



USAF COUNTERPROLIFERATION CENTER
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MAXWELL AFB, ALABAMA

Issue No. 970, 10 January 2012

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Press TV – Iran

'Halting Iran Nuclear Work, Unacceptable'

Saturday, January 7, 2012

Head of Iran's Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee says Tehran will not approve any precondition for halting its peaceful nuclear program in negotiations.

"As Iran's nuclear activities are fundamentally peaceful and within the framework of the [International Atomic Energy] Agency and the [Non- Proliferation Treaty] NPT regulations, any precondition for halting Iran's nuclear activities is not approved by us as it lacks logical basis," Alaeddin Boroujerdi said Saturday.

He went on to add that Tehran and the P5+1 (Britain, China, France, Russia, and the United States plus Germany) will resume talks, which are "based on Iran's proposed package which includes new issues," after both sides agree on a venue and date for the meeting.

Boroujerdi went on to say that Tehran welcomes having Turkey host the next round of talks between Iran and the P5+1.

Iran and the P5+1 have held two rounds of multifaceted talks in Geneva in December 2010 and in the Turkish city of Istanbul last January.

Tehran says it is ready to continue negotiations based on common ground, adding that it has no intention of backing down from its nuclear rights.

The United States, Israel and some of their allies, however, accuse Tehran of pursuing military objectives in its nuclear program and have used this pretext to impose four rounds of sanctions against the Islamic Republic.

Iran has refuted the allegations, arguing that as a signatory to the NPT and a member of the IAEA, Tehran has a right to use nuclear technology for peaceful use.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/219838.html>

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Tehran Times – Iran

Iran Mulling over Russia's Revised 'Step-by-Step' Plan: Envoy

Political Desk

Sunday, January 08, 2012

TEHRAN - The Iranian ambassador to Moscow has said that the Russian proposal for a "step-by-step" plan toward Iran's nuclear program has undergone a number of revisions.

On July 13, 2011, Russia made a proposal for a step-by-step approach, according to which Iran could address questions about its nuclear program and be rewarded with a gradual easing of sanctions.

Ambassador Reza Sajjadi, in an interview with the Fars News Agency published on Saturday, said, "After the Russians presented the plan, we studied it for two months. Mr. Ali Baqeri, the deputy secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, during his trip to Moscow (in early November 2011) expressed the country's views in this regard. The Russians, after about three weeks, presented their revised initiative to Iran through the Russian Embassy in Tehran. The relevant authority is now deliberating on the revised plan."

"The difference between this initiative and the proposals of the 5+1 (group) (the United States, Britain, France, Russia, China, and Germany) is that first of all, the 5+1, in contravention of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, does not recognize our legitimate rights in regard to nuclear activities, and, on the other hand, has been calling for

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all our peaceful nuclear activities to be halted. But the step-by-step plan recognizes Iran's inalienable right to acquire peaceful nuclear energy," he stated.

Sajjadi added, "Previously, we took some steps and confidence-building measures to which the West has not given any positive response. The basis of the plan of (Russian Foreign Minister Sergei) Lavrov is logical, but in order for an agreement to be reached and (the plan) to be accepted by us, many consultations are required."

Sanctions on Iran's central bank illegal

In reply to a question about the fact that U.S. President Barack Obama signed into law a defense funding bill that imposes sanctions on financial institutions dealing with the Central Bank of Iran on December 31, 2011, Sajjadi said that Obama's move was "illegal" and "unilateral."

"The Russians had earlier announced that they do not approve of sanctions that go beyond resolutions and do not tolerate them. What Obama did caused a split between the members of the United Nations Security Council and undermined the UN," he stated.

Sajjadi added, "The move is rejected, and the Russians have clearly announced that they will not agree to such sanctions and that Iran's nuclear issue can only be resolved through dialogue."

Russia has not asked to inspect U.S. drone

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Iranian ambassador dismissed news reports claiming that Russian officials have asked for permission to inspect the U.S. spy drone that was recently downed by the Iranian armed forces and said, "We have not received any request from the Russians to inspect the drone."

He also said that the secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council did not discuss the issue of the drone with Russian officials during his trip to Moscow in early December 2011.

SNSC Secretary Saeed Jalili and Russian officials only exchanged views on regional issues, Sajjadi stated.

<http://tehrantimes.com/politics/94321-iran-mulling-over-russias-revised-step-by-step-plan-envoy->

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Yonhap News – South Korea
January 8, 2012

Iran Officials Visited N. Korea in Nov. on Possible Uranium Enrichment: Report

SEOUL, Jan. 8 (Yonhap) -- A delegation of Iranian defense officials visited North Korea in late November in an apparent bid to discuss military cooperation, including uranium enrichment, a report said Sunday.

Citing an informed source, Japan's Kyodo News Agency said a three-member Iranian delegation visited the North to talk with key officials including head of the military general staff Ri Yong-ho in an apparent move to cement military cooperation and discuss advanced centrifuge technologies related to uranium enrichment.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2012/01/08/0401000000AEN20120108004800320.HTML>

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San Francisco Chronicle

US: Iran Has Not Yet Decided to Build Nuclear Bomb

By DOUGLAS BIRCH, Associated Press
Sunday, January 8, 2012



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PST WASHINGTON, (AP) -- Defense Secretary Leon Panetta says Iran is laying the groundwork for making nuclear weapons someday, but is not yet building a bomb and called for continued diplomatic and economic pressure to persuade Tehran not to take that step.

As he has previously, Panetta cautioned against a unilateral strike by Israel against Iran's nuclear facilities, saying the action could trigger Iranian retaliation against U.S. forces in the region.

"We have common cause here" with Israel, he said. "And the better approach is for us to work together."

Panetta's remarks on CBS' Face the Nation, which were taped Friday and aired Sunday, reflect the long-held view of the Obama administration that Iran is not yet committed to building a nuclear arsenal, only to creating the industrial and scientific capacity to allow one if its leaders to decide to take that final step.

The comments suggest the White House's assessment of Iran's nuclear strategy has not changed in recent months, despite warnings from advocates of military action that time is running out to prevent Tehran from becoming a nuclear-armed state.

Several Republican candidates have called for a tougher line against Iran, saying they believe it is committed to building the bomb. "If we re-elect Barack Obama, Iran will have a nuclear weapon," said Mitt Romney. "And if you elect Mitt Romney, Iran will not have a nuclear weapon."

Rick Santorum has said that the U.S. should plan a military strike against Iran's nuclear facilities and "say to them that if you do not open up those facilities and close them down, we will close them down for you."

Iran has opened two dozen of its facilities to international inspectors, but has refused in defiance of the U.N. Security Council to suspend its uranium enrichment.

A leading hardline Iranian newspaper reported Sunday that Iran has begun uranium enrichment at a new underground site well protected from possible airstrikes.

Kayhan daily, which is close to Iran's ruling clerics, said scientists have begun injecting uranium gas into sophisticated centrifuges at the Fordo facility near the holy city of Qom.

In a talk at a Brookings Institution forum in December, Panetta said an attack on Iran's nuclear facilities would "at best" delay Iran's nuclear program by one or two years. Among the unintended consequences, he said, would be an increase in international support for Iran and the likelihood of Iranian retaliation against U.S. forces and bases in the Mideast.

Panetta did not discuss the issue directly on Sunday's "Face the Nation." But Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Martin Dempsey, appearing with the defense secretary, said that he wanted the Iranians to believe that a U.S. military strike could wipe out their nuclear program.

"I absolutely want them to believe that's the case," he said.

Panetta did not rule out launching a pre-emptive strike.

"But the responsible thing to do right now is to keep putting diplomatic and economic pressure on them to force them to do the right thing," he said. "And to make sure that they do not make the decision to proceed with the development of a nuclear weapon."

Panetta said if Iran started developing a weapon, the U.S. would act. "I think they need to know that -- that if they take that step -- that they're going to get stopped."

Dempsey also said that Iran has the military power to block the Strait of Hormuz "for a period of time" if it decides to do so, but that the U.S. would take action to reopen them. "We can defeat that," he said.

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Panetta said closing the strait would draw a U.S. military response. "We made very clear that the United States will not tolerate the blocking of the Strait of Hormuz," he said. "That's another red line for us and ... we will respond to them."

A number of experts say Iran is unlikely to close the strait, through which Gulf oil flows, because the action could hurt Iran as much as the West.

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/n/a/2012/01/08/national/w060127S20.DTL>

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Press TV – Iran

'Fordo Facility Cannot Be Attacked'

Sunday, January 08, 2012

Head of Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) says Fordo nuclear facility, like its counterpart in Natanz, has been built under the ground so that the enemy cannot attack and destroy it.

Speaking to a group of students in Hormozgan Province, Fereydoun Abbasi said in recent years, Iran's enemies have been trying to destroy the country's nuclear facilities.

"Over the past years, the enemy has used various methods and tactics from industrial sabotage to computer viruses and special signals, which can disrupt [the activities] of [nuclear] facilities, to destroy and damage Iran's nuclear sites [but] all of their attempts have been discovered and foiled by Iran's specialists," he said.

Abbasi said Fordo facility has been built underground in line with passive defense principles to make the destruction of the site too costly for the enemy.

"So far the enemy has not been able to disrupt [the activities of] Iran's nuclear and enrichment facilities and from now on it will not succeed against Iranian young specialists," he added.

He said Fordo facility can enrich uranium to 20 percent and if needed, it can also produce 3.5-percent and 4-percent enriched uranium.

On Sunday, August 21, 2011, head of AEOI announced the Islamic Republic has started transferring the centrifuges of its Natanz nuclear facility to the Fordo atomic site.

"Transferring Natanz centrifuges to Fordo is underway with full observance of standards," Abbasi added.

The Fordo nuclear facility, Iran's second site for enriching uranium, is located in Qom Province, 160 kilometers (100 miles) south of Tehran.

The US and its allies accuse Iran of pursuing a military nuclear program and have pressured the UN Security Council to impose four rounds of sanctions against the country.

As a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Tehran insists it is entitled to utilize nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

<http://presstv.com/detail/219963.html>

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Chicago Tribune

Iran Starts Nuclear Work in Mountain Bunker: Diplomats

By Fredrik Dahl

Monday, January 09, 2012

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VIENNA (Reuters) - Iran has started refining uranium deep inside a mountain, diplomatic sources said on Monday, a move likely to exacerbate a dispute with Western powers that suspect Tehran is seeking a nuclear weapons capability.

The sources said uranium enrichment to a fissile purity of 20 percent had begun at the Fordow underground site near the Shi'ite Muslim holy city of Qom, signaling Iran's defiance in the face of intensifying Western pressure to curb such activity.

"Yes, they have," one Vienna-based diplomat said in response to a question on whether the enrichment operations had begun.

Iran has said for months that it is preparing to move its highest-grade uranium refinement work to Fordow from its main enrichment plant at Natanz, and sharply boost capacity. Enriched uranium can have both civilian and military uses.

News that it has now launched the work at Fordow underlines the Islamic Republic's determination not to back down despite increased Western sanctions on the world's No. 5 oil producer.

