability to reproduce the North Korean nuclear model in Iran, he told Al-Ahram Online in a telephone

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interview from London. Tehran was able to acquire nine nuclear bombs that have deterred the US for attacking it.

"Khamenei told several advisers that if Iran had possessed one nuclear bomb, the revolution and rule of the clerics would be protected for at least another 25 years during confrontations with the US and Israel," Nourzadah said, even though Washington views this as a red line and Tel Aviv sees it as a much more serious infraction.

It is true that Tehran has the capability to manufacture such vessels and submarines, but within limits. The RG sometimes holds war games and sees US aircraft carriers cruising in the Gulf guarded by six to seven vessels and a nuclear submarine below the surface. This is a temptation for them, according to Brigadier Safwat El-Zayat who has spoken to several Iranians in close to military strategies. Iran's normal submarines that run on diesel fuel require refuelling from time to time, and every few years need to be changed. On the other hand, nuclear energy can operate for 15-20 years.

"I asked Iranians whether there are commercial ships that can reach the Indian Ocean and beyond without escort protection of this kind of submarine," stated El-Zayat. He viewed them as exaggerations in the media by Tehran, which has high aspirations about what he termed as the negotiations battle in several directions. These include assassinations of its nuclear scientists, stifling sanctions including the latest by the EU on Iranian oil imports. The difficulties are not in oil exports to Europe, but 90 per cent of insurance companies in the Eurozone that protect the passage of Iranian oil to North Korea are outside this zone.

Iran is also jockeying with other international players. While it attends talks in Moscow, Iran's Shura Council threatens it will pass a law to close the Straits of Hormuz as Great Prophet 7 war games were taking place. Meanwhile, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad declared that his country will bear the unbearable, sending a message to the world that Iran will survive these sanctions.

"It seems that the Iranian regime is dismissive of social conditions in the country under sanctions," opined Nourzadah, "especially after the value of its currency was slashed by half when sanctions were imposed on the Central Bank, followed by a ban on oil exports to EU countries." He added: "The Iranian regime is parading in front of its people the Syrian model and is waiting to see what will happen there, although it is unlikely that the Iranian street will wait much longer."

The Straits of Hormuz are a lifeline for Gulf oil supplies to the outside world, and an international treaty on international corridors signed in 1958 under the Shah stipulates that the straits are an international corridor that is not subject to local sovereignty, according to what is known as law of the sea convention. However, the regime of the supreme guide did not sign the treaty on transit



passage, which gives parliament the right to condone the closing of the straits if the issue is referred to the Guardian Council.

"If Tehran closes the Straits of Hormuz it will be equivalent to a declaration of war," argued Fathi El-Maraghi, an expert on Iranian affairs at Ain Shams University. "It will also give Arab countries reason for more aggressive responses to Iran that might go beyond sanctions, because Iran will be rattling its sabre," El-Maraghi said.

Suddenly, Iran reversed its combative tone and several statements were made that the Straits of Hormuz will not be closed, although El-Zayat believes it could shut down the waterway for 11-15 weeks but that would be political folly. Now the US is also flaunting its powers by unprecedented mobilisation in the Gulf, using F-22 jets for the first time -- which Washington may not have even used before the war in Libya. He added that the RG may not shut down the Straits of Hormuz but it could hamper navigation in the waterway through suicide missions or mines or firing Cruise missiles across the Zagros Mountains.

Experts anticipate a war scenario and Nourzadah stated that Washington obtained a pledge from Tel Aviv not to go to war against Tehran before the upcoming presidential elections. The question now is whether Israel will keep its word. Nourzadah believes Israel will probably continue its policy of attrition of Iran's nuclear programme. If there are reports, however, that Iran is close to manufacturing a nuclear bomb, it will breach its promise to the Obama administration and the US will be forced to go to war the next day without a choice.

"Israel is closely watching the dramatic changes taking place in Arab Spring countries and the Islamist rise there," Jackie Khoury, a political analyst and 1948 Arab who is an expert on Arab affairs, wrote in Haaretz newspaper. "The most it can do right now is a sweeping operation to cripple progress in the nuclear programme, like it did with the Iraqi reactor Osirak. It will keep in mind, however, Arab reactions because it knows this would destabilise the region and open several fronts that it will not be able to repel at once.

El-Zayat agrees with this analysis, but noted that a strike similar to Israel's attack against Syria's Deir Al-Zur reactor three years ago is more likely, since the operation was backed by the US to avoid confrontation on several fronts at once. Thus, it will be very cautious about initiating an attack irrespective of how far the Iranian nuclear programme progresses, because Tel Aviv's plan would be fraught with danger. Meanwhile, Iran is unlikely to take another step beyond "advanced nuclear capabilities", meaning that it will stop just before the manufacturing phase because circumstances are not conducive for that either. This phase will end once Tehran leaves the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

For now, more talks are expected that will deepen the chasm between Iran and the world, according to Nourzadah. "Israel has infiltrated Iran and its nuclear programme, and knows well



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how far Tehran has gone in manufacturing the bomb. Therefore, if we are surprised by an attack on Iran, we will know that Tehran was very close to this capability -- perhaps only one month away from production. At such a time, the possible scenarios are endless."

