



**USAF COUNTERPROLIFERATION CENTER**  
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**Issue No. 1037, 14 December 2012**

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Jerusalem Post – Israel

## 'Iran Not on Track to Make Long-Range Missile'

*US Congress report casts doubt on intelligence views Iran could test-fly intercontinental ballistic missile by 2015.*

By REUTERS

December 08, 2012

An internal report for the US Congress has concluded that Iran probably is no longer on track, if it ever was, to having an ocean-crossing missile as soon as 2015.

The study casts doubt on a view long held by US intelligence agencies that Iran could be able to test-fly by 2015 an intercontinental ballistic missile, or ICBM, if it receives "sufficient foreign assistance."

"It is increasingly uncertain whether Iran will be able to achieve an ICBM capability by 2015," said the report by the non-partisan Congressional Research Service, which works exclusively for lawmakers.

Iran does not appear to be receiving as much help as would likely be necessary, notably from China or Russia, to reach that goal, according to the 66-page report dated Thursday.

It is also increasingly tough for Tehran to obtain certain critical components and materials because of international sanctions related to its disputed nuclear program.

In addition, Iran has not demonstrated the kind of flight test program generally deemed necessary to produce an ICBM, said the study by Steven Hildreth, a specialist in missile defense who consulted seven external expert reviewers.

The study appears to be the most detailed unclassified look yet at Iran's controversial ballistic missile and space programs. It does not address Tehran's nuclear program, which has prompted international fears that it could lead to atomic weapons at short notice.

An effective nuclear-weapons capability requires three things to work together - enough fissile material, a reliable weapons device and an effective delivery system, such as a ballistic missile that can grow out of a space launch program.

Iran's efforts to develop, test and field ballistic missiles and build a space launch capability have helped drive billions of dollars of US ballistic missile defense spending, further destabilized the Middle East and contributed to Israel's push for pre-emptive action.

Iranian missile threats have also prompted a US drive for an increasingly capable shield for Europe, largely built by contractors such as Lockheed Martin Corp, Boeing Co , Raytheon Co and Northrop Grumman Corp.

The US intelligence community since 1999 has stuck to the conditional 2015 date, provided Iran gets enough outside help, for a potential Iranian ICBM capable of reaching the United States, which is at least 10,000 kilometers away.

An ICBM is generally defined as having a range greater than 5,500 km (3,400 miles). Such missiles from Iran could threaten targets throughout Europe and the Middle East.

"With sufficient foreign assistance, Iran may be technically capable of flight-testing an intercontinental ballistic missile by 2015," the Defense Department told Congress in its 2012 annual report on Iranian military power.

Michael Birmingham, a spokesman for the office of the Director of National Intelligence, which leads the 17 organizations which comprise the U.S. intelligence community, said views among spy agencies vary on the Iranian ICBM outlook.

He added that the 2015 date cited by the Defense Department was "heavily caveated."

Iran appears to have a significant space launch effort, not merely a disguised cover for ICBM development, the Congressional Research Service report said.



Iran became the ninth country to demonstrate an indigenous space launch capability on February 2, 2009, when it launched an Omid satellite from a Safir 2 rocket.

Iran has stated it plans to use future launchers to put intelligence-gathering satellites in orbit, a capability that is a decade or so in the future.

Tom Collina, research director of the private Arms Control Association, a Washington-based advocacy group, said the report suggests the United States could respond in a more "measured" way to a potential Iranian long-range missile threat.

"We do not have to deploy missile defenses on the East Coast by 2015, as some in Congress want, nor do we have to rush missile defenses into Europe, which makes Russia nervous," he said.

<http://www.jpost.com/IranianThreat/News/Article.aspx?id=295059>

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Russia Today (RT) – Russia

## **True Danger from Syrian Chemical Weapons Is if Militants Acquire Them – Russian FM**

09 December 2012

The Syrian government does not intend, and has never planned, to use chemical weapons against rebel forces, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said, addressing rumors that the Assad regime is preparing to use its chemical weapons arsenal.

The biggest threat surrounding Syria's chemical weapons is their *"probable acquisition by militants,"* Lavrov said.

*"According to our information, and this information we pass to our US colleagues, and European colleagues, [the Syrian] government does not have such intentions and cannot have, because this is all very serious,"* the minister said on Sunday.

Russia took seriously the rumors surrounding Syria's chemical weapons and sought clarity from the Syrian government, and is passing on this information to other nations, Lavrov explained.

*"It is not the first time when reports, that can be called rumors or leak, suggesting Syrian government moves reserves of chemical weapon from places where it is being storage to different locations and prepares to use it, emerge,"* he said.

Lavrov's statement came in response to recent allegations from the US Pentagon and State Department that Syria is preparing to use chemical weapons. The rumors were quickly disseminated in Western media.

This week, NBC quoted anonymous US officials' accusations that the Syrian military loaded the deadly nerve gas Sarin into aerial bombs, which could then be dropped on rebels from Mig-23 or Sukhoi-24 aircraft.

Another report by ABC News, also quoting unnamed American officials, suggested the bombs have not yet been loaded onto planes.

US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton commented on the reports, reiterating that the use of chemical weapons would be crossing *"a red line."*

On December 4, NATO foreign ministers approved Ankara's request for Patriot missiles to be deployed on the Turkey-Syria border. The deployment was requested over fears that Syria could attack its neighbor with missiles and chemical weapons.



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Syria's chemical weapons stockpile became a topic of international concern this past July. Syria is reportedly in possession of nerve agents, including mustard gas, as well as the Scud missiles needed to deliver them. The country is one of six states that have not signed the Chemical Weapons Convention, which outlaws their production.

### **'We are not talking Assad's fate'**

On Sunday, Russia agreed to take part in resumed talks in Geneva on the Syria conflict with US diplomats and UN peace envoy Lakhdar Brahimi. However, Moscow refused to negotiate *"on the fate of Assad."*

Lavrov said the US was wrong to see Moscow as softening its position, adding that Russia will not back down from its position on the Syria conflict.

*"All attempts to portray things differently are unscrupulous, even for diplomats of those countries which are known to try to distort the facts in their favor,"* Lavrov said.

Earlier on Thursday, Lavrov held informal talks with Clinton and Brahimi.

<http://rt.com/politics/chemical-weapons-terrorists-syria-659/>

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Wall Street Journal  
December 11, 2012

## **Panetta: No New Sign of Syria Chemical Weapons**

By ADAM ENTOUS

KUWAIT CITY—U.S. intelligence agencies haven't detected any new steps by the Syrian government to prepare chemical weapons for possible use, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said Tuesday.

The Obama administration last week warned that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad would face "consequences" if the government used chemical weapons after intelligence showed the movement of large stockpiles of such arms, including deadly sarin gas.

The administration didn't specify what those consequences might be.

"At this point, the intelligence has really kind of leveled off," Mr. Panetta told reporters en route to talks in Kuwait. "We haven't seen anything new indicating any aggressive steps to move forward in that way."

Mr. Panetta said it was possible that Mr. Assad "got the message" from the international community, but cautioned: "It's also clear that the opposition continues to make gains in Syria and our concern is that if they (regime leaders) feel like the regime is threatened with collapse that they might resort to these kinds of weapons."

Mr. Panetta was in Kuwait to visit U.S. troops at the start of a four-day trip.

The Pentagon has close to 50,000 troops in the region, including about 13,500 troops in Kuwait, but it will temporarily shrink its aircraft carrier presence in the Persian Gulf area from two to one due to maintenance requirements. The Naval presence in particular is seen as a deterrent against Iran.

Mr. Panetta played down the impact of the carrier moves on U.S. capabilities in the region, telling reporters: "In the end, I am very confident that we're going to be able to maintain the ships and forces we need in order to respond to any contingency."

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887324024004578173032796998690.html>

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Xinhua News – China

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## Iran Denies DPRK Missile Cooperation: Spokesman

December 11, 2012

TEHRAN, Dec. 11 (Xinhua) -- Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast denied on Tuesday the claims about missile cooperation between the Islamic republic and the Democratic People 's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

After the Islamic revolution in 1979, Iran and DPRK expanded their relations in a number of areas, including the military cooperation during the war between Iran and Iraq from 1980-1988, and after that the ties of the two sides continued in political, economic and humanitarian sectors, said the Iranian spokesman in his weekly press briefing.

The claims which alleged that Iran and DPRK were cooperating in missile and nuclear programs were "baseless" and were aimed to influence Iran's relations with the regional states, he said, emphasizing that "this issue is never true."

Recently Western media reported that Iranian military officers were to attend DPRK's test launch of a long-range ballistic missile expected for December 2012 underlining Tehran's intention for further missile development in close cooperation with Pyongyang.

[http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2012-12/11/c\\_132034411.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2012-12/11/c_132034411.htm)

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Bloomberg News

## U.S. and Partners Agree on Revised Nuclear Offer for Iran

By Indira A.R. Lakshmanan

December 12, 2012

The U.S. and its partners have hammered out a revised deal to offer Iran, aimed at persuading the Islamic Republic to curtail nuclear activities that might be used to produce an atomic bomb.

The amended proposal, agreed to in recent days by the six world powers involved in the negotiations, would be put on the table at the next round of talks with Iran, according to a U.S. official who spoke yesterday on condition of anonymity because Iran hasn't yet seen the plan. The official described it as an updated proposal from the one discussed in Baghdad in May, and not a dramatic new plan or grand bargain to address all of the international community's concerns at once.

The U.S. and its partners -- France, Britain, China, Russia and Germany -- are seeking to restart nuclear talks in a push to persuade the Persian Gulf state to stop enriching uranium to 20 percent levels, a potential intermediate step toward bomb-grade fissile material.

The revived negotiations are seen as the best hope for avoiding a military confrontation over Iran's disputed program as soon as next year. The U.S., European allies and Israel accuse the Iranians of pursuing a nuclear weapons capability. Iran says its program is for civilian energy and medical research

Several U.S. officials said the time is ripe for restarting talks in the aftermath of President Barack Obama's re-election and several months before Iran's presidential elections next June.

### Phone Contact

Helga Schmid, a senior official with the European Union, which leads the talks between the six powers and Iran, spoke by phone with Iran's deputy nuclear negotiator, Ali Bagheri, "to discuss the way ahead, including possible dates and venues" for talks, State Department spokesperson Victoria Nuland said yesterday.

The talks faltered months ago after the two sides failed to agree to a deal during three rounds of negotiations in Istanbul, Baghdad and Moscow between April and June. Negotiators for the U.S. and its partners adopted a step-by-

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step approach, saying any deals should be based on reciprocal actions, building toward a long-term agreement for Iran to address all international concerns about its nuclear activities.

Former diplomats involved in Iran policy, including Thomas Pickering, have urged the U.S. and its partners to restart negotiations with a revised offer as soon as possible.

### **Realistic Offer**

What the six powers had previously proposed “is not close enough to being a realistic offer that the other side will take seriously,” said Pickering, a former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations and former No. 3 official at the State Department. Iran’s counterproposal was “not realistic either,” he said in a telephone interview yesterday.

Each side was demanding “a horse for a rabbit,” rather than genuine reciprocal steps, he said.

It’s critical, Pickering said, for the six powers to put forward a realistic proposal soon “to see if there’s any reaction to move things ahead. If there’s not, then the situation’s worse than we thought,” Pickering said.

Earlier this year, the six powers asked Iran to halt all 20 percent enrichment, transfer medium-enriched material out of Iran and shut down its underground Fordo facility, which was built clandestinely near the holy city of Qom. In exchange, the world powers offered technical cooperation and parts for Iran’s medical research reactor, parts and repairs for commercial aircraft and help acquiring a light water research reactor for medical isotopes.

### **Unequal Deal**

Iran, which derided the deal as unequal, asked instead for relief from sanctions that have crippled its economy and sent its currency plunging over the last year. Iran’s oil output, formerly the second-largest in OPEC, has dropped to fifth among the 12 members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries as a result of sanctions.

The U.S. and the EU have said they won’t lift all sanctions until Iran takes irreversible steps to resolve concerns about possible military dimensions of its nuclear program.

Both the U.S. and Israel have threatened military action to stop Iran from acquiring an atomic bomb.

On a separate track, officials from the International Atomic Energy Agency are in Tehran today for talks seeking to resolve questions about suspected covert military elements of Iran’s nuclear program. It will be the first meeting between the two sides since talks broke down in August.

The top goal for the IAEA delegation visiting Iran will be to win access to Parchin, a military complex about 20 kilometers (12 miles) southeast of Tehran. The IAEA says it was provided with intelligence information showing Iran may have constructed a blast chamber for testing nuclear weapons components there.

