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**CPC OUTREACH JOURNAL**  
MAXWELL AFB, ALABAMA

**Issue No. 981, 17 February 2012**

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Philadelphia Daily News

## Iran Claims Two Steps to Nuclear Self-Sufficiency

Wednesday, February 15, 2012

ALI AKBAR DAREINI, Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran - Iran claimed Wednesday that it has taken two major steps toward mastering the production of nuclear fuel, a defiant move in response to increasingly tough Western sanctions over its controversial nuclear program.

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad oversaw the insertion of the first Iranian domestically-made fuel rod into a research reactor in northern Tehran, the country's official IRNA news agency reported.

Separately, the semiofficial Fars agency reported that a "new generation of Iranian centrifuges" had been installed and had gone into operation at the country's main uranium enrichment facility at Natanz in central Iran.

The West suspects Iran's nuclear program is aimed at producing atomic weapons, a charge Tehran denies, insisting it's geared for peaceful purposes only, such as energy production.

The crisis has already resulted in sanctions placed on Iran's economy, and there are fears that it could escalate to military action.

Iran's nuclear announcements came as the country said Wednesday it halted oil exports to six European countries, the Netherlands, Spain, Italy, France, Greece and Portugal, in response to recent new European Union sanctions.

Iran has said it is forced to manufacture nuclear fuel rods, which provide fuel for reactors, on its own since international sanctions ban it from buying them on foreign markets. In January, Iran said it had produced its first such fuel rod.

IRNA boasted that the nuclear fuel announcement is the final step in the entire cycle of nuclear fuel, from extracting uranium ore to producing the finished rods.

Fuel rods are tube metals containing pellets made of low-enriched uranium. The rod is then inserted into a fuel assembly, which then is placed in the core of the reactor.

IRNA said the nuclear fuel rods were produced at Iran's nuclear fuel fabrication plant in Isfahan, central Iran.

The centrifuges that Iran claims to be now manufacturing are machines that are used to enrich uranium. Low-enriched uranium, at around 3.5 percent, can be used to fuel a reactor to generate electricity, which Iran says is the intention of its program. But if uranium is further enriched to around 90 percent purity, it can be used to develop a nuclear warhead.

Iran has been producing uranium enriched up to 5 percent for years, and began enriching up to near 20 percent, considered a threshold between low and high enriched uranium, in February 2010.

Iran claims it needs the higher enriched uranium to produce fuel for the Tehran reactor that makes medical radioisotopes needed for cancer patients.

Israel is worried Iran could be on the brink of achieving nuclear weapons capability) and many Israeli officials believe sanctions only give Tehran time to move its nuclear program underground, out of reach of Israeli military strikes. The U.S. and its allies argue that Israel should hold off on any military strike on Iranian nuclear facilities to allow more time for sanctions to work.

[http://www.philly.com/philly/wires/ap/news/nation\\_world/20120215\\_ap\\_iranclaimstwestepstonuclearselfsufficiency.html?ref=more-like-this](http://www.philly.com/philly/wires/ap/news/nation_world/20120215_ap_iranclaimstwestepstonuclearselfsufficiency.html?ref=more-like-this)

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Trend – Azerbaijan

## Iran to Open New Yellowcake Production Facility Next Year

15 February 2012

By S. Isayev and T. Jafarov, Trend

Iran will open new facility for "yellowcake" production next year (begins on March 21), Head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization Mohammad Abbasi said today, at the official ceremony in Tehran, during which, country's new achievements in nuclear sphere were announced.

Yellowcake (also called urania) is a kind of uranium concentrate powder obtained from leach solutions, in an intermediate step in the processing of uranium ores. Yellowcake concentrates are prepared by various extraction and refining methods, depending on the types of ores.

Typically, yellowcakes are obtained through the milling and chemical processing of uranium ore forming a coarse powder which has a pungent odor, is insoluble in water and contains about 80% uranium oxide, which melts at approximately 2878 °C. Although uranium is one of the densest metals on Earth, yellowcake is relatively light, with a density approximately that of elemental sulfur.

Abbasi noted that the facility for yellowcake production is ready, and will be commissioned next year. "New Uranium fuel complexes will become operational soon", Abbasi said.

Speaking earlier about country's nuclear achievements, Abbasi said that the three new achievements of country's nuclear program are: the increased number of centrifuges, production of new IR-4 generation centrifuges and successful loading of domestically-made fuel rods into the nuclear reactor.

<http://en.trend.az/news/nuclearp/1992697.html>

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Daily Star – Lebanon

## U.S. 'Very Closely' Watching Syrian Chemical Weapons

February 15, 2012 08:31 AM

By Douglas Birch, Associated Press

WASHINGTON: The U.S. and its allies are closely monitoring Syria's stockpiles of chemical arms and portable anti-aircraft missiles, a State Department official says, amid concerns that the country's unconventional weapons could fall into the hands of terrorist or militant groups while the 11-month-old uprising continues.

"Syria is a country of significant proliferation concern, so we monitor its chemical weapons activities very closely," the State Department official said, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss intelligence-related matters.

"We believe Syria's chemical weapons stockpile remains under Syrian government control, and we will continue to work closely with like-minded countries to impede proliferation [of] Syria's chemical weapons program."

The official added that the U.S. is in discussion with its allies on ways to ensure that Syria's stockpile of portable anti-aircraft missiles, called Man-Portable Air Defense Systems, or MANPADS, aren't stolen or diverted.

"We are consulting with allies and partners as we plan for a variety of contingencies," the official said.

Republicans in Congress, meanwhile, have been critical of U.S. efforts to secure Libya's chemical and unconventional arsenals, saying the Obama administration should have responded more quickly during that crisis and now faces the task of trying to account for thousands of missing portable anti-aircraft missiles.

"We got off to a slow start with Libya," Rep. Edward Royce, chairman of the House Foreign Affairs subcommittee on terrorism, nonproliferation and trade, said in a recent interview.

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Libya halted its weapons of mass destruction programs in 2003 as part of an agreement reached to improve relations with the West. Muammar Gadhafi's remaining stocks of mustard gas were awaiting destruction when rebels drove him from power last year.

Gadhafi, however, maintained a large conventional arsenal, including an estimated 20,000 portable anti-aircraft missiles, believed to be the largest stockpile outside of a MANPADS-producing country.

Syria is believed to have nerve agents as well as mustard gas, Scud missiles capable of delivering these lethal chemicals and a variety of advanced conventional arms coveted by insurgent and terrorist groups, including some late-model MANPADS and anti-tank rockets. U.S. intelligence officials in the past have said Syria has conducted biological weapons-related research but have stopped short of saying the country had taken the next step and built bioweapons.

The task of securing Syrian President Bashar Assad's arsenals is complicated by the fact that the U.S. can't be certain it knows how many weapons Syria has and where they are stored. "There's a lot to worry about and oftentimes very little information to assess the situation," said Matthew Schroeder, a small arms researcher with the Federation of American Scientists.

According to independent military experts, Syria had more than 4,000 portable anti-aircraft missiles in the late 2000s. But Syria is a major customer of arms suppliers, including Russia, and could have purchased many more since then.

Israel and its allies long have suspected Syria of seeking at least the capacity to build atomic weapons, and the U.N. nuclear watchdog agency has pressed for information about Syria's nuclear research program. But a 2007 Israeli airstrike on a suspected plutonium-producing reactor under construction in northern Syria may have derailed Syria's nuclear ambitions.

Israeli officials this month said their main worry is that Syria's Lebanese ally Hezbollah could acquire Syria's Soviet-design S-125 surface-to-air missile systems, which could hinder operations by the Israeli air force. But Israeli officials also said they were concerned Hezbollah could get its hands on chemical weapons and missiles capable of striking deep inside Israel.

Syria's chemical arms are believed to be secure for now because they are stored at weapons depots in rural areas, officials and experts say, away from the urban centers where most fighting is now taking place.

"So far at least I don't think we've seen any examples among troops that are guarding these sites or any activities to suggest the chain of command is weakening," said Leonard Spector, a former senior nonproliferation official with the National Nuclear Security Administration. "I think what people are worried about is that the situation could become increasingly chaotic and the chain of command breaks down."

But if Syria's control of its arsenal collapses, he said, the consequences could be worse than in Libya. "It's a hundred times more serious in Syria," he said.

Andrew Shapiro, the assistant secretary of state for political-military affairs, said this month that the U.S. has helped recover 5,000 of Libya's portable anti-aircraft missiles, or about a quarter of the number the Gadhafi government is thought to have amassed.

Shapiro said many of the weapons that have not been accounted for were likely used in training, had broken down or were fired by rebels while fighting the regime. A substantial number probably remain in the hands of militias who defeated Libyan government forces and were often the first to "liberate" weapons sites, he said.

"Yet clearly we cannot rule out that some weapons may have leaked out of Libya," Shapiro said in a talk to the Stimson Center, a Washington nonproliferation group.

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The U.S. plans to spend \$40 million helping Libya secure and recover its stockpiles of portable anti-aircraft weapons, Shapiro said. The U.S. also will conduct an inventory of all Libyan weapons storage areas and has two mobile teams assigned to respond to the discovery of new portable missile caches, he added.

Royce and other Republican lawmakers said that if Syria's arsenals are threatened, the Obama administration should move faster than it did in Libya to secure unconventional weapons.

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2012/Feb-15/163332-us-very-closely-watching-syrian-chemical-weapons.ashx#axzz1mYi16XUH>

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Orlando Sentinel – Orlando, FL

## Iran Wants Early Resumption of Nuclear Talks: Letter

By Fredrik Dahl, Reuters

February 16, 2012

VIENNA (Reuters) - Iran has proposed a resumption of long-stalled nuclear talks with world powers in which Tehran would have "new initiatives," according to a letter from Tehran to European Union foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton obtained by Reuters on Thursday.

The brief letter, which offered no specific proposals in the nuclear dispute, may not convince Western states that Iran is ready to enter the kind of substantive negotiations tackling its nuclear work they say is needed to resolve the longstanding row.

"We voice our readiness for dialogue on a spectrum of various issues which can provide ground for constructive and forward-looking cooperation," said the letter, dated February 14, from Iranian chief nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili.

The United States and its allies suspect Iran is seeking to develop nuclear weapons capability. Iran denies this, saying it is enriching uranium only for electricity to meet demands of its rapidly growing population.

Jalili's letter was a response to one from Ashton in October, in which she said the big powers could meet with Iran within weeks if it was ready to "engage seriously in meaningful discussions" and address concerns about its nuclear work.

Ashton handles the Iran file on behalf of six world powers - the United States, Russia, China, Germany, France and Britain.

Negotiations have been frozen since a fruitless meeting in Istanbul in January 2011.

Tension has soared in recent months after the U.N. nuclear watchdog in November issued a report on Iran detailing indications that it has worked on designing a nuclear weapon.