"The start of 20 percent enrichment at Fordow certainly raises the stakes," said nuclear expert Mark Fitzpatrick at the International Institute for Strategic Studies think tank.

"Iran will now be producing nearly weapons-usable fissile material in centrifuges that are out of harm's way inside the mountain," he said of the remote site believed to be buried beneath 80 meters (265 feet) of rock and soil.

In Tehran on Monday, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said that Iran would not yield to the West's pressure to get the country to change its nuclear course.

An Iranian decision to conduct sensitive atomic activities at the underground site - offering better protection against any enemy attacks - could complicate diplomatic efforts to resolve the long-running stand-off peacefully.

Iran's mission to the International Atomic Energy Agency, the Vienna-based U.N. nuclear watchdog, was not immediately available for comment.

On Sunday, an Iranian newspaper quoted the head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation as saying Iran would in the "near future" start enriching uranium at Fordow.

The United States and its allies say Iran is trying to develop the means to make atomic bombs, but Tehran insists its nuclear program is aimed at generating electricity and isotopes for medical treatment.

As the sanctions pressure mounts, Iran has called for fresh talks on its nuclear program with the permanent members of the Security Council and Germany (P5+1). Such talks have been stalled for a year.

Western powers have repeatedly made clear they are also ready for renewed diplomacy, but stress that Iran must show it is willing to engage in meaningful discussions and start addressing growing international concerns about its work.

CLOSER TO WEAPONS MATERIAL

Iran is already refining uranium to a fissile purity of 20 percent - far more than the 3.5 percent level usually required to power nuclear energy plants - above ground at Natanz.

The country said last year it would move this higher-grade enrichment to Fordow, which like other declared Iranian nuclear sites is regularly inspected by the IAEA, and also sharply boost output capacity.

The centrifuges and other equipment needed to start enrichment were installed at Fordow last year, with initially two cascades, or interlocked networks, of 174 machines each deployed for 20 percent enrichment.

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The United States and Israel, Iran's arch foes, have not ruled out strikes against the Islamic state if diplomacy fails to resolve the dispute.

Iran disclosed the existence of Fordow to the IAEA only in September 2009 after learning that Western intelligence agencies had detected it.

Tehran says it will use 20 percent-enriched uranium to convert into fuel for a research reactor making isotopes to treat cancer patients, but Western officials say they doubt that the country has the technical capability to do that.

In addition, they say, Fordow's capacity - a maximum of 3,000 centrifuges - is too small to produce the fuel needed for nuclear power plants, but ideal for yielding smaller amounts of high-enriched product typical of a nuclear weapons program.

Centrifuges spin at supersonic speeds, enriching uranium by increasing the concentration of fissile isotopes.

Nuclear bombs require uranium enriched to 90 percent, but Western experts say much of the effort required to get there is already achieved once it reaches 20 percent purity, shortening the time needed for any nuclear weapons "break-out."

They give different estimates of how quickly Iran could assemble a nuclear weapon - ranging from as little as six months to a year or more.

Western officials believe Iran has not yet decided whether it will indeed "weaponise" enrichment, but rather is seeking now solely to establish the industrial and scientific capacity to do so if needed for military and security contingencies.

Editing by Mark Heinrich

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/sns-rt-us-nuclear-iran-iaeatre8080kt-20120109,0,3491645.story>

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BusinessWeek

Iran Says Work at Fortified Enrichment Site Supervised by IAEA

January 10, 2012

By Nicole Gaouette and Ladane Nasseri

Jan. 10 (Bloomberg) -- Iran said that all activities at a fortified nuclear site, where it began enriching uranium drawing U.S. condemnation, are under the permanent supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Fordo "was declared more than two years ago and since then the agency has continuously monitored all the activities," Ali Asghar Soltanieh, Iran's delegate to the IAEA, told the state-run Press TV news channel. "Every step we have taken so far and will take in the future has been and will be under IAEA containment and surveillance."

Iran has started the production of uranium enriched up to 20 percent in the Fordo Fuel Enrichment Plant near the holy city of Qom, International Atomic Energy Agency spokesman Gill Tudor said in an e-mail yesterday. "All nuclear material in the facility remains under the agency's containment and surveillance."

The start of enrichment activities at the Fordo facility, which is built into the side of a mountain south of Tehran, the capital, has aroused Western ire and may accelerate the imposition of tighter sanctions on the country.

U.S. State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland said yesterday the enrichment represented "a further escalation" of Iranian violations of United Nations agreements on its nuclear program, and called on Iran to suspend enrichment activities.

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France also said it “condemns in the strongest possible terms” the production of enriched uranium at the Qom facility and is calling for additional sanctions of an “unprecedented severity” to be imposed on Iran, according to an e-mailed statement from the French Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs yesterday.

‘Covert Site’

The IAEA conducts safeguard inspections of the facility. The existence of the Fordo plant was revealed in 2009 through Western intelligence reports, raising concerns at the time about its purpose.

Iranian officials announced in June plans to install an initial series of centrifuges at the Fordo nuclear facility within “months” and said they already informed the IAEA about the project.

“The worry was that it would be this covert enrichment site that would allow Iran to produce weapons-grade uranium fairly quickly without anyone knowing it was taking place,” David Albright, president of the Institute for Science and International Security, a Washington nonprofit group, said yesterday in a telephone interview.

The IAEA has asked Iran to clarify the circumstances that led to the plant’s construction.

‘Next Step’

Nuland said Iran was taking the “next step” and couldn’t have civilian uses in mind.

“When you enrich to 20 percent there’s no possible use if you’re talking about a peaceful purpose,” Nuland said. “You’re enriching to a level that takes you to a different kind of nuclear program.”

Iran began processing low-enriched uranium to 20 percent purity two years ago as a deal brokered in 2009 by the UN for the delivery of the fuel failed to materialize.

While Iran says it needs the enriched uranium for civilian use in a medical research reactor, Albright said Iran has already produced enough such fuel to serve that purpose for several years.

Stockpiling 20 percent enriched uranium would make it that much easier to get to the next step of 60 percent, and from there to 90 percent enrichment that is ideal for creating weapons, Albright said.

“So that if they do decide they want nuclear weapons, it’s easy to do,” he said.

Repeated Denial

The activities at Fordo would let Iran “build nuclear weapons relatively quickly and in facilities that are relatively hard to destroy militarily,” Albright said.

Iran has repeatedly denied any ambition to build a nuclear weapons program. Nuland said the U.S. was open to talks with Iran if it would “come clean” about its nuclear program.

Tensions between Iran and the West have escalated as the U.S. moves to sanction Iran’s central bank and the European Union considers an embargo on Iranian oil.

The European Union is considering bringing forward to Jan. 23 from Jan. 30 a meeting of foreign ministers to discuss a possible embargo on imports of Iranian oil, an EU diplomat, who declined to be identified, citing government policy, said yesterday.

Iranian Vice President Mohammad Reza Rahimi said on Dec. 27 that his nation would block oil shipments through the Strait of Hormuz if sanctions are imposed, the Islamic Republic News Agency said. The Strait is a transit point for a fifth of oil traded worldwide.

Jay Carney, the White House press secretary, said moves on additional sanctions “must be timed and phased” to avoid damage to oil markets.



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<http://www.businessweek.com/news/2012-01-10/iran-says-work-at-fortified-enrichment-site-supervised-by-iaea.html>

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The Australian – Australia

Israel Braces for Nuclear-Armed Iran

By Sheera Frenkel, The Times

January 10, 2012

ISRAEL has begun thinking the unthinkable: that it will have to deal with a nuclear-armed Iran within a year.

In documents seen by The Times, Israeli officials have begun preparing scenarios for the day after a nuclear weapons test.

The move is a tacit recognition that Israel is backing away from its long-held position that it would do everything in its power - including mounting a military strike - to stop Iran acquiring nuclear capabilities.

Details of the war game, which was enacted by former ambassadors, intelligence officials and ex-military chiefs, emerged as the United Nations' nuclear watchdog confirmed yesterday that Iran has begun producing enriched uranium in an underground bunker designed to withstand airstrikes.

The International Atomic Energy Agency said that it was monitoring the work at the Fordow facility, which is concealed in a mountain near the holy city of Qom.

The simulation exercise was conducted in Tel Aviv last week by the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), a think-tank. Its conclusions suggest that a nuclear test would radically shift the whole power balance of the Middle East. The Israeli specialists assumed that the following would occur:

THE US would try to restrain Israel from military retaliation and propose a formal defence pact, including possibly inviting the Jewish state to join Nato;

RUSSIA would propose a defence pact with the United States in an effort to stop nuclear proliferation in the Middle East;

SAUDI ARABIA, not content with US nuclear guarantees, would develop its own nuclear arms programme;

EGYPT would push for military action against Iran while Turkey would be likely to avoid a showdown with Tehran. If Israel were to become a member of Nato, Turkey would withdraw from the organisation.

All the predictions are based on current international policies.

The specialists - including a former head of Israel's National Security Council, two former members of the Prime Minister's Office, a former ambassador and others with close ties to Israeli military intelligence - believe that a nuclear test in January 2013 would be presaged by a series of provocative demands from Tehran.

They include an Iranian call for its border with Iraq to be redrawn; calls for sovereignty over Bahrain and low-level actions against the vessels of the US Fifth Fleet in the Gulf.

The specialists made clear that although Israel would come under pressure to abandon any military plans against Iran, it would keep this option on the table.

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"The Israeli military option is likely to be a significant lever, if not toward Iran, then toward some of the main players," said the minutes of the war game seen by The Times. "The simulation showed that this option, or the threat of using it, would also be relevant following an Iranian nuclear test," it added.

"The simulation showed that Iran will not forgo nuclear weapons, but will attempt to use them to reach an agreement with the major powers that will improve its position."

In their report, the Israeli authors, INSS fellows Yoel Guzansky and Yonatan Lerner, wrote: "Iran is closer than ever to the juncture at which its leaders will need to decide whether to stay in a relatively comfortable position on the verge of nuclear capability or, alternatively, to break through to the bomb. Iran has an interest in postponing the decision whether to cross the threshold to a later stage. Nevertheless, a series of regional and international developments is likely to cause Iran to decide to accelerate its nuclear development and to break through toward nuclear weapons."

While Israeli officials have long maintained their position that the Jewish state could not live with a nuclear Iran, over the past year several high-ranking Israeli officials have come forward and questioned whether the Jewish state would not be forced to accept Iran's acquisition of nuclear capabilities.

In June last year, Meir Dagan, the former head of Mossad, publicly voiced his doubts concerning an Israeli strike on Iran, suggesting that it would engulf the region in war. Last month he added that a nuclear Iran "did not necessarily threaten Israel".

Both statements were condemned by the Israeli Government, which said it was inappropriate and unhelpful for him to suggest that Israel would not do everything possible to stop Iran's nuclear weapons programme.

The scenario laid out by the INSS suggests that the possibility that Israel has to "live with it" might become a reality.

Unlike other think-tanks, the INSS enjoys a particularly close relationship with the top echelons in Israel. It is led by the former head of Israeli military intelligence, and most of its fellows have held official positions within the defence and political establishment.