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-12-13/u-s-and-partners-agree-on-revised-nuclear-offer-for-iran.html>

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Al Jazeera – U.A.E.

## **UN Inspectors in Iran for Nuclear Talks**

*Seven-member IAEA delegation in Tehran for one-day visit to discuss country's disputed nuclear programme.*

13 December 2012

Source: Agencies

Inspectors from the UN's nuclear agency have arrived in Tehran in an attempt to seal a deal to ease international concerns regarding the country's disputed nuclear programme, state media reports.

Thursday's talks in Tehran are the first between the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and Iran since August this year.





The ISNA news agency said the seven-member IAEA delegation, headed by Deputy Director General Herman Nackaerts, would meet Iranian nuclear officials behind closed doors during the one-day stop in the capital.

The IAEA says it is seeking to reach agreement with Iran on a "structured approach" to resolve outstanding concerns, and to obtain its inspectors broader access to Iran's nuclear sites and people working in the programme.

### **Military complex**

The inspectors also want to inspect Parchin, a restricted military complex near Tehran, where the IAEA suspects experiments with explosives capable of triggering a nuclear weapon may have been carried out.

"We also hope that Iran will allow us to go the site of Parchin, and if Iran would grant us access we would welcome that chance and we are ready to go," Nackaerts told reporters at Vienna airport on Wednesday.

ISNA, however, reported that "no inspection or visit" would take place "for now". It did not source the information.

One Vienna diplomat said that the team in Tehran is larger than in past visits in February and in May, and now included two "technical experts" who could conduct verification work at Parchin - if invited to do so.

Iran denies seeking or ever having sought nuclear weapons, and has refused to give the IAEA access to Parchin, saying that as a non-nuclear site the agency has no right to conduct inspections there.

Ramin Mehmanparast, an Iranian foreign ministry spokesperson, said on Tuesday that the visit would focus on discussions regarding "Iran's nuclear rights as well as its peaceful nuclear activities".

But "certain issues that have possibly become a source of concern for [IAEA] officials can also be discussed", he said.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/12/2012121393341205267.html>

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Washington Post

## **Intelligence on Syrian Troops Readying Chemical Weapons for use Prompted Obama's Warning**

By Joby Warrick

December 14, 2012

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Western intelligence agencies observed Syrian units making advanced preparations for the potential use of chemical weapons, including loading trucks with ready-to-use bombs and shells, prompting President Obama last week to warn Syria against using the banned munitions, according to Western and Middle Eastern officials.

Soldiers at one Syrian base were monitored mixing precursors for chemical weapons and taking other steps to ready the lethal munitions for battlefield use, the officials said. It was the first hard evidence that Syria was moving toward possible activation of its vast arsenal of chemical weapons, which includes nerve gas and other poisons.

Surveillance photos confirmed that at least one army unit began loading special military vehicles that transport bombs and artillery shells carrying chemical warheads, according to the officials. The moves followed specific orders to elite troops to begin preparations for the use of the weapons against advancing rebel fighters, the officials said.

Two Western officials briefed on the intelligence findings said that the Syrian government forces stopped the preparations late last week and that there was no evidence that activated chemical weapons were loaded onto aircraft or deployed to the battlefield.



The officials spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitive nature of the intelligence. The Obama administration and the CIA declined to answer questions about the episode. Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta said this week that the threat had eased, though it had not been eliminated.

Intelligence analysts said the orders to prepare the weapons were issued about two weeks ago. They said it was not clear whether the decision came from senior Syrian leaders, possibly including President Bashar al-Assad, or from a field commander acting on his own, the officials said.

Since concerns surfaced in the summer that Syria was moving chemical weapons among several sites across the country, officials in Damascus have repeatedly pledged not to use the banned munitions. After the warnings last week from Obama and other foreign leaders, the Syrian Foreign Ministry repeated that it would not use chemical weapons against the rebel forces.

Still, the discovery that steps had been taken to activate weapons at at least one military base alarmed intelligence officials, because of fears that a single commander could unleash the deadly poisons without orders from higher up the chain of command.

### **Danger persists**

The latest disclosures, which provide more detail about the weapons threat than was previously known, came amid reports that Syrian troops have launched short-range, Scud-type missiles against rebel positions in recent days in an escalation of the nearly 21-month-old conflict. Several types of surface-to-surface missiles in Syria's arsenal are capable of carrying chemical-weapons warheads. There have been no reports that the missiles launched contained chemical weapons.

Syria is known to possess one of the world's largest arsenals of chemical weapons, including stocks of the highly lethal nerve agents sarin and VX. The chemicals can be loaded into artillery shells, aerial bombs or missile warheads for use against troop positions or civilian targets.

It is unclear whether the warnings from Obama and others factored into the Syrian government's decision to put the limited chemical weapons preparations on hold. Syrian commanders have shown no hesitancy in using other lethal weapons — including cluster bombs and incendiary devices — to slow a rebel offensive that is pressing ever closer to the capital, the officials said.

"If the situation becomes more desperate, there's no predicting what will happen," said a Western diplomat whose government tracked the developments as they began unfolding nearly two weeks ago.

On Thursday, NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen said Assad's government appears to be approaching collapse, and Russia acknowledged that Syrian rebels were making progress in their effort to oust Assad, a Moscow ally.

Although Assad is aware of the dire consequences of using chemical weapons, individual commanders could take matters into their own hands if their positions are being overrun, said a Middle Eastern intelligence official briefed on the latest intelligence findings.

"Once you've used the weapons, you know the world is coming after you," the official said. "But if you're a general and you think you're not going to survive this, you might not care."

Panetta confirmed Tuesday that the threat appeared to have eased after Obama publicly warned Assad of "consequences" if he used chemical weapons, which are banned under international treaties.

"We haven't seen anything new indicating any aggressive steps to move forward in that way," Panetta told reporters during a visit to Kuwait. Referring to Obama's warning to Assad, the defense secretary said, "I like to believe he's got the message."

### **A game-changer**





Syria began amassing its chemical weapons arsenal in the 1970s and 1980s as a counterbalance against a superior-armed Israel, its presumed foe in a future conflict. Military and intelligence analysts are divided over whether Assad would use the munitions against his own people, an act that would earn him global condemnation and perhaps trigger an attack by Western forces.

Chemical weapons such as sarin are designed for use against massed concentrations of troops and are not regarded as particularly effective against insurgencies in close-combat situations. Yet, a large-scale use of such munitions could devastate the rebels by causing panic and, potentially, thousands of casualties.

"It could change the game in important ways," said Jeffrey White, a military analyst formerly with the Pentagon's Defense Intelligence Agency. "Any use of gas would have a terrific psychological impact and cause all kinds of panic."

Clouds of poison gas also could kill government supporters and troops if a subtle wind shift blows the chemicals toward government-held lines, White said. "It doesn't spread for miles," he said, "but you have to think that any group affected by it will be highly traumatized, and word will spread quickly."

Depending on the type and quantity of weapons used, the attackers could deny access to large swaths of territory because of the long-lasting effects of the poisons. Nerve agents such as sarin are so deadly that a small drop on the skin can kill a person. Even the task of removing or treating victims of a chemical attack can prove deadly for rescue workers and physicians, weapons experts say.

Although experts generally agree that any use of chemical weapons would seal Assad's doom, some analysts say the embattled Syrian president may not be convinced that the international community would strike back.

"We haven't seen a lot of willingness in this conflict to confront Assad on any level," said Bilal Saab, director of the Institute for Near East and Gulf Military Analysis-North America, a think tank based in the United Arab Emirates. "Assad needs to be told, not just in words but by actions on the ground, that there will be consequences."

[http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/intelligence-on-syrian-troops-readying-chemical-weapons-for-potential-use-prompted-obamas-warning/2012/12/13/389dd7b4-44a2-11e2-8061-253bccfc7532\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/intelligence-on-syrian-troops-readying-chemical-weapons-for-potential-use-prompted-obamas-warning/2012/12/13/389dd7b4-44a2-11e2-8061-253bccfc7532_story.html)

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CNN

## **Official: Iran, Nuclear Watchdog Group Deal Close**

By Chelsea J. Carter and Saskya Vandoorne, CNN

Friday, December 14, 2012

(CNN) -- The head of a U.N. nuclear watchdog group said Friday a deal with Iran over its nuclear program is likely in January, an agreement that will also allow inspectors to gain access to a military complex where Tehran is believed to be testing nuclear materials.

The news followed reports that the International Atomic Energy Agency wrapped one-day talks in Iran over its nuclear program, widely suspected by the United States and other Western nations as a front for the country's development of nuclear weapons -- a charge Iran has repeatedly denied.

"We have agreed to meet again on 16 January next year, where we expect to finalize the structured approach and start implementing it then shortly after that," IAEA chief inspector Herman Nackaerts told reporters after returning to Vienna, Austria.

The talks between Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) were aimed at jump-starting negotiations, while allowing agency inspectors to gain access to a military complex where Tehran is suspected of testing nuclear materials.

Access to the Parchin military complex, just outside Tehran, is a key element in the negotiations.



"We have not been given access to Parchin this time. But as you know access to Parchin is part of the structured approach, and we hope as I said that we will implement that shortly," Nackaerts said.

Iran's liaison to IAEA, Ali Asghar Soltanieh, characterized the talks as constructive, according to state-run news agency IRNA. The report stopped short of saying whether the talks included discussion about investigators getting access to Parchin, which was requested at a meeting in November in Vienna, Austria.

The next round of talks were scheduled for January 16, Soltanieh told IRNA. The IAEA also confirmed the talks would continue on that day.

The United States, meanwhile, slapped new sanctions on Iran on Thursday, targeting a handful of companies and individuals it says are providing materials and technology to Tehran's nuclear program.

The sanctions, announced by the U.S. State and Treasury departments, are the latest to target Iran's economy as well as its ability to develop nuclear material.

The sanctions were essential "given Iran's continued intransigence on its nuclear program," said Victoria Nuland, the U.S. State Department spokeswoman.

Among the targets of the latest sanctions is Prof. Fereydoun Abbasi Davani, the head of the Iran Atomic Energy Organization.

Abbasi Davani and his wife survived a car bomb two years ago that Tehran has blamed on Israel. At least four scientists associated with Iran's nuclear program have been killed since 2010.

The companies being targeted with sanctions: FaraTech, the Neda Industrial Group, Aria Nikan Marine Industry, Towled Abzar Boreshi, Iran Pouya, Terjerat Gostar and Tarh O Palayesh.

The sanctions freeze the companies' assets and prohibit business dealings in or with the United States. Companies and banks that defy the U.S. sanctions could be cut off from the U.S. financial system, the State and Treasury departments said.

Iran maintains its nuclear program is for civilian energy purposes only. But the IAEA has said it cannot verify whether the intent of the program is for peaceful means.

A number of Western nations have placed economic and arms-related sanctions on Iran since November 2010 when the IAEA said Tehran was pursuing technology that could be used to build nuclear weapons.

Since then, Iran has been hit by the United States and the European Union with an oil embargo as well as sanctions targeting its banks and number of its businesses.

*CNN's Saskya Vandoorne reported from London and Chelsea J. Carter from Atlanta.*

[http://www.cnn.com/2012/12/14/world/meast/iran-us-sanctions/index.html?hpt=hp\\_t4](http://www.cnn.com/2012/12/14/world/meast/iran-us-sanctions/index.html?hpt=hp_t4)

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The Chosun Ilbo – South Korea  
December 10, 2012

## **Iranian Experts 'Helping with N.Korean Rocket Launch'**

The U.S. and South Korea believe Iranian missile experts secretly entered North Korea recently and are staying near the North's rocket launch pad in Tongchang-ri.

"Identifiable cars have been spotted traveling back and forth from the quarters to the missile launch site," a government source here said. "We believe they're carrying Iranian experts."



North Korea apparently invited Iranian missile experts to help with technical problems after the previous rocket launch in April failed.

The rocket launches are widely seen as a cover to test long-range ballistic missile technology.

UPI said experts from Iran's Shahid Hemmat Industrial Group, which developed the Shahab-3 intercontinental ballistic missile, will be present at the North Korean launch. "The missile connection between North Korea and Iran, which started in the 1980s, appears to be more extensive than expected," said a government official here.

North Korea and Iran began cooperating in the development of missiles and other weapons of mass destruction in the 1980s, when Tehran asked Pyongyang help in developing missile technology to counter attacks from Iraqi Scuds.