Jalili said he welcomed a statement by Ashton on respecting Iran's right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

"No doubt by committing to this approach, our talks for cooperation based on step-by-step principles and reciprocity on Iran's nuclear issue could be commenced," the English-language letter said.

"(A) constructive and positive attitude towards Islamic Republic of Iran's new initiatives in this round of talks could open positive perspective for our negotiation."

"Therefore...I propose to resume our talks in order to take fundamental steps for sustainable cooperation in the earliest possibility in a mutually agreed venue and time," Jalili said.

He did not specify what initiatives he was referring to.

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In previous talks, Iran has refused to discuss measures that would guarantee its nuclear program is peaceful and transparent for U.N. inspectors, instead floating vague proposals for international cooperation on security and trade.

A spokeswoman for Ashton confirmed receipt of the letter on Wednesday, saying she was evaluating it and would consult with the six powers on a response.

*Reporting by Fredrik Dahl; Editing by Mark Heinrich*

<http://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/nationworld/sns-rt-us-nuclear-iran-talkstre81f0iq-20120216,0,3039834.story>

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CRIENGLISH.com – China

## **Iran to Continue Centrifuge Work but Ready for Talks**

February 16, 2012

Xinhua

Teheran would not suspend its building of centrifuges, but was ready for talks with the six international mediators, Iranian Ambassador to Moscow Mahmoud Reza Sajjadi said Thursday.

"We are 100 percent ready for talks with the Iran Six (the United States, China, Russia, Britain, France and Germany) in order to have a clear answer from all parties," Sajjadi told reporters, but he said a suspension of its work on centrifuges was unacceptable and the talks should be resumed without any preconditions.

The diplomat also warned that Teheran would respond with "massive means" if the United States attacked Iran.

"Iran does not fear any military actions from any country, who would repent of its actions (against Iran)," he said.

Tension between Iran and the West has been simmering, with the latter accusing Tehran of pursuing nuclear weapons through its enrichment program, a charge rejected by the Islamic republic.

The United States and its European allies also have expanded their sanctions against Iran to target its oil exports, the lifeline of the country's economy. The action prompted threats by Iran to block the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most critical oil routes.

Sajjadi told the briefing the sanctions against Iran only benefited his country, which in the past had been heavily dependent on imported fuel due to restricted refining capacity.

Sajjadi also denied any presence of Iranian troops in Syria. Such information was aimed at weakening both Iran and Syria, he said, adding Syria did not need Iran's special troops.

<http://english.cri.cn/6966/2012/02/16/2941s681580.htm>

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BBC News – U.K.

16 February 2012

## **World Press Unimpressed by Iran's Nuclear Achievements**

*Iran's announcement that it has achieved major progress in its nuclear programme failed to impress commentators around the world. On Wednesday, Tehran said that it had for the first time loaded domestically made nuclear fuel rods into a research reactor and had put into operation a new generation of nuclear centrifuges.*

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Analysts in Israel and China said the move was an attempt by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to boost his profile ahead of parliamentary elections due in March. Many papers were in no doubt that Iran was steadily on its way to developing a nuclear weapon, with newspapers in the Middle East, Turkey and Russia predicting this could lead to a pre-emptive strike against the country.

## **ISRAEL**

### **Ronen Bergman in Yediot Aharonot**

The show with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad at the reactor was intended to demonstrate toughness in the run-up to both the imposition of sanctions by the international community and his election campaign in the country. However, this toughness, and the recent terrorist attacks against Israeli targets in the world, hint at one thing: the regime in Tehran is under heavy pressure, and perhaps is on the verge of losing control.

### **Nadav Eyal in Maariv**

The complex TV production at the small nuclear reactor in Tehran was intended to beat the tom-tom drums of national pride next to the dying bonfire of the Iranian society... The announcements about the sophisticated centrifuges and homemade fuel rods surprised no-one in the West... it looked like recycling old news for internal needs.

### **Boaz Bismuth in Yisrael Hayom**

If Iran is not lying, it will be capable of continuing to enrich uranium to the 90 percent required for making a nuclear bomb. Tehran, of course, continued to report that everything is for civilian purposes... But make no mistake: Behind the Iranian festival this week lurks a bomb.

## **MIDDLE EAST**

### **Manar al-Rashwani in Jordan's Al-Ghad**

The political debate on how to deal with the Iranian nuclear programme has moved to a new level, which revolves around the timing of an Israeli air strike on Iran... Tehran has two options... to present radical concessions to the USA and the West on its nuclear programme, which means aborting the whole project. This will be considered as a political suicide for the ruling group in Tehran... There is nothing left for Iran but to accelerate its nuclear project in order to engage in what the Israelis call an "immunity zone".

### **Yusuf al- Kuwaylit in Saudi Al-Riyadh**

Iran has political and military aspirations in the Arab region and Central Asia... but it wants to accomplish them through distributing challenges and threats that are beyond its capabilities.

## **CHINA**

### **Hua Liming, former Chinese ambassador to Iran, China Radio International**

After Europe announced sanctions against Iran, a number of signs have arisen to show that Iran's domestic society is less stable. Therefore, President Ahmadinejad wants to tell the people of the country that Iran still has the capacity to resist in the face of powerful enemies.

### **Prof Shen Dingli in Global Times**

Iran's domestically-made 20 per cent-enriched rods mean that if it wants to build a bomb, it is halfway there.

### **Article in Renmin Ribao**

In the context of the West's escalating confrontation with Iran this year, Iran's high-profile announcement of nuclear achievements is mostly to show its unyielding stance... Iran, however, cannot "step on the brakes" on its

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road to possessing nuclear weapons. But the outcome of constantly running ahead will be a head-on collision with the US' huge war chariot.

### **Sun Degang in Xinwen Chenbao**

Iran still has a very long way to go in raising the purity of enriched uranium from 20 to 90 per cent... Threats to attack Iran have gone on for three or four years and the determination of the West to take action immediately against Iran still cannot be seen... The West is likely to wait until the 2013 Iranian presidential election to see how strong the Iranian opposition is before making a decision.

### **RUSSIA**

#### **Andrey Ryabov in Kommersant**

By activating its nuclear programmes, Tehran is obviously in a hurry as it realises that, given all the talk of a future military operation against Iran, it is running out of time. The Iranian side is trying to take the lead by managing to manufacture a nuclear bomb before a forceful action against the country is performed.

### **TURKEY**

#### **Ahmet Selim in Zaman**

The possibility of Israel (that is to say the US and Europe) hitting Iran is considered to be weak. For me, this is not a weak prospect at all. I think that the US is monitoring Iran with close intelligence and that it will act when Iran comes to the edge of making a nuclear bomb.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-17063482>

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U.S. News & World Report

## **Intel Official: Iranian Missiles Could Hit Nearby U.S. Targets, Europe**

February 16, 2012

Iran has the ability to fire missiles at U.S. targets in the Middle East and "temporarily" close a key sea transit route, a senior intelligence official said Thursday.

Tehran has a missile arsenal capable of reaching "targets throughout the region and into Eastern Europe," Lt. Gen. Ronald Burgess, Defense Intelligence Agency director, told the Senate Armed Services Committee.

"Iran has ... threatened to launch missiles against the United States and our allies in the region in response to an attack" on its nuclear facilities or other targets, he said.

What's more, Iran "could also employ its terrorist surrogates worldwide," Burgess said. He also noted that "Iran can close the Strait of Hormuz," the key sea lane used to move oil and other goods to destinations around the globe. The U.S. intelligence community believes Iran "is unlikely to initiate or intentionally provoke a conflict or launch a preemptive attack," Burgess told the panel.

The blunt assessment of Iranian intentions and offensive capabilities comes amid increasing tensions between Tehran, Israel and the United States over Iran's nuclear weapons program.

Alireza Nader, an analyst at the RAND Corporation, said the DIA chief's assessment of Iran's naval and missile capabilities sounds accurate.

"Iran does have missiles capable of hitting U.S. facilities in the Persian Gulf, and notably, in Afghanistan," Nader said. "And it is known to be in development of long-range missiles that could reach Eastern Europe. It has a pretty robust missile program."

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Under a scenario where Iranian leaders ordered a missile strike, U.S. officials and analysts question whether any would hit their intended targets.

"Iran's missiles are strategic weapons, not tactical weapons," said Nader. That's because they lack the kinds of precision guidance systems fitted on U.S. ballistic missiles.

"Still, if Tehran fired several hundred missiles, it likely would get at least a few past" missile defense systems in the region operated by the U.S. military and its allies, Nader said.

The RAND analyst said the Iranian Navy could employ a number of tools to temporarily shut down the Strait of Hormuz, and frustrate the U.S. Navy. That list includes "hundreds of small boats equipped with relatively sophisticated anti-ship weaponry" and mines on the sea floor, Nader said.

Should tensions over Iran's nuclear weapons ambitions escalate into a military conflict, Nader said, "Iran is looking for an asymmetric war, mostly at sea." That means the conflict would feature those small boats and mines instead of war ships firing on one another.

<http://www.usnews.com/news/blogs/dotmil/2012/02/16/intel-official-iranian-missiles-could-hit-nearby-us-targets-europe>

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Miami Herald

## **Panetta: No Iranian Decision Yet on Nukes**

By Donna Cassata, Associated Press

Thursday, February 16, 2012

WASHINGTON — The nation's U.S. intelligence officials said Thursday that if Iran is attacked over its alleged nuclear weapons program, it could retaliate by closing the Strait of Hormuz to ships and launch missiles at regional U.S. forces and allies.

Testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Defense Intelligence Agency chief Lt. Gen. Ronald Burgess said Iran is unlikely to initiate or intentionally provoke a conflict. His comments came amid growing international fears that Israel would launch military strikes against Iran to thwart its nuclear ambitions and counter recent diplomatic attacks in Thailand, India and Georgia. Israel has accused Iran of trying to kill its diplomats.

Burgess and Director of National Intelligence James Clapper said they do not believe that Israel has decided to strike Iran.

On the other side of the Capitol, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said intelligence shows that Iran is continuing to enrich uranium but that Tehran has not made a decision to proceed with developing a nuclear weapon. The former CIA director said the United States is open to negotiations with Iran to find a diplomatic solution, but he said the U.S. keeps all options on the table to ensure that Tehran does not acquire a nuclear weapon.

Clapper said it's "technically feasible" that Tehran could produce a nuclear weapon in one or two years, if its leaders decide to build one, "but practically not likely."

Their testimony came as many in Congress are pressing the Obama administration to take tough steps against Iran, questioning whether diplomatic and economic sanctions have taken a toll on the regime. This issue of Iran has united Republicans and Democrats, who have clamored for harsh penalties. Last year, the Senate voted 100-0 to impose penalties on Iran's Central Bank, and President Barack Obama signed the sweeping defense bill containing the sanctions on Dec. 31.

Speaking with reporters, House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, said that for the sake of Israel and moderate Arab nations, "We need to take further action."