This week's report from the war game has been sent to Binyamin Netanyahu, the Prime Minister of Israel.

Participants included Giora Eiland, former head of national security, Alon Liel, the former Israeli Charge d'Affaires to Turkey, and Yehuda Ben Meir, the former Knesset member.

THE TIMES

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/israel-iran-bomb/story-e6frg6so-1226241018976>

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The Star – Toronto, Canada

Sunday, January 08, 2012

Kim Jong-Un Vows War if Enemies Shoot Down Rocket, Video Footage Shows

By Hyung-Jin Kim, Associated Press

SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA—North Korea's new leader vowed in 2009 to wage war if the country's enemies shot down its long-range rocket, footage aired on state television showed Sunday in the first official word of his role in military operations before his father's death.



The documentary is the second in a week seeking to highlight Kim Jong-un's experience in leading North Korea's 1.2 million-strong military and was aimed at showing that he was in charge of the armed forces long before his father, former leader Kim Jong-Il, died of a heart attack last month.

The son, who is in his late 20s, has moved swiftly into the role of "supreme leader" of the people, the ruling Workers' Party and the military despite questions abroad about how easily he could assume power with only a few years of grooming behind him. Kim Jong-Il, in contrast, had 20 years of training when his father, North Korea founder Kim Il-Sung, died of a heart attack in 1994.

Where a North Korea under Kim Jong-Un is headed is deemed crucial because the country is locked in a long-running standoff over its nuclear ambitions and is grappling with chronic food shortages. North Korea has tested two atomic devices and is believed to be working toward mounting a bomb on a missile capable of reaching the U.S.

After years of acrimony, Pyongyang and Washington had begun discussions about food aid and how to restart nuclear disarmament talks that were suspended when Kim died last month. The U.S. and North Korea fought on opposite sides of the 1950-53 Korean War, and do not have formal diplomatic relations.

Sunday's footage — shown on a day believed to be Kim Jong-Un's birthday — confirmed that he was being groomed as early as 2009 to succeed Kim Jong-Il. The choice of Kim Jong-Un as successor among the elder Kim's three known sons was not revealed publicly until state media reported in September 2010 that he had been made a four-star general and a vice chairman of the Central Military Commission of the Workers' Party.

The video showed Kim Jong-Un shaking hands with officials at a satellite control centre after scientists launched a rocket in April 2009 that stoked regional tensions and earned North Korea international sanctions and condemnation.

"I had decided to wage a real war if the enemies shot down" the rocket, Kim Jong-Un was quoted as saying. A voice-over described Kim Jong-Il as saying his son was in charge of the military's anti-rocket interception operations at the time.

North Korea has said it successfully sent a satellite into orbit as part of a peaceful bid to develop its space program. U.S. and South Korean officials, however, said no satellite or other object reached orbit, and accused the North of using the launch to test its long-range missile technology.

At the time, Japan had threatened to shoot down any debris from the rocket if the launch went awry. U.S. lawmakers also urged their military to shoot the rocket down.

The video also showed Kim Jong-Un navigating a tank, observing fighter jets and firing exercises, and posing for photographs with soldiers. He is shown seated in the tank's cockpit and speaking to officers with the hatch cover open. He later drove it on a snow-covered road as his father watched from a reviewing stand.

Both father and son wore heavy winter parkas. State TV did not say when the video was taken.

For two years, North Koreans were told that Kim Jong-Un, who graduated from Kim Il-Sung Military University, was a military genius, Pyongyang residents have told The Associated Press.

Sunday's documentary said Kim Jong-Un had intensified military training, and showed fighter jets tearing through the skies, and soldiers jumping out of planes with parachutes and firing multiple-rocket launchers.

It cited Kim Jong-Il as saying, "Our general resembles me. ... I sometimes admire his strong belief, resolve and gut."

Kim is also quoted as saying his son has "outstanding (military) strategies and is well-versed in military tactics. ... He is a man of many abilities and the genius among the geniuses."

Another documentary aired a week ago showed Kim Jong-Un visiting a premier tank division with strong historical and family ties in the first solo inspection trip made after his father's death.



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Since Kim Jong-Il's death on Dec. 17, the process to install his son as leader has been quick, with top military and party officials wasting no time in pledging their loyalty to the third Kim to lead the nation of 24 million since it was founded in 1948.

Kim Jong-Un, who was recently named supreme commander of the Korean People's Army, has pledged to uphold Kim Jong-Il's "military first" policy.

He is believed to have turned 28 or 29 on Sunday, though his exact birth date has not been confirmed by the government. The birthdays of his father and grandfather are considered the nation's most important holidays, but Kim Jong-Un's birthday has not been declared a national holiday.

<http://www.thestar.com/news/article/1112262--kim-jong-un-vows-war-if-enemies-shoot-down-rocket-video-footage-shows?bn=1>

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China Daily – China

US Accusation against China Groundless: FM Spokesman

January 09, 2012

BEIJING - China on Monday said an accusation against itself in a strategic defense guidance released by the US Department of Defense is "groundless and untrustworthy."

Foreign Ministry Spokesman Liu Weimin made the remarks at a press conference, adding that China's strategic intent is clear, open and transparent.

The US on Thursday unveiled a revised national defense strategy, vowing to strengthen the US military presence in the Asia-Pacific region despite fiscal constraints.

The document says China needs to clarify its strategic intent as its military power grows.

"China's national defense modernization serves the objective requirements of its national security and development, and it is a positive factor in maintaining regional peace and stability," Liu said, adding that the modernization will not pose any threat to any country.

China follows a path of peaceful development, adheres to an independent foreign policy of peace and pursues a defense policy which is defensive in nature, Liu said.

"The accusation against China in this document is groundless and untrustworthy," Liu said, noting China will study the document in depth.

Maintaining peace, stability and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region is in line with the interest of all countries in this region, Liu said.

"We hope the US side will play a more constructive role in this regard," he added.

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012-01/09/content_14409629.htm

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Korea Times – South Korea

January 09, 2012

NK Leader Signals 'Military-First' Policy

By Kim Young-jin

Issue No. 970, 10 January 2012

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



New North Korean leader Kim Jong-un's repeated appearances overseeing military affairs in state media are apparent signals that his fledgling regime will stick to the "military-first" policy of his late father Kim Jong-il in a bid to consolidate support among the elite.

The stance was further clarified Sunday when Pyongyang's mouthpiece media aired footage of the twenty-something leader shaking hands with officials after the North's 2009 missile test that put the region on edge.

The footage, aired on what is thought to be the junior Kim's birthday, was an attempt to dispel concerns in the North that he has not had sufficient training to control its 1.2 million strong military, analysts said. It also showed him inspecting fighter jets and firing exercise as well as navigating a tank.

"In times of transition in the North, the military is the most important power source and Kim Jong-un still needs to consolidate his base," Yoo Ho-yeol, a North watcher at Korea University said. "It's his number one priority."

Pyongyang has moved quickly to anoint Kim as its new leader, making him supreme commander of the army. But concerns linger that his youth and inexperience could be hurdles as he asserts his leadership, despite the wide belief he is being guided by a powerful group of regents.

His father, who oversaw the collapse of the North Korean economy while developing a provocative nuclear program, elevated his son as heir apparent in September 2010 by making him a four-star general and awarding him a high party post.

The footage confirmed that Kim Jong-il had been grooming Jong-un as early as 2009 for the top spot. Still, the few years of tutelage pale in comparison to the decades of preparation afforded to the father.

It followed reports that Kim, on his first inspection tour since his father's Dec. 17 death, visited a tank division in another effort to show his military involvement.

Professor Yoo said hints of what the new leader's economic policy might be will likely wait until he is more confident in his leadership.

It was also the latest signal Kim would continue developing the nuclear program despite international pressure to dismantle it in return for massive aid. Shortly after Kim's death, he was exulted by state media for his efforts to build a "nuclear state."

Still, regional players are in close consultations over how to resume six-party denuclearization talks in an apparent bid to at least curb the North's ambitions after it revealed a uranium enrichment program in 2010.

The North walked away from the talks — which also involve the United States, South Korea, Japan, Russia and China — the previous year over international sanctions for its nuclear and missile tests.

Kim's death came just as Washington had made a small but meaningful breakthrough, with Pyongyang reportedly agreeing to suspend its uranium enrichment program in return for 240,000 tons of food, during talks in Beijing.

Washington says it had contact with North Korean officials directly after the announcement on Dec. 19 of Kim's death over the possible nutritional aid. Reports now say Pyongyang called for a larger amount of aid and for inclusion of grains.

The bolstering of Kim Jong-un's military credentials had been underway before his father's death. Diplomats who worked in Pyongyang say North Korean officials believe him to have masterminded the deadly 2010 shelling of Yeonpyeong Island.

http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2012/01/116_102529.html

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ITAR-TASS News Agency – Russia



USAF COUNTERPROLIFERATION CENTER
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MAXWELL AFB, ALABAMA

7 January 2012

Russia's Strategic Missile Troops to Speed up Modernization in 2012

MOSCOW, January 7 (Itar-Tass) — Russia's Strategic Missile Troops plan to increase rates of re-equipping its facilities with new security and defence systems two-fold as a minimum as of 2012, a spokesman for the Troops, Colonel Vadim Koval, told Itar-Tass on Saturday.

"Under the conditions of existing terrorist threats one of the main tasks for the Strategic Missile Troops is to thwart nuclear terrorism attempts. As a result one of the main activities for the command of the Strategic Missile Troops is to upgrade security and defense capacities of strategic facilities and increase their anti-terrorism resistance," he said.

"Targeted efforts to develop modern automated security systems and equip facilities of the Strategic Missile Troops with them have been taken since 2005. Beginning from 2012 the rates of re-equipping facilities of the Strategic Missile Troops with new security and defense systems will increase no less than two-fold," Koval said.

Moreover, the Strategic Missile Troops regularly maintain and revamp automated security systems developed in 1960s-1980s. Ageing equipment has been replaced with new systems at 85 percent of such facilities.

<http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c154/312024.html>

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

Russia to Put New Radar on Combat Duty Near Irkutsk in 2012

8 January 2012

A new radar of the fourth Voronezh class will be put into operation near the Siberian city of Irkutsk by the end of this year as part of Russia's early warning system, a missile defense spokesman said on Sunday.

The current overhaul of Russia's missile defenses is also due to the new strategic challenges presented by the U.S.-led missile shield plans in Europe.

"This year a new generation radar will be put on combat duty. It is not complete but it is already working in the test regime," said Colonel Alexei Zolotukhin, spokesman for the missile defense troops in the Russian Defense Ministry.

Three other Voronezh class radars are already operating in Lekhtusi near St. Petersburg, in Armavir in the Black Sea area and in Pionersky near Kaliningrad.

The Voronezh class radars are a serious breakthrough compared to the previous generation radars of the Dnepr and Daryal class. The radar in Pionersky has a range of 6,000 km and can simultaneously track about 500 objects.

Under the national defense program until 2020, the Defense Ministry is to replace all Soviet long-range radars and close all gaps in radar coverage on Russia's borders.