In 1987, Iran imported 100 Scud-B missiles with a range of 300 km and 12 mobile launch vehicles from North Korea and used them against Iraq.

Since then, North Korea has exported Scud-C (1992) and Rodong missiles (1994) to Iran and also dispatched experts to Iran in 1990 to help it build its own missile manufacturing plant. In 1997, the North provided computer software to Iran to produce Rodong missiles.

Experts believe Iran's Shahab-3 was based on North Korea's Rodong missile, which has a range of 1,300 km, while the Shahab-5 and Shahab-6 were modeled after the North's Taepodong-2 missile.

Iran succeeded in putting satellites into orbit in February 2009 and February this year using rockets based on the Shahab missile.

Iran is now apparently returning the favors. "Iran obtained missile technology not only from China and Russia but also from Western countries such as Germany and the U.K.," said one rocket expert at a state-run research institute here. "All that missile technology ended up in North Korean hands."

A Defense Ministry official here said tight sanctions from the international community prompted North Korea to test a ballistic missile in Iran.

[http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html\\_dir/2012/12/10/2012121001124.html](http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2012/12/10/2012121001124.html)

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Yonhap News Agency – South Korea

December 12, 2012

## **North Korea Successfully Launches Long-Range Rocket**

By Chang Jae-soon and Kim Eun-jung

SEOUL, Dec. 12 (Yonhap) -- North Korea successfully carried out a surprise long-range rocket launch Wednesday, South Korean officials said, rattling regional security and beyond, and fully demonstrating it is perfecting capabilities to deliver nuclear weapons as far as the mainland United States.

The Unha-3 rocket blasted off from the Dongchang-ri site in the North's northwest at 9:49 a.m., officials said. Its first stage fell in the Yellow Sea off South Korea's west coast, and the second stage landed in waters near the Philippines, they said.

The landings happened as Pyongyang announced, and officials said the launch was a success.

The rocket is estimated to have a range of more than 13,000 kilometers, a breakthrough distance long enough to put all of the United States within striking range, a South Korean military source said, citing rocket experts.

Experts drew the range estimate based on the fact that the rocket's first stage had an engine "burn-out" time of 156 seconds, 26 seconds longer than when the North fired the same type of rocket in April, the source said on condition of anonymity.



Experts had previously warned the rocket could have a range of some 10,000 kilometers, which means it could fly as far as Los Angeles. They say it is meaningless to differentiate between a rocket and a missile because they are basically the same and are characterized depending on their payloads.

North Korea also hailed the launch as a "complete success."

"The second version of satellite Kwangmyongsong-3 successfully lifted off from the Sohae Space Center by carrier rocket Unha-3 on Wednesday," the official Korean Central News Agency said. "The satellite entered its preset orbit."

The launch came as a total surprise.

Pyongyang had originally set a 13-day launch window starting Monday, but extended it by a week until Dec. 29 after discovering technical problems with the rocket. Officials in Seoul said Tuesday the North had taken the rocket off the launch pad for repair, leading many to believe it would take some time to fix the problems.

The launch came a week before North Korea marks the first anniversary of the death of late leader Kim Jong-il, father of current leader Kim Jong-un. It also came ahead of South Korea's Dec. 19 presidential election, spurring speculation Pyongyang is attempting to sway the tight race for Seoul's top office.

North Korea has claimed the planned launch is aimed at putting a satellite into orbit.

But South Korea, the United States, China and other countries have denounced it as a disguised ballistic missile test and a violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions that ban Pyongyang from any ballistic activity because it can be used to develop missiles capable of carrying nuclear weapons.

Wednesday's firing was the North's fifth launch of a long-range rocket or missile since the first test in 1998. The other three launches came in 2006, 2009 and April this year. The April launch ended in failure as the rocket exploded soon after takeoff.

North Korea's missile development has long been a top security concern in the region and beyond, along with its nuclear weapons program.

Pyongyang test blasted nuclear devices twice, first in 2006 and the other in 2009, though it is unclear whether the country has mastered the technology to make a nuclear warhead small enough to fit atop ballistic missiles.

South Korea said it "strongly condemns" the firing as a violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions while warning that the communist nation will have to "take full responsibility" for the violation and face deeper isolation from the international community.

"North Korea's launch this time will only result in the deepening of its isolation from the international community," Foreign Minister Kim Sung-hwan said, reading a government statement issued after an emergency National Security Council meeting.

"The government yet again urges North Korea to divert the enormous financial resources wasted on the development of nuclear weapons and missiles to addressing the pressing issue of taking care of the everyday lives of its citizens," Kim said.

The White House denounced the launch as a "highly provocative act" and warned of "consequences."

"North Korea's launch today - using ballistic missile technology despite express prohibitions by United Nations Security Council resolutions - is a highly provocative act that threatens regional security," NSC spokesman Tommy Vietor said.

"This action is yet another example of North Korea's pattern of irresponsible behavior," Vietor said. "The United States remains vigilant in the face of North Korean provocations and fully committed to the security of our allies in the region."

He called for the international community to "work in a concerted fashion to send North Korea a clear message that its violations of United Nations Security Council resolutions have consequences."



The U.N. Security Council is scheduled to convene an emergency session on Wednesday morning.

In New York, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon deplored the North's launch, expressing concern that it could have a negative impact on peace and security in Northeast Asia.

"The Secretary-General deplores the rocket launch. ... It is a clear violation of Security Council resolution 1874, in which the Council demanded that the DPRK not conduct any launch using ballistic missile technology," Ban's spokesman Martin Nesirky said in a statement.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2012/12/12/12/0401000000AEN20121212012451315F.HTML>

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The Australian – Australia

## North Korea Passes Key Ballistic Test

By Rick Wallace, Tokyo correspondent, *The Australian*

December 13, 2012

NORTH Korea has taken a dramatic leap towards having a viable long-range ballistic missile, with a surprise rocket launch yesterday that US aerospace officials said succeeded in placing an object in orbit.

The apparent success of the launch - condemned by Julia Gillard and other world leaders - dramatically increases North Korea's leverage and poses a new foreign policy dilemma for the US, China and South Korea.

While doubts remain about the North's ability to miniaturise a nuclear warhead, the US and its allies must face the reality of dealing with a foe that is now much closer to having the ability to mount a long-range atomic, biological or chemical attack.

The Prime Minister, in a joint statement with Foreign Minister Bob Carr, condemned the launch as a "provocative and irresponsible act" that violated UN sanctions and the will of the wider community.

"North Korea's nuclear and long-range missile programs and its proliferation of sensitive technologies threaten the stability and security of our region," the statement said. "This is North Korea's second, costly, long-range rocket launch this year. And all the while its people struggle to get the food they need to survive.

"We call on the North Korean government to abide by UN Security Council resolutions, stop its provocations, improve the wellbeing of its people, and engage constructively with the international community."

North Korea's Taepodong 3 rocket was launched southwards yesterday from the northwestern Sohae space station at 9.51am (11.51am AEDT) and flew west of the Korean Peninsula, over Okinawa, east of The Philippines and into space above Australia.

According to reports from various agencies, the first two spent stages dropped into the sea west and southwest of South Korea and the final stage splashed down east of The Philippines as intended by North Korean space engineers.

NORAD, the North American Aerospace Defence Command, said the rocket appeared to have launched an object into orbit, although this was contradicted by Japan's Defence Minister.

Japan had threatened to shoot down the missile if it strayed into its territory, but no move to intercept the rocket was made by Tokyo or Seoul.

The timing appeared to be intended to impact on the South Korean and Japanese elections this month, as well as to mark the one-year anniversary of Kim Jong-il's death on December 17.

The launch is likely to substantially boost the standing of Kim's son Kim Jong-un, 29, who has had to launch a major purge to keep control of the impoverished nation's powerful military.



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Pyongyang has always said the rocket was a peaceful attempt to launch a satellite, while the rest of the world regards it as a de facto ballistic missile test. The technologies, hardware and trajectories required for both are similar.

North Korea has been working steadily to produce a long-range rocket capable of striking targets in the US to increase its leverage over its enemies.

The secretive family-run dictatorship had hinted at technical problems that might delay the launch until late this month. But, as is its wont, it shocked the world by launching the missile just as think tanks and pundits watching satellite images of the launch pad were predicting lengthy delays.

South Korean President Lee Myung-bak convened a meeting of national security officials and ministers soon after the launch and a similar meeting was held in Tokyo.

Japan, South Korea and a host of other nations condemned the launch and the UN Security Council was expected to meet overnight to discuss tightening sanctions over the launch.

State-run media gleefully reported yesterday's launch as a triumph. "The second version of satellite Kwangmyongsong-3 successfully lifted off from the Sohae Space Center by carrier rocket Unha-3 on Wednesday," the official Korean Central News Agency said. "The satellite entered its preset orbit."

Pyongyang, humiliated after it invited foreign observers to watch its failed launch of the same type of rocket in April and conducted failed launches in 2006 and 2009, announced a celebratory lunchtime bulletin on state television.

Leading North Korea-watcher Narushige Michishita, of Tokyo's National Graduate Institute of Policy Studies, said while there would be a flurry of condemnation fresh talks would likely begin between the two Koreas, and perhaps the US, China, Russia and Japan, once the fuss had died down.

Professor Michishita said if the satellite had entered orbit it would show Pyongyang had a "rudimentary ability to deliver 100kg of anthrax or chemical weapons to the US", giving it a strong psychological advantage in negotiations.

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/north-korea-passes-key-ballistic-test/story-e6frg6so-1226535673663>

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Chicago Tribune

## **For North Korea, Next Step Is a Nuclear Test**

By David Chance, Reuters

December 13, 2012

SEOUL (Reuters) - North Korea's next step after rattling the world by putting a satellite into orbit for the first time will likely be a nuclear test, the third conducted by the reclusive and unpredictable state.

A nuclear test would be the logical follow-up to Wednesday's successful rocket launch, analysts said. The North's 2009 test came on May 25, a month after a rocket launch.

For the North and its absolute ruler Kim Jong Un, the costs of the rocket program and its allied nuclear weapons efforts--estimated by South Korea's government at \$2.8-\$3.2 billion since 1998--and the risk of additional U.N. or unilateral sanctions are simply not part of the calculation.

"North Korea will insist any sanctions are unjust, and if sanctions get toughened, the likelihood of North Korea carrying out a nuclear test is high," said Baek Seung-joo of the Korea Institute of Defense Analyses.

The United Nations Security Council is to discuss how to respond to the launch, which it says is a breach of sanctions imposed in 2006 and 2009 that banned the isolated and impoverished state from missile and nuclear developments in the wake of its two nuclear weapons tests.

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The only surprise is that the Security Council appears to believe it can dissuade Pyongyang, now on its third hereditary ruler since its foundation in 1948, from further nuclear or rocket tests.

Even China, the North's only major diplomatic backer, has limited clout on a state whose policy of self reliance is backed up by an ideology that states: "No matter how precious peace is, we will never beg for peace. Peace lies at the end of the barrel of our gun".

As recently as August, North Korea showed it was well aware of how a second rocket launch this year, after a failed attempt in April, would be received in Washington.

"It is true that both satellite carrier rocket and (a) missile with warhead use similar technology," its Foreign Ministry said in an eight-page statement carried by state news agency KCNA on Aug. 31.

"The U.S. saw our satellite carrier rocket as a long-range missile that would one day reach the U.S. because it regards the DPRK (Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea) as an enemy."

### **CASH IN EXCHANGED FOR COLDER WAR**

The end-game for the North is a formal peace treaty with Washington, diplomatic recognition and bundles of cash to help bolster its moribund economy.

"They might hope that the U.S. will finally face the unpleasant reality and will start negotiations aimed at slowing down or freezing, but not reversing, their nuclear and missile programs," said Andrei Lankov, a North Korea expert at Kookmin University in Seoul.

"If such a deal is possible, mere cognition is not enough. The U.S. will have to pay, will have to provide generous 'aid' as a reward for North Koreans' willingness to slow down or stop for a while."

Recent commercially available satellite imagery shows that North Korea has rebuilt an old road leading to its nuclear test site in the mountainous in the northeast of the country. It has also shoveled away snow and dirt from one of the entrances to the test tunnel as recently as November.

At the same time as developing its nuclear weapons test site, the North has pushed ahead with what it says is a civil nuclear program.

At the end of November, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said the construction of a light water reactor was moving ahead and that North Korea had largely completed work on the exterior of the main buildings.