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“We gave the president a lot of tools to use,” he said, referring to the Iran Sanctions Act. “He’s used some of them, but there are more tools available to the president to try to bring Iran into the world community.”

Boehner said it is “totally unacceptable” for Iran to develop nuclear weapons and said he agrees with Obama that “we should take no options off the table.”

“There has to be some resolution to this issue,” Boehner told reporters. “This issue is escalating. That causes me great concern.”

*Associated Press writers Kimberly Dozier and Alan Fram contributed to this report.*

<http://www.miamiherald.com/2012/02/16/2644821/panetta-no-iranian-decision-yet.html>

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Bloomberg News

## **UN’s Ban Says ‘Onus on Iran’ to Show Peaceful Atomic Intent**

By Jonathan Tirone

February 17, 2012

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon said Iranian assertions that its nuclear program is peaceful are unconvincing and that it is up to the government in Tehran to assuage suspicions over its atomic work.

“The onus is on the Iranian side to prove, convince the international community that their nuclear program is genuinely for peaceful purposes,” Ban told journalists in Vienna today. “To my mind, and that of the IAEA, they haven’t been able to convince the international community,” he added, referring to the UN’s International Atomic Energy Agency watchdog.

IAEA inspectors will return to Tehran for a second time in a month for meetings with Iranian atomic officials Feb. 21 and 22. Iran has been under investigation since 2003 over suspected nuclear-weapon work. The UN Security Council has passed four sets of sanctions against atomic officials and companies in Iran. Israel and the U.S. haven’t ruled out the use of military force.

“All these issues must be resolved through negotiation, through dialogue,” Ban said. “There is no alternative to a peaceful resolution on this issue.”

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-02-17/un-s-ban-says-onus-on-iran-to-show-peaceful-atomic-intent-1-.html>

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Korea Times – South Korea

February 15, 2012

## **China’s Xi Not Likely to Alter NK Policy: Experts**

By Kim Young-jin

With China’s presumed next leader Xi Jinping raising his profile through a closely-watched visit to the United States, some here are wondering what his emerging leadership will mean for Beijing’s oft-criticized policy on North Korea.

Experts say major changes are unlikely as Vice President Xi’s need to consolidate power will require him to above all, maintain his country’s stance of prioritizing stability in the nuclear-armed North.

Like all incoming Chinese leaders, Xi, expected to take power when President Hu Jintao steps down later this year, has not revealed much about his policy preferences.

**Issue No. 981, 17 February 2012**

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“He has no special experience with Korean affairs,” said Bonnie Glaser, a China expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C. “At least in the next few years, I expect he will support a policy that is aimed at ensuring stability in North Korea and strengthening Sino-North Korea relations.”

The North’s closest ally and biggest economic partner, Beijing came under criticism for what was seen by many as a passive response to the North’s two deadly provocations on the South in 2010.

Analysts have long said China values stability on its borders the most when it comes to the North, fearing instability in the Stalinist state could trigger a flood of refugees that would disrupt the world’s second-largest economy.

Bahng Tae-seop of the Samsung Economic Research Institute said longstanding relations between the old guards of the two militaries would make it difficult for Xi to change course should he want to.

“If Xi were to take a harsh approach to the North, the Chinese military would object and he would have to listen,” he said.

The analyst added that China is likely to urge the North to refrain from provocative behavior especially during the transition to Xi. Many have speculated that the North could conduct a third nuclear test in a bid to consolidate Kim’s power.

Xi is likely to stay the course when comes the North’s nuclear program as well, observers said.

In a statement upon arriving in the United States, Xi said his goal was to implement the “important consensus” reached between Hu and U.S. President Barack Obama during their summit last year.

During those talks, the two leaders expressed concerns regarding the North’s uranium enrichment program and called for “concrete and effective steps” to achieve denuclearization. Beijing has been pushing for a resumption of the multilateral negotiations to denuclearize the North.

In the past, Xi has raised eyebrows with remarks about the Peninsula.

Veteran liberal politician Park Jie-won said in 2010 that Xi criticized Lee Myung-bak’s hard line policy on Pyongyang during a meeting with late former President Kim Dae-jung a year earlier. Last year Beijing backpedaled when Xi said the 1950-53 Korean War “a just war to defend peace against aggression from the U.S.”

[http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2012/02/116\\_104934.html](http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2012/02/116_104934.html)

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Yonhap News – South Korea  
February 16, 2012

## **U.S. Proposes 'Monitored Shutdown' of N. Korea's UEP**

WASHINGTON, Feb. 16 (Yonhap) -- The United States has suggested that North Korea shut down its uranium enrichment facilities under the monitoring of the U.N. nuclear watchdog, citing the shutdown as a key condition for the resumption of six-way nuclear talks, a diplomatic source here said Wednesday.

The issue is expected to become a major agenda item in high-level talks between the two nations to be held in Beijing next Thursday, the source added.

“The U.S. proposed a so-called monitored shutdown regarding the suspension of North Korea’s uranium enrichment program (UEP), which is one of the core initial steps toward denuclearization,” the source said on the condition of anonymity.

The U.S. is focusing more on the UEP issue than the return of inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency and a moratorium on nuclear and missile tests, according to the source.

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"What is most important in the high-level dialogue to take place in Beijing on Feb. 23 is to confirm whether North Korea will implement initial steps toward denuclearization," the source said. "It is a prerequisite for the resumption of the six-party talks."

The Pyongyang-Washington meeting will be the first talks between the two sides since a recent transfer of power in the communist nation. The North's long-time leader Kim Jong-il died of a heart attack in December and his youngest son Jon-un took over power.

Launched in 2003, the six-way talks also involve China, South Korea, Russia and Japan.

The negotiations have been deadlocked for years amid what some observers see as Pyongyang's repeated provocations, including nuclear and missile tests.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2012/02/16/26/0301000000AEN20120216000200315F.HTML>

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Korea Times – South Korea  
February 17, 2012

## **NK Remains Ready to Test Nuclear Devices: Official**

(Yonhap)

North Korea remains ready to test nuclear devices or fire missiles with only brief preparation, a Seoul official said Friday, though such action does not appear to be imminent.

In a defense policy briefing, a senior defense ministry official said North Korea "has maintained a state in which it can carry out a nuclear or missile test with only one or two months of additional preparation."

"We believe the possibility exists for a sudden provocation by North Korea, as Pyongyang seeks to achieve its own political goals," the official said. "But at the moment, we have not identified any unusual signs that missile or nuclear tests are imminent."

To ensure a soft landing for the new Kim Jong-un regime, North Korea also met with Japan in Beijing to discuss the abduction of Japanese nationals to North Korea on Jan. 9, the official added. The North is also set to hold a third round of high-level nuclear talks in Beijing next week.

Pyongyang and Washington may also meet around April to discuss recovering remains of soldiers killed during the 1950-53 Korean War, the official added.

In the meantime, North Korea has continued to criticize the South Korean government, joint Korea-U.S. military drills and Defense Minister Kim Kwan-jin.

"The North has resumed its annual winter military exercises, which were put on hold around the death of former leader Kim Jong-il (in December)," the official said. "The military there is also preparing for a large parade for the birthday of the country's founder Kim Il-sung on April 15 and the founding anniversary of the military on April 25."

Another ministry official said the South will look to maintain its strong alliance with the U.S. this year.

"We are pushing for 'two-plus-two' security talks this year, involving defense and foreign ministers of the two countries," the official said. "We first held such a meeting in 2010. It will serve as an opportunity for us to demonstrate our alliance's strong determination to protect the Korean Peninsula and to discuss outstanding security issues."

The official stressed that the U.S. will stay committed to South Korea despite its major defense budget cuts.

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"The U.S. will maintain the size of its forces stationed here and there will be no change to the size of reinforcements to Korea in contingencies," the official said. "The two countries will maintain close cooperation and coordination at all levels."

About 28,500 U.S. troops are serving in South Korea, a legacy of the Korean War that ended in an armistice, not a peace treaty.

[http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2012/02/120\\_105105.html](http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2012/02/120_105105.html)

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Daily Messenger – Pakistan

## **Pakistan Will Back Iran in Case of Foreign Attack: Zardari**

February 17, 2012

Amid the US-led publicity campaign on the prospect of an Israeli military strike on Iran, Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari says his country will support Iran against any foreign aggression.

Islamabad will also not provide any assistance to Washington over a conflict with Tehran, Zardari told reporters in a joint press conference with his Iranian and Afghan counterparts Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Hamid Karzai in Islamabad on Friday.

Washington and Tel Aviv have repeatedly threatened Tehran with a 'military option' in their attempts to force the Islamic Republic to halt its peaceful nuclear program, which has been closely monitored by inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Tehran, however, maintains that as a signatory to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and an IAEA member, it has the right to develop and acquire nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

The Pakistani president further stated that Islamabad would not permit foreign pressure to affect its ties with Tehran and stressed the importance of implementing a joint gas pipeline project with Iran.

The Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project is meant to export a daily amount of 21.5 million cubic meters (8.7 billion cubic meters per year) of the Iranian natural gas to Pakistan.

The maximum daily gas transfer capacity of the 56-inch pipeline, which runs over 900 km on Iran's soil from Asalouyeh in Bushehr Province to the city of Iranshahr in Sistan and Baluchestan Province, is said to stand at 110 million cubic meters.

<http://dailymessenger.com.pk/pakistan/2012/02/17/pakistan-will-back-iran-in-case-of-foreign-attack-zardari/>

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Bellona – Norway

## **Russia's Deputy Prime Minister Indirectly Admits 'Armaments' Were Aboard Nuclear Sub Blaze in December – Bellona Demands an Accounting**

*Russia's deputy prime minister in charge of the defense industry Dmitry Rogozin has indirectly admitted that the Yekaterinburg – one of the Northern Fleet's strategic nuclear submarines – which caught fire on December 29th while in dry dock for repairs near Murmansk had "armaments" on board when the 20-hour-long blaze broke out, injuring 9.*

By Charles Digges

14 February 2012

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The deputy prime minister had previously vociferously denied this in both Russian and international media – even though evidence discovered by Bellona at the time suggested otherwise.

“It was a gross violation of existing regulations for the repairs of nuclear submarines specifically with armaments onboard,” Rogozin told reporters – but did not specify the types of weapons onboard the sub at the time, according to the official ITAR-TASS news agency.

Evidence that has emerged since the fire, however, suggests that the burning vessel was loaded not only with nuclear missiles but torpedoes as well.

Had Russia’s Emergency Services Ministry – which was primarily responsible for handling the crisis – not extinguished the flames in time, the fire could have erupted into a radiation-spewing explosion six kilometers from the 300,000-strong population of Murmansk and 200 kilometers from the Norwegian border.