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/2/8/47650/World/Region/Hormuz-alarm-bells.aspx>

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New York Times

British Spymaster Says Iran Is 2 Years From Nuclear Bomb Capability

July 13, 2012

By ALAN COWELL

In an unusually public forum, the head of Britain's foreign intelligence agency, MI6, has forecast that Iran would likely achieve a nuclear weapons capability within two years, a British

The newspaper, The Daily Telegraph, quoted Sir John Sawers, once the ranking British diplomat on the Iranian nuclear issue and now head of the Secret Intelligence Service, as making the disclosure last week to a gathering of around 100 high-ranking civil servants.

The reported remarks play into a highly contentious debate over Iran's intentions and capabilities, in which estimates have varied widely.

American intelligence agencies have cited a 2007 assessment stating that Iran, in fact, suspended research on nuclear weapons technology in 2003 and had not decided to take the final steps needed to build a bomb.

But Britain and Israel in particular, have interpreted the same data to mean that a decision has been made to move to a nuclear weapons capability. For its part, Iran has frequently said it has no intention of building such weapons.

Sir John was also said to have maintained that covert operations by British intelligence agents had prevented Iran from acquiring the technology as early as 2008. A British government official, speaking in return for anonymity under departmental rules, said Sir John had been "speaking off the record to civil servants at a leadership event and what he said has been said by others before."

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According to The Daily Telegraph, the remarks were Sir John's first publicly reported assessment of Iran's nuclear ambitions since his appointment as head of MI6 in 2009. Iran, he said, was now "two years away" from becoming a "a nuclear weapons state," The Daily Telegraph reported and when it achieved that status, the United States and Israel would have to decide whether to strike.

"The Iranians are determinedly going down a path to master all aspects of nuclear weapons; all the technologies they need," he said. "It's equally clear that Israel and the United States would face huge dangers if Iran were to become a nuclear weapon state."

Iran says its nuclear program is designed for peaceful purposes but, reflecting the assessment that Tehran is seeking a nuclear weapons capability, the United States and its allies have imposed a tightening vise of economic sanctions, the latest Thursday, accompanying thus far inconclusive diplomatic efforts to persuade Iran to abandon nuclear enrichment.

Sir John said it was up British intelligence to "delay that awful moment when the politicians may have to take a decision between accepting a nuclear-armed Iran or launching a military strike against Iran."

"I think it will be very tough for any prime minister of Israel or president of the United States to accept a nuclear-armed Iran." Without previous efforts by British intelligence, he was quoted as saying, "you'd have Iran as a nuclear weapons state in 2008 rather than still being two years away in 2012." He did not elaborate.

In recent years, several Iranian scientists have been assassinated on the streets of Tehran and a computer virus called Stuxnet has disrupted computer systems at nuclear facilities in Iran. Tehran has accused the American, Israeli and British secret services of conducting covert operations against it.

Sir John said MI6 has "run a series of operations to ensure that the sanctions introduced internationally are implemented, and that we do everything we can within the Middle East to slow down these remaining problems."

Earlier this month, low-level talks between Iran and the group of big powers over the Iranian nuclear program ended early with both sides saying the deputies of their top negotiators would meet at a later date. Their announcement gave no hint of progress but nonetheless suggested that neither side was ready to declare the effort a failure.

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The talks, in Istanbul, were part of a series of negotiations this year and were held against a backdrop of increasingly bellicose oratory by Iran and the United States because of the nuclear impasse, which has started to raise tensions again in the Middle East.

Iran has renewed a threat to close the Strait of Hormuz, a vital Persian Gulf oil conduit, in response to intensified American and European sanctions meant to paralyze the Iranian oil industry as a pressure tactic in the nuclear talks. Iran has also said the new sanctions will have no effect on its resolve to prevail in the nuclear dispute.

Since 2010, Iran has been enriching some of its processed uranium to raise its purity from around 5 percent to 20 percent, saying it needs the concentrated fuel for a research reactor in Tehran. The purity is less than the 90 percent level needed for nuclear weapons, but facilitates further purification to weapons grade.

In 2011, Tehran said it would triple the amount of uranium enriched to 20 percent and slowly move the operation to a once secret enrichment plant known as Fordo deep inside a mountain near the holy city of Qum and widely considered by experts to be invulnerable to bombing.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/14/world/middleeast/british-spy-master-says-iran-is-2-years-from-nuclear-bomb-capability.html>

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Bloomberg

Iranian Charged With Illegal Nuclear Shipments Via China

July 13, 2012

By: Emily Grannis

An Iranian and a Chinese resident were charged with conspiring to sell uranium and cobalt to Iran, and successfully shipping lathes and alloy wire, using a Chinese company to evade U.S. export controls.