MOSCOW, January 8 (RIA Novosti)

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20120108/170669217.html>

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Chicago Tribune

Safeguarding Soviet Nukes: How Threat of Nuclear Apocalypse Was Avoided after Soviet Breakup

Issue No. 970, 10 January 2012

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By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV, Associated Press
Sunday, January 8, 2012

MOSCOW (AP) — The doomsday scenario of Soviet nukes falling into the hands of rogue states or terrorists has, as far as is known, remained fiction, thanks to a massive U.S.-Russian effort to lock the weaponry up safely after the Soviet Union fell apart.

The vast nuclear arsenal, scattered among several newly independent nations, was secured because Russian military officers acted with professionalism and honesty, Moscow and Washington shared clear priorities, and the U.S. taxpayer coughed up billions of dollars, former top officials who dealt with the Soviet nuclear legacy say.

Even so, as the world marks the 20th anniversary of the Soviet demise at the end of 1991, occasional doubts surface about whether the system was airtight. There's the Russian scientist who perhaps went to work for Iran's nuclear program, an old claim that portable nuclear devices went astray, the seizures of smuggled fissile material in the 1990s.

But difficult though it is to prove a nuclear negative, U.S. and Russian officials insist in interviews with The Associated Press that the fears of the 1990s have not become a reality, even though the challenges of safeguarding Soviet nukes were daunting at the time.

"Twenty years on it's pretty hard to believe that not a single nuclear weapon has shown up loose," said Graham Allison, who played a key role in the effort as an assistant secretary of defense under President Bill Clinton and now heads Harvard's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs.

A quick U.S.-sponsored deal had Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan handing all their nukes over to Russia, and American cash helped safeguard the weapons at a time when the new governments couldn't even afford to pay military wages on time. Additional U.S. incentives offered jobs to disgruntled nuclear scientists from the former Soviet Union, many of whom were courted by nations like Iran.

There have been gnawing fears that a few Soviet nukes still might have gone missing, but experts with inside knowledge say that if it were true the world would already know.

"If somebody or a terrorist group got hold of a nuclear weapon, they would probably use it as quickly as possible," said Steven Pifer, who served as U.S. ambassador to Ukraine, held other senior State Department posts and is now director of the Brookings Institution's Arms Control Initiative. "So the fact that you haven't seen a nuclear detonation ... reflects the fact that the nuclear weapons have been maintained in a secure way."

That was no mean achievement given the enormous proliferation risks posed by the Soviet breakup.

The economic meltdown of the early 1990s forced many officers of the once-proud Soviet Army to moonlight as security guards or even cab drivers. And with the wars and ethnic clashes triggered by the Soviet collapse came strong incentives to steal weapons for the black market.

The immediate task for the Russian military was to quickly remove thousands of battlefield weapons such as nuclear artillery shells and land mines from other Soviet nations. These relatively compact arms posed the biggest proliferation risk and often were stored close to areas of conflict.

"The military officers who did the job were the unknown heroes," said Alexander Golts, a Russian independent analyst. "It's hard to imagine what might have happened if the tactical nuclear weapons had remained on the territories of the states involved in military conflicts."

The next goal, strongly backed by Washington, was to remove strategic nuclear weapons from Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine. The first two agreed quickly, but Ukraine, which had inherited enough of the Soviet arsenal to be the world's third largest nuclear power, balked at the plan, setting the stage for years of diplomatic battles.

A war for custody of nukes? "All this was quite terrifying," said Allison.

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Pifer said that some Ukrainian officials longed to keep them, but around 1992 concluded their country had neither the money nor the expertise to remain a nuclear power.

Also, the world's worst nuclear disaster had happened in 1986 at Chernobyl, in Ukraine, and public opinion wasn't keen on keeping nukes.

Still, Ukraine bargained for years for compensation in tough talks that sometimes made even seasoned diplomats lose their temper.

"There was a lot of pressure, they threatened us with all kinds of economic sanctions, they wanted to get this issue over with fast," Leonid Kravchuk, Ukraine's then president, told the AP.

Ukraine insisted the U.S. provide hundreds of millions of dollars to pay for safeguarding and dismantling the arsenal. From Russia it demanded nuclear fuel as compensation for the highly enriched uranium in the warheads. And it wanted security guarantees from all the nuclear powers.

"We didn't want to get naked for free," Kravchuk said.

Tensions over which country military officers in Ukraine should swear allegiance to — Russia or Ukraine — also stoked tensions. In February, 1992 an entire squadron of combat jets flew from Ukraine to Russia after their pilots refused to take the oath.

Ukraine eventually got the money and security guarantees it was seeking, but the Russians had other obstacles to overcome. For instance, the economy was so bad that the military struggled to pay wages on time, and top brass were reduced to struggling to give the strategic nuclear forces personnel better rations, said Maj.-Gen. (Ret.) Vladimir Dvorkin, a nuclear weapons expert in the Russian Defense Ministry in the early 1990s.

Control over the security of nuclear weapons never slackened, Dvorkin said. "People realized their responsibility because they were fully aware of the dangers."

Nuclear arsenals surrendered by former Soviet republics had to be safely transported long distances to centralized storage sites and secured. Dismantling missiles, bombers and submarines as required by the 1991 START treaty with the U.S. also required huge funds.

"Russia badly needed assistance," Dvorkin said, and the U.S. responded quickly with the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program initiated by Sens. Sam Nunn and Richard Lugar, which provided billions of dollars in equipment and know-how to help Russia and its neighbors deal with the Soviet nuclear legacy.

"It seems to me that Nunn-Lugar was one of the smartest uses of defense dollars we ever made," Pifer said.

Under the program, the U.S. provided reinforced rail cars to carry nuclear warheads, high-tech security systems for storage sites and dismantling mothballed nuclear subs.

"The program provided colossal support," Dvorkin said.

Building on their cooperation in securing the Soviet nuclear arsenals, Moscow and Washington moved later to reduce the number of nuclear weapons held by both sides, most recently with the New START deal signed by Presidents Barack Obama and Dmitry Medvedev that took effect last year.

But while Dvorkin says the military in Russia and other ex-Soviet nations kept tight control over atomic weapons, numerous civilian agencies were far less diligent in keeping track of nuclear materials at their disposal. "Fissile materials at nuclear power plants were controlled by one agency, and research reactors were in the hands of another one," he said.

Oversight at civilian structures was less stringent than in the military, creating conditions for a steady string of thefts of radioactive materials in the early 1990s, which were later seized by police in Germany and other European nations.

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"There were such cases, but they didn't entail catastrophic consequences," Dvorkin said, noting that the amounts of uranium and plutonium seized in Germany and elsewhere were extremely small, each measuring just a few grams.

Another major worry for the West was that scientists with nuclear know-how would be hired by unfriendly forces.

The U.S. responded quickly by setting up research centers that distributed grants to scientists "so that they can do civilian research and do it in Russia and avoid the temptations perhaps to go to countries such as North Korea and Iran," Pifer said.

"Thousands of scientists participated in this project in Russia and Ukraine, so we know of thousands of people who stayed behind," he said. "Whether we got everybody, I don't know."

Iran was working actively to attract scientists from Russia and other ex-Soviet lands, and the International Atomic Energy Agency in a report released in November said a foreign expert helped Iran on some of its alleged weapons-related experiments by working on ways to set off a nuclear blast through a sophisticated multipoint explosives trigger. Diplomats identified him as former Soviet scientist Vyacheslav Danilenko, who worked in Iran for several years.

Despite the assurances from Russian and U.S. officials that no Soviet nukes got lost in the chaos of the post-Soviet years, allegations occasionally surfaced that some of the weapons went missing.

Gen. Alexander Lebed, who headed Russia's Security Council for several months in 1996, made the most stunning of such claims in 1997, saying the military lost track of dozens of suitcase-sized portable nuclear devices. Lebed issued several contradictory statements about the number missing, and Russian officials rejected his claim.

Dvorkin said Lebed, who died in a helicopter crash in 2002, didn't know what he was talking about.

"I personally know people who were counting the weapons at centralized depots, and they have confirmed that nothing was stolen," he said. "They did the check after Lebed's statements and made sure that everything was in place."

Maria Danilova in Kiev, Ukraine contributed to this report.

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/sns-ap-eu-russia-avoiding-armageddon,0,4399453,full.story>

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Miami Herald
Tuesday, January 10, 2012

Russia's Space Chief Says Failures May Be Sabotage

The Associated Press

MOSCOW -- Russia's space chief says the recent failures of his country's spacecraft may have been caused by hostile interference.

Roscosmos chief Vladimir Popovkin stopped short of accusing the United States of disabling Russian satellites, but in an interview published Tuesday in the daily Izvestia he said some Russian craft had suffered malfunctions while flying beyond the reach of its tracking facilities.

Popovkin said he didn't want to proportion blame, but modern technology makes spacecraft vulnerable to foreign influence.

Popovkin made the comment when asked about the failure of the unmanned Phobos-Ground probe, which was to explore a Mars moon but became stranded while orbiting Earth after its Nov. 9 launch.

The spacecraft is expected to fall to Earth around Jan. 15.

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<http://www.miamiherald.com/2012/01/10/2582375/russias-space-chief-says-failures.html>

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Voice of Russia – Russia

Russia's Navy Goes Digital

By Daria Manina

January 10, 2012

New generation submarines will soon be made operational in the Russian Navy. The Borei nuclear submarine will be the first "digital" submarine in Russia.

The new submarine will be equipped with the state-of-the-art strategic Bulava missile system, which is in fact an upgraded version of the Topol-M intercontinental ballistic missile, Alexander Shirokorad, a military expert, says:

"The Borei submarine is capable of carrying 12 Bulava missiles. By now 18 test launches of the missile have been carried out and 11 of them have been successful. President Dmitry Medvedev has announced that the Bulava will be made operational this year. His statement was prompted by a successful test of two missiles on December 23. Those missiles launched from the Yury Dolgoruky submarine successfully hit targets on the Kura test range on Kamchatka."

In comparison with the missile carriers of the former generations the new nuclear submarines have better hydrodynamic and acoustic qualities, another Russian military expert Igor Korotchenko says:

"The Borei class submarines are equipped with new monitoring systems, which enable them to evaluate the situation underwater and, if needed, attack different underwater targets. The systems were designed with the use of the latest developments of Russia's defense industry in the field of combat information control systems and weapons control systems. The submarine also has the latest life support systems. For the aging Russian underwater fleet the transition to the new generation of submarines is very important for the Russian Navy."

The out-of-date nuclear submarines, in particular the Akula class submarines (or Typhoon-class, according to NATO classification) are to be scrapped by 2014, Alexander Shirokorad says:

"The new submarines will be three to four times less noisy than the Akula submarines. They will also have a life-saving capsule. In case of danger the crew can escape in a special cell, which surfaces."

In total eight nuclear submarines of the Borei class will be built. Currently, the submarines named Yury Dolgoruky, Alexander Nevsky, Vladimir Monomah and Svyatitel Nikolay are in different stages of completion. All of them will be deployed on the Kamchatka peninsula and become part of Russia's Pacific fleet. The necessary facilities for the submarines as well as housing for the crew and their families have already been built, Korotchenko says:

"The naval facilities for the new submarines have been completed. The whole base has been reequipped, the docks have been built, as well as a training center and a maintenance base and a base for the handling of missiles. Measures have been taken to strengthen the security systems both at sea and in the air."