The Yekaterinburg Delta IV class submarine – capable of carrying 16 intercontinental ballistic missiles with up to ten nuclear warheads apiece and 12 torpedoes – caught fire in Roslyakovo when welding works reportedly went awry, though the real cause of the fire remains unknown. The fire was concentrated in the bow area of the vessel.

The Yekaterinburg was transferred after the fire was extinguished, Bellona learned in January, to Okolnaya, another Arctic base located north of Severomorsk, which has the fixed pier and crane capacity for the long and labor intensive process of removing ballistic missiles.

#### **Bellona demands an official accounting from Moscow**

Rogozin’s announcement and reports in Russian newspapers prompted Bellona President Frederic Hauge to demand an official response to Norway about whether nuclear weapons had been aboard the submarine at the time of the fire.

“Bellona has reviewed thorough documentation of the fire, and we think there are so many serious issues that we are now asking Norwegian authorities require an official response from Russia as to whether there really were nuclear weapons on board,” he said.

Hauge went on to say that other of Rogozin’s statements about the fire issued earlier this month made oblique references to weapons on the sub. ITAR-TASS quoted Rogozin as saying that rules governing work aboard nuclear submarines “especially when there are armaments on board” had been contravened in the case of the Yekaterinburg.

#### **Potentially lethal communications breakdown**

Hauge responded to this earlier statement by Rogozin today by saying Norway should have been notified of the work taking place on the Yekaterinburg.

“This statement by Rogozin makes clear that [international] notification procedures did not work. Therefore, we are now contacting Norwegian government authorities to express our concerns through formal channels,” Hauge said.

“We expect much better notification procedures between Norway and Russia in case something similar happens in the future,” he said.

The two countries to have an agreement in place whereby either side is to warn the other should any works take place that might lead to radiation or other pollution hazards. As a rule, communication from the Russian side has flowed only in dribs and drabs and far too late.

#### **What precipitated the break in the silence?**



Rogozin's climb down from the official line that no weapons were aboard the Yekaterinburg came Tuesday after a heavily publicized investigative article in the influential Russian weekly magazine Kommersant Vlast – published by the business newspaper Kommersant – appeared over the weekend.

It cited anonymous Russian naval officials as saying the Yekaterinburg had indeed had weapons on board while it was in dry dock.

The story, saying that both nuclear missiles and torpedoes had been aboard the submarine during the fire, dominated Russia's news cycle yesterday.

### **Early misdirection by Russian officials**

The fire was confined to the bow of outer hull of the submarine, said Bellona's Alexander Nikitin, a former Russian submarine captain, who reviewed photos of the blaze released anonymously by a reliable Murmansk area blogger, Blogger51, in early January.

This much the Defense Ministry confirmed at the time of the fire – whose 10-meter plume was noticed as far as 10 kilometers away and was initially reported to the local Emergency Services Ministry division by civilians.

Nikitin, who is also chairman of the Environmental Rights Center Bellona in St. Petersburg, said upon reviewing the photographs that the fire's origin had been the submarines' port side hydro-acoustic chamber – a navigational center still located on the outer hull, but packed with antennas filled with flammable oils and highly pressurized air tanks, which most likely fanned the severity and duration of the flams.

The Defense Ministry – while maintaining no weapons were on board – attributed the duration of the blaze, which injured seven sailors and two Emergency Services workers, to the slow burn of the rubber outer hull. Such hulls are made of rubber to increase a sub's stealth.

The Defense Ministry also attributed the cause of the fire to welding works on a wooden scaffolding going awry.

The Kommersant Vlast article indicated that sailors worked to manually remove the torpedoes from their compartments when the fire broke out.

### **Typical procedure could lead to nuclear catastrophe**

As shocking as Rogozin's announcement is after more than a month's worth of silence, Nikitin in January indicated that it is not uncommon to leave nuclear weapons aboard a submarine if it puts in for short duration repairs. During longer-term repairs, said Nikitin, all missiles are removed.

Six Delta IVs constitute the backbone of the Russian nuclear shield.

The Yekaterinburg was on active patrol duty when it landed in dry dock, Bellona has learned, meaning only three of Russia's strategic defense subs were on active duty during the fire. The Yekaterinburg was therefore likely expected to return to patrol in short order to compensate for the other two subs that were in repairs.

Nevertheless, this typical procedure is fraught with dangers, Hauge said.

"Had there been a danger of nuclear explosion Russia should have evacuated huge portions of the Kola Peninsula, which would have affected hundreds of thousands – Russia ignored this," said Hauge.

"We're talking about a very serious incident only 200 kilometers from the Norwegian border. At worst, it could have meant radioactive emissions reaching Norway in two hours, so the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs must actively to get the answers Norway is entitled to," he said.

### **Worst case scenario**





If the fire had not been dealt with quickly, the torpedoes in the front chamber of the submarine would have detonated first. Many Russian fire and rescue workers would have been killed and the blaze's intensity would have increased.

The fire would have spread to the missile compartment, which also would have detonated as a result of the high temperatures. An explosion would have then damaged the Yekaterinburg's two nuclear reactors, resulting in a release of radiation into the atmosphere.

Murmansk should have been evacuated along with other towns in the surrounding area. The fire occurred just prior to Russia's New Year's holidays, and an evacuation would have caused panic and chaos. Yet had things gone as they very possibly could have, even more explosions releasing more radioactivity could have resulted, making – as shown in Fukushima – efforts to extinguish the fire even more arduous, as radioactivity continued to spread.

Rogozin said a special military-industrial commission had been established to launch a probe into the causes of the incident, said ITAR-TASS. The panel has the authority to specify violations that may have occurred but not to bring criminal charges.

"We have our own list of culprits, but we can make it public only after we receive investigation results from the Investigative Committee," Rogozin was quoted by ITAR-TASS as saying.

Damage estimates to the Yekaterinburg come to some 500 million roubles (€12.7 million).

Rogozin also urged a stepping up of the commissioning of Russia's new class of submarines, the Borei and Yasen classes, complaining that their launches are at least six months behind schedule, ITAR-TASS reported.

*Ruth Lothe contributed to this report.*

[http://www.bellona.org/articles/articles\\_2012/rogozin\\_admission](http://www.bellona.org/articles/articles_2012/rogozin_admission)

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

## **Russia Would Use Nukes to Stave Off Threats - General Staff**

15 February 2012

Russia would use nuclear weapons in response to any imminent threat to its national security, Chief of the Russian General Staff Gen. Nikolai Makarov said on Wednesday.

"We are certainly not planning to fight against the whole of NATO," Makarov said in an interview with the Ekho Moskv radio, "but if there is a threat to the integrity of the Russian Federation, we have the right to use nuclear weapons, and we will."

The general said Russia's nuclear deterrent is the cornerstone of strategic stability and serious efforts are being taken by the Russian government to modernize the country's nuclear triad.

The Russian Defense ministry is planning to acquire at least 10 Borey class strategic nuclear submarines, thoroughly modernize its fleet of Tu-160 Blackjack and Tu-95 Bear strategic bombers, and equip its Strategic Missile Forces with formidable Yars mobile ballistic missile systems.

Makarov also stressed the importance of maintaining highly-efficient, mobile conventional forces.

"Unfortunately, we are facing threats from a number of unstable states, where no nuclear weapons but well-trained, strong and mobile Armed Forces are required to resolve any conflict situation," Makarov said.

The Russian government has allocated 22 trillion roubles (\$730 billion) on the state arms procurement program until 2020.



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MOSCOW, February 15 (RIA Novosti)

[http://en.ria.ru/military\\_news/20120215/171329091.html](http://en.ria.ru/military_news/20120215/171329091.html)

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Defpro.com

## **Russia to Put More RS-24 Missiles on Combat Duty in 2012**

(RIA Novosti)

February 16, 2012

Moscow -- A second regiment of the Teikovo Missile Division in central Russia will be fully equipped with Yars mobile ballistic missile systems in 2012, Strategic Missile Forces (SMF) spokesman Col. Vadim Koval said on Thursday, according to RIA Novosti.

Russia fully deployed the first Yars regiment consisting of three battalions in August 2011, and put two battalions of the second regiment on combat duty on December 27 last year.

"The deployment of the third battalion of the second regiment will complete the rearming of the Teikovo division with Yars systems," Koval said.

Two regiments will consist of a total of 18 missile systems and several mobile command posts.

Two more missile divisions will start receiving the Yars systems in 2012. The Novosibirsk division (in Siberia) will receive mobile Yars systems, while the Kozelsk division (in central Russia) will be armed with the silo-based version of the system.

The Yars missile system is armed with the RS-24 intercontinental ballistic missile that has considerably better combat and operational capabilities than the Topol-M (SS-27 Stalin).

The SMF said last year that the Topol-M and RS-24 ballistic missiles would be the mainstay of the ground-based component of Russia's nuclear triad and would account for no less than 80% of the SMF's arsenal by 2016.

<http://www.defpro.com/news/details/32473/?SID=3872db7af8aa9afdcaa1fde9aa6daa55>

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Minneapolis Star Tribune

## **Putin Resorts to Cold War-Style Anti-US Rhetoric to Boost Support in Presidential Campaign**

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV, Associated Press

Friday, February 17, 2012

MOSCOW — It's a mantra of Vladimir Putin's presidential campaign: The United States is working to weaken Russia and push it back into the chaos that followed the Soviet collapse.

In a wave of anti-Americanism reminiscent of the Cold War, the prime minister has cast his opponents as U.S. lackeys and the new American ambassador has found himself under unprecedented attack, including being targeted in an offensive YouTube video that implies he is a pedophile.

Putin's posturing as a defender of national interests may help him win the March 4 election, but possibly at the cost of the "reset" of U.S.-Russian relations that has been one of the foreign policy achievements of Barack Obama's presidency.

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“The current campaign is laden with anti-Americanism,” said Sergei Oznobishchev, head of the Institute of Strategic Assessments, a Moscow think tank. “It’s like clothing they dust off and put on for certain occasions, currently for electoral purposes.”

Putin has frequently criticized the United States throughout his 12-year rule, first as president and then as prime minister, accusing Washington of seeking to secure global domination. After a period of relative warmth thanks to the reset, relations have worsened again over U.S. missile defense plans and Moscow’s support for the Syrian government despite its violent crackdown on protests.

With the election approaching and pro-democracy protests gaining momentum, anti-American rhetoric on state TV channels has risen dramatically in pitch.

Shortly after the arrival in mid-January of U.S. Ambassador Michael McFaul, who had served as Obama’s Russia adviser and helped engineer the reset, Channel One state television aired a program describing him as a “specialist in the promotion of democracy” who came to Russia to organize “a revolution.” As a Stanford University professor, McFaul has written extensively on fostering democracy.

A video posted on YouTube this week shows an anonymous pollster asking people on the street in Moscow to compare photographs of McFaul with a man convicted of pedophilia, and say which one looks like a pedophile. Everyone in the video points to McFaul. The authors could not be tracked down, but the video has the hallmarks of those made by pro-Kremlin youth groups to tarnish Putin’s enemies.

