



USAF COUNTERPROLIFERATION CENTER
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MAXWELL AFB, ALABAMA

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Al Arabiya – U.A.E.

IAEA Says Iran Expands Nuke Work; Russia Says West Seeks ‘Regime Change’ in Tehran

Friday, 24 February 2012

By Al Arabiya with Agencies

Iran has sharply stepped up its controversial uranium enrichment drive, the United Nations’ nuclear agency said on Friday in a report that will further inflame Israeli fears that the Islamic Republic is pushing ahead with an atomic weapons program, as Russia accused the West of seeking “regime change” in Iran.

The U.N. International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) also reported its failed mission to Tehran this week that aimed to get Iran to respond to allegations of research relevant for the development of nuclear weapons -- a serious setback to the possible resumption of diplomatic talks.

“The Agency continues to have serious concerns regarding possible military dimensions to Iran’s nuclear program,” the Vienna-based U.N. body said in a quarterly report about Iran issued to its member states, according to Reuters.

Israel, which has threatened Iran with pre-emptive strikes on its nuclear sites, had no immediate comment on the report. Germany, which has backed tough new sanctions on Iran, said it was further cause for concern.

“Germany is very concerned about the latest report from the IAEA. We think Iran should understand the key to ending sanctions is in their own hands, they have a duty to cooperate with the international community,” said German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle.

The Islamic Republic’s rapid expansion of work which can have both civilian and military purposes underlines that it has no intention of backing down in a long-running row with the West that has sparked fears of war in the Middle East.

Confidential IAEA report

Tehran says its nuclear program is exclusively for civilian purposes and denies it aims to make atomic weapons.

The confidential IAEA report said Iran has, since late last year, tripled output of uranium refined to a level that brings it significantly closer to potential bomb material, an official familiar with the agency’s probe said.

Making clear the two sides were far apart, it said there were major differences on how to tackle the issue and that Iran had dismissed the IAEA’s concerns as “unfounded.” No further meetings are planned.

The setback increased concerns of a downward spiral towards conflict between Iran and the West, and sent oil prices higher.

IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano urged Iran in the report to provide “early access” to Parchin, a military site near Tehran seen as central to the agency’s investigations into possible military aspects of Iran’s nuclear work.

The failure of the two-day IAEA visit could hamper any resumption of wider nuclear negotiations between Iran and six world powers -- the United States, China, Russia, Britain, France and Germany -- as the sense grows that Tehran feels it is being backed into a corner.

The IAEA report said Iran had carried out a significant expansion of activities at its main enrichment plant near the central city of Natanz, and also increased work at the Fordow underground facility.

Enriched uranium can be used to fuel nuclear power plants, which is Iran's stated aim, or provide material for bombs if refined much further, which the West suspects is Tehran's ultimate plan.

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At Natanz, the IAEA report said 52 cascades -- each containing around 170 centrifuges -- were now operating, up from 37 in November.

At Fordow, almost 700 centrifuges are now refining uranium to a fissile concentration of 20 percent and preparations are under way to install many more, the report said.

Fordow is of particular concern for the West and Israel as Iran is shifting the most sensitive aspect of its nuclear work -- refining uranium to a level that takes it significantly closer to potential bomb material -- to the site.

Estimated to be buried beneath 80 meters (265 feet) of rock and soil, it gives Iran better protection against any Israeli or U.S. military strikes.

The report said Iran had now produced nearly 110 kg of uranium enriched to 20 percent since early 2010. Western experts say about 250 kg is needed for a nuclear weapon, although it would need to be enriched much further.

West seeking regime change in Iran

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin on Friday accused the West of seeking "regime change" in Iran and warned Washington that Russia intended to keep its nuclear weapons to keep U.S. power in check.

"Under the guise of trying to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction... they are attempting something else entirely and setting different goals -- regime change," news agencies quoted Putin as saying, according to AFP.

"We have such suspicions," said Putin. "And we are trying to take a stand that differs from the one they are trying to force on us... concerning the ways that the Iranian nuclear problem might develop."

Russia has longstanding commercial and military ties with Iran and has condemned unilateral sanctions imposed by the United States and the European Union over its suspected pursuit of nuclear weapons.

Putin's tough talk came as he toured a nuclear research center in the once-secret city of Sarov ahead of a March 4 presidential election in which he is widely expected to secure a return to the Kremlin.

Footage showed the former KGB spy inspect research stands and then chair a security meeting in which he lashed out at U.S. plans to deploy a missile defense shield in Europe that Russia fears might make its nuclear forces ineffective.