Parviz Khaki, 43, an Iranian citizen arrested in the Philippines in May, and Zongcheng Yi, who prosecutors called a “purported” managing director of Monalila Co. in Guangzhou City, China,

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allegedly tried to ship a specialty steel, aluminum alloy rods, mass spectrometers, radioactive chemicals and other products from the U.S. to Iran in violation of a U.S. embargo.

The men were accused today in a federal indictment in Washington of using Yi's company as an intermediary for the products between October 2008 and January 2011.

Khaki and Yi were charged with conspiring to violate the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, conspiracy to defraud the U.S., two counts of smuggling, two counts of illegally exporting U.S. goods to Iran, and conspiracy to commit money. Each faces a maximum of 105 years in prison if convicted on all counts.

Khaki remains in custody in the Philippines and Yi is still at large, according to a Justice Department statement. No attorney was listed in court documents as representing either man.

"By dismantling this complex conspiracy to deliver nuclear-related materials from the U.S. to Iran, we have disrupted a significant threat to national security," said John Morton, the director of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

An undercover federal agent became involved with Khaki and Yi's operation in March 2009, according to the indictment. The agent claimed to have experience exporting products out of the U.S. illegally.

Khaki allegedly contacted him to help arrange the illegal exports, prosecutors said.

Today's indictment follows charges filed in federal court in Manhattan yesterday against another Iranian national accused of illegally exporting \$390,000 worth of industrial parts to Dubai and sending them on to Iran.

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-07-13/iranian-charged-with-illegal-nuclear-shipments-via-china.html>

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The Korean Herald

Nuke test, no visit, China tells N.K.

July 15, 2012

By: Song Sang-ho

China has reportedly demanded that North Korea pledge not to carry out a third nuclear test as a precondition to accepting the fledgling leader Kim Jong-un's visit to Beijing.

Citing multiple sources, Japan's daily Tokyo Shimbun reported Sunday that Beijing made the request when Kim Yong-il, the international affairs secretary of the North's ruling Workers' Party, visited China from April 20-24.

While expressing opposition to the demand, Pyongyang tried to reach a compromise with its biggest patron and ally, saying that it would inform Beijing of its nuclear test plan far in advance, the daily said. The North took China by surprise as it gave short notice when it conducted nuclear tests in 2006 and 2009.

After the North failed to launch its long-range rocket in April, speculation grew that it would carry out a third nuclear test to save face and show off its military strength to the international community.

China has long called on the North to refrain from provocative behavior as world leaders have called on Beijing to use its leverage to influence the reclusive state.

Last Thursday, the North's Foreign Minister Park Ui-chun repeated Pyongyang's stance that it would continue its nuclear and missile programs, stressing that his country has the sovereign right to do so.

He made the comment while attending the annual ASEAN Regional Forum in Cambodia, which was hosted by the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

A Seoul government official said that he was not informed of any deal between Pyongyang and Beijing, and that making such a deal is "not understandable."

"Of course, China may expect that North Korea would stop additional provocations including the nuclear test, should he visit China. That is diplomatic common sense," the official told media, declining to be named.

"(In my personal view), how Kim Jong-un can hold a summit right away when he did not ever meet

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any high-level Beijing officials? Another factor that could affect Kim's visit to China would be the leadership handover in China slated for October."

China had tried to reopen the multilateral aid-for-denuclearization talks involving the Koreans, the U.S., China, Japan and Russia. The North has also called for the resumption of the talks to address its international isolation and gain economic support from outside.

The mood for dialogue emerged on Feb. 29 when Pyongyang agreed with Washington to temporarily suspend its uranium enrichment at its main nuclear complex in Yongbyon and put a moratorium on nuclear and missile tests in return for 240,000 tons of "nutritional assistance."

The mood was broken after the North fired a long range rocket, which it claimed was aimed at putting a research satellite into orbit. Experts said that the launch was to test the Taepodong-2 missile.

The longest-range North Korean missile under development is presumed to have a range of more than 6,700 km, enough to hit parts of Alaska, but still short of reaching the U.S. mainland. The missile's tests have so far failed.

<http://view.koreaherald.com/kh/view.php?ud=20120715000336&cpv=0>

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News Asia

Taiwan tests new weapons in China war simulation

July 16, 2012

TAIPEI: Taiwan for the first time Monday tested how a fleet of advanced submarine hunting aircraft and attack helicopters would be utilised in the event of an attack by rival China, officials and media said.

The weapons were included at the beginning of the five-day "Han Kuang No 28" computer-aided wargame -- the biggest of the military's series of annual drills.

The Defence ministry confirmed the drill started Monday but refused to provide further details.

However Taipei-based Liberty Times said: "The authorities will use the event to evaluate how Taiwan's defence capacities could be boosted after the military obtains the two weapons."