When McFaul met with representatives of the Russian opposition, camera crews from Kremlin-controlled stations were waiting at the gates to harass them and try to cast them as U.S. stooges.

McFaul has indicated that behind the scenes, Russian officials have been more welcoming.

“Productive meetings this week with Russian govt officials, even as we disagree on Syria,” he tweeted on Feb. 8. “Sharp contrast with public anti-US statements.”

In a documentary broadcast this month by Channel One, Putin charged that the U.S. wants to subdue Russia, fearing its nuclear might.

“Our partners don’t want allies, they want vassals,” Putin said. He dismissed as lies U.S. assurances that the planned missile shield is intended to counter a missile threat from Iran, insisting that its real goal was to erode Russia’s nuclear deterrent.

Moscow has sought legal guarantees from the U.S. that the future missile shield will not be directed against it; failure to reach agreement has fueled tensions that may further escalate in May when NATO members are to sign an agreement in Chicago on the U.S.-led missile defense.

The annual summit of the Group of Eight, which includes Russia, is being held in Chicago at about the same time. Putin is expected to attend, for what would likely be his first major foreign trip after his likely election and inauguration in early May.

Putin’s anti-Americanism may have roots in his 16-year KGB career, but many believe that it is really driven by political expediency rather than ideology.

Facing growing public frustration over pervasive official corruption and rising social inequality, Putin appears to be trying to redirect public anger at foreign forces.

“Putin has revived the Soviet-era argument: We are poor because we are surrounded by enemies,” said Dmitry Oreshkin, a political analyst who was among the founders of the League of Voters, a public organization set up to promote fair elections. “That serves both as an explanation for the economic inefficiency and an argument against a leadership change.”

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Anti-U.S. rhetoric works well for Putin's core electorate of blue-collar workers, farmers and public servants, many of whom harbor deep suspicions of U.S. intentions after years of anti-American propaganda on state-controlled television stations.

"People have been poisoned by television, and many sincerely believe in U.S. aggressive intentions," said Alexander Konovalov, a political analyst.

He said Putin has taken the risk of damaging ties with the U.S. because his desire to return to the presidency outweighs other concerns.

"The focus now is on showing the domestic audience that he doesn't fear standing up to the United States," Konovalov said.

Putin has accused the U.S. State Department of instigating the protests that drew tens of thousands of people after a Dec. 4 parliamentary election that was manipulated in favor of Putin's party. Russia's top investigative agency then claimed that videos chronicling vote rigging were faked and originated from a server in California.

Russia's only independent election-monitoring group, Golos, dismissed the claim, saying the only specific video the Investigative Committee had pointed at as fake was in fact genuine and came from a server in Moscow, not California. Golos' statement was ignored by state television stations.

State broadcasters also have given prominent coverage to incidents involving Russian children adopted by American families. The Foreign Ministry sprang into action over the weekend, accusing U.S. authorities of failing to adequately punish parents charged with killing or mistreating their adopted children and urging a suspension of further adoptions.

Despite the rise of anti-American rhetoric, few expect the current frictions to escalate into a bigger conflict.

Putin doesn't want a showdown with the United States, said Sergei Rogov, the head of the USA and Canada Institute, which advises the Kremlin. He said Moscow and Washington may still agree on a missile defense document that would assuage Russia's concerns before the Chicago summit.

"The newly elected Russian president would not like to begin his term in office with a confrontation with the United States," Rogov said.

Oznobishchev said that Moscow's economic interests, such as Russia's investments in U.S. Treasuries and the Russian elite's assets in the U.S., would prevent it from going too far in challenging Washington. Moscow also badly needs Western investments and technology, he added.

"The need for modernization objectively pushes Russia toward establishing closer ties with the United States, Japan and Western Europe," he said. "It will not risk any serious rift with the U.S."

<http://www.startribune.com/world/139507568.html?page=all&prepage=1&c=y#continue>

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Press Release of Senator Lugar

## **Lugar Celebrates Two Milestones of Largest Nunn-Lugar WMD Destruction Project**

Wednesday, February 15, 2012

U.S. Sen. Dick Lugar announced today that the Nunn-Lugar Chemical Weapons Destruction Facility in Shchuchye, Russia has successfully eliminated half of the nerve agent stored there.

Last July, workers at the facility completed destruction of the projectiles/shells at the facility. As of today, they completed the draining, neutralizing and bituminizing chemical agent that was in the shells.

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Lugar hailed these milestones as a testament to U.S.-Russian cooperation and a shared dedication to addressing the threats posed by weapons of mass destruction. These destruction efforts at Shchuchye mirror U.S. domestic chemical weapons destruction efforts under the Chemical Weapons Convention. Both Washington and Moscow have reaffirmed their commitment to proceeding expeditiously with the further destruction of the remaining chemical stockpiles in both countries.

More than a decade in the making, the Shchuchye facility will destroy nearly 2 million chemical weapons shells and nerve agent that has been stored there since Soviet days. It is arguably the largest facility in the world destroying chemical munitions, and is currently the only operating facility that can accommodate the destruction of 2 million munitions.

“The path to peace and prosperity for both Russia and the United States depends on how we resolve the threats posed by the arsenals built to fight World War III. Thankfully, that confrontation never came. But today, we must ensure that the weapons are never used and never fall into the hands of those who would do harm to us or others. The United States and Russia have too much at stake and too many common interests to allow our relationship to drift toward conflict. Both of our nations have been the victim of terrorism that has deeply influenced our sense of security,” Lugar said.

“The experience of the Nunn-Lugar program in Russia has demonstrated that the threat of weapons of mass destruction can lead to extraordinary outcomes based on mutual interest. As new dangers emerge in third countries, the U.S. and Russia must work together around the world and aggressively pursue any non-proliferation opportunities that appear. Together, we can utilize the Nunn-Lugar concept to address global threats.”

On at least a dozen occasions over the past decade and a half, Lugar has interceded to keep the Shchuchye project on track. The program was challenged by Congressional restrictions, contractual problems, cost over runs, and delays. “Our own national security is bolstered by a vigorous international campaign to contain and eliminate all chemical weapons stockpiles. Global terrorists remain on the prowl, looking for new targets and, no doubt, new weapons. Destroying the huge cache of weapons at Shchuchye will make Americans safer,” Lugar said.

Lugar co-authored the Nunn-Lugar program in 1991 with then Senator Sam Nunn (D-GA). Lugar also led the 1997 Senate ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which helped spur Russia to agree to the treaty. Chemical weapons at Newport, in Lugar’s home state of Indiana, have already been eliminated in compliance with the treaty. The U.S. and Russia continue to work on destruction at other locations in both countries.

Shchuchye is located about 1,000 miles east-southeast of Moscow. Approximately 14 percent (about 5,460 metric tons) of Russia’s nerve agent stockpile has been stored in munitions at the site.

“The stockpile poses a threat because of the size and lethality of the weapons. In 1999, a Russian Major and I demonstrated the proliferation threat posed by these weapons by easily fitting an 85 mm shell, filled with VX, into an ordinary briefcase. Room was available for at least two more shells. One briefcase alone could carry enough agent to kill thousands of Americans,” Lugar said. The nerve agents, including VX, Sarin and Soman, are being neutralized into nonlethal bitumen (tar) and stored in secure bunkers. The munitions shells are also destroyed in the process.

Lugar last visited Shchuchye in May 2009 to celebrate the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Nunn-Lugar program. The opening ceremonies constituted Lugar’s fourth visit to Shchuchye, the previous as part of the ongoing oversight inspections. In addition to the U.S., Russia, Canada, the Czech Republic, the European Union, Italy, Norway, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom supported the project. It is the largest Nunn-Lugar project.

The Nunn-Lugar program has provided U.S. funding and expertise to help the former Soviet Union safeguard and dismantle its enormous stockpiles of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, related materials, and delivery systems. In 2003, Congress adopted the Lugar-initiated Nunn-Lugar Expansion Act, which authorized the Nunn-Lugar program to operate outside the former Soviet Union to address proliferation threats. In 2004, Nunn-Lugar

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funds were committed for the first time outside of the former Soviet Union to destroy chemical weapons in Albania. In 2007, Lugar announced the complete destruction of Albania's chemical weapons.

The Nunn-Lugar scorecard now totals 7,610 strategic nuclear warheads deactivated, 792 intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) destroyed, 498 ICBM silos eliminated, 191 ICBM mobile launchers destroyed, 677 submarine launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) eliminated, 556 nuclear weapons transport train shipments secured, upgraded security at 24 nuclear weapons storage sites, and built and equipped 38 biological monitoring stations. Perhaps most importantly, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus are nuclear weapons free as a result of cooperative efforts under the Nunn-Lugar program. Those countries were the third, fourth, and eighth largest nuclear weapons powers in the world.

<http://lugar.senate.gov/record.cfm?id=336001&>

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Adelaide Now – Australia

## US Considers Deep Nuclear Weapons Cut

Associated Press (AP)

February 15, 2012

**THE Obama administration is weighing options for sharp new cuts to the U.S. nuclear force, including a reduction of up to 80 percent in the number of deployed weapons.**

Even the most modest option now under consideration would be a historic and politically bold disarmament step in a presidential election year, although the plan is in line with President Barack Obama's 2009 pledge to pursue the elimination of nuclear weapons.

No final decision has been made, but the administration is considering at least three options for lower total numbers of deployed strategic nuclear weapons cutting to: 1,000 to 1,100; 700 to 800, and 300 to 400, according to a former government official and a congressional staffer. Both spoke on condition of anonymity in order to reveal internal administration deliberations.

The potential cuts would be from a current treaty limit of 1,550 deployed strategic warheads.

A level of 300 deployed strategic nuclear weapons would take the U.S. back to levels not seen since 1950 when the nation was ramping up production in an arms race with the Soviet Union. The U.S. numbers peaked at above 12,000 in the late 1980s and first dropped below 5,000 in 2003.

Obama often has talked of his desire to seek lower levels of nuclear weapons, but specific options for a further round of cuts had been kept under wraps.

A spokesman for the White House's National Security Council, Tommy Vietor, said today that the options developed by the Pentagon have not yet been presented to Obama.

The Pentagon's press secretary, George Little, declined to comment on specific force level options because they are classified. He said Obama had asked the Pentagon to develop several "alternative approaches" to nuclear deterrence.

The U.S. could make further weapons reductions on its own but is seen as more likely to propose a new round of arms negotiations with Russia, in which cuts in deployed weapons would be one element in a possible new treaty between the former Cold War adversaries.

Stephen Young, senior analyst at the Union of Concerned Scientists, which favours nuclear arms reductions, said Tuesday, "The administration is absolutely correct to look at deep cuts like this. The United States does not rely on nuclear weapons as a central part of our security."