North Korea says it needs nuclear power to provide electricity, but has also boasted of its nuclear deterrence capability and has traded nuclear technology with Syria, Libya and probably Pakistan, according to U.S. intelligence reports.

It terms its nuclear weapons program a "treasured sword."

The missile and the nuclear tests both serve as a "shop window" for Pyongyang's technology and Kookmin's Lankov adds that the attractions for other states could rise if North Korea carries out a test using highly enriched uranium (HEU).

In its two nuclear tests so far, the North has used plutonium of which it has limited stocks which fall further with each test. However it sits on vast reserves of uranium minerals, which could give it a second path to a nuclear weapon.

"An HEU-based device will have a great political impact, since it will demonstrate that North Korean engineers know how to enrich uranium, and this knowledge is in high demand among aspiring nuclear states," Lankov said.

*Editing by Raju Gopalakrishnan.*

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/sns-rt-us-korea-north-rocketbre8bb02k-20121211,0,4136832.story>

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Asahi Shimbun – Japan

## North Korea Missiles Could Threaten U.S., but Not Yet

December 13, 2012

The Associated Press (AP)

WASHINGTON--North Korea's successful long-range rocket shot raised a nightmarish specter for Americans: that one day its longtime adversary could fire a nuclear-tipped missile into the U.S. mainland. But North Korea still has far to go to make that threat a reality.

Experts say the North still faces major technical hurdles. Dec. 12 launch showed it can fire a rocket into space, but it has not worked out how to make a projectile return to Earth and hit a target. Nor has it mastered how to put a nuclear warhead on a missile. Even if it solves those problems, a giant rocket would be vulnerable to a pre-emptive attack.

That's little consolation for U.S. officials who say North Korea is progressing technologically, and unless that progress is checked, it's only a matter of time before the North has the ability to threaten America and elsewhere with a long-range ballistic missile.

There's still time to negotiate, and Washington will be pressing China, the North's main ally, to get Pyongyang to play ball. But negotiating North Korea's disarmament in return for much-needed aid will prove tough if the North's totalitarian leadership--ensconced since the Korean War six decades ago--views its weapons of mass destruction as key to its survival.

Six-nation talks on the North's nuclear program, also including China, the U.S., Russia, South Korea and Japan, have been stalled since 2009, and the Obama administration's effort last year to kick start the process by offering food aid in return for nuclear concessions collapsed when Pyongyang attempted a satellite launch in April.

That launch attempt failed, like the three other launches of three-stage rockets that had proceeded it since 1998, leading to skepticism that the impoverished country, which subject to tough international sanctions, had the wherewithal to succeed. But Dec. 12 launch managed to send a small communications satellite into orbit, prompting celebrations in Pyongyang.

In 2010, U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates warned that within five years the North could develop an intercontinental ballistic missile capable of reaching the United States, and Dec. 12 launch suggests the North is on track for that, said former U.S. defense official, James Schoff, now an expert on East Asia at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

But he and other experts say the North must still surmount tough technical barriers.

"It's worth keeping in mind that even though this launch worked, North Korea has no confidence in the reliability of the rocket, which undermines its utility for military purposes," said David Wright at the Washington-based Union of Concerned Scientists.

Wright says the Unha-3 has a potential range of 8,000 to 10,000 kilometers (4,970 to 6,210 miles), which could put Hawaii and the northwest coast of the mainland United States within range. But the satellite it mounted on the rocket weighs only 50 kilograms (110 pounds)--about a tenth the weight of a nuclear warhead. The North would also have to develop a heat shield for a missile so it could withstand the extreme heat and pressure of a descent back through the Earth's atmosphere. It would also need a guidance system to enable it to hit a target.

"Those are pretty serious tasks," Wright said.

Another key technical challenge would be to miniaturize a nuclear warhead to fit on a missile. The North Korea conducted nuclear tests in 2006 and 2009, and probably has enough plutonium for a half-dozen or more bombs, but would will have to do more testing to advance its warhead designs.

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Even if it achieves all that, experts say a liquid-fueled rocket like the 32-meter (105-foot) -tall Unha-3 on which a ballistic missile could be based takes days to assemble and hours to fuel. That would be vulnerable to attack in a pre-emptive airstrike, compared to more mobile solid-fueled missiles developed by the U.S. and Soviet Union which are more easily concealed and ready to launch within minutes.

But Victor Cha, a former White House director for Asia policy, warned there has been an unspoken tendency in the United States to regard North Korea as a technologically backward and bizarre country, underestimating the strategic threat it poses.

"This is no longer acceptable," he wrote in a commentary, noting Dec. 12 launch makes North Korea one of the only non-U.S. allied countries outside of China and the Soviet Union to develop long-range missile technology that could potentially reach the United States.

North Korea portrayed the launch as a success for its peaceful space program, but it violates U.N. Security Council resolutions that forbid North Korea from such rocket launches as the technology can be used for ballistic missiles. The U.S. and allies will now be pressing for tighter sanctions against Pyongyang, although it remains to be seen if they can win China's support.

"This launch is about a weapons program, not peaceful use of space," State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland said.

North Korea already poses a major security threat to its East Asian neighbors. It has one of the world's largest standing armies and a formidable if aging arsenal of artillery that could target Seoul, the capital of South Korea. Nearly 30,000 U.S. forces are based in South Korea, a legacy of the 1950-53 Korean War that ended with an armistice not a formal peace treaty.

The North's short-range rockets could also potentially target another core U.S. ally, Japan.

Darryl Kimball, executive director of the nongovernment Arms Control Association, said those capabilities, rather than its future ability to strike the U.S., still warrant the most attention. He said the launch of the Unha-3 was worrisome and would provide valuable information for the North in its missile development, but would not change the balance of military power in the region.

[http://ajw.asahi.com/article/asia/korean\\_peninsula/AJ201212130014](http://ajw.asahi.com/article/asia/korean_peninsula/AJ201212130014)

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Channel News Asia – Singapore

## **China 'Lacks Leverage' over North Korea: State Media**

13 December 2012

Agence France-Presse (AFP)

BEIJING: Beijing lacks leverage over North Korea and will block moves for strong new sanctions for fear of weakening its position further, Chinese state media said Thursday following Pyongyang's rocket launch.

China is the North's sole major ally, considered the nation with the most influence over Pyongyang, and after Wednesday's rocket flight US officials urged it to intervene.

But in an editorial Thursday the state-run Global Times said: "China's ability to influence countries in the region is limited... The real problem is China's strength is not sufficient to influence its neighbour's situation."

"NK move shows China's lack of leverage" read its headline.

China voiced "regret" over the launch but state press said it could not support strong further measures against Pyongyang for fear of weakening its relationship.

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A bellicose Western reaction risked driving North Korea into a corner with potentially devastating results, editorials said.

"That is why China should not take a cooperative stance with the US, Japan and South Korea in imposing sanctions on North Korea," the Global Times said.

"China will veto radical resolutions made by the three countries. At the same time North Korea should pay for its actions."

It acknowledged fears in the region should North Korea eventually be able to arm a ballistic missile with a nuclear weapon.

The reaction to the launch "is almost the same as that of North Korea's nuclear test", the paper said, and "a vicious circle" of escalation could lead to Japan abandoning its pacifist constitution and threaten peace in Northeast Asia.

The situation was "subtle, complex and dangerous", said the People's Daily, the official mouthpiece of the Communist Party, urging calm and a return to the six-party talks on North Korea hosted by China and including Russia, the United States, South Korea and Japan.

"The reaction by the Security Council should be prudent and measured," the paper added.

One columnist in Global Times, which often takes a nationalist stance, suggested that China should seize the opportunity to establish a regional security framework.

The country is embroiled in territorial disputes with Japan over islands in the East China Sea, and several littoral states over the South China Sea, which Beijing claims almost in its entirety.

"Now it's high time to establish a political and security mechanism," wrote Ding Gang. "China is a big power in the region.

"China itself will certainly be confined by the mechanism, but the credibility it acquires will be more important."

"The mechanism will not only regulate North Korea, but also the Philippines and Vietnam."

[http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/afp\\_asiapacific/view/1242558/1.html](http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/afp_asiapacific/view/1242558/1.html)

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The Himalayan Times - Kathmandu, Nepal

## **With Successful Launch, Kim and Allies Cement Rule in N.Korea**

By Reuters

Friday, December 14, 2012

SEOUL (Reuters) - When North Korea's Kim Jong-un commemorates a year of his rule next week, he will be able to declare he has fulfilled the country's long-held dream of becoming a "space power".

Sharing the limelight with the 29-year old will be three civilians who have grown stronger in the past year and have helped Kim exert control over the country's powerful military, which may be an advantage in edging the country closer to an attempt to reopen dialogue with the United States.

Wednesday's successful rocket launch, in which North Korea put a satellite in space for the first time, may have helped cement the position of Kim's uncle Jang Song-thaek and Choe Ryong-hae, the military's top political strategist, as well as Ju Kyu-chang, the 84-year-old head of the country's missile and nuclear programme.

"The rocket launch is a boost politically to the standing of Jang Song-thaek and Choe Ryong-hae, who have been around Kim Jong-un," said Baek Seung-joo of the Korea Institute of Defense Analyses, a government-affiliated think tank in South Korea.



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While Washington has condemned the rocket launch and called for tougher sanctions on North Korea it was, as recently as February, willing to offer food aid to Pyongyang. At that time it was just over a year since the North shelled a South Korean island, killing civilians, and sank a South Korean warship.

The rise of Jang and Chae especially, once ridiculed as "fake" military men by army veterans, together with the country's aging chief missile bureaucrat, could also mean the renegade state will try its hand at using what is now stronger leverage in negotiations to extract aid and concessions.

Jang is the brother-in-law of Kim Jong-il and was the chief promoter of his son Kim Jong-un when the elder Kim died on Dec. 17 last year. Jang has further increased his prominence in recent weeks with high-level public appearances, at times in unprecedented proximity to the leader of a country where appearance and formality are rigidly controlled.

Jang accompanied Kim to the rocket command centre to watch the successful launch on Wednesday, the North's state news agency KCNA said.

He is officially a vice chairman of the ruling National Defence Commission and an army general in name only, but is widely believed to be the North's second-in-command in reality.

Jang is considered a pragmatist who is willing to engage both allies and enemies abroad, but also one who understands the challenge of cementing the position of the young and relatively untested grandson of the state's founder.

Baek noted that comments by the North's Foreign Ministry, customarily the channel used by the leadership to wage war of words with the United States, had been tempered recently, indicating Pyongyang may seek a way back into negotiations.

"The North may start to send active indications to the United States and China that it is willing to talk, even to go back to the six-party talks, and to say that its pledge for a missile test moratorium still stands," Baek said.

The six-party talks are aimed at halting North Korea's nuclear programme and involve the North, the United States, China, Japan, Russia and South Korea. They have been held since 2003 but have stalled since 2008.

#### CIVILIANS IN MILITARY GARB

Choe is another Workers' Party faithful now donning army uniform. He is head of the General Political Department of the North's 1.2-million strong Army, and is seen as the other major beneficiary of this week's rocket launch.

Jang and Choe are anomalies in a country that claims its roots in the armed struggle against Japan, in that they have not risen through the army's ranks but have received military titles that are said to be a source of ridicule among their opponents.

"Choe and Jang will benefit from the launch because they are the ones who will have undermined the military's influence and strengthened the party's status," said Moon Hong-sik of South Korea's Institute for National Security Strategy, a government-linked thinktank.

The surprise success of Wednesday's launch after a failure in April will be credited to Jang and Choe while Kim will boost his credibility as a leader who gets the job done, said Suh Choo-suk, who was chief national security advisor to former South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun.

"I think Kim Jong-un's overall control is already solid. His control will be even stronger through the rocket launch."

The technical aspects of the North's longstanding missile programme and possibly its nuclear project are led by a quiet and elderly engineer Ju Kyu-chang, another civilian in army garb.

Ju has been around since the North first tested its long-range missile technology in the summer of 1998 and is still believed to be in charge of the day-to-day running of the project to develop missiles and possibly nuclear weapons.

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Recognition appears to have come relatively late in life for the silver haired technocrat Ju, who is believed to have trained as a metal alloy specialist, as he started to appear in public with the country's top leader only when he turned 70.

Officially, Ju is the head of the ruling Workers' Party of Korea's oddly named Machine-Building Industry Department. He was also named to the National Defence Commission, the country's top military body, after the North's 2009 long-range missile test.

Ju is among the North's most heavily sanctioned individuals, personally named in several government blacklists.

"His rise coincided with the escalation of pace in the North's missile and nuclear programmes," said an expert with a South Korean state-run think tank who did not want to be named.