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The paper said Taiwan was expecting to receive six Apache AH-64D Longbow helicopters and six P-3C submarine hunting aircraft from the United States next year.

Washington agreed in 2007 to sell 12 refurbished P-3C Orion patrol aircraft, along with three non-operational machines for spares, in a \$1.96 billion arms deal. The P-3C fleet is intended to replace the island's ageing S-2T anti-submarine aircraft.

Despite protests from Beijing, the Pentagon in 2008 notified Congress of a \$6.5 billion arms sale to Taiwan that included advanced interceptor missiles, 30 Apache attack helicopters and submarine-launched missiles.

Ties with Beijing have improved since Ma Ying-jeou of the China-friendly Kuomintang party came to power in 2008 on promises of ramping up trade links and allowing an increase in the number of Chinese tourists.

But Beijing still refuses to renounce the use of force against Taiwan should it declare formal independence, even though the island has governed itself since the end of a civil war in 1949.

This has prompted Taipei to keep modernising its forces, with weapons mainly supplied by the United States, despite a lack of official ties after Washington switched its diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing in 1979.

http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/afp_asiapacific/view/1213830/1/.html

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Toronto Star

Battle for the Pacific: Naval arms race in the China Sea

July 14, 2012

By: Rick Westhead

ABOARD THE USS CARL VINSON—U.S. navy Capt. Rick Labranche streaks across the horizon at 1,000 kilometres an hour in his F-18 Hornet strike fighter.

It has been 12 minutes since a catapult slung Labranche's plane from the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson and Labranche is preparing to drop a pair of 225-kilogram bombs into the Indian Ocean's two-metre swells.

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Labranche checks his radar and scans the blur of blue below. Before he can release his payload on this practice run, he needs to make sure no one is within 16 kilometres.

There's no telling whose fishing trawlers, research vessels or submarines are plying these waters.

A 21st-century Great Game is unfolding in the Asia Pacific, a region that accounts for more than half the world's population and many emerging powers. Some, such as China, India, Pakistan and North Korea, are nuclear-armed rivals who have battled before.

As these regional rivals vie for control of trade routes, fishing stocks and rich, untapped oil and gas deposits, they are expanding and modernizing their maritime forces, conducting war games and opening naval bases in what has become the most perilous arms race in the world.

At the same time, the U.S. is trying to reestablish a dominant presence in the region, strengthening ties to some countries, including the Philippines and Australia, and trying to warm relations with others, such as Burma (Myanmar).

With the U.S. pledging to send more troops and ships to the Asia Pacific, regional neighbours want to coax China to be more open at the negotiating table. Ten Southeast Asian nations this week agreed on a code of conduct to prevent disputes over the South China Sea from escalating into open conflict. China has refused to sign the pact.

"The more militarized the region becomes the harder it is to resolve conflicts," says Stephanie Kleine-Ahlbradt, a China analyst with the International Crisis Group, which works to defuse conflicts.

"You have increasing harassment of fishermen in disputed waters, which becomes a proxy for bigger issues of claimed territory," she says. "It can easily spiral into a security dilemma, especially when nationalist sentiments in the region are increasing. There's a real pressure in these countries not to cave in on disputes, and when you've been telling people for 50 years that you have a claim, it's hard to agree to go to an international tribunal and live with its decisions."

China is the pacesetter. It is said to be spending \$106 billion this year alone on its military, up from \$14 billion in 2000. It recently began sea trials on its first aircraft carrier, the Shi Lang, and is developing an anti-ship ballistic missile that can penetrate the defences of U.S. aircraft carriers, according to its military.

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India — whose first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, once wrote, “to be secure on land we must be supreme at sea” — bought a Russian-built attack submarine, the Chakra, in January. It’s the first nuclear-powered sub India has operated in 20 years.

India’s first locally built aircraft carriers, the Vikramaditya and Vikrant, are scheduled to join the navy in 2013 and 2014.

South Korea last year began construction on a \$970-million naval base for 20 warships, including submarines.

Australia, which has signalled it will build a sub fleet after construction is finished on three destroyers, recently agreed to allow the U.S. navy to station 2,500 marines in Darwin, while the Philippines is in talks with the U.S. about expanding an American military presence there.

Half a world away, the U.S. looms over the islands, straits and channels of the Indian Ocean and South China Sea, a region U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has called a “national interest.”

In January, President Barack Obama said the U.S. would “pivot” and “rebalance” its global military forces toward the Asia-Pacific region. The U.S. is concerned about China’s sweeping claims of sovereignty, such as its directive to foreign oil companies not to help Vietnam develop oilfields in the South China Sea.

While the U.S. Defence Department has been ordered to pare spending by \$487 billion over the next 10 years, Obama has mostly spared the navy from cuts. In June, Defence Secretary Leon Panetta told a conference in Singapore that by 2020, 60 per cent of U.S. warships, including six aircraft-carrier groups, would be stationed in the Asia-Pacific.