Even small proposed cuts are likely to draw heavy criticism from Republicans who have argued that a smaller nuclear force would weaken the U.S. at a time when Russia, China and others are strengthening their nuclear capabilities. They also argue that shrinking the American arsenal would undermine the credibility of the nuclear "umbrella" that the United States provides for allies such as Japan, South Korea and Turkey, who might otherwise build their own nuclear forces.

The administration last year began considering a range of possible future reductions below the levels agreed in the New START treaty with Russia that took effect one year ago. Options are expected to be presented to Obama soon. The force levels he settles on will form the basis of a new strategic nuclear war plan to be produced by the Pentagon.

The U.S. already is on track to reduce to 1,550 deployed strategic nuclear warheads by 2018, as required by New START. As of last Sept. 1, the United States had 1,790 warheads and Russia had 1,566, according to treaty-mandated reports by each. The treaty does not bar either country from cutting below 1,550 on its own.

Those who favor additional cuts argue that nuclear weapons have no role in major security threats of the 21st century, such as terrorism. A 2010 nuclear policy review by the Pentagon said the U.S. nuclear arsenal also is "poorly suited" to deal with challenges posed by "unfriendly regimes seeking nuclear weapons," an apparent reference to Iran.

It is unclear what calculus went into each of the three options now under consideration at the White House.

The notion of a 300-weapon arsenal is featured prominently in a paper written for the Pentagon by a RAND National Defense Project Institute analyst last October, in the early stages of the administration's review of nuclear requirements. The author, Paul K. Davis, wrote that he was not advocating any particular course of action but sought to provide an analytic guide for how policymakers could think about the implications of various levels of nuclear reductions.

Davis wrote that an arsenal of 300 weapons might be considered adequate for deterrence purposes if that force level was part of a treaty with sound anti-cheating provisions; if the U.S. deployed additional non-nuclear weapons with global reach, and if the U.S. had "hypothetically excellent," if limited, defenses against long- and medium-range nuclear missiles.

In 2010, three Air Force analysts wrote in *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, an Air Force publication, that the U.S. could get by with as few as 311 deployed nuclear weapons, and that it did not matter whether Russia followed suit with its own cuts.

New U.S. cuts could open the prospect for a historic reshaping of the American nuclear arsenal, which for decades has stood on three legs: submarine-launched ballistic missiles, ground-based ballistic missiles and weapons launched from big bombers like the B-52 and the stealthy B-2. The traditional rationale for this "triad" of weaponry is that it is essential to surviving any nuclear exchange.

As recently as last month the administration said it was keeping the triad intact under current plans, while also hinting at future cuts to the force. In the 2013 defense budget submitted to Congress on Monday, the administration proposed a two-year delay in the development of a new generation of ballistic missile submarines that carry nuclear weapons. That would save an estimated \$4.3 billion over five years.

In congressional testimony last November, the Pentagon's point man on nuclear policy, James N. Miller, would not say what options for force reductions the administration was considering. Republican Rep. Michael Turner, chairman of the House of Representatives' Armed Services Committee strategic forces subcommittee, unsuccessfully pressed Miller for key details about his policy review. As recently as last month Turner said in an interview that he feared the administration was bent on cutting the force.

In his written testimony at a Nov. 2 hearing chaired by Turner, Miller made it clear that the administration was making a fundamental reassessment of nuclear weapons requirements. In unusually stark terms he said the critical





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question at hand was "what to do" if a nuclear-armed state or nonstate entity could not be deterred from launching an attack.

"In effect, we are asking: what are the guiding concepts for employing nuclear weapons to deter adversaries of the United States, and what are the guiding concepts for ending a nuclear conflict on the best possible terms if one has started?" he said.

Nuclear stockpile numbers are closely guarded secrets in most states that possess them, but private nuclear policy experts say no countries other than the U.S. and Russia are thought to have more than 300. The Federation of American Scientists estimates that France has about 300, China about 240, Britain about 225, and Israel, India and Pakistan roughly 100 each.

Since taking office Obama has put heavy emphasis on reducing the role and number of nuclear weapons as part of a broader strategy for limiting the global spread of nuclear arms technology and containing the threat of nuclear terrorism. That strategy is being put to the test most urgently by Iran's suspected pursuit of a nuclear bomb.

<http://www.adelaidenow.com.au/news/world/us-considers-deep-nuclear-weapons-cut/story-e6frea8l-1226271562933>

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San Francisco Chronicle

## **GOP Pushes Back Against any Further Cuts in Nukes**

By DONNA CASSATA and ROBERT BURNS, Associated Press

Wednesday, February 15, 2012

WASHINGTON, (AP) -- Congressional Republicans on Wednesday vowed to block the Obama administration from sharply cutting the U.S. nuclear force, calling potential reductions of as much as 80 percent in the number of deployed weapons "reckless lunacy."

Pointing to the growing number of trouble spots, from Iran to Syria to Egypt, members of the House Armed Services Committee said any significant cuts would undermine the U.S. ability to deter aggression. The Associated Press reported on Tuesday that the administration is weighing several options for new reductions from the current treaty limit of 1,550 deployed strategic warheads.

Defense Secretary Leon Panetta and Army Gen. Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told the committee that no decision has been made and maintaining the current level is one of the options. But that did little to assuage GOP lawmakers.

"I just want to go on record as saying that there are many of us that are going to do everything we possibly can to make sure that this preposterous notion does not gain any real traction," said Rep. Trent Franks, R-Ariz.

The most modest option under discussion would return the United States to a level not seen in more than half a century, when the Soviet Union and the U.S. pushed ahead in a Cold War nuclear arms race. The administration is weighing at least three options for lower total numbers, cutting to around 1,000 to 1,100, 700 to 800, or 300 to 400.

Although Dempsey said maintaining the status quo is one option, further cuts are consistent with President Barack Obama's 2009 promise to pursue the elimination of nuclear weapons and the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review, which called for an "implementation study" by the Defense Department to review the nation's nuclear deterrence requirements with an eye toward further reductions in the size of the arsenal.

Last March, National Security Adviser Tom Donilon said the administration was making preparations for the next round of nuclear reductions.

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Rep. Mac Thornberry, R-Texas, complained that such a step would encourage other nations to advance their nuclear programs. Fearing Iran's nuclear ambitions, the United States and the international community have imposed tough sanctions on Tehran.

"If they see that we are going to come down from 1,500 to some number in the low to middle hundreds, it does nothing but encourage our enemies and discourage our friends," Thornberry said. "And the result of that is more nuclear weapons programs all across the world, which would seem to me to be something that we would not want to have happen."

Panetta said a number of options are being discussed but provided no specifics. He insisted any decision would be part of a treaty that would have to be ratified by the Senate.

"As you know, reductions that have been made, at least in this administration, have only been made as part of the START process and not outside of that process. And I would expect that that would be the same in the future," Panetta said.

Rep. Michael Turner, R-Ohio, raised serious concerns about cuts of 80 percent. Franks called that "reckless lunacy." In a statement, Sen. Jim Inhofe, R-Okla., accused Obama of "catering to his liberal base that believes that if we unilaterally disarm, the rest of the world will follow suit and threats to our national security will just go away."

Rose Gottemoeller, the State Department's top arms control official, told reporters Wednesday that although the administration is not yet ready to begin a new round of nuclear arms reduction negotiations with Russia, officials on both sides already are holding "serious discussions" on issues that should be settled before negotiations begin.

She said such discussions have begun, for example, on reaching a common understanding of which sets of U.S. and Russian nuclear weapons should be included in the "strategic" category and which are "non-strategic." The difference is important because until now, U.S.-Russian nuclear arms negotiations have dealt only with strategic weapons, which traditionally are defined as those capable of reaching either the U.S. or Russian homeland. The Russians argue that U.S. nuclear weapons based in Europe should be included in the "strategic" category; the U.S. disagrees.

Panetta and Dempsey were pressed on the issue during their second day of congressional testimony on Obama's defense budget for 2013. Democrats and Republicans are resisting proposed cuts in the size of the Army and Marine Corps, cutbacks on shipbuilding, delays in the purchase of some fighter jets and weapons systems and another round of domestic base closings.

Overall, the budget for the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1 would provide \$525.4 billion in base spending and another \$88.5 billion for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The total is nearly \$32 billion less than this year's budget.

Panetta repeatedly reminded lawmakers that the cuts were dictated by the budget agreement reached by Obama and Congress last summer, a pact supported by the panel's chairman, Rep. Howard "Buck" McKeon, R-Calif., and many other members of the committee.

"The bottom line here is we were handed a number for defense reductions. We stepped up to the plate, we met our obligations to try to do this in a way that would still preserve for us an effective force to deal with the threats," Panetta said.

Committee Republicans argued that Obama had called for \$400 billion in reductions over 10 years last April, months before the deficit-cutting plan.

Looking at future budgets, Rep. Adam Smith of Washington state, the panel's top Democrat, said that in reality the cuts are a reduction in projected spending.

"It's a decrease in the increase," Smith said.



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<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/n/a/2012/02/15/national/w125225S27.DTL&ao=all>

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Korea Herald – South Korea  
OPINION/Editorial

## Restarting a Charade?

February 15, 2012

The United States is set to hold talks with North Korea in Beijing next Thursday, the third of their kind aimed at restarting the stalled six-nation negotiations on North Korea's nuclear weapons program.

As a U.S. State Department spokeswoman put it, the talks are "a continuation of the meetings" that the United States has been holding with an evasive, cunning North Korea to see if it is prepared to fulfill its past commitments to denuclearization.

Given the remarks, the United States does not appear to pin high hopes on the Beijing meeting. But it cannot be blamed for its lack of enthusiasm, given that the meet is basically talks about talks, not about substance. Reopening the six-way disarmament talks is one thing, and producing tangible results is quite another.

But the forthcoming round of talks, the first to be held since North Korean leader Kim Jong-il died on Dec. 17, may prove to be more than a mere continuation its tiresome predecessors. Instead, it may provide the United States with an opportunity to determine where the post-Kim North is headed on the issue of denuclearization.

Of paramount concern to the United States is whether or not the North, under the rule of Kim's untested young son, would abandon its nuclear ambitions given the right incentives. As such, the United States should not limit itself to taking up where it left off in the previous talks with North Korea when talks are held in Beijing. Instead, it will be well advised to seek to discuss other issues of concern to North Korea, including its request for food aid.

The United States and North Korea had two rounds of talks on suspending North Korea's uranium-enrichment program and resuming the six-way talks, in New York in July and in Geneva in October. The third round, originally scheduled to be held in Beijing on Dec. 22, was put on hold when Kim Jong-il died of a heart attack.

One day prior to Kim's death, they came close to an accord on the U.S. provision of food aid to the impoverished communist state — a deal which was apparently intended to encourage Pyongyang to return to the negotiating table.

Three years have passed since North Korea pulled out of the nuclear disarmament talks in protest against the U.N. Security Council's censure of its rocket test. It has since warned of an intercontinental ballistic missile test, conducted its second nuclear test and announced its launch of a uranium-enrichment program.