"It could very well have been as a reward for his contribution."

<http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=With+successful+launch%26sbquo%3B+Kim+and+allies+cement+rule+in+N.Korea&NewsID=357744>

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Deccan Herald – India

## **Pak Nuclear Stock Pile to Grow: US Analyst**

Washington, Dec 11, 2012

Press Trust of India (PTI)

Pakistan's nuclear stock pile is likely to grow in the coming years, as its programme unlike that of India is controlled by military leaders who consider this as both a political and military instrument, a noted American analyst has said.

Michael Krepon argues that it will be hard to dampen the growth of Pakistan's considerable and growing nuclear arsenal because few individuals make these decisions and most Pakistanis view them as a rare success story.

In a report on 'Pakistan's Nuclear Strategy and Deterrence Stability', Krepon of the Stimson Institute says that a further growth in Pakistan's stock piles is likely to accelerate a similar growth in India.

"Pakistan's stockpile is likely to grow as long as key constituencies within the country view their nuclear programmes as a success story, domestic critics can be easily dismissed, relations with India remain contentious, and the sense of Pakistan's international isolation grows," he said.

He said perceived nuclear requirements could be revised downward in select possibilities -- in case of advent of new leaders who have unconventional views about nuclear weapons, or improved relations with India with significant domestic backing or severe economic perturbations or a perception-shattering event that causes a rethink by nuclear advocates.

India's nuclear stockpile, like that of Pakistan, has approximately doubled over the last decade to perhaps 80-100 warheads, he said, adding that the pace of New Delhi's efforts has seemed satisfactory to Indian political leaders who have viewed nuclear weapons as political, message-sending instruments, rather than as weapons to carry out war plans.

The ambivalent Indian approach to nuclear weapons has been well-chronicled and is deeply rooted, he said.

"Pakistan's programmes, unlike India's, are controlled by military officers who view nuclear weapons as military, as well as political, instruments," Krepon said.

He said by almost every indicator, Pakistan is receding in India's rear-view mirror and Indian elites resent being compared to Pakistan but this is not true with respect to Pakistan's nuclear weapon-related accomplishments.

**Issue No. 1037, 14 December 2012**

*United States Air Force Counterproliferation Research & Education / Maxwell AFB, Montgomery AL*  
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"If reports are true that Pakistan is leading India in warhead numbers and operationally-ready missiles, and if the stewards of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal continue along current programming trajectories, New Delhi is likely to accelerate stockpile growth and hasten the transfer of missile programmes from the Defense Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) to the military services," he wrote.

"India certainly has the nuclear infrastructure to compete successfully with Pakistan, which is one of the reasons why the stewards of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal strive so hard. Still, the tempos of making and implementing decisions in New Delhi are not easily accelerated," he noted.

He said the Pakistani nuclear doctrine asserts that its nuclear deterrent is India-specific but the requirements for credible, minimal deterrence are not fixed, rather they are determined by a dynamic threat environment.

"Given India's conventional military advantages, Pakistan reserves the option to use nuclear weapons first in extremis," Krepon said.

With the exception of the first use option, all of the central tenets of Pakistan's nuclear doctrine have some malleability, he argued.

For example, Pakistan's nuclear arsenal is not entirely "India specific".

Pakistani officials have occasionally expressed concerns about Israeli and US designs against their nuclear capabilities – designs that presumably also require deterrence in some fashion, he said.

<http://www.deccanherald.com/content/297812/pak-nuclear-stock-pile-grow.html>

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Global Times – China

## **India Successfully Testfires Nuke-Capable Agni I Missile**

Xinhua, December 12, 2012

By Agencies

India Wednesday successfully testfired its home-made, nuclear-capable surface-to-surface Agni-I intermediate-range ballistic missile in the eastern state of Odisha, sources said.

"The missile, a single-stage missile powered by solid propellants, was testfired from a military facility on the Wheeler Island. The testfiring of the missile was successful," the sources said.

Senior defense scientists and top military officials witnessed the testfiring of the ballistic missile which can carry payloads up to 1,000 kg, they added.

The Agni missile, used by the Indian Army, is a family of short to intermediate range ballistic missiles developed by India under the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme.

India's state-owned Defense Research and Development Organisation has developed Agni missile series, including Agni-I with a strike range of 700 km, Agni-II with a strike range of 2,000 km, Agni-III with strike range of 3,000 km, Agni-IV with a strike range beyond 3,500 km and Agni-V with a strike range of more than 5,000 km.

<http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/749793.shtml>

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

## **Russia to Abandon Key Missile Defense Station – Baku**

10 December 2012



MOSCOW, December 10 (RIA Novosti) – The Russian army is giving up the Gabala radar it leased in Azerbaijan because of a disagreement over rental price, Azerbaijan's Foreign Ministry said on Monday.

Russia informed the Azerbaijani authorities about the pullout on Monday, the ministry said in a statement.

The lease, signed in 2002, was valid until December 24, 2012. Moscow and Baku have been in talks about prolonging the lease on Gabala until 2025 for more than a year.

The current lease stood at \$7 million a year, but Azeri authorities wanted to hike it to \$300 million, Russian daily Kommersant said in February.

Neither Russia nor Azerbaijan made any official comment on the lease prices being discussed, though an official of the Azeri presidential administration, Novruz Mamedov, told local news agency Trend on Monday that the current price was "symbolic" and that Gabala will be made into a resort instead.

Russia will replace the Gabala radar, a crucial element of its missile defense system, with a new station in Armavir in Russia's southern Krasnodar Region, then-commander of Russia's Space Forces, Oleg Ostapenko, said in September.

The Gabala station, which has a staff of 1,100, is capable of tracking missile launches and trajectories over the territories of Iran, Turkey, China, Pakistan, India, Iraq and Australia, as well as most of Africa and parts of Indian and Atlantic oceans.

The Russian military said that its new Voronezh-type radars will have comparable range while utilizing better equipment than the Gabala radar, opened in 1983. One Voronezh radar is already deployed in Armavir and another is set to be added by 2013.

[http://en.rian.ru/military\\_news/20121210/178055907.html](http://en.rian.ru/military_news/20121210/178055907.html)

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BioPrepWatch.com

## **Russia to Increase Spending on Chemical and Biological Weapons Defense**

December 12, 2012

By Jeffrey Bigongiari

The Russian Defense Ministry recently announced that military spending on improving chemical and biological weapons defenses will reach \$183 million in 2013.

The program, called the National System of Chemical and Biological Security for Russia from 2009-2015, already includes more than \$57 million slated for research and testing and approximately \$88 million for capital investment, according to RIA Novosti.

"The overall spending on measures to defend against chemical and biological threats in 2013 will be around 5.65 billion rubles," Maj. Gen. Yevgeny Starkov, the head of the Russia's Nuclear, Chemical and Biological Defense Department, said, RIA Novosti reports. "Under the program we plan to fit out organizations involved in working with dangerous micro-organisms and highly toxic substances with modern equipment, modernize a range of potentially dangerous facilities, thus reducing the risk of an accident."

Starkov recently said that he does not believe the world powers will be able to completely eliminate their chemical weapons stockpiles.

"This type of weaponry cannot be completely excluded from combat arsenals because analysis of...spending, both in the United States and other Western countries, on the development of new combat agents, which fall under the provisions of the Convention, shows that this work is ongoing," Starkov said, Rossiya 24 TV reports.



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[http://www.bioprepwatch.com/international\\_bioterror\\_policy/russia-to-increase-spending-on-chemical-and-biological-weapons-defense/326436/](http://www.bioprepwatch.com/international_bioterror_policy/russia-to-increase-spending-on-chemical-and-biological-weapons-defense/326436/)

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency  
**Russian Press - Behind the Headlines, December 13**  
MOSCOW, December 13 (RIA Novosti)

*Argumenty i Fakty*

## **Russia Suspends Work on Hypersonic Aircraft Development Project**

Russia has given up the idea of manned hypersonic flights (at speeds above Mach 5), a spokesman for the Central Aerohydrodynamic Institute (TsAGI) reported.

The TsAGI source was probably referring to the GELA project (the Russian acronym stands for Hypersonic Experimental Aircraft), also known as the Kh-90 Rocket, which is being developed by the Raduga Engineering Designing Bureau.

According to the source, the first Kh-90 launches were scheduled for August of this year at the testing range of the 929th state Aircraft Research Center in Akhtubinsk near Astrakhan.

“What we know at this stage is that the work has been suspended until 2014. But we stopped testing the Kh-90 in wind tunnels back in 2010. Only theoretical calculations have been conducted over the last two years,” the TsAGI source added.

A source in the design bureau itself went on record as saying that the hypersonic project had already lost relevance 10 years ago.

“Maybe my TsAGI colleagues were referring to a formal decision to this effect, because the closure of the project is already a done deal. We haven’t worked on it for 10 years,” he said.

The United States gave up the development of its X-43 hypersonic jet back in 2003, replacing it with a hypersonic drone.

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

<http://en.rian.ru/papers/20121213/178132800.html>

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

## **Russia to Test 11 ICBMs in 2013**

14 December 2012

MOSCOW, December (RIA Novosti) - Russia's Strategic Missile Force (RSVN) plans to test-fire 11 intercontinental ballistic missiles in 2013, after firing only five this year, its commander said on Friday.

"In 2013 we plan to fire 11 ICBMs with the main aim being the life-extension of existing missile systems and state acceptance trials of future systems," Col. Gen. Sergei Karakayev said.

A new automated battle management system (ASBU) is also being introduced for the RSVN which will allow rapid retargeting of ICBMs, he said.

"The RSVN is currently undertaking introduction of a fourth-generation automated battle management system, which, while undertaking the traditional role of authentication of commands, collating reports and controlling launch stations, will also guarantee automated alteration of plans and operational retargeting of missiles," he said.

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By 2020, the whole of the RSVN will be equipped with modern digital communications, he added.

[http://en.rian.ru/military\\_news/20121214/178158499.html](http://en.rian.ru/military_news/20121214/178158499.html)

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Russia & India Report – India

## **Russia to Develop Precision Conventional ICBM Option**

14 December 2012

RIA Novosti

"The availability of a powerful liquid-fueled ICBM allows us the capability of creating a strategic high-accuracy weapons system with a conventional payload with practically global range, if the US does not pull back from its program for creating such missile systems," he said.

The new liquid-fuel ICBM will be able to penetrate any missile defense system likely to emerge in the near future, he said.

"The higher energy provided by liquid fuels gives it more varied and effective methods of countermeasures against global missile defense screens including space-based elements of those systems," he said.

Analysts say arming ICBMs with conventional warheads for long-range attack might produce problems as well as solutions.

"A conventionally-armed ICBM was one option considered as part of Washington's Prompt Global Strike studies," said Douglas Barrie, air warfare analyst at the London-based International Institute of Strategic Studies. "The advantages of reach and speed are self-apparent, however, the issue of differentiating between a nuclear and a conventional warhead once the system was launched but prior to impact raises a concern of how those targeted might respond," he added.

Russia is developing a solid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) to replace all its current "fifth-generation" long-range missile systems including the Yars and Topol M, Karakayev said.

The RSVN has carried out a small number of test-firings of a prototype of the new missile, the last of which was carried out from the Kapustin Yar range on October 24 from a mobile launcher.

"This missile was built with maximal use of technologies developed in the course of producing fifth-generation systems in order to get it into service more quickly and reduce costs," he said.

Karakayev said it was too early to discuss details of such work for "clearly obvious reasons" but added "the results of the launches show that the makers of this missile technology are clearly on the right track."

It is the first formal announcement from the RSVN command that the fifth-generation solid-fueled ICBM would be deployed; but previously unnamed sources had said it would be deployed by 2014.

[http://indrus.in/articles/2012/12/14/russia\\_to\\_develop\\_precision\\_conventional\\_icbm\\_option\\_21027.html](http://indrus.in/articles/2012/12/14/russia_to_develop_precision_conventional_icbm_option_21027.html)

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The London Guardian – U.K.

## **Sea-Based Nuclear Deterrent Expensive and 'Insane' – Ex-Defence minister**

*Former armed forces minister Sir Nick Harvey urges need for Trident alternatives in evidence to Nuclear Education Trust*

By Nick Hopkins

Thursday, 13 December 2012

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Keeping a constant sea-bound nuclear deterrent is "complete insanity" that costs too much and is militarily illogical, a former defence minister has said.

Sir Nick Harvey, who was armed forces minister until September, said the UK had to properly consider other options before any decisions were taken about whether to replace the Royal Navy's four ageing Trident submarines.