Mitt Romney, the Republican nominee in November’s presidential election, has pledged to increase the naval fleet from 285 warships to 346.

“In many respects, the broader Pacific will be the most dynamic and significant part of the world for American interests for many decades to come,” U.S. Deputy Secretary of State William J. Burns said in November.

The U.S. announced last year it would develop long-range nuclear-capable bombers and better electronic jammers for the navy.

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The military contractors General Dynamics and Northrop Grumman are also building a new stealth destroyer.

The ship, known as the DDG-1000, will cost as much as \$3.3 billion and feature a new type of radar that offers improved scanning in shallow coastlines, a wave-piercing hull that leaves a minimal wake, and an electromagnetic rail gun, which employs a magnetic field and electric current to shoot a projectile at several times the speed of sound.

While the navy originally wanted 32 of the DDG-1000s, its order has been trimmed to three.

But Chinese Rear Admiral Zhang Zhaozhong, a professor at China's National Defence University, said the DDG-1000's high-tech design wouldn't protect it from a group of fishing boats packed with explosives. If enough fishing boats could be mobilized, the DDG-1000 "would be a goner," Zhaozhong said recently on CCTV, China's public broadcaster.

History would seem to support Zhaozhong.

During the Falklands War in 1982, Argentina used a single \$200,000 air-to-surface missile to sink a \$50-million destroyer, HMS Sheffield. And in 1967, an Egyptian vessel used several guided missiles to sink an Israeli destroyer.

Meanwhile, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Thailand, Taiwan, Vietnam and Bangladesh have either acquired submarines or plan to buy them. Japan is increasing its 18-sub fleet to 24.

And China has more than 68 subs, three nuclear-powered, according to The Military Balance in Asia, a May 2011 report by the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

"For most countries, it's not about a fight, it's about the ability to dispatch to preserve your quarter," says Mike Hennessy, a professor of naval history at the Royal Military College of Canada. "It's about being able to intimidate so your claims go unchallenged."

Throughout the sprawling Asia Pacific region, there is no shortage of maritime claims.

The biggest dispute is over the Spratly Islands, a barren patch of 750 islets, coral reefs and outcroppings in the South China Sea about 350 kilometres southeast of Vietnam and 900 kilometres southeast of China.



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For more than 50 years, China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei have fought for control of the archipelago. In 1956, a Filipino businessman named Tomas Clomas arrived at the islands and declared an independent country, Freedomland.

Manila rejected the suggestion but claimed the islands, occupying some with armed troops since 1968. Last year, Vietnam announced that six monks who belong to the government-sanctioned wing of the Buddhist church would set up temples and live on several islands in the Spratlys chain, presumably to establish Vietnam's claim.

In April, the Philippines and Vietnam said they would hold soccer and basketball matches in the Spratlys, the same day a Chinese cruise ship completed a voyage to the disputed territory.

At first glance, the Spratlys seem to hold scarce value. Some of the islands actually disappear below the water at high tide.

But, the Spratlys offer a prime location to monitor the shipping lanes of the South China Sea. More important, the seabed is believed to contain as much as 225 billion barrels worth oil and natural gas — enough to fuel Canada for 280 years, based on current consumption of about 2.2 million barrels per day. (The Athabasca oilsands formation, by contrast, is estimated to contain 1.7 billion barrels of recoverable oil.)

It's no wonder China covets the Spratlys. The world's fastest-growing economy, China uses five times as much oil and gas as Canada, but its supply of hydroelectricity declined by 40 per cent last year because of a prolonged drought.

When the Philippines announced recently that it would work with a U.K. company to explore for deposits near the Spratlys, China's government-owned Global Times newspaper wrote an editorial that China should strike first.

"Everything will be burned to the ground should a military conflict break out," the paper argued. "We shouldn't waste the opportunity to launch some tiny-scale battles that could deter provocateurs from going further."

Oil and gas are only one reason for the naval buildup.

The Persian Gulf, Indian Ocean and the Strait of Malacca off Indonesia combine to form a crucial trade route. At least 40 per cent of the world's oil is carried aboard tankers that travel these waters.

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An estimated 700 million people live near the South China Sea and depend on the rich fishing stocks for their livelihoods, as well as 80 per cent of their diets. Vietnam, for instance, estimates its population of 87 million will surge by 25 per cent by 2050 and it will need additional food and fish.

This spring, on April 8, China and the Philippines quarrelled in a stretch known as the Scarborough Shoal after the Philippine Navy discovered coral, giant clams and live sharks on a Chinese boat. The Philippines announced the Chinese fishermen would be arrested for poaching.

The showdown, some 200 kilometres west of the Philippine island of Luzon, simmered for more than two months. Then, on June 17, the Philippines ordered its two ships to withdraw. The day before they left, China had seven large ships and as many as 26 fishing boats stationed at the shoal, the Philippine Daily Inquirer reported.