The U.S. effort to make North Korea nuclear-free dates back to early 1994 when the communist state unloaded spent fuel from its disputed nuclear research facility in Yongbyon. But Kim Il-sung agreed to stop the nuclear research program when he met former U.S. President Jimmy Carter in Pyongyang in June in the same year. In October, the United States and North Korea concluded an Agreed Framework on replacing the North Korean nuclear power plant with a safer light-water reactor of South Korean manufacture.

The replacement project launched under the Agreed Framework was abandoned when the United States claimed that North Korea was conducting a uranium-enrichment program in October 2002.

Discussions resumed in August 2003, this time in the format of multi-nation talks involving South Korea, China, Japan and Russia as well as the United States and North Korea. The negotiators produced a preliminary accord on Sept. 19, 2005, which made no mention of the U.S. allegation about the uranium-enrichment program. Little progress had been made by the time the talks broke down in 2009.

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As the brief overview shows, the North Korean offer to negotiate an end to its nuclear weapons program has been a charade. No wonder the United States, South Korea and Japan have demanded time and again that North Korea demonstrate its sincerity in abandoning its nuclear ambitions.

In this regard, China will have to join those countries in putting pressure on a wayward North Korea to make good on its commitments, instead of limiting its role to facilitating negotiations. Many will question the wisdom of continuing talks with North Korea should it prove to be as unruly as it has been in the past.

<http://www.koreaherald.com/opinion/Detail.jsp?newsMLId=20120215000835>

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Investor Business Daily  
OPINION/Editorial

## **Obama's Irrational Warhead Cuts: Nuclear Gun Control**

February 15, 2012

National Security: The commander in chief who once pined for a world without nuclear weapons has decided a world without an American deterrent is a good start, seeking to cut the U.S. arsenal by 80%.

In a world where rogue states with unstable leadership are either in possession of or pursuing nuclear weapons, and with Russia rearming and China emerging as a world military and nuclear superpower, President Obama has ordered the Pentagon to consider cutting U.S. strategic nuclear forces to as few as 300 deployed warheads — below the number believed to be in China's arsenal and far fewer than current Russian strategic weapon stocks.

This latest example of presidential naivete, which makes even Jimmy Carter look like a warmongering hawk, seems based not on geostrategic reality but rather on the wishful thinking that the threat posed is nuclear weapons, not the enemies that possess them.

Pentagon planners have been asked to consider three force levels as part of a Nuclear Posture Review ordered by President Obama last August: a force of 1,100 to 1,000 warheads, a second scenario of between 700 and 800 warheads, and the lowest level of between 300 and 400 warheads.

Retired Air Force Lt. Gen. Thomas McInerney believes that even considering such deep strategic cuts is irrational. "No sane military leader," he says, "would condone 300 to 400 warheads for an effective nuclear deterrent strategy," he told Bill Gertz of the Washington Free Beacon.

Gertz also quotes John Bolton, former U.N. ambassador and undersecretary of state for international security in the Bush administration, as saying the administration's plan to cut the nuclear force as low as 300 is by itself "sufficient to vote against Obama in November."

The current U.S. arsenal has about 5,000 warheads. A cut to 300 would put us at a level not seen since 1950.

Just as liberals think that guns, not criminals, cause crime, foes of American exceptionalism such as President Obama believe it is nuclear weapons that threaten the world, not the tyrants who possess them.

They believe the once-unrivaled arsenal of democracy is really just the instigator of arms races. In the past, we would decide what we need to meet obvious threats. Obama seems to be saying let's disarm and the threats will just go away.

As the world's only effective defender of freedom and democracy, the U.S. has a slightly different mission statement and military needs than Russia, China or the rogue states such as North Korea and Iran.

To morally equate us with them is like saying there's no difference between cops and criminals because they both carry guns, so let's put restrictions on the guns.

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In a 2009 speech in Prague, Obama spoke of "America's commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons," ignoring the fact that before 1945 we lived in such a world and it was neither peaceful nor secure.

While Obama envisions a world without nuclear weapons, and moves steadily toward unilateral disarmament of our arsenal, we envision a world without tyrants and thugs willing to use them against us.

We do not fear nuclear weapons in the hands of Britain or France, countries that share our love of freedom and democracy.

Nuclear weapons in the right hands ended the violence of World War II. In the right hands, they kept Western Europe free and helped win the Cold War. And the fact that they were used made it less likely they would ever be used again.

<http://news.investors.com/Article/601292/201202151830/obama-nuclear-warhead-cuts-are-irrational-.htm?p=1>

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Think Progress

OPINION/ Guest Blogger

## **Obama Plan to Reduce Nukes Is Good For Budget, Boosts Moral Authority on Global Nonproliferation**

February 15, 2012

By Lawrence Korb and Alex Rothman

The Obama administration is reportedly considering major reductions in the size the U.S. nuclear arsenal. The administration has reportedly asked the Pentagon to evaluate three options for further cuts: to approximately 1100, 800, or 400 weapons. Any of these scenarios would take the United States well below the ceiling imposed by the New START treaty, which requires the United States and Russia to reduce their nuclear arsenals to no more than 1,550 deployed weapons.

In recent years, it has become increasingly clear that the strategic value of the U.S. nuclear stockpile has declined significantly in the 21st century. Nuclear weapons have been useless in all of the U.S.'s recent military campaigns — Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya. And they offer no protection against terrorist groups and subnational actors, two of the most significant threats facing the United States today.

In fact, the Pentagon's own strategic thinkers have noted that the strategic landscape has changed and that the U.S.'s Cold War-sized arsenal may exceed the country's current needs. The Defense Department's strategic guidance document, released in early January, states that "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."

Moreover, according to strategists at the Air War College and the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, the U.S. could draw down its arsenal to 311 survivable reliable weapons and still maintain a credible deterrent.

For two reasons, President Obama is wise to reevaluate the size of the U.S. nuclear arsenal. First, our massive nuclear arsenal is tremendously expensive and diverts funds away from programs designed to bolster the U.S.'s long-term health of the U.S. economy and military. The budget for "nuclear weapons activities" is projected to grow by 6 percent to \$18 billion next year in FY 2013. It will be 20 percent higher in real terms than President Reagan's largest nuclear weapons budget. Further, unless the Pentagon reduces the number of deployed nuclear weapons significantly, it will have to modernize all three legs of the triad at a cost of over \$100 billion.

Protecting and modernizing our exponentially larger nuclear stockpile adds to the national debt and sucks up taxpayer dollars that could be used to bolster our economy, put people back to work, or invest in technologies

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that support our men and women serving around the globe. Adopting the Air War College recommendation would save the Pentagon at least \$11 billion per year.

Second, significant reductions in the U.S. nuclear arsenal would give the Obama administration the moral authority to push for stronger international commitments control the spread weapons-usable nuclear technology and material. President Obama has called nuclear terrorism the “single biggest threat to U.S. security, both short-term, medium-term and long-term.” Demonstrating that the United States is serious about controlling the size of its own nuclear stockpile would breathe life into the global nonproliferation regime, thereby decrease the chances of a terrorist group acquiring a nuclear warhead without undermining U.S. security.

Given the fiscal problems facing our nation and historic highs in defense spending, the Obama administration has been right to downsize or eliminate out-dated weapons systems that do little to further American security, like the F-22 and EFV. Surplus nuclear weapons, which are expensive to maintain and protect, should be no exception.

Last week, State department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland criticized the Iranian government, stating it “would rather spend money on a nuclear weapons program than on the welfare of its people.” Reducing the size of the U.S. nuclear arsenal to more strategically reasonable levels will allow the Obama administration to practice what it preaches.

*Lawrence J. Korb is a Senior Fellow at American Progress. He is also a senior advisor to the Center for Defense Information and an adjunct professor at Georgetown University. Alex Rothman is a Special Assistant with the National Security and International Policy team at American Progress.*

<http://thinkprogress.org/security/2012/02/15/426332/obama-plan-to-reduce-nukes-is-good-for-budget-boosts-moral-authority-on-global-nonproliferation/?mobile=nc>

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Bloomberg News  
OPINION/Op-Ed

## How Iran Nuclear Standoff Looks From Saudi Arabia: Mustafa Alani

By Mustafa Alani  
February 15, 2012

The most likely victims of a nuclear armed Iran are not the U.S. or Israel, but the Gulf states -- countries that are engaged in intense competition with the regime in Tehran, but that lack the power to deter any threat or aggression with a nuclear-strike capability of their own.

That, at least, is how it looks from Riyadh and other Gulf capitals. Saudi Arabia has kept a low public profile amid the heated international debate regarding the nature and ultimate objectives of the Iranian nuclear program, and the country isn't yet ready to back a military strike. But that reticence hides deep and genuine concern, demonstrated by the speed with which Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates pledged to fill any shortfall in global oil supplies that planned European Union sanctions on Iran's energy exports may cause.

A complete boycott of Iranian oil would result in the disappearance of about 2.5 million barrels per day from the international oil market, driving up prices sharply and damping the global economy as it struggles to escape a slump.

To start with, the Saudis strongly believe that if Iran is able to militarize its nuclear program while it remains a signatory to the 1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, or NPT, this would render the treaty worthless. The likely Saudi response would be to seek a nuclear capability of its own.

### The Nuclear Path

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Saudi and other Gulf country officials have made this point clear to Western governments, though not in public. They have told their Western counterparts that if Iran acquires a nuclear weapon, they would feel themselves under no legal or moral obligation to adhere to the treaty's principles. In other words, they would be free to go down the nuclear path. From the Saudi point of view, the success or failure of the international community in restraining Iran's nuclear program will determine whether the global nonproliferation regime survives.

Nor do the Saudis distinguish between Iran acquiring nuclear capability and actually producing the bomb. In their view, an unassembled nuclear weapon on the shelf is no less dangerous and intimidating than a completed one in storage.

The dominant feeling in the Gulf region is that U.S. policy, wittingly or unwittingly, has gifted Iran with painless and costless strategic gains over the past decade. When the U.S. removed the Taliban from power in Afghanistan and then toppled Saddam Hussein's Baath regime in Iraq, it lifted what had been for Iran a state of siege and containment, imposed by the two hostile regimes on its long eastern and western borders. U.S. mishandling of the postwar situations in Afghanistan and Iraq handed a further bonus to Iranian policy.

Iran's release from that vise is worrying to Saudi Arabia and other Gulf nations because they believe their Persian neighbor represents a hegemonic state that is attempting to implement aggressively interventionist and potentially expansionist policies. So far, these policies have successfully established states-within-a-state in both Lebanon and Iraq. Iran is now vigorously trying to repeat those experiences in other Arab countries that have Shiites among their populations.

Iran's expansionist goals are exemplified in the occupation of three islands in the Gulf that belong to the UAE. Second-tier Iranian officials in recent years have also begun to revive Iran's territorial claim to Bahrain. In addition, Iran has threatened repeatedly to "punish" the Gulf states and to close the Strait of Hormuz, an important international waterway for global oil supplies.