Giving evidence to a research paper compiled by the Nuclear Education Trust, Harvey made the case for alternatives to "like for like" replacement vessels, insisting the government needed to accept the world had changed, and so had the UK's enemies.

"Continuous at-sea deterrence is, it must be said, complete insanity," he told the trust. "At [the] height of the cold war, when the Soviet Union had us in its sights and we had their cities in ours, then at least it had some logic. Now, 20 years after 'de-targeting', what possible logic can there be in having a continuously available arsenal aimed at nothing in particular? The costs of continuous at-sea deterrence are also extreme – a vast financial premium."

Harvey, a senior Liberal Democrat, said he hoped to see the government "descend the ladder of options".

This could mean adopting a strategy of having only two replacements for the Trident-carrying Vanguard submarines, or converting the hunter-killer Astute submarines to carry nuclear warheads.

This is thought to be one of the options being explored by the Trident Alternatives Review, which was commissioned by Harvey when he was at the Ministry of Defence, and is now being overseen by Danny Alexander, the chief secretary to the Treasury.

The review is due to report early next year and is expected to set out a series of options for the future of the UK's independent nuclear deterrent.

The government has already approved money for initial work to be undertaken to replace the Vanguards, but the "main gate" decision to go ahead with manufacturing new vessels will not be taken until 2016.

The Tories are in favour of replacing Trident, and the removal of Harvey has raised concerns that the review has been effectively mothballed.

In separate evidence for Thursday's report, Prof Andrew Dorman from the thinktank Chatham House said Harvey's dismissal "would seem to confirm that the Trident Alternative Review has, to all intents and purposes, been shelved with the acquiescence of the leadership of the Liberal Democrats. Thus the review is likely to be as thin in its findings just as the previous Labour government's white paper on the replacement of the nuclear deterrent was.

"Its conclusions, no doubt, will be to carry on with the existing policy ... the Trident Alternatives Review has effectively ended with the loss of Liberal Democrat leadership within the MoD."

The trust's lengthy research paper also set out the potentially devastating consequences to the shipbuilding community at Barrow-in-Furness, where BAE Systems has 5,000 people working on the Astute and Trident "successor" programmes.

Community and business leaders said if the Trident submarines were not replaced, "the government must provide immediate, sustained and considerable support, which should include for instance regeneration funding at the level of £100 million for every 1,000 jobs lost to the local economy".

The trust called for the Trident Alternatives Review to be "made public by the coalition with the least number of redactions possible" so that people could consider the issues.

Harvey suggested work at Barrow-in-Furness could be sustained by increasing the number of Astute submarines from seven to 10 – if the Trident boats are not replaced.

"If we were to commit to a programme of 10 non-Ballistic submarines, BAE Systems would maintain a perpetuity of business employing numbers at 4,000 or so."



He said 1,000 jobs would be lost, but that it was "not feasible in the current financial climate, and given the pressures within the MoD for other equipment, to spend approximately £100bn on weapons of mass destruction in order to save 1,000 or so jobs."

Harvey said it would be cheaper for the government to give every worker £2m "so they could go and live in the Bahamas". This option was, he said, not entirely flippant.

"I would have thought [it was] not unwelcome to the employees as well as affordable to the government given the scale of the potential savings."

"I am very clear the government does have a moral responsibility to step in and make some kind of injection into the local economy, including a considerable financial commitment."

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2012/dec/13/sea-nuclear-deterrent-trident-expensive-insanity>

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Russia Today (RT) – Russia

## **Next-Gen US Drone: Now Equipped with ‘Death Ray’ Laser**

11 December 2012

The next generation of military drones, unveiled by a leading US manufacturer, will not just carry a limited supply of rockets – but will likely be fitted with an ultra-light laser, capable of repeatedly destroying objects at the speed of light.

"It would give us an unlimited magazine," a person close to the High Energy Liquid Laser Area Defense System (HELLADS) program told Time magazine.

Over the past four years, the Defense Advance Research Project Agency (DARPA) has given contractor General Atomics over \$60 million to develop and then scale HELLADS – a powerful 150 kW ray with a difference.

Current lasers of that strength – enough to destroy an incoming rocket or plane – are bulky, which means they can only be placed on stationary defense systems.

HELLADS, which DARPA says is in the "final development stage," is radically lighter. It will weigh only 750 kilograms – less than a very small car.

This vastly opens up its potential uses.

A key application of HELLADS is in the new generation of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), better known as drones.

In a digital video advertising its own Predator C Avenger drone, General Atomics shows a formation of UAVs annihilating a shower of ground-launched interceptor missiles in a split second, before making them an offensive weapon and targeting objects on the ground.

The capacity of the laser is likely to be multiplied by the capability of the Predator itself. General Atomics believes the most efficient use of the relatively cheap, high-speed drones will be as a large "swarm" of integrated units that can overcome even a large defense network, at the expense of a small amount mechanical casualties.

The bold claims have to be weighed against several reservations.

Neither the UAV nor the laser have reached mass production stage, and although it is evident that the US Air Force sees drones as crucial to its future, the success of the Predator is not yet guaranteed.

Another is the natural limitation of the laser. While it can be easily recharged and work for hours on end, unlike a conventional missile, a laser weapon cannot easily penetrate clouds or smoke with its rays. Essentially, HELLADS will have to see its target before it can shoot it, making its use most likely against missiles and enemy planes, rather than ground-based targets.





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Proponents of the new generation of lasers say that despite their nickname of “death rays,” lasers will help to reduce collateral damage with their precision, and mute the ethical criticism that has dogged drones since they have become the preferred method for picking out specific US targets.

Russia, Israel and other leading arms manufacturers say they are working on their own versions of similar portable lasers, though the US developments appear to be at a more advanced stage.

<http://rt.com/news/hellads-drone-predator-darpa-762/>

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Global Security Newswire

## **"Fiscal Cliff" Prompts Fresh Push for U.S. Nuke Spending Cut**

December 12, 2012

By Diane Barnes, Global Security Newswire

WASHINGTON -- Dozens of Democratic lawmakers have revived a call for \$100 billion in U.S. nuclear weapons spending reductions over 10 years as Congress pushes to enact \$1.2 trillion in deficit reductions by the beginning of January.

Washington must meet the deadline to avert automatic, across-the-board cuts to federal programs imposed under the 2011 Budget Control Act, but no deal appears imminent. The law's sequestration provisions are part of a series of scheduled tax increases and spending cuts anticipated to have far-ranging implications for the U.S. economy if they are allowed to begin taking effect next month.

Failure in Congress to negotiate a deficit spending agreement would leave open the potential for significant nuclear cuts under budget sequestration. The Defense Department last week received White House instructions to identify \$500 billion in potential spending cuts that could be implemented to meet mandates under the budget control law.

"Unchecked spending on nuclear weapons threatens to push us over the fiscal cliff," Representative Edward Markey (D-Mass.) and 44 other House Democrats stated in a Dec. 4 letter to the top Democratic and Republican lawmakers in both chambers, citing the term popularly used to refer to the anticipated funding moves. "We know there is plenty of waste in the nuclear weapons budget."

The lawmakers singled out plans to refurbish approximately 400 B-61 nuclear gravity bombs, a project expected to cost roughly \$10 billion. They also cited the scheduled construction of a new highly enriched uranium processing facility in Tennessee; the effort is projected to cost between \$4.2 billion and \$6.5 billion.

"Cuts to nuclear weapons programs upwards of \$100 billion over the next 10 years are possible," the letter says. The United States is now on track to spend at least \$640 billion through fiscal 2022 on the operation and upkeep of its nuclear deterrent, the Democrats cited the independent Ploughshares Fund as determining in a September estimate.

"Specific programs have been identified that can be decreased in scope or eliminated to bring our nuclear forces into better alignment with our 21st century needs," the lawmakers wrote. "Such cuts should be included in any final deal to avoid the fiscal cliff."

The letter also calls for reduced spending on the nation's ICBM fleet, as well as on B-52 and B-2 nuclear bomber aircraft.

Those recommendations are not likely to be welcomed by Republicans, who have already criticized President Obama for failing to keep up with nuclear complex spending levels pledged as the administration successfully pressed for Senate ratification of the U.S.-Russia New START arms control treaty.

"During the Senate's consideration of the New START treaty, the president made many promises to achieve support for Senate ratification," House Armed Services Strategic Forces Subcommittee Chairman Michael Turner (R-Ohio) stated in

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March, referring to a decade-long, \$85 billion nuclear weapons spending plan submitted by the administration in 2010. "With the president's [fiscal year 2013] budget request, it is ... apparent that those promises have been broken."

The panel's top Democrat, though, on Wednesday urged Washington to zero any funding for "new nuclear weapons."

"If you see the budget, there's new monies in there to make more nuclear weapons," Representative Loretta Sanchez (Calif.) said at a defense policy luncheon in Washington. The lawmaker did not specify what nuclear arms programs she was referencing, but updates planned for the nation's B-61 bombs would reportedly involve replacing nearly every component of each weapon.

Sanchez called for further examination of "what nonproliferation will bring us," and for the New START pact to "actually be implemented."

Republican lawmakers at the Wednesday event did not address the nuclear arms spending question.

U.S. atomic arsenal spending is likely to face the chopping block even if a compromise is reached to prevent curbs under the 2011 legislation, according to findings from a planning exercise carried out earlier this year by the independent Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments.

<http://www.nti.org/gsn/article/fiscal-cliff-talks-prompt-new-call-curb-us-nuke-spending/>

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Union of Concerned Scientists  
OPINION/All Things Nuclear

## Is Xi Jinping Changing Chinese Nuclear Weapons Policy?

By Gregory Kulacki, China project manager and senior analyst  
December 8, 2012

Newly appointed Chinese Communist Party (CCP) General Secretary Xi Jinping may have broken new ground in Chinese nuclear weapons policy this week. Xi, who is also the new chair of China's Central Military Commission (CMC), gave what China's *Wenhui Bao* characterized as a "major address" to a delegation from China's Second Artillery during a meeting in Beijing on 5 December. Retired PLA Major-General Wang Haiyun, presenting an "explanatory reading" of the speech for Hong Kong media, is reported to have said Xi's speech marked the "first time the mission and status of China's strategic nuclear forces were articulated in a public setting." The full text of the speech has not yet been made available.

Wang, who once served as a military attaché to Russia and now works with several Chinese think tanks, indicates that Xi spoke about nuclear deterrence in a way that may represent a departure from past Chinese statements about the purpose of China's nuclear arsenal. Wang claims China's new commander-in-chief believes that "deterrence is not the same as a threat" and that it is "a means for China to seek peace, not a means for war."

Speaking for himself, Wang compared China's nuclear deterrent to that of the U.S. and the former Soviet Union, claiming that the experience of multiple crises between the two nuclear powers "shows that strategic deterrence is an important means of preserving the peace under nuclear conditions." Somewhat ominously, Wang linked the Obama administration's new Asia policy to nuclear deterrence issues. He described current U.S. policy as a "containment strategy" that "itself is a type of deterrence" meant to keep China from challenging U.S. global primacy.

Notably, none of the Chinese press reports on Xi's speech to the Second Artillery mention—as is standard practice when Chinese nuclear weapons policy is discussed in the Chinese media—China's pledge not to be the first to use nuclear weapons.

Traditionally, Chinese declaratory policy emphasizes that the sole purpose of China's nuclear arsenal is to prevent "nuclear blackmail." U.S. declaratory policy, which does not eschew first use, is seen by many Chinese analysts as an example of nuclear blackmail. This uniquely Chinese characterization was preferred over the concept of "deterrence,"

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which older Chinese nuclear policy hands generally interpreted as a threat to use nuclear weapons. Wang's commentary on Xi's remarks to the Second Artillery suggests China's new leadership may now be more accepting of the traditional U.S. concept of deterrence. As a result, they may also be beginning to broaden the purpose of China's nuclear arsenal to include deterring conventional conflicts as well as achieving vague geopolitical objectives.

However, Wang's "explanatory reading" of supposed changes in China's view of nuclear weapons may not represent official policy. The Chinese Ministry of Defense website report on Xi's speech contained none of the explanations of possible changes in Chinese nuclear weapons policy offered by Major-General Wang to the Hong Kong media.