China has alienated and antagonized its regional neighbours during the past two few years over a string of incidents, pushing them “into a coalition and toward the Americans,” says M. Taylor Fravel, a political scientist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who has written a book about China’s territorial issues.

Last year, a boat owned by PetroVietnam was surveying the ocean floor about 120 kilometres south of Vietnam and 600 kilometres from China’s Hainan Island. Three Chinese patrol vessels intercepted the Vietnamese ship and cut its cables to the seabed. China’s foreign ministry blamed Vietnam for the clash, claiming its oil and gas operations “undermined China’s interests and jurisdictional rights.”

That incident came 10 months after the U.S. and Vietnam began joint naval exercises in the South China Sea.

“I think China has realized the open hostility has been a mistake and you’re seeing it take a more moderate approach now,” Fravel says.

“It’s unarmed or lightly armed vessels, the Chinese version of the coast guard, who are responding to conflicts, not its navy.”

Fravel says China is also becoming better at international diplomacy, using civilian maritime law agencies to press its claims in conjunction with its navy, which is becoming formidable.

In 1990, China’s navy amounted to two Soviet-era destroyers. By 2011, China had 71 frigates and destroyers and 71 submarines, as well as its first aircraft carrier.



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China bought HMAS Melbourne aircraft carrier from Australia in 1985. Its engineers spent years dissecting the ship and building a replica flight deck to train pilots. Two other carriers, the Minsk and the Kiev, were bought from Russia and they, too, were studied by engineers before being converted into floating theme parks.

In August 2011, the Shi Lang, China's first aircraft carrier left port. It is named for the Chinese general who conquered Taiwan in 1681.

Russia built the Varyag — as the Shi Lang was first known — in 1990; two years later, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, its ownership was transferred to Ukraine. In 1998, China bought the carrier from Ukraine for \$20 million. China said the vessel would become an aircraft carrier-themed hotel.

Instead, the Varyag was rechristened and became the first of five carriers China hopes to launch by 2050.

China is also using its financial power to expand its influence in the Asia Pacific.

China's Export-Import Bank is financing 85 per cent of a \$1-billion port in Hambantota, Sri Lanka. The Chinese government is also building a \$200-million port in Pakistan near the Strait of Hormuz and another port and pipeline in Burma to bring natural gas to China.

China's loans and construction of airports, roads and ports has been called a "string of pearls" strategy, a concerted effort to develop markets for their goods and services in economically stunted parts of Asia.

The U.S. and others shouldn't view China's buildup as threatening, says Christian Le Miere, a naval expert at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, an arms analysis group in London.

"It's not like you're going to see China strangling world trade," Le Miere says. "Everyone wants open and free shipping lanes."

Still, good relations can quickly sour and become games of brinkmanship.

In 2010, a South Korean corvette called the Cheonan was on a routine patrol in the Yellow Sea when it was sunk near Baengnyeong, 22 kilometres from the North Korean coast. Forty-six South Korean sailors died. An investigation concluded the warship had been crippled by a torpedo from a mini-submarine.

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“No one can predict what North Korea will do, and no one can say what China will do if the U.S. rushes in to help South Korea,” says David Zimmerman, a professor of military history at British Columbia’s University of Victoria.

Tensions are already raw between South Korea and China.

Last December, a South Korean coast guard commando was stabbed and another injured after they arrested nine Chinese fishermen who had been illegally fishing in the Yellow Sea.

After the commandos boarded one fishing vessel, another rammed it, prompting fishermen on board to start attacking the commandos. The captain of the Chinese fishing boat smashed a window and used broken glass to kill the commando.

“One of the reasons for worry is that there is no code of conduct when there are incidents at sea,” says Kleine-Ahlbradt of the International Crisis Group. “During the Cold War between the U.S. and Soviet Union, there would be at least one confrontation between vessels each year but we never heard about it because there was an agreement known as the Military Maritime Consultative Agreement to settle those disputes. China hasn’t wanted to negotiate that kind of agreement.”

While the U.S. argues its interests in the region are based on ensuring ships receive free passage in international waters and regional countries enjoy fair access to mineral deposits, China contends the U.S. is a cunning meddler.

To monitor shipping routes, the U.S. says it’s necessary to patrol waters within a 321-kilometre exclusive economic zone of China’s shores.

“They’re actually just spying on Chinese subs as they leave port,” says a former United Nations official. “The U.S. would say that they would respect China’s right to do the same off the coast of Florida, but it’s not a fair comparison. It would take years before China’s in a position to have subs there, if they are able to do it at all.”

The U.S. has discussed deploying P3C Orion spy planes to the Philippines to monitor disputed areas in the South China Sea.

Even though the U.S. holds an advantage both in technology and the number of vessels, military strategists and security hawks note the U.S. now has 285 ships, its smallest naval fleet since 1916 and down from a 600-ship fleet during the Reagan years. The average age of its ships is approaching 20 years.