At present Russia's fleet counts 60 submarines including nuclear, strategic, multi-purpose and modern diesel ones. The Borei nuclear submarines will be the fourth generation of submarines in terms of the level of the armament and capabilities.

<http://english.ruvr.ru/2012/01/10/63621032.html>

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

U.S. Wishes More Progress in Missile Shield Talks with Russia

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10 January 2012

The United States wish more progress has been made in missile shield talks with Russia, Assistant Secretary of State Philip Gordon said.

Russia has retained staunch opposition to the planned deployment of U.S. missile defense systems near its borders, claiming they would be a security threat. NATO and the United States insist that the shield would defend NATO members against missiles from North Korea and Iran and would not be directed at Russia.

“We wish that, more broadly, we had been able to make more progress in terms of NATO-Russia and U.S.-Russia cooperation in missile defense,” he said. “I think we made some progress towards some theater missile defense exercises... which shows that the two sides, as in the past, as prior to 2008, can cooperate in a way that serves their interests.”

“We’re going to keep talking about it. Our view on the subject I think is quite clear. We, the United States and our NATO allies, are going to move forward with the European Phased Adaptive Approach because there’s a growing threat from the proliferation of ballistic missiles, potentially combined with nuclear weapons proliferation,” Gordon went on.

He reiterated that the system is not directed against Russia and “offer to work together remains on the table”.

“We’re going to continue to discuss it with Russia and look forward to progress in the future,” the U.S. diplomat said.

Russia and NATO agreed to cooperate on the so-called European missile shield during the NATO-Russia Council summit in Lisbon in November 2010. NATO insists there should be two independent systems that exchange information, while Russia favors a joint system with full-scale interoperability.

Gordon also expressed readiness to discuss issues of nonstrategic weapons in Europe, but said the U.S. stance remains unchanged and “NATO will and should remain a nuclear alliance so long as nuclear weapons exist in the world.”

“And we have drawn attention on a number of occasions to the issue of nonstrategic or tactical nuclear weapons in Europe is to a significant degree the numbers,” he said. “A number of our allies have raised the same issue, the numbers of tactical nuclear weapons, nonstrategic, that Russia has, and those should be the part of any discussion moving forward when it comes to nonstrategic weapons.”

WASHINGTON, January 10 (RIA Novosti)

<http://en.ria.ru/russia/20120110/170687726.html>

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Scotland on Sunday – Scotland

Scottish Trident Nuclear Plans would Leave UK without Deterrent

By Eddie Barnes

Sunday, 8 January 2012

AN INDEPENDENT Scotland committed to banishing nuclear warheads from Faslane would impose disarmament on the whole of the UK, a leading defence expert declares today.

In an article for *Scotland on Sunday*, William Walker, professor of international relations at St Andrews University, says the SNP policy of removing Trident from Scotland after independence would “amount to a promise to shut down the UK’s nuclear deterrent and enforce its disarmament”.



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As a result, an independent Scots government might have to compromise on removing the weapons or leave the UK without a nuclear shield. This is because nowhere else in the UK is suitable to house both the submarines and missiles at a realistic cost, he says.

Currently, the naval base at Faslane provides a home for Britain's four Trident submarines - the UK's sole nuclear deterrent - while Coulport on Loch Long is home to their warheads and missiles.

SNP policy, come independence, is to remove the weapons from Scottish territory, saying it does not want Scotland to be home to such weapons of mass destruction. SNP figures have asserted that the submarines and the warheads could be housed elsewhere in the UK.

But Walker warns that this is fraught with difficulties. He argues that a newly independent Scotland would face several diplomatic and practical obstacles in getting rid of the weapons and that SNP leaders "know that compromise may be forced on them".

However, he also says the SNP's position could help to form an anti-Trident coalition in the UK as a whole if both Labour and the Lib Dems also come out to oppose the vast cost of replacing the weapons system over the next few years. Some senior figures in the military would also "say good riddance" to Trident, he adds.

The clash over nuclear weapons comes with UK ministers having said they are "absolutely committed" to renewing Britain's four ageing Trident submarines, all based at Faslane, at an estimated cost of around £25 billion. Those plans could be thrown into disarray, however, if Scots were to back independence.

On the issue of sending Trident south of the Border, Walker writes: "Although a harbour might be adapted to function like Faslane, establishing another Coulport – at a location that would meet stringent safety and logistic requirements – would be extremely difficult.

"Furthermore, transfer south would require huge investments to replace infrastructure built in Scotland over decades."

http://www.scotsman.com/scotland-on-sunday/uk/scottish_trident_nuclear_plans_would_leave_uk_without_deterrent_1_2043364

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Buenos Aires Herald – Argentina

Iranian, Venezuelan Leaders Rebuff US, Joke about Bomb

9 January 2012

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Venezuela's Hugo Chávez lavished each other with praise on Monday, mocked US disapproval and joked about having an atomic bomb at their disposal.

"Despite those arrogant people who do not wish us to be together, we will unite forever," the Iranian president told socialist leader Chávez at the start of a visit to four left-leaning Latin American nations.

Despite their geographical distance, the fiery anti-US ideologues have forged increasingly close ties between their fellow OPEC nations in recent years, although concrete projects have often lagged behind the rhetoric.

Ahmadinejad was in Venezuela at the start of a tour intended to shore up support as expanded Western economic sanctions kick in over the Islamic Republic's nuclear program.

"The imperialist madness has been unleashed in a way that has not been seen for a long time," Chávez said in a ceremony to welcome Ahmadinejad at his presidential palace in Caracas.

Both men hugged, beamed, held hands and showered each other with praise.

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As he often does, the theatrical and provocative Chávez stuck his finger right into the global political sore spot, joking that a bomb was ready under a grassy knoll in front of his Miraflores palace steps.

"That hill will open up and a big atomic bomb will come out," he said, the two men laughing together.

"The imperialist spokesmen say ... Ahmadinejad and I are going into the Miraflores basement now to set our sights on Washington and launch cannons and missiles ... It's laughable."

US officials from President Barack Obama down have expressed disquiet over Venezuela's close ties with Iran. They fear Chávez will weaken the international diplomatic front against Iran and could give Tehran an economic lifeline.

The United States and its allies believe Iran's nuclear policy is aimed at producing a weapon. Iran says it is only for peaceful power generation.

As well as Venezuela, Ahmadinejad plans to visit Nicaragua, Cuba and Ecuador -- a visit that Washington has said shows its "desperation" for friends.

<http://www.buenosairesherald.com/article/89468/iranian-venezuelan-leaders-rebuff-us-joke-about-bomb>

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National Journal

New U.S. Defense Strategy Lays Groundwork for More Nuclear Cuts

By Elaine M. Grossman

January 6, 2012

A fresh U.S. defense strategy unveiled by President Obama at the Pentagon on Thursday asserts that nuclear deterrence can be maintained with a smaller stockpile, while renewing earlier assurances that the remaining arsenal would be kept "safe, secure and effective" (see *GSN*, Jan. 5).

The Defense Department released an 11-page document outlining a new set of priorities for the military at what it called an "inflection point," as longtime troop commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan wind down.

The strategy blueprint, titled "Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense," is short on specifics but indicates that a secret nuclear-policy review the Pentagon completed last month set the stage for reductions below New START levels (see *GSN*, Nov. 8, 2011).

The U.S.-Russian arms-control treaty, which entered into force last year, mandates that by February 2018 each side cap its fielded strategic nuclear arsenal at 1,550 warheads. The pact also limits each nation's deployed nuclear delivery systems to 700, with an additional 100 bombers, ICBMs or sea-based ballistic missiles permitted in reserve.

"It is possible that our deterrence goals can be achieved with a smaller nuclear force, which would reduce the number of nuclear weapons in our inventory as well as their role in U.S. national security strategy," the new policy outline states.

Details about how a more limited U.S. atomic arsenal could continue to deter conflict even as conventional defense equipment, troop levels, and major operations abroad are being scaled back were largely left out of the strategy document.

Defense Secretary Leon Panetta and his deputy, Ashton Carter, said on Thursday that specific programs and force structure to be reduced would be identified within the next few weeks as Obama delivers his State of the Union speech -- slated for Jan. 25 -- and sends a fiscal 2013 federal budget request to Congress shortly thereafter.

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“Our judgment [is] that we can maintain deterrence at lower levels of forces, but I will defer any discussion of specific programmatic details to the budget when it rolls out,” Michele Flournoy, the Defense undersecretary for policy, said at the Thursday press briefing.

An overall defense-strategy relook would have been necessary at such a juncture but was hastened by a roughly \$490 billion budget cut over the next decade that represents the Pentagon’s “part in helping the nation put its fiscal house in order,” Panetta told reporters after the president delivered remarks without taking questions.

The department might also have to absorb another \$500 billion in reductions over the same time frame if lawmakers fail to negotiate a new approach to deficit reductions by the end of this year.

The administration also used the policy document to reaffirm its commitment to maintaining viable U.S. nuclear warheads and the technologies built to deliver them.

“As long as nuclear weapons remain in existence, the United States will maintain a safe, secure and effective arsenal,” states the policy directive. “We will field nuclear forces that can under any circumstances confront an adversary with the prospect of unacceptable damage, both to deter potential adversaries and to assure U.S. allies and other security partners that they can count on America’s security commitments.”

Pentagon leaders plan to design and build new bomber aircraft and ballistic-missile-carrying submarines over the next couple of decades, as well as replace the nation’s aging ICBM fleet, all of which is expected to cost hundreds of billions of dollars. A former vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the since-retired Marine Corps Gen. James Cartwright, said in July that the Defense Department challenge is that “we have to recapitalize all three legs [of the triad] and we don’t have the money to do it.”

It is unclear whether the upcoming budget plan for fiscal 2013 and future years would significantly alter any of these nuclear modernization efforts. If the administration wants to avoid unilateral reductions to the nuclear arsenal, it is likely to await new negotiations with Russia on lower numbers before enshrining cuts in its out-year budget plans.

In an e-mailed commentary on Thursday, Daryl Kimball and Tom Collina of the Arms Control Association focused on the indications that the size of the nuclear arsenal might be permitted to shrink more in the years to come. The two experts estimated that the nation could “save at least \$45 billion over the next decade, and still maintain a formidable nuclear force” through possible reductions across all three legs of the nuclear triad (see *GSN*, Dec. 16, 2011).

The pair also said further-negotiated reductions could improve security around the globe.

“Maintaining excessive nuclear force does nothing to help convince nations, such as Iran or North Korea, or terrorist actors to abandon their pursuit of dangerous weapons. It does nothing to encourage nuclear restraint by China and Russia,” Kimball and Collina said. “In fact, by maintaining a larger nuclear force than we need, we are more likely to induce Russia to build up its own arsenal. It is in the security and financial interests of both countries to pursue further, parallel reductions in nuclear forces.”