The Chinese Communist Party website report on Xi's speech to the Second Artillery focused on Xi's reiteration of the need to "study the spirit of the 18th Party Congress" and to "place the building of political thought in the first place." This fits with the political boilerplate Xi has been presenting to other groups in the wake of assuming his new role as General Secretary of the CCP last month. Xi's speech also emphasized PLA loyalty to the CCP central leadership, the need to clean up corruption and the importance of preserving continuity with China's long term objectives of becoming a fully mechanized and information savvy military by 2020.

*Gregory Kulacki has lived and worked in China for the better part of the last twenty-five years. Since joining the Union of Concerned Scientists in 2002, he has focused on promoting and conducting dialog between Chinese and American experts on nuclear arms control and space security.*

<http://allthingsnuclear.org/is-xi-jinping-changing-chinese-nuclear-weapons-policy/>

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Business Insider – New York, NY

OPINION/Analysis

## China's New MIRV Ballistic Missile Is a Big Deal

By Robert Johnson

December 11, 2012,

During the nuclear honed days of the Cold War, the Soviet Union developed a nuclear missile able to strike anywhere in the U.S.

Loaded with multiple maneuverable warheads (MIRVs), while carrying decoys and chaff to keep from getting struck down, the missiles undermined the entire balance of power between the two superpowers and struck fear into hard hearts at the Kremlin and the Pentagon alike.

When China successfully tested its DF-31A missile several days ago, it confirmed another country now has proven nuclear ability reach any city in the U.S. with precisely the type of missiles that troubled the U.S. decades ago.

The DF-31A is believed to have three warheads per missile and a range of about 7,000 miles, which allows it to target anywhere in the U.S. While that ability isn't new, China's CSS-4 has that capability as well, that missile requires a stationary launch pad and contains but one nuclear warhead.

The DF-31A is portable and launches from the back of a tank, train, or truck. China also has more than 3,000 miles of underground tunnels and highly reinforced military bunkers where it can stash the highly mobile ordnance.

Notoriously cryptic about the extent of its nuclear arsenal, China announced the launch on a Chinese military news site.

Bill Gertz at The Washington Free Beacon confirms what the site claims, reporting that U.S. intelligence, airborne, and space sensors picked up the launch from China's Wuzhai Space and Missile Test Center in western China when it happened.

From the Beacon:

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It was the second DF-31A flight test since August and highlights China's growing strategic nuclear buildup, a modernization program largely carried out in secret. The DF-31A test also took place on the last day of a rare U.S.-China military exercise in Chengdu that practiced joint disaster relief efforts.

China is known to use its missile tests to send political signals, as in 1996 when it bracketed Taiwan with missile flight tests that impacted north and south of the island prior to a presidential election. Analysts say the DF-31A test likely was intended to bolster the Chinese military's hardline stance toward the United States and particularly the U.S. military, regarded by Beijing as its main adversary.

Richard Fisher, a China military affairs specialist, told the Beacon, the development "suggests that China may be building toward a 'counterstrike' strategy that would require the secret buildup of many more missiles and warheads than suggested by public ICBM number estimates made available by the U.S. Intelligence Community."

A viable counterstrike is one potential scenario China may be planning for, but what unsettled both the U.S. and the Soviets about the MIRVs when they came around the first time was the "enhancement of a first strike capability."

Basically, having multiple warheads per missile vastly increases the chances of successfully striking the U.S. and at multiple sites. The belief was that this degree of confidence would do little to decrease the chances of nuclear war.

But with so much going on in the world today at a pace the warriors of the Cold War never imagined, it's easy to overlook just one more missile test. Which is why it could be important to remember that it's missiles like this that helped lift the arms race to the frenzied heights it achieved before the Iron Curtain fell in the early 1990s and defined a generation.

If China shares the MIRV technology with Iran, Pakistan, Syria, and North Korea like it has shared nuclear, missile materials, and technology in the past it could prompt an entirely new round of concerns.

<http://www.businessinsider.com/chinas-df-3a-mirv-multiple-us-targets-one-missile-2012-12>

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Washington Post  
OPINION/Think Tanked

## **North Korea Rocket Launch: 5 Reasons It can be Considered Successful**

By Allen McDuffee  
December 12, 2012

Despite strict international sanctions, North Korea on Wednesday successfully launched a long-range rocket carrying a satellite into orbit, marking what seems to be a major advance in the regime's weapons program.

While the move drew strong condemnation from the international community, along with a threat of even stronger sanctions, Victor Cha, the Korea Chair at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), says there are several technological, domestic and international reasons North Korea may consider the launch successful.

DPRK has developed the ballistic missile launch technology to fly a missile possibly 4,000 to 6,000 kilometers.

DPRK could sell this technology to others, including Iran and Pakistan, who have been regular customers of North Korea's other missiles (Scud, Nodong, Musudan).

The North has crossed a major threshold in terms of mating an ICBM with a nuclear weapon. They still have other technological thresholds to cross (miniaturized warheads, reentry vehicle), but this was undeniably a major one.

The North can claim to have accomplished something the richer and more technologically advanced South Koreans could not yet do (putting a satellite in orbit on their own).

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This successful launch probably helps the young leader Kim Jong-un with his domestic credibility after the failed test in April.

“The right to use outer space for peaceful purposes is universally recognized by international law, and it reflects the unanimous will of the international community,” North Korea’s state-run news agency quoted its Foreign Ministry spokesman as saying Wednesday.

“No matter what others say, we will continue to exercise our legitimate right to launch satellites and thus actively contribute to the economic construction and improvement of the standard of people’s living while conquering space.”

*Allen McDuffee is a New York-based politics writer. Part reporter, part investigative journalist, part blogger, Allen has written for The Nation, Huffington Post, AlterNet, Raw Story, New York Observer, In These Times and Truthdig, among others.*

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/thinktank/wp/2012/12/12/north-korea-rocket-launch-5-ways-it-was-successful/>

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New York Post  
OPINION/Op-Ed

## **Al Qaeda's New Base**

*Terrorists now rule northern Mali*

By Peter Brookes

December 12, 2012

When most Americans think of al Qaeda, they don’t think of Africa. But they should, especially considering a country called Mali, where Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and its allies are attempting to build an Islamist state.

One the size of Texas.

And AQIM, which has been implicated in the Benghazi attack, isn’t only interested in establishing a caliphate in Africa: It has America in its cross-hairs, too.

It has plenty of pro-al Qaeda friends who are helping, such as Ansar Dine and the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa, which has reportedly promised to attack the West.

The Wall Street Journal recently wrote that, according to knowledgeable US and French diplomats, these terror groups plan to use “Mali as a base for attacks throughout Africa, and beyond.”

Basically, al Qaeda now has a new safe haven for its African allies and its foreign-fighter friends (from reportedly as far away as Afghanistan), a place where they can recruit, plan, train and operate — essentially unfettered from outside interference.

Just what we need.

This, of course, is in addition to the al Qaeda affiliates already established on the continent like Boko Haram, which operates in and around Nigeria, and al Shabab, which has long found a home in Somalia.

Al Qaeda and its wings clearly aren’t just a Middle Eastern, South Asian or even Southeast Asian problem any longer; the network is spreading like a cancer — now across Africa.

So how did we get to this point?

There’s little question that what is happening in Mali is an offshoot of the Arab Spring in Libya last year, where weapons loosed by the fighting between rebels and Khadafy loyalists made their way to Mali with ethnic Tuareg mercenaries.

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Returning Tuareg “mercs” joined the ranks of local Tuareg separatists in Mali’s north (who had grievances with the central government in Bamako) and levied heavy losses on the Malian army. In March, the unhappy, defeated army conducted a coup in the capital, dissolving the democratically elected government.

By April, an opportunist AQIM & Co. pushed the victorious Tuaregs aside, seizing control of the vast Northern region, including cities like Timbuktu. Today, the area is under Islamist control and sharia law; stonings and mutilations — not to mention the conscription of children — are “widespread,” according to the United Nations.

The international community wants to do something to address the increasingly dire situation in northern Mali, which a UN official recently called “one of the potentially most explosive corners of the world.”

But aside from some initial talks between African diplomats and Tuareg separatists and Ansar Dine — plus some chatter about political reconciliation, elections and military interventions at places like the UN — there’s no coordinated strategy to retake the North.

Indeed, the Associated Press reports that the UN bureaucracy doesn’t expect to be able to put together an African intervention force until next fall — if it even decides on that route. Next fall? A lot of bad things can happen in a year, especially at the hands of a terror group like AQIM.

Adding to the troubles, Mali’s interim prime minister was arrested and forced to resign yesterday by the army, which is still calling the shots in Bamako. This complicates any effort to get a new government to retake the North from the extremists.

When President Obama told us during this year’s campaign that al Qaeda was “on the run,” everyone thought he meant al Qaeda was on the road to defeat. Instead, it seems the terror group was on the run — to Africa.

*Peter Brookes is a Heritage Foundation senior fellow and a former deputy assistant secretary of defense.*

[http://www.nypost.com/p/news/opinion/opedcolumnists/al\\_qaeda\\_new\\_base\\_JJQL0U5Q7FWRIqIlgkYK2BK](http://www.nypost.com/p/news/opinion/opedcolumnists/al_qaeda_new_base_JJQL0U5Q7FWRIqIlgkYK2BK)

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Asahi Shimbun – Japan  
OPINION/Editorial

## **EDITORIAL: North Korea Missile Launch Serious Challenge for World**

December 13, 2012

North Korea defied world opinion and went ahead with its missile launch on Dec. 12.

North Korea claims it was to put a satellite in orbit. However, given that Pyongyang is also developing nuclear weapons, there is no doubt that it was an attempt to acquire a means to deliver nuclear arms.

We strongly denounce this reckless act, which undermines world peace and stability.

It is believed the launch was intended to increase national prestige just as the nation marks the first anniversary of the death of Kim Jong Il, and at the same time solidify the power base of his son, Kim Jong Un, who succeeded his father as the reclusive country’s supreme leader.

If it succeeds in possessing a missile that can reach the United States, Pyongyang probably hopes to gain a bargaining chip that strengthens its position in negotiations with Washington.

North Korea’s arms programs would pose a serious security threat to the entire international community if the country manages to bring its ballistic missiles to the stage of practical use and make a nuclear weapon that is small enough to be mounted on missiles. The successful launch has brought that disturbing prospect closer to reality.

Everything possible must be done to stop North Korea from conducting a third nuclear test.

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The United Nations Security Council immediately decided to convene emergency meetings to discuss how to respond to the act. After North Korea's botched rocket launch in April, the Security Council issued a statement from its president warning it would "take actions accordingly" in the event of another launch.

The council members are expected to consider strengthening sanctions against North Korea, but the effectiveness of such measures will depend on China, the country's longtime ally.

China has been reluctant to support tighter sanctions against North Korea, arguing that they would be counterproductive. But such a lenient attitude has apparently led Pyongyang to become cocky.

This time, China urged North Korea not to go ahead with the launch, but it could have taken stronger actions to put more effective pressure on its neighbor. Beijing should realize that if it leaves North Korea as it is, the international community's distrust of China will deepen and, as a result, its national interests will be damaged.

Crucial for successful efforts to rein in North Korea are talks between China and the United States, which is facing the prospect of its territory falling within the range of North Korean missiles. Japan also needs to cooperate closely with other countries concerned. Only concerted and effective actions by the international community can prevent Pyongyang from making further reckless moves.

In August, North Korea tried to export aluminum alloy bars and other materials used to develop nuclear arms and missiles to Myanmar. The Japanese government seized the items aboard a cargo vessel docked at Tokyo Port in a raid made in response to a request by the United States. International cooperation is also vital for such efforts to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Prior to North Korea's latest missile launch, there were reports that the country had dismantled the missile. The fact the missile was launched immediately after the reports emerged suggests it is difficult to monitor activities within the secretive country from the sky.

In Japan, calls for military countermeasures, such as the enhancement of its missile defense system, will become louder. But what Japan needs to do right now is make tenacious diplomatic efforts to extract positive changes from North Korea through cooperation with other countries concerned. Such efforts would also boost the effectiveness of international sanctions against the regime. We hope for cool-headed debate.

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/views/editorial/AJ201212130028>

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CNN.com

OPINION/Commentary

## **One Small Step for Kim Jong Un**

By Joe Cirincione, Special to CNN

December 13, 2012

(CNN) -- It took five tries and almost 15 years, but there is no question that North Korea's successful launch of a satellite into orbit on December 11 is a major technological achievement.

It is not, however, a serious military threat to the United States or other nations. North Korea still has a long way to go before they can turn the orbiting of a baby satellite, reportedly tumbling out of control, into the ability to threaten others at long distance with a nuclear weapon.