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Still, the U.S. remains far ahead of its rivals. Of the 22 operational aircraft carriers in the world, according to the trade journal *Jane's Guide to Fighting Ships*, the U.S. has 11. They form the backbone of the American fleet.

"If the U.S. doesn't have a base in a country, it's irrelevant," says Zimmerman. "They can just bring their carriers around and they have a major airbase right there. They're powerful enough that one carrier group could defeat the entire Iranian air force."

The power and size of carrier battle group is difficult to overstate. Carriers like the *Carl Vinson* are home to as many as 85 aircraft, as well as vast stores of ammunition and fuel. A carrier's protective escorts usually include two guided missile cruisers, two destroyers, a frigate, two submarines and a supply ship.

In 1981, after Libya claimed the Gulf of Sidra was within its territorial waters, threatening to punish anyone who crossed a "line of death," the aircraft carrier *Nimitz* was dispatched to the region. Two Libyan fighters were subsequently shot down and Libya backed down.

Twenty years later, with China conducting a series of naval war games, the U.S. sent two carriers, the *Constellation* and *Carl Vinson*, to participate in a drill off the coast of Taiwan.

"The fact is, as long as carriers are in a region, they represent pressure," Zimmerman says. "The message is, 'We can, if we decide we have to, strike at you and there's little you can do about it.'"

As Labranche waited in his office aboard the *Carl Vinson* for the last of his pilots to touch down on deck following their daily missions, he said technology and decades of experience give the U.S. an advantage over its rivals.

Labranche, 51, said he recently met a Russian pilot who was his country's most experienced at landing on a carrier at sea. That pilot had 100 landings. Labranche has 1,300.

"So what do I have, a factor of 13?" Labranche said. "That's huge and in this game, experience is gold."

Labranche said it would take China years to catch up.

"All the lessons you learn on a ship like a carrier are written in blood. This takes time and we've had a 60-year head start."

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It's almost 10 p.m. aboard the Carl Vinson, which is now about 500 kilometres off the western coast of Australia, and the last few planes are landing for the day.

Though his ship is only two days away from docking in Perth, the Carl Vinson could, in five days, easily make its way through the South China Sea to within sight of Hong Kong.

Labranche would have no reservation about going, even if it meant conflict with nuclear-armed China.

"You pick a fight with one of us, you pick a fight with all of us," he says "If you're not hostile with us, we don't want to be kinetic, but we will if we have to. It's all in the name of global peace."

<http://www.thestar.com/news/world/article/1225396--battle-for-the-pacific-naval-arms-race-in-the-china-sea>

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Politico

North Korean Military Chief Deposed

July 15, 2012

SEOUL, South Korea — Kim Jong Un's top military official - a key mentor to North Korea's new young leader - has been removed from all posts because of illness, state media said Monday.

At least one analyst speculated that a more likely reason for Ri Yong Ho's departure is Kim's desire to put his own mark on the government he inherited from his father late last year.

The decision to relieve Ri of his duties was made at a Workers' Party meeting Sunday, according to the North's official Korean Central News Agency. It was not immediately clear who would take Ri's place, and the North Korean media dispatch did not elaborate on Ri's condition or future.

Ri was vice marshal of the Korean People's Army and the military's General Staff chief, as well as a top figure in the Workers' Party.

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He has been at Kim Jong Un's side since the young man emerged as father Kim Jong Il's successor in 2010, often standing between father and son at major events. That role appeared to deepen after Kim Jong Il's death in December, helping Kim to solidify support among the military.

Kim Jong Il's "military first" policy made the army North Korea's most powerful institution. Ri wielded power from his position at the intersection of three crucial institutions: the Korean People's Army, the Central Military Commission of the ruling Workers' Party and the Standing Committee of the party's influential Political Bureau.

Ri also oversaw an influential Kim Jong Un support group comprising officers in their 50s and 60s whom commanders consider rising stars, according to Ken Gause, a North Korea specialist at CNA, a U.S.-based research organization.

Hong Hyun-ik, an analyst at private Sejong Institute near Seoul, was skeptical about the illness claim, saying that when top North Korean officials do get sick, they typically remain in office while deputies handle their duties. There had been no previous sign that Ri was ill, he added.

Hong said the change appears aimed at replacing an appointee of Kim's late father, Kim Jong Il, with a closer confidant.

"It can be seen as part of a general change," Hong said, adding that he expects similar news on the dismissal of other aging, senior officials will come out in coming weeks.

Animosity on the Korean Peninsula has deepened since a North Korean rocket launch in April that the United States called a cover for a banned long-range missile test. North Korea says it was a satellite launch.

North Korea has repeatedly threatened harm to South Korea's president and his supporters in recent months, angry over perceived insults to its leadership and recent U.S.-South Korean military drills that Pyongyang says are a prelude to an invasion.