The nuclear-policy statements in the newly released strategy are also drawing some slight nudges from the Left and more pointed barbs from the Right.

“The strategy’s take on nuclear issues is cautious but hints at positive steps,” said Stephen Young, a senior analyst at the Union of Concerned Scientists. By contrast, a bolder policy statement could help Obama honor his “sensible commitment to reducing the role of nuclear weapons and ending Cold War thinking,” he said.

“The administration would be better served by declaring the truth: The United States would be more secure with far fewer nuclear weapons undertaking fewer missions,” Young told *Global Security Newswire* in an e-mailed response to questions. “This approach would have the additional benefit of saving significant sums of money.”



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Christopher Ford, a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, said the United States could face new levels of risk by cutting its conventional forces and nuclear arsenal simultaneously.

"If the White House were serious" about both reducing the role of nuclear arms in national security and assuring foreign partners of Washington's security commitments, "they'd be keeping a large and robust conventional military force, and developing improved ways to hold challenging targets at risk through nonnuclear means," Ford told *GSN* in a written response to questions.

"It's logically impossible to meet all these objectives at the same time. You might be able to reassure allies without nuclear weapons, but it would take new conventional muscle and lots of money," he said. "You're not going to reassure allies while cutting both nuclear weapons and conventional budgets. Our friends around the world are a lot smarter than that."

A key finding of the president's defense strategy review was that the time had come for a significant downsizing of the nation's ground troops, which would leave them with less capability to perform long-term stability missions abroad. Defense leaders emphasized on Thursday, though, that the U.S. Army and Marine Corps would continue to train for a wide array of combat tasks, and an ability to "regenerate" more ground forces would be maintained.

Rep. Mike Turner, R-Ohio, who chairs the House Armed Services Strategic Forces Subcommittee, said on Thursday that the defense strategy's new emphasis on a heightened U.S. role in Asia could be hurt by the administration's nuclear policies.

"Deeper nuclear cuts will actually undermine the president's stated shift of focus to the Pacific," Turner said in a released statement. "Our allies across Asia, much like others around the globe, rely on a strong U.S. nuclear deterrent for their security."

Ford also questioned the document's portrayal of nuclear deterrence as presenting a threat of unacceptable damage to would-be antagonists.

"What damage is 'unacceptable' will vary hugely from country to country, and with the circumstances -- such as what is at stake in any particular potential conflict," he said. "It doesn't make much sense as a guideline for sizing one's arsenal."

The Hudson analyst also echoed concerns, voiced recently by Republican lawmakers, that a smaller nuclear arsenal might limit targeting options to such an extent that the Pentagon could no longer expend bombs or missiles on an adversary's military facilities, and would go after population centers instead (see *GSN*, Dec. 9, 2011).

"Countervalue [targeting] might certainly provide a rationale for much lower numbers, but this would come at great moral cost: Mass murder would become not the derivative and unfortunate result of targeting military assets but the actual objective of U.S. policy," Ford said.

Administration officials and congressional Democrats have argued that U.S. nuclear-targeting strategy for years has put a potential adversary's cities at risk, regardless of which party held the White House. A significant number of military and industrial targets are located near large population centers, meaning that almost any plausible nuclear-war plan would result in catastrophic levels of civilian casualties, according to this line of thinking (see *GSN*, May 27, 2011).

Rep. Edward Markey, D-Mass., who in October led 64 lawmakers in proposing deep nuclear cuts to help close the federal budget deficit, lauded the new strategy as a step in the right direction (see *GSN*, Oct. 12, 2011).

"America's nuclear-weapons policy is the epitome of overkill, and nuclear weapons and related programs must be on the chopping block like all other defense programs," the lawmaker said in a written statement. Markey said he planned to introduce legislation to "address the wasteful spending on nuclear weapons and related programs."

<http://www.nationaljournal.com/nationalsecurity/new-u-s-defense-strategy-lays-groundwork-for-more-nuclear-cuts-20120106>

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Mainichi Daily News – Japan
January 7, 2012

U.S. Gov't Says It Conducted 4th Plutonium Test in Last Nov.

WASHINGTON (Kyodo) -- The United States conducted a fourth experiment using plutonium to examine the capabilities of its nuclear arsenal last November, officials of the National Nuclear Security Administration said Friday.

The test, which did not involve an atomic explosion or nuclear-testing site, was conducted at the Sandia National Laboratories in New Mexico on Nov. 16, the officials said.

The U.S. government has conducted similar test three times since November 2010.

The NNSA, an entity under the U.S. Energy Department, said the latest test used "Z machine" equipment capable of generating the strongest X-rays in the world to simulate the fusion that occurs in nuclear weapons and studied the behavior of plutonium under extreme pressure and temperature conditions.

The new test complemented nuclear subcritical tests, according to the NNSA.

The United States has continued nuclear subcritical tests since 1997 and new plutonium tests since 2010 to see if its nuclear weapons built during the Cold War era remain in an operational state.

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/international/news/20120107p2g00m0in015000c.html>

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Latin America Herald Tribune – Venezuela
Caracas, January 09, 2012

US Expels Venezuela Consul for Possible Involvement in Terrorism Against US

After U.S. lawmakers and federal agencies investigated reports that Iranian and Venezuelan diplomats in Mexico were involved in plotting cyberattacks against U.S. targets, including nuclear power plants, the US today expelled one of the diplomats -- Livia Antonieta Acosta Noguera -- who was Venezuela's Consul General in Miami.

MIAMI -- The U.S. has ordered Venezuela's Miami Consul General Livia Acosta Noguera to leave the country by January 10, according to the U.S. Department of State.

The Venezuela Embassy in Washington was told on January 6 that Acosta Noguera had been declared "persona non grata."

The US State Department did not say why the Venezuela Consul was expelled, but many US Congressmen and women had expressed concern and called for action from US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton over Acosta Noguera's possible involvement in terrorism against the United States.

"It has recently come to our attention that Ms. Antonieta, assigned to the Venezuelan consul in Miami since March 2011, has been linked to a potential cyber attack on the United States involving affiliates of the Iranian, Cuban, and Venezuelan regimes," Congressman David Rivera (FL-25), Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (FL-18), Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart (FL-21) and Congressman Albio Sires (NJ-13) wrote to Secretary Clinton in December.

Antonieta was featured in the Univision Network documentary, "The Iranian Threat" ("La Amenaza Irani"). According to the documentary, when she served as the vice secretary at the Venezuelan embassy in Mexico in

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2008, she interacted with members from the Iranian and Cuban embassies and extremist students from the Universidad Autónoma of Mexico to coordinate a cyber attack against the U.S. government, and critical infrastructure systems at the White House, FBI and CIA.

"If true, these actions demonstrate Livia Antonieta's willingness to undermine U.S. interests and the potential threat to our national security posed by Livia Antonieta's activities. With this in mind, we respectfully request the Department of State to investigate these allegations, and if found true, declare her a persona non grata and require her immediate departure from the United States," the letter reads.

In the Senate, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, Senator Robert Menendez (D-NJ), has called for hearings on the alleged plot.

"If Iran is using regional actors to facilitate and direct activities against the United States, this would represent a substantial increase in the level of the Iranian threat and would necessitate an immediate response," said Menendez.

Venezuela President Hugo Chavez denies the allegations in the documentary.

"They are using a lie as an excuse to attack us," the leftist strongman said of the United States during a TV and radio address. "We must be on our guard."

Chavez resumed his talk show Sunday after a 7 month hiatus while he recovered from cancer treatment. He later hosts Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad who is in Caracas for meetings.

<http://www.laht.com/article.asp?ArticleId=460277&CategoryId=10717>

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Atlanta Business Chronicle

Nuclear Threat Initiative Starting New Index

Atlanta Business Chronicle

Monday, January 9, 2012

Nuclear Threat Initiative on Wednesday will debut the Nuclear Materials Security Index, a new and unique assessment of the status of nuclear materials security conditions in 176 countries.

The index will launch officially at 10 a.m. on Jan. 11 at <http://www.ntiindex.org/>.

Nuclear Threat Initiative was founded by former Ga. Sen. Sam Nunn and Atlanta media mogul Ted Turner. The nonprofit, nonpartisan organization says its mission is to "strengthen global security by reducing the risk of use and preventing the spread of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons."

<http://www.bizjournals.com/atlanta/news/2012/01/09/nuclear-threat-initiative-starting-new.html>

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Seattle Times

Monday, January 09, 2012

Plan for New Navy Wharf at Bangor Fires up Nuke Debate

Is the nuclear-sub fleet a "Cold War relic" or a modern deterrent? The Pentagon nears a decision on building a \$715 million munitions wharf on Hood Canal.

By Kyung M. Song, Seattle Times Washington bureau

WASHINGTON — The Cold War ended in 1991. But you might not know it to look at Naval Base Kitsap Bangor.

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The base's eight nuclear submarines typically sail on patrol three times a year for up to 100 days at a stretch, much as they did before the Soviet Union disintegrated.

Three of those submarines might be on alert at any given time, and the entire fleet carries enough nuclear warheads on its Trident missiles to obliterate every major city in Russia and China.

Now the Navy wants a \$715 million second munitions wharf to accommodate upgrade work on the missiles. The Pentagon is scheduled to issue its final environmental-impact statement early this year, one of the last major hurdles before the four-year construction can begin in July.

The Navy says expanding wharf capacity to load and unload weapons at Bangor is critical to defense readiness. But critics are trying to block it, calling it a costly, unneeded project for a bygone era.

The United States and Russia last year began a new round of whittling down their nuclear arsenals. Last week, the Obama administration released a much-awaited strategic shift in defense priorities, calling for, among other things, both fewer nuclear weapons as well as less reliance on them for national security.

And diminished federal budgets have even top Pentagon officials mulling the possibility that the U.S. eventually may drop one leg of its sea-land-air nuclear stance.

For Tom Rogers, of Poulsbo, those are more than enough reasons to scrap plans for the second weapons-handling wharf.

Rogers, a retired Navy captain turned anti-nuclear activist, was one of five dozen people who showed up at a public hearing in April at North Kitsap High School. The meeting was to discuss environmental consequences of building the 152,000-square-foot wharf on Hood Canal. But most of the attendees who spoke instead questioned why one needed to be built at all.

"Why are we doing this? We're spending a whole lot of taxpayer money on a Cold War relic," Rogers said in an interview. "All we are doing is making defense contractors rich."

Rogers, 65, served three decades on attack submarines at Naval Base San Diego. He believes the massive American nuclear stockpile makes little difference to such unstable nuclear states as North Korea or possible would-be player Iran. And it encourages potential enemies such as Russia or China to keep up their own inventory.

"We're not deterring anyone with those weapons right now," Rogers said. "This is ridiculous spending."

Navy: wharf "critical"

The Navy, however, argues the existing 1970s-era munitions wharf is simply inadequate. Over many years, the military will be upgrading the Trident II D5 missiles to extend their service through 2042.

The Navy estimates it would need 400 days of wharf access a year to remove and reinstall electronics components and perform other work. That's twice the number of days the existing wharf is currently available due to maintenance work and pile replacements.