If the past is any guide, North Korea's launch of an Unha-3 rocket will have international security repercussions far out of proportion to its military capability.

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North Korea's first attempt in launching a satellite in April 1998 under Kim Jong Il failed, but it triggered a panic in the U.S. Proponents of elaborate anti-missile weapons seized on the launch as proof that dictators of small, undeterrable countries could soon attack the U.S. with nuclear-armed intercontinental ballistic missiles.

At the time, a commission chaired by Donald Rumsfeld made headlines with its warning that "A nation with a well-developed, Scud-based ballistic missile infrastructure would be able to achieve first flight of a long-range missile, up to and including intercontinental ballistic missile range (greater than 5,500 kilometers), within about five years of deciding to do so."

North Korea and Iran had Scud-based missile infrastructures: They were clearly trying to do so. Fifteen years later, they have not come close to succeeding.

But the warning achieved its purpose: Missile defense programs and budgets soared and have never come down. Our nation today spends about \$10 billion a year on such programs, even though the threat never developed as predicted.

Governments meeting in emergency session in Seoul and Tokyo will have to produce more than statements of condemnation. They will likely support more anti-missile programs. The U.S., feeling the pressure from them and from defense hawks at home, may increase efforts to field more of the systems it is developing.

We deploy about 30 ground-based interceptors in silos in Alaska and California. These systems have some ability to hit a long-range rocket, like the Unha-3 should it be turned into a missile and aimed at the U.S. Some in Congress will no doubt demand that we deploy more. We are fielding interceptors at sea aboard Aegis-class destroyers and cruisers that have some capability against short-range missiles, with plans to grow the program to longer-range missiles and deploy them in Eastern Europe. The U.S. Defense Department just recently approved arms sales to Japan to help that nation upgrade its Aegis anti-missile system. Pressures will mount to deploy more capable anti-missile systems in Asia.

China and Russia will almost certainly react to these deployments, believing that they are aimed at them, not North Korea or Iran. This will chill efforts to negotiate reductions in Cold War stockpiles of nuclear weapons. How can we reduce, they will ask, if the U.S. is racing to ring us with new weapons?

There is no reason for this cycle of action and reaction. There is no threat that warrants the panicked deployment of untested and unreliable anti-missile weapons. As my colleague and North Korean expert Philip Yun notes, "A successful launch was only a matter of time, and it shows a level of technical sophistication that was always there. We need to take North Korea seriously but not make it more than it really is."

I pointed out in 2009, after North Korea's third failed attempt, that the nation was a long way from having a nuclear-armed ICBM. That is still true after this successful launch. North Korea would have to achieve three additional breakthroughs.

First, it would have to demonstrate the reliability of its launcher. The first four tests failed. This one succeeded. Will the next? Sometimes, you really do have to be a rocket scientist to answer questions like this.

The one I consult is David Wright of the Union of Concerned Scientists. He writes, "From past launches, we knew that North Korea has been able to build or buy working components for a rocket. The main difficulty is getting all the parts to work together and at the same time, given the enormous complexity of rockets. Even with this success, North Korea has no confidence in the reliability of the rocket, which undermines its utility for military purposes."

Second, it will have to develop a nuclear warhead small enough and reliable enough to fit on a missile. North Korea (unlike Iran) has twice tested nuclear devices, but these are believed to be too large and heavy for use in a warhead. North Korea would need several more nuclear tests to achieve this capability.

Third, as North Korea's long history demonstrates, it is very hard to get something up into space -- and it is just as hard to bring it safely down. North Korea will have to develop and test a re-entry vehicle that can survive the temperatures, pressures and vibration of coming back into the Earth's atmosphere and the accuracy to land where targeted.



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It is a long journey from initial satellite launch to an ICBM. Ask Iran. Iran first launched a low-Earth orbit-satellite in 2009, the same feat North Korea has now duplicated, but Iran does not now, nor is it likely to have anytime soon, an ICBM. A new study from the Congressional Research Service concludes that contrary to predictions in the late 1990s that Iran or North Korea or both would have ICBMs by 2015, "It is increasingly uncertain whether Iran will be able to achieve an ICBM capability by 2015."

So, the lessons are: Don't underestimate North Korea. Don't count on this regime disappearing anytime soon. But don't panic. Don't start an arms race that undermines your greater strategic stability goals. We need to take a deep breath and work with our allies to get North Korea back to the bargaining table and off the test ranges.

*Joe Cirincione is president of Ploughshares Fund, a global security foundation that seeks to make progress toward a world free of nuclear weapons, and author of "Bomb Scare: The History and Future of Nuclear Weapons."*

[http://edition.cnn.com/2012/12/12/opinion/cirincione-north-korea/?hpt=hp\\_bn7](http://edition.cnn.com/2012/12/12/opinion/cirincione-north-korea/?hpt=hp_bn7)

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Bulletin of Atomic Scientist  
OPINION/Op-Ed

## **Underestimated or Overestimated? North Korea's Satellite Launch in Perspective**

By David Wright  
13 December 2012

Despite supposed technical problems with its rocket, North Korea surprised the world this week by launching its Unha-3 rocket and successfully placing a satellite into orbit.

The launch -- using the same rocket, satellite, and trajectory -- was a repeat of last April's attempt, which failed. Overall, it was North Korea's fifth attempt to launch a satellite, and its first success.

**Timeline of launches.** North Korea's first attempt to launch a satellite into space was in August 1998 with the three-stage Taepodong-1 launcher, which used a version of the Nodong missile as a first stage. In that case, all three stages ignited, but the third stage apparently went out of control and disintegrated before reaching orbit.

The next attempt in July 2006 failed less than 40 seconds after launch, and little is known about it. Powered by a cluster of four first-stage Nodong engines, this rocket launcher is believed to have been much larger than that used in 1998, which only had used engine in the first stage. The four-engine configuration has been used since 2006.

In April 2009, North Korea launched the Unha-2 launch vehicle. Though the first two stages of the three-stage rocket appeared to work, the upper stage and satellite fell into the ocean. This launch sparked international outcry since it was fired on a path that carried it east over Japan. The April 2012 attempt was instead launched south from a new launch site on the western coast of the country, following a path similar to that of South Korean launches. That attempt had problems with the first stage and apparently the second stage did not ignite.

In advance of the 2009 and both 2012 launches, North Korea announced a launch window and zones where it expected the empty first and second stage bodies to fall to Earth after they separated from the rocket. This is standard procedure to warn air and sea traffic in the region when a country is planning a launch, and suggested Pyongyang seemed to be trying to act like a responsible country developing a space program.

**Post-launch analysis.** The Unha-3 missile, which is a slight modification of the Unha-2, in principle is capable of reaching parts of the continental United States with a payload of half a ton or more if the country modified it for use as a ballistic missile. With this week's launch, the fact that the first two stages appear to have fallen in or near the declared zones gives some evidence that the first part of the launch went as planned. In addition, North Korea announced that the satellite was expected to be placed in orbit at an altitude of about 500 kilometers, and initial

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tracking information shows that the satellite is in a nearly circular orbit with minimum and maximum altitudes of 494 kilometers and 588 kilometers, respectively.

What was somewhat surprising is that the third stage apparently maneuvered to move off the launch trajectory (which had an inclination of about 88 degrees) and place the satellite in a sun-synchronous orbit with an inclination of 97.4 degrees (sun-synchronous orbits are a particular class of orbits with special properties that make them useful for Earth-monitoring satellites). North Korea had announced this was its intent before its April launch, but many observers doubted the country had the technical sophistication to control the behavior of the third stage to the extent needed to be successful.

The satellite is believed to be relatively simple, and probably includes a low-resolution camera. But it would give North Korea experience communicating with it and controlling it in orbit. However, less than 24 hours after it was placed, reports began to surface that US officials believe it is tumbling in orbit. If so, the satellite may be unable to point its antenna toward the Earth and therefore would be out of communication. This suggests that the launch was not as successful as originally thought.

**Game changer in Asia Pacific?** Despite this apparent problem with the satellite, North Korea was still able to beat South Korea into orbit. South Korea is in the process of developing its own space-launch capability, and has attempted two unsuccessful launches in recent years and postponed a third attempt from this fall to next spring due to technical problems. The prospect of placing an object into orbit before Seoul was able to do so may have been an important factor driving the timing of the North's launch.

The question most people are asking is what this success implies about the state of North Korea's missile development program. While the success may have political importance, it means little from a technical perspective. It has been clear from its past launches that North Korea has been able to build or buy working components for a rocket, and that it has assembled those components into a design that, in principle, should work. The main stumbling block for North Korea has been the enormous complexity of rockets, and getting all the parts to work together and at the same time. Even if the probability of that happening is small, there is some chance that it will happen, but that does not imply a technological advance or mean that future launches are any more likely to be successful. So even with this success, North Korea has little confidence in the reliability of the rocket, which undermines its utility for military purposes.

Despite that, as a colleague of mine following the launch, mused following the launch, "now we're likely to see people go from underestimating the capability of North Korea's program to overestimating it." Neither caricature of Pyongyang's development program is helpful for developing a serious response to the launch. The impulse by some in the United States and elsewhere to call for missile defense as a technical fix for the problem is misplaced -- like it or not, there is no technical fix.

North Korea has shown over the years that it can make slow but real progress toward improving its rocket program. As frustrating as diplomacy can be, the world has little choice other than engaging Pyongyang to try to reduce this threat. And despite this successful launch, there remains time for that process.

*David Wright is a physicist; he codirects the Union of Concerned Scientists' (UCS) Global Security Program. His expertise is in national missile defense, space weapons, and U.S. nuclear weapons policy.*

<http://www.thebulletin.org/web-edition/features/underestimated-or-overestimated-north-korea%E2%80%99s-satellite-launch-perspective>

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Asahi Shimbun – Japan  
OPINION/Editorial

## **EDITORIAL: Constitutional Revision is Not a 'Reset' Button**

December 14, 2012

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The issue of constitutional revision, or even writing a new Constitution, has major ramifications and is not something that can be overlooked in the Lower House election to be held Dec. 16.

The Liberal Democratic Party has advocated constitutional revision for some time, and this theme has the backing of Your Party, People's New Party and New Renaissance Party. The Japan Restoration Party has gone a step further and proposed that Japan adopt a new Constitution.

Since the end of World War II, elections in which constitutional revision became a focal point were held a number of times. But for so many parties to be raising this issue at the same time is extremely rare.

However, points in question range widely from the establishment of a national defense force, advocated by the LDP, to the enactment of a new Constitution independently drafted by Japan and the direct election of prime minister by popular vote, both of which are proposed by the Japan Restoration Party. There are also many other points that are no more than slogans.

In our view, it is highly questionable whether changing the Constitution will help solve the problems Japan is now facing.

To begin with, the Constitution defines the broad outline of a nation. Incorporating individual policies into the Constitution does not mean that they would be immediately realized.

It is also necessary to weigh what messages constitutional revisions would send to the world.

For example, some countries in Asia accept the idea of upgrading the Self-Defense Forces to a national defense force to keep China in check. But most other countries would regard the move as a serious shift in policy of postwar Japan, which has stuck to restrained defense power out of reflection on its past military aggression. We must also pay attention to the fact that there is growing concern in the United States to Japan's "tilt to the right."

There is growing friction between Japan and some neighboring countries over issues of history and territorial disputes. We do not believe the establishment of a national defense force would enhance Japan's national security.

We believe this viewpoint is also indispensable in the argument on whether to recognize the exercise of the right to collective self-defense, which is advocated by the LDP and some other parties.

Furthermore, to revise the Constitution, the Diet needs to propose it with the support of two-thirds or more of all members of each house of the Diet. Once that is achieved, it would have to obtain support from more than half of voters in a national referendum. In order to overcome these hurdles, much time and energy are needed, regardless of the makeup of the Lower House after the Dec. 16 election.

Japan is now facing difficult problems both at home and abroad. Given these circumstances, are there any issues that require the country to revise the Constitution even if it goes to the exceptional political lengths outlined above? Moreover, drafting a new Constitution from scratch is a daunting task.

Momentum for changing the Constitution apparently stems from anxiety among the Japanese people toward the growing military and economic power of China and North Korea's nuclear weapon and missile development. Another factor must be growing frustration over the turmoil that continues to fester in Japanese politics.

It is significant to fundamentally discuss how Japan ought to be when the domestic and international environment is changing so drastically. But there is no such thing as a "convenient button" that can reset everything.

At a time like this, it is all the more important to sit tight and take the time to deal with real problems one by one. That is the royal road of politics.

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/views/editorial/AJ201212140037>

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