### **Iran as Troublemaker**

The perception within this region is that Iran without nuclear capability is a troublemaker and that with a nuclear bomb it would probably become still more aggressive and irresponsible. From the Saudi perspective, Iran doesn't need nuclear weapons for deterrence because, like other states in the region, it doesn't face a nuclear threat. Israel, Pakistan and India, of course, all have nuclear weapons, but in the Saudi view these countries do not pose an offensive threat. Israel, for example, has a well-established superiority in conventional weapons and therefore does not depend on nuclear deterrence. Only as a state that has hegemonic aspirations and a misguided superiority complex would Iran need the bomb.

Since 2003, when Iraq ceased to be an effective regional counterweight to Iran, the Gulf states have invested heavily in high-tech conventional-weapons systems in an effort to redress the regional military imbalance. A nuclear Iran would make those acquisitions moot, upsetting the delicate regional equilibrium. That would be a new ballgame that none of the Gulf states feels equipped to handle.

Saudi Arabia and its neighbors have no specific vision for how to deal with the issue of Iran's nuclear program. At this point, they don't favor a military option. They want first to see serious and effective non-military pressure on Iran intensified in quality and quantity. Should these measures fail to halt Iran's progress toward the bomb, the Gulf states would reluctantly support military action, despite all its negative consequences for the region.

If Iran is determined to militarize its nuclear program at any cost, they reason, then the international community must be equally determined to prevent that outcome at any cost. Otherwise, the entire Gulf region would go nuclear.

*Mustafa Alani is the director of the security and defense studies department at the Geneva-based Gulf Research Center. This is the second in a series of op-ed articles about Iran, from writers in countries that have a direct*





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*interest in the escalating debate over how to rein in its alleged nuclear weapons program. The opinions expressed are his own.*

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-02-16/how-iran-nuclear-standoff-looks-from-saudi-arabia-mustafalalani.html>

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Brookings Institute  
OPINION/Up Front Blog

## **President Obama, Deterrence and Nuclear Weapons**

By Steven Pifer  
February 16, 2012

The Washington defense and security communities are abuzz with press reports regarding possible presidential decisions on U.S. nuclear weapons numbers. Administration officials say the president has not yet seen the options that the National Security Council is preparing with the Defense Department and others, let alone made a decision.

What's the background? In April 2010, the Department of Defense issued a Nuclear Posture Review. That document described how the administration planned to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in U.S. security policy while at the same time maintaining strategic deterrence and stability, and strengthening regional deterrence. Shortly thereafter, Presidents Obama and Medvedev signed the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START), which limits the United States and Russia each no more than 1550 deployed strategic warheads on no more than 700 deployed strategic missiles and bombers. The treaty entered into force in February 2011, and its implementation is well underway.

More than anything else in the U.S. arsenal, nuclear weapons are the president's weapons. He (or she) must authorize their use, in what would be one of the most momentous decisions that a president could take. The process now underway is examining alternative approaches to deterrence. It will conclude with the president deciding on guidance as to what is needed for deterrence, on how and to what end nuclear weapons would be used, should that be necessary. The Department of Defense and Strategic Command will then translate that guidance into a specific nuclear force structure and number of weapons.

Several options for what that guidance would look like, along with illustrative strategic nuclear force structures, are being prepared for the president's review. Those force structures reportedly run from something like the current structure to options that would cut the number of deployed strategic warheads to levels well below those in New START. Some observations:

First, it is appropriate to conduct this review. The current U.S. strategic nuclear force structure is based on presidential guidance approved more than eleven years ago. U.S. officials ought to be asking what it takes today to maintain an effective deterrent. That includes questions such as: What targets of value to a potential adversary should U.S. nuclear forces hold at risk in order to deter that adversary? How many nuclear weapons are needed to hold those targets at risk, allowing for the possibility that the adversary might consider striking first? Would some adversaries be better deterred by more usable military options, such as Predators with Hellfire missiles that could target individual leaders? And so on. Getting these calculations right should produce a policy and a force structure capable of deterring potential adversaries.

Some critics of New START (and arms control in general) claim that 1550 deployed strategic warheads is already too low for deterrence, but they do not say who is not deterred by that force. If the president and his senior civilian and military advisors conclude that the United States can maintain an effective deterrent at a number below 1550, it would be logical to consider going below New START levels.

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Second, it is a smart time to conduct this review. Over the next several years, Washington will have to make important and expensive decisions about recapitalizing all three legs of the U.S. strategic triad—intercontinental ballistic missiles, ballistic missile submarines and nuclear-capable heavy bombers. Those decisions will shape the strategic force for decades. It would be wise to have a policy in place to guide those decisions rather than having them driven simply by budget considerations. That is especially true when defense resources are tight, and the Pentagon wants to buy other equipment—ships, aircraft and ground combat vehicles—for military operations that are far more likely than nuclear war.

Third, whatever policy the president chooses—and whatever force structure and number of nuclear warheads follow from that policy—it is an entirely separate question how the United States chooses to get to that level. One way would be to do so unilaterally. Should Washington conclude that X deployed strategic warheads suffice to deter any potential adversary, should we worry about the number of weapons that other countries have? The George W. Bush administration decided in 2001 that deterrence required 1700-2200 operational strategic warheads, said that it did not care how many nuclear weapons Russia or China kept, and over the following eight years unilaterally cut the U.S. nuclear arsenal in half.

Alternatively, Washington could decide to implement a new level through an arms control arrangement. The president might choose to reduce U.S. nuclear forces only if Russia and possibly other countries reduced theirs as well.

I personally believe that the security of the United States and its allies could be safely maintained with fewer nuclear weapons than we have today. The current U.S. force structure, while significantly smaller than what the United States maintained 20 years ago, still looks awfully Cold War-like. The president and his senior national security advisors need to work through the complex deterrence questions, but it seems that we have more than we need to deter a rational potential adversary. And if an irrational potential adversary is not deterred by 1550 nuclear warheads, we should look at some other deterrence mechanism, since 5000 or 10,000 warheads likely will not deter him either. The review is the opportunity for the president to consider these very serious and consequential issues with his senior advisors and render his judgment.

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[http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2012/0216\\_arms\\_control\\_pifer.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2012/0216_arms_control_pifer.aspx)

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The Washington Times  
OPINION/Editorial

## **EDITORIAL: Obama's Unilateral Disarmament**

*White House drive for 'nuclear zero' imperils the world*

By *The Washington Times*

Thursday, February 16, 2012

President Obama is working to realize the leftist dream of unilateral nuclear disarmament. This will leave the United States pitifully weak and create conditions for catastrophic deterrence failure.

The White House has told the Pentagon to study options for reducing the number of U.S. nuclear warheads by as much as 80 percent. The future nuclear force could have as few as 300 weapons, far below the cuts to 1,550 required by the START 2 nuclear treaty with Russia. It would give America an arsenal about the size of France's Force de Frappe and raise serious questions on whether it would have sufficient strength for even minimal deterrence.

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Supporters of radical weapons reduction contend that Mr. Obama's "nuclear zero" is not a unilateralist strategy and that deep cuts would only come as part of a framework of global arms reduction. This is mere rhetoric. No such framework has been established or is being negotiated, and no other country in the world is contemplating such extreme cuts. START 2, which the Obama administration claims is a model for the global framework, committed the United States to nuclear cuts while giving Russia the green light for nuclear-force modernization and expansion. The weak verification regime in the treaty puts America in the position of having to take Moscow's word for it that Russia is complying with the agreed-upon terms. Ronald Reagan counseled "Trust but verify," but Mr. Obama signed off on "Let's just hope they aren't lying."

Communist China has never agreed to be part of any strategic nuclear framework. There are no reliable official numbers on the size of Beijing's nuclear forces, though a 2011 Georgetown University study concluded the Chinese already may have the world's largest nuclear arsenal. The White House hasn't pursued any nuclear negotiations with Beijing and seems to think if the People's Republic doesn't mention its strategic forces, they don't exist.

Rising regional powers aren't buying into Mr. Obama's anti-nuke line. Pakistan, India, North Korea and Iran have or are pursuing nuclear weapons. As the U.S. arsenal shrinks, the relative value of their weapons increases, so they have every incentive to continue to move down this path. This illustrates a dangerous flaw in Mr. Obama's thinking. At the same time he is pushing America toward "nuclear zero," the White House is promising to extend the U.S. nuclear-deterrence umbrella to countries such as Israel and Saudi Arabia to assuage fears of the nuclear threat from Tehran. Given this credibility gap, it's no wonder many Middle Eastern states are planning to initiate their own nuclear programs if Iran gets the bomb. In this respect, "nuclear zero" is weakening deterrence, spurring an arms race and making conflict more likely.

It will be left to Mr. Obama's successor to dump "nuclear zero" and reverse the dangerous erosion of the U.S. nuclear arsenal. If America rejects the security responsibilities of a superpower, it has no business calling itself one.

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2012/feb/16/obamas-unilateral-disarmament/>

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Time

OPINION/Battleland Blog

## Nuclear New Math

By Mark Thompson

February 17, 2012

Reports that the Pentagon is weighing a range of cuts to the nation's nuclear arsenal – perhaps going as low as 300 deployed strategic weapons, down from the current 1,550 – has nuclear-triggered concern on Capitol Hill. "I have to suggest to you," Rep. Trent Franks, R-Ariz., told Defense Secretary Leon Panetta on Wednesday, "I consider that reckless lunacy."

But Stephen I. Schwartz, editor of the *The Nonproliferation Review* at California's Monterey Institute of International Studies, has gone to the history books. "Amid all the hyperventilating from congressional Republicans over the Obama administration's ongoing review of nuclear force levels and postures, it's worth remembering that when it comes to actual reductions in U.S. nuclear weapons, whether bilateral or unilateral, these have always been deeper and faster under Republicans than under Democrats," he tells *Battleland*, flinging recently-declassified charts our way to make his case.

"During George H.W. Bush's four years in office, the total stockpile was reduced by 38%, from 22,217 to 13,708 weapons, thanks in part to his unilateral decision to retire all ground-based nuclear weapons in Europe and South



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Korea and remove all nuclear weapons from naval surface vessels,” Schwartz says. “George W. Bush went even further, cutting the total stockpile over eight years by 50%, from 10,526 to 5,273 weapons.

“I don’t recall too many Republicans complaining about, or opposing, those reductions,” he adds. The stockpile shrinkage under W., he points out, “took place during a period when we were fighting two wars, when North Korea conducted two nuclear tests, and as Iran expanded its uranium centrifuge operations.”

*Pulitzer Prize-winner Mark Thompson has covered national security in Washington since 1979, and for Time since 1994.*

<http://battleland.blogs.time.com/2012/02/17/nuclear-new-math/>

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