Six other Trident submarines are based in the Atlantic in Kings Bay, Ga. Of the total fleet of 14 submarines, 12 are operational at a time.

In March, Adm. Gary Roughead, chief of naval operations, testified in Congress that a second munitions wharf in the Pacific is "critical to nuclear weapons surety and our national security."

Roughead said the Navy has budgeted \$715 million for the wharf. The fiscal 2012 military construction spending bill includes \$78 million as the first installment.

Rep. Norm Dicks, D-Bremerton, the top Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee, said the Navy made "a very strong case" to justify the project.

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Dicks said that compared with their predecessor Trident I C4 missiles, the newer missiles are more complex and handling them takes longer.

"I looked at this [wharf] very carefully. And I'm aware about the concerns about the necessity," he said. "I think this is a worthy project."

Dicks added the project will create sorely needed jobs. Kitsap County officials, who generally favor the project, also cited the new paychecks from the construction and related mitigation work.

According to the Navy's estimates, the wharf is expected to create 4,370 direct jobs and 1,970 indirect jobs. The Navy plans to use workers hired through local union halls.

Dicks contends the second wharf is warranted even though the number of submarines at Bangor likely will shrink in the future. The Navy is looking to replace the current fleet starting in 2029 with a new class of submarines. The Navy wants a dozen, at an estimated total cost of \$100 billion. Some defense experts expect only 10 may get built, split between Pacific and Atlantic homeports.

Still, Dicks believes submarine-launched ballistic missiles have the "most secure" role in the nation's nuclear armament. He said it would make sense for the Pentagon to cut nuclear spending by reducing the number of land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles first.

Future unclear for subs

Michael Krepon, a security expert who blogs at armscontrolwonk.com, questioned how the second wharf would fit into a downsized nuclear — and fiscal — world.

"In times of great budgetary stringency, this appropriations ought to raise eyebrows," said Krepon, who was an aide to both Dicks and to his predecessor in the 6th Congressional District, Rep. Floyd Hicks.

The Navy has talked about the need for a second and even a third wharf at Bangor for more than 30 years.

Hans Kristensen, a nuclear expert at the Federation of American Scientists, said the Trident missiles are the "crown jewels" of the U.S. nuclear arsenal. Yet Kristensen said it's possible that in 15 years, Bangor may have only five or six submarines.

"The real driver is, 'How many subs are going to be operating at the base in the future?'" Kristensen said. "This has to be taken into consideration."

According to inspection numbers under the New START Treaty with Russia, the United States as of Sept. 1 had 1,790 nuclear warheads deployed. The Russian Federation had 1,566. The treaty limits deployed warheads to 1,550 by 2018.

Each Trident submarine typically carries 20 missiles, each with four or five warheads. The new-generation subs would have 16 missile launchers.

But the size and purpose of future American nuclear forces is very much under debate. Kristensen believes the results of the strategic review announced by President Obama, who has pledged to end "Cold War thinking," could fundamentally reshape the role of nuclear weapons in the nation's defense.

Meanwhile, the federal budget deficit has given new impetus to re-examine the nation's nuclear spending. The Pentagon is facing a possible budget cut of \$1 trillion over the next decade, or roughly 15 percent.

In October, 65 House Democrats, including Rep. Jim McDermott, of Seattle, sent a letter to the now-defunct congressional "supercommittee" on deficit reduction calling for cuts to an "outdated radioactive relic."

"Cut Minuteman missiles. Do not cut Medicare and Medicaid," they wrote. "Cut nuclear-armed B-52 and B-2 bombers. Do not cut Social Security."

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Rogers, the retired submarine officer, contends that fears of a dangerous world and ignorance keep many citizens from asking hard questions about the Trident submarines. But if they did, Rogers said, there would be no second wharf.

"The American people could certainly stop it," he said. "Because it's stupid."

http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/localnews/2017193326_navywharf09m.html

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Miami Herald

OPINION/In My Opinion/Columnist

Ahmadinejad's Latin America "Tour of Tyrants"

Saturday, January 7, 2012

By Andres Oppenheimer, The Miami Herald

Iranian President Mahmud Ahmadinejad will be visiting Latin America this week for the fifth time since 2007 — as often as U.S. presidents over the same period, and visiting more countries than them. He must have powerful reasons to spend so much time in the region.

Ahmadinejad's five-day trip to Venezuela, Nicaragua, Cuba and Ecuador — which U.S. House Foreign Relations Committee chairwoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, R-Miami, has labeled a "tour of tyrants" — comes at a time of growing international tensions over Iran's failure to comply with United Nations nuclear non-proliferation agreements.

The United States and the 27-country European Community have announced new economic sanctions on Iran, including a possible European oil embargo, following a November United Nations report that Iran is likely to be developing a nuclear bomb. Iran is threatening to close the Strait of Hormuz, where 35 percent of the world's oil goes through, if U.S. and European sanctions limit its oil exports.

There are two major theories within the U.S. diplomatic community on Ahmadinejad's trip:

U.S. foreign policy hard-liners, including most Republican presidential candidates, say Iran's growing presence in Latin America is a demonstration of power by a terrorist regime.

"The Iranians have a vision of themselves of being a global power, and they feel that they have the momentum," says Roger Noriega, a Republican foreign policy hawk who headed the U.S. State Department's Latin American affairs office during the George W. Bush presidency.

"They feel that they blocked the U.S. presence in Iraq, they are angling to undermine the U.S. agreement with Afghanistan, and they want to challenge us in our neighborhood," he adds.

According to Noriega, Iran is getting help from Venezuela, and perhaps from Ecuador, to mine uranium for its nuclear program. In addition, Iran is building a network of local operatives in Latin America to strike back at U.S. and Israeli targets in the region should there be a military attack against Iran's nuclear facilities, Noriega says.

The United States says Iran is the world's leading sponsor of terrorism, providing weapons to several terrorist groups and actively promoting suicide bombings in the Middle East. Argentina has also accused Iran of carrying out bloody bombings against the Israeli Embassy and a Jewish community center in 1992 and 1994.

U.S. foreign policy moderates, on the other hand, side with the State Department's view that Ahmadinejad's visit to Latin America may be a sign of weakness.

The Iranian leader is increasingly isolated at home and abroad, and is desperately seeking to project an image of strength by showing his countrymen that he is being welcomed abroad, U.S. moderates say.

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At home, Ahmadinejad has lost the support of the nation's fundamentalist supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and at the same time faces a growing challenge from reformist leaders such as presidential hopeful Mir Hossein Mousavi.

Iran's economy is deteriorating badly, and new international sanctions could make things worse. Rising food prices could drive up public discontent, which has already risen significantly since the regime's brutal repression of protests over Ahmadinejad's dubious 2009 electoral victory.

Meantime, Syria's regime — Iran's closest Middle Eastern ally — is increasingly threatened by an internal revolt.

Asked about Ahmadinejad's trip, a well-placed State Department official told me that it's a frantic effort to break his growing domestic and international isolation. As for allegations that Iran is getting nuclear cooperation from Venezuela, and may be creating local terrorist networks in the region, the official said that "Iran's threat to the U.S. national security interests in Latin America is latent, rather than active."

My opinion: I tend to side with the moderates, in that Iran's fascist ruler is trying to show his people at home that he is not a world pariah, and that he is still received as a world figure abroad.

Still, the Latin American presidents who are welcoming him are not only embracing a tyranny — which according to Amnesty International severely restricts fundamental freedoms and executed up to 552 people last year, more than any other country except China — but may also be setting up violent support groups in Latin America to use as an insurance policy against an attack against its nuclear facilities.

By welcoming Ahmadinejad, they are importing a foreign conflict, and that can only bring bad things to the region. The 1990's bombings in Argentina speak for themselves.

Andres Oppenheimer is a Miami Herald syndicated columnist and a member of The Miami Herald team that won the 1987 Pulitzer Prize. He is the author of Castro's Final Hour; Bordering on Chaos, Cronicas de heroes y bandidos, Ojos vendados, Cuentos Chinos and most recently, Saving the Americas.

<http://www.miamiherald.com/2012/01/07/2577341/ahmadinejads-latin-america-tour.html>

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New York Times
OPINION/Sunday Review
January 8, 2012

No Need for All These Nukes

By PHILIP TAUBMAN, Page – SR4

STANFORD, Calif. -- OVER the last three years, as I delved into the world of American nuclear weapons, I felt increasingly as though I had stepped into a time warp. Despite the nearly total rearrangement of the international security landscape since the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991, the rise of Islamic terrorism and the spread of nuclear materials and technology to volatile nations like Pakistan, North Korea and Iran, the Defense Department remains enthralled by cold war nuclear strategies and practices.

Barack Obama took office determined to change that. He has made progress on many fronts. Last week, he outlined a new, no-frills defense strategy, downsizing conventional forces. He now needs to double down on his commitment to refashion nuclear forces. He should trim the American nuclear arsenal by two-thirds to bring it down to a sensible size, order the Pentagon to scale back nuclear war-fighting plans so they are relevant to contemporary threats, remove most American intercontinental, land-based missiles from high alert and drop the quaint notion that a fleet of aging B-52 bombers can effectively deliver nuclear weapons to distant targets.

This agenda is not only desirable, it is doable without undercutting American security. It would save tens of billions of dollars a year, a relatively small amount by Pentagon standards, but every billion counts as Leon E. Panetta, the

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defense secretary, trims his budget. And the steps can safely be taken without requiring reciprocal moves by Russia that must be codified in a treaty.

For the last few months, the Obama administration has been conducting a classified review of the doctrines and operations that determine the shape and potential uses of America's nuclear armaments. If the president pushes back against the defenders of the old order at the Pentagon and other redoubts of the nuclear priesthood, he can preserve American security while making the United States a more credible leader on one of today's most critical issues — containing the spread of nuclear weapons. Like a chain smoker asking others to give up cigarettes, the United States, with its bloated arsenal, sounds hypocritical when it puts pressure on other nations to cut weapons and stop producing bomb-grade highly enriched uranium, the key ingredient of a crude nuclear weapon.

American actions alone won't end the proliferation danger, but American leadership is essential to any hope of containing the threat.

Sam Nunn, the former chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, and anything but a dove over the years, rightly warns that the spread of weapons and the means to make them may soon reach a combustible stage where New York, Washington, Moscow, Tokyo or London is at risk of a nuclear terrorist attack.

Mr. Nunn and other keepers of America's cold-war armory, George P. Shultz and Henry A. Kissinger, former Republican secretaries of state, and William J. Perry, a former Democratic defense secretary, have banded together in recent years to press, among other things, for cutting nuclear forces, de-alerting missiles and, ultimately, eliminating nuclear arms. Mr. Obama has embraced their aims and welcomed them to the Oval Office. Their high-powered, bipartisan alliance, if adroitly employed by the White House, ought to provide some political cover as Mr. Obama reshapes nuclear policy while running for a second term.

There is no national security rationale for maintaining an arsenal of some 5,000 warheads, with nearly 2,000 arms ready to use on short notice and the rest in reserve. We don't need thousands of warheads, or even hundreds, to counter threats from countries like Iran or North Korea.