<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0712/78535.html>

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REUTERS

U.S. Navy Fires on Fishing Boat Near UAE; 1 Killed

July 16, 2012

By Amena Bakr and Phil Stewart

Why the boat approached the U.S. refuel ling ship, the USNS Rappahannock, was still unclear, U.S. officials said. But the U.S. Navy said the small motor boat ignored repeated warnings to halt its approach before a security team fired rounds from a .50-caliber machine gun.

Even small boats dwarfed by the size of the U.S. vessel can still pose a threat. Two suicide bombers rammed an explosives-laden boat into the USS Cole in 2000, blowing a massive hole in its side and killing 17 U.S. sailors.

But the incident was also reminder of how quickly a confrontation can turn deadly in the Gulf, where tensions with Iran have triggered military buildup by the United States and its allies.

Those killed and injured in Monday's incident were not Iranians and it was unclear whether the incident may have been a mere misunderstanding. The UAE state news agency, quoting a government official, identified all of the dead and wounded as Indian nationals.

The shooting took place in the waters near the UAE port of Jebel Ali, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command said in a statement.

"The U.S. crew repeatedly attempted to warn the vessel's operators to turn away from their deliberate approach," it said, adding the incident was under investigation.

ACCELERATING DEPLOYMENT

The incident came as the U.S. military has bolstered its presence in the region, sending additional fighter jets, deploying a floating naval base and doubling the number of mine-sweepers in recent months.

Iran renewed threats on Sunday to close the Strait of Hormuz, through which 40 percent of the world's seaborne oil exports pass, unless sanctions imposed over its nuclear program are revoked.

Shortly before news of the shooting incident broke, the Pentagon announced it was accelerating the deployment of an aircraft carrier strike group to the Middle East, assuring that the United

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States keeps two of the massive nuclear-powered ships and their entourages of warships in the tense region.

Pentagon spokesman George Little was vague about the motives behind the decision to send in the USS John C. Stennis roughly four months ahead of schedule. But he denied it was tied exclusively to Iran.

"This is about a wide-range of U.S. security interests in the region. We're always mindful of the challenges posed by Iran but let me be very clear -- this is not a decision that is based solely on the challenge posed by Iran," Little said.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/07/16/us-usa-uae-ship-idUSBRE86F0S620120716>

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Washington Post

Port security: U.S. fails to meet deadline for scanning of cargo containers

15 July 2012

By Douglas Frantz

The Obama administration has failed to meet a legal deadline for scanning all shipping containers for radioactive material before they reach the United States, a requirement aimed at strengthening maritime security and preventing terrorists from smuggling a nuclear device into any of the nation's 300 sea and river ports.

The Department of Homeland Security was given until this month to ensure that 100 percent of inbound shipping containers are screened at foreign ports.

But the department's secretary, Janet Napolitano, informed Congress in May that she was extending a two-year blanket exemption to foreign ports because the screening is proving too costly and cumbersome. She said it would cost \$16 billion to implement scanning measures at the nearly 700 ports worldwide that ship to the United States.

Instead, the DHS relies on intelligence-gathering and analysis to identify "high-risk" containers, which are checked before being loaded onto ships. Under this system, fewer than half a percent of the roughly 10 million containers arriving at U.S. ports last year were scanned before departure. The DHS says that those checks turned up narcotics and other contraband but that there have been no public reports of smuggled nuclear material.

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In response to the 9/11 Commission, Congress passed a law in 2007 specifying that no cargo container may enter the United States before being scanned with imaging equipment and a radiation-detection device.

The administration's failure to meet the deadline has left some members of Congress and outside experts concerned about whether the threat is being taken seriously enough.

"I personally do not believe they intend to comply with the law," Rep. Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.), co-author of the 2007 law, said in an interview. "This is a real terrorist threat, and it has a solution. We can't afford to wait until a catastrophic attack."

The DHS says monitors scan 99 percent of the containers for radiation after they arrive at U.S. ports. But experts say the monitors at U.S. ports are not sophisticated enough to detect nuclear devices or highly enriched uranium, which emit low levels of radiation.

The Government Accountability Office has warned that a nuclear device could be detonated while at a port — containers often sit for days awaiting radiation checks — causing billions of dollars in damage in addition to the loss of life. Estimates of damage caused by a nuclear detonation at a major port range from tens of billions of dollars to \$1 trillion.

Shipping containers are potentially ideal for smuggling weapons, people and other illicit cargo; ensuring the integrity of the contents is difficult and costly. The standard container is 40 feet long and 8 feet high and holds more than 30 tons of cargo. A large vessel carries 3,000 or more containers from hundreds of different shippers and many ports. And a single container can hold cargo from many customers.

Counterterrorism experts have worried about port vulnerability since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. Khalid Sheik Mohammed, the self-described mastermind of the attacks, reportedly told interrogators he had considered sending explosives to the United States hidden inside a shipment of personal computers from Japan.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/port-security-us-fails-to-meet-deadline-for-scanning-of-cargo-containers/2012/07/15/gJQAmgW8mW_story.html

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