The only conceivable use of so many weapons would be a full-scale nuclear war with Russia, which has more warheads than the United States. But two decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union, even Vladimir V. Putin, with his authoritarian bent, is not about to put Russia on a collision course with the United States that leads to nuclear war. China, equally unlikely to escalate tensions to the nuclear brink, probably has fewer than 400 warheads and a policy to use them only in self-defense. Pakistan has roughly 100, North Korea fewer than 10 and Iran, so far, zero.

The United States could live quite securely with fewer than 1,500 warheads, half in reserve. Defenders of the nuclear faith claim we need 5,000 weapons as a hedge against warheads that may become defective over time. But an elaborate Energy Department program to maintain and refurbish warheads, the Stockpile Stewardship Program, has proved highly effective.

Another oft-cited reason for increasing our arsenal is that the Pentagon's nuclear war-fighting plans still call for striking hundreds of targets in Russia and China, as well as dozens of sites in a number of other publicly unidentified nations — presumably Iran, North Korea and Syria — considered potentially hostile to the United States and eager to possess unconventional weapons.

Washington's current nuclear war plans remain far too outsize to deal with any plausible attack on America. Mr. Obama could remove some nations from the hit list, starting with China, and tell his generals to limit the number of targets in the countries that remain.

The oversize American nuclear arsenal features an equally outdated reliance on long-distance bombers. The days when lumbering B-52 bombers could play a central role in delivering nuclear weapons — memorably spoofed in Stanley Kubrick's "Dr. Strangelove" — ended decades ago. Mr. Obama should ground the bombers and depend on land- and sea-based missiles.

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The high-alert status of America's intercontinental ballistic missiles is another anachronism. There are few circumstances that might require the United States to quickly launch nuclear-tipped missiles, and missiles on high alert are an invitation to an accident, or impulsive action. In the first year of his presidency, Mr. Obama outlined an ambitious nuclear weapons agenda. Absent new action, Washington will remain frozen in a costly cold war posture.

Philip Taubman is a former New York Times bureau chief in Moscow and Washington and the author of "The Partnership: Five Cold Warriors and Their Quest to Ban the Bomb."

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/08/opinion/sunday/reducing-the-nuclear-arsenal.html>

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Time

OPINION/Global Spin

Why New Sanctions Raise Danger of Iran Building Nuclear Weapons

By TONY KARON

January 9, 2012

The White House believes the latest round of saber rattling from Iran is a sign that sanctions are beginning to bite. Perhaps. But as the U.S. and its European partners move to throttle Iran's economy by cutting off its ability to export oil, it requires a stretch of the imagination to posit that Tehran's response will be the one desired by Washington.

The Administration's stated goal is to bring Iran to the table to negotiate a deal that would end international concerns over a nuclear program that has given Iran the means to build nuclear weapons -- even though, as Defense Secretary Leon Panetta emphasized in a TV interview on Sunday, U.S. and allied officials believe Tehran has not yet decided to build the bomb. Panetta allowed that the U.S. might launch a military strike if Iran tried to build nuclear weapons. "But the responsible thing to do right now," he continued, "is to keep putting diplomatic and economic pressure on them to force them to do the right thing. And to make sure that they do not make the decision to proceed with the development of a nuclear weapon."

But many analysts familiar with the thinking of Iran's leadership warn that the pressure tactics being adopted by the Obama administration are incompatible with the objective of persuading Iran to refrain from building nuclear weapons, and may represent a raising of the ante which, if it doesn't persuade Tehran to fold, could press the Iranian regime towards making the fateful nuclear decision.

"The United States cannot hope to bargain with a country whose economy it is trying to disrupt and destroy," warned former Bush Administration State Department policy adviser Suzanne Maloney, writing in *Foreign Affairs*. She continued:

As severe sanctions devastate Iran's economy, Tehran will surely be encouraged to double down on its quest for the ultimate deterrent [nuclear weapons]... Given the ayatollahs' innate mistrust of the West, they cannot be nudged into a constructive negotiating process by measures that exacerbate their vulnerability. American policy is now effectively predicated on achieving political change in Tehran. Such an outcome will likely prove even more elusive than productive talks with the revolutionary regime.

Regardless of the Administration's intent, the new measures, which are explicitly designed to throttle the Iranian economy, are being read in Tehran as further evidence that Washington's goal is to force regime-change. That's hardly likely to convince Iran's leaders that they don't need nuclear weapons; on the contrary, Iran appears to be bracing itself for war.

For a relatively weak state (Fareed Zakaria once noted in response the "its 1938 and Iran is Nazi Germany" hysteria touted by some, that by measure of the global military balance of 1938 Iran would be the equivalent of Rumania)

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and a state ideologically at odds with far more powerful enemies, nuclear weapons, as North Korea's example demonstrates, provide a gold-plated insurance policy. For now, Iran has conducted extensive maneuvers in the Strait of Hormuz, as if to demonstrate its capacity to disrupt global oil supplies (which Iranian officials have threatened to do if Iran is barred from selling its own oil). And in Tehran, the population is anxiously buying up supplies and assuming that Western bombers will soon fill their skies. Some analysts see the expectation of being attacked as the reason behind Iran's increasingly aggressive bluster.

"My sources inside the country say the circle of regime insiders around Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei truly believes an attack is inevitable, perhaps even before the U.S. presidential election," says Century Foundation analyst Genevieve Abdo. "Therefore, to save face at home and in the region, Iran's saber-rattling has reached a fever pitch." Iran's leader has a strong domestic political incentive to maintain the conflict with the West, she argues, but at the same time to avoid a confrontation which could lead to the regime's destruction. A number of Iran analysts have noted that Khamenei's traditional response to foreign pressure is to escalate the confrontation by raising pressure of his own. The Supreme Leader, warns Karim Sadjadpour of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, "wants to make clear to the outside world, specifically the United States, that Western pressure is going to harden, not soften, Iran's behavior."

The escalation of an external threat also helps him reunite a dangerously divided regime (whose rival factions face off in a parliamentary election in March), creating a narrative that blames hostile Western pressure for the economic pain suffered by ordinary Iranians. It also fosters a siege environment in which political opposition is equated with treason. Even in the narrowest economic sense, talking up the possibility of confrontation helps Iran mitigate the effect of sanctions: The oil price seems to jump a few dollars with each new rattle of the saber.

In the absence of established channels of communication and diplomatic engagement, the danger is rising of both sides stumbling into war. State Department adviser and Tufts University professor Vali Nasr suggests that Iran's regime may, in fact, be spoiling for a fight, albeit a limited one, which would help it stave off internal collapse. And, he warns, if Khamenei believes his adversaries are turning up the heat to force his overthrow, he's more, rather than less, likely to use Iran's nuclear infrastructure to build the ultimate insurance policy. Khamenei himself may have issued a fatwa in 2005 declaring the production and use of nuclear weapons un-Islamic, but Yale researcher Patrick Disney notes that during the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s, then-leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, faced with a dilemma over Saddam's chemical-weapons capability, created a precedent for overriding religious edicts in defense of the state. "Khomeini established the philosophical foundation for a key principle within the Islamic Republic known as '*maslahat-e nizam*' or 'expediency of the system'," Disney writes, "by which the needs of the Islamic Republic as a political institution might trump even Islamic law."

And the mounting pressure and threat-level from outside could, in fact, prompt Khamenei to trump his own fatwa. "The focus of Western policy has been on imposing pressure in order to give Iran's leaders a reason not to weaponise," Disney adds. "Equally important, however, and far too often overlooked, is the need to take care not to give Iran a reason to weaponise."

The pattern of Iran's nuclear development suggests that it has used the rubric of a civilian nuclear energy program to assemble the *means* to build weapons -- even if, like Japan and Brazil for example, it has thus far stopped short of crossing the threshold to begin actually building them.

Whether Khamenei gives the order to launch a weapons program will likely be determined by his perception of Iran's threat environment. The logic of those agitating for sanctions is that only the pain they inflict, and the threat of force, will persuade the Iranian leadership that the cost of seeking nuclear breakout capability is prohibitive. But the Iranian leaders' view of the motivations of its adversaries, and dynamics in the region, may in fact convince the regime to absorb whatever blows come its way in order to acquire a nuclear deterrent. (Pakistan and North Korea would provide encouraging examples of badly behaved weak states treated with kid gloves because of their nuclear status; the fate of leaders like Saddam Hussein and Muammar Gaddafi who gave up their own nuclear programs speaks for itself.)

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Nasr says the regime was divided over how to respond, but recent covert attacks on Revolutionary Guard missile facilities, plus sanctions against oil exports, has tilted the balance in favor of those pressing for retaliation. He says a more bellicose Iranian position is underscored by a belief that the economic crisis leaves the West vulnerable to oil price shocks, at the same time as Washington's regional strategic position declines. "Rather than discourage this aggressive Iranian position, U.S. policy is encouraging it, making a dangerous military confrontation more likely," Nasr warns. "There are no easy options for dealing with Iran, but not persisting in a failing strategy is a good place to start."

American officials would dispute the idea that theirs is a "failing strategy." Mindful of a U.S. electoral season in which branding President Obama as weak on Iran has become a favorite Republican talking point, they talk up the diplomatic achievement of putting in place the most wide-ranging sanctions Iran has ever faced. The purpose of those sanctions, explained Obama's U.N. envoy Ambassador Susan Rice at the Security Council last month, according to CBS, is to "buy more time to resolve the nuclear crisis through diplomatic means."

The problem, of course, is that there's no obvious diplomatic endgame in place. Mindful that no channels currently exist for sustained diplomacy, Turkey has once again moved into the breach and is seeking to broker new talks between Iran and its Western adversaries. Right now, most of the 'diplomacy' between the protagonists is conducting through a megaphone and is limited to exchanging ultimatums. Late last month, a group of U.S. foreign policy graybeards, represented by former Ambassadors Thomas Pickering and William Luers, warned that the U.S. strategy lacked a serious diplomatic component, and that raised the risk of confrontation.

"Military action is becoming the seemingly fail-safe solution for the United States to deal with real and imagined security problems," Pickering and Luers wrote in the *Washington Post* "The uncertain and intellectually demanding ways of diplomacy are seen as 'unmanly' and tedious -- likely to involve compromise and even 'appeasement'." Iran, they and other analysts have argued, has not been presented with a plausible (to its leaders) path away from the brink. "The slow, elusive diplomatic process to achieve U.S. objectives does not provide the sound-bite satisfaction of military threats or action," they argue. "Multiple, creative efforts to engage Iran's leaders and provide a dignified exit from the corner in which the world community has placed them could achieve more durable solutions at a far lower cost."

But real diplomacy and its attendant compromises are difficult at best of times, and an election year -- in both Washington and Tehran -- is not the best of times. Without compromise and confidence building, the only diplomacy on offer is that of the megaphone variety. And if Iran's leaders are loathe to come out with their hands up, the alternative is more likely to be war and, quite possibly, a nuclear-armed Iran.

<http://globalspin.blogs.time.com/2012/01/09/why-new-sanctions-raise-danger-of-iran-building-nuclear-weapons/>

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