Putin often clashed with the United States while president between 2000 and 2008 and has remained a key decision-maker in the past four years who spearheaded Russia's criticism of the NATO-led air campaign in Libya.

An IAEA report in November suggested Iran had pursued military nuclear technology helped to precipitate the latest sanctions by the European Union and United States.

Iran last month said it had started to refine uranium to a fissile concentration of 20 percent -- compared with the 3.5 percent it mainly produces at Natanz and which is used for nuclear power plants -- at Fordow.

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

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/02/24/196796.html>

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Ha'aretz Daily News -- Israel
Saturday, February 25, 2012

Iran: IAEA Report Proves 'Peaceful Nature' of Nuclear Program

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UN nuclear watchdog report says Iran tripled capacity to enrich uranium to elevated levels and doubled number of centrifuges for enriching to 20 per cent at Fordo underground site.

By **Deutsche Presse-Agentur** (DPA)

Iran on Friday said the report by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on its nuclear program proves it is of a peaceful nature, Tehran's envoy to the UN nuclear watchdog, Ali-Asqar Soltanieh said.

"The latest IAEA report again showed the peaceful nature of the Iranian nuclear program and further reflected the progress Iran achieved in nuclear technology," Soltanieh was quoted as saying by the Fars news agency.

According to the IAEA report released Friday, Iran has tripled its capacity to enrich uranium to elevated levels and doubled the number of centrifuges for enriching to 20 per cent at its fortified underground site at Fordo.

Iran is suspected by Western powers of building a nuclear weapon, for which high-grade enriched uranium is needed.

Soltanieh said the items mentioned in the latest IAEA report had already been announced earlier by Iranian officials who had confirmed production of 95.4 kilograms of 20 per cent and 5,441 kg of 5 per cent enriched uranium by Iran.

He added that not granting the visiting IAEA team access to the Parchin military complex in south-eastern Tehran was due to technical modalities but could be settled through further negotiations.

He also said that Iran was committed to both international nuclear regulations and continued cooperation with the IAEA "but Tehran will not make any concessions over its rights to pursue peaceful nuclear programs."

<http://www.haaretz.com/news/middle-east/iran-iaea-report-proves-peaceful-nature-of-nuclear-program-1.414681>

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Wall Street Journal
February 25, 2012

Tehran Is Ramping Up Nuclear-Fuel Output

By JAY SOLOMON

WASHINGTON—Iran has significantly increased its stockpile of a purer form of enriched uranium that is closer to weapons grade, according to the United Nations' nuclear watchdog, and has begun to produce it at a fortified mountain site seen as potentially immune from a military strike.

The International Atomic Energy Agency on Friday also reported that Iranian officials continue to rebuff the agency's calls to explain growing evidence that shows Tehran has experimented in developing the technologies for atomic weapons.

This week, for the second time in a month, Iran denied IAEA inspectors access to sites, scientists and documents that the agency believes are related to nuclear-weapons work.

The report on Iran's nuclear advances rattled international oil markets on Friday and intensified fears in the international community that the country is moving closer to a nuclear-weapons capability, something Tehran denies it wants.

By blocking the IAEA's mission, Tehran also cast doubt on Western hopes for a resumption of negotiations on the nuclear issue in the coming weeks.

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"Iran's actions demonstrate why Iran has failed to convince the international community that its nuclear program is peaceful," White House National Security Council spokesman Tommy Vietor said. "If it refuses to shift course, its isolation from the international community will only continue to grow."

Iran in recent months has significantly increased the number of centrifuge machines that are used to produce nuclear fuel at sites near the Iranian cities of Natanz and Qom, according to the IAEA.

The Qom facility, called Fordow, has particularly concerned the U.S., Israel and their European allies because it is based at a military site protected by anti-aircraft batteries and a mountain of rock and soil. The Iranian government had previously kept the Fordow facility secret from the IAEA, before it was uncovered by American intelligence in 2009.

Over the past three months, Iran has more than tripled its monthly output of uranium that has been enriched to a fissile concentration of 20% at Natanz and Fordow, according to the IAEA. Such nuclear fuel, compared with the 3.5% used in most nuclear-power reactors, brings Iran dangerously close to the weapons-grade level needed to make atomic weapons, according to nuclear experts.

Iran's current stockpile of 20% enriched uranium stands at 110 kilograms, according to the IAEA. Nuclear experts estimate Iran could make a single bomb if it increased its current stockpile of 20% enriched uranium to between 125 and 200 kilograms and then enriched it further, to weapons grade.

Iran's government has said it needs the purer form of enriched uranium to fuel its research reactor in Tehran. But nuclear experts argue that Iran's stockpile already is large enough to fuel that facility for at least a decade.

"What's the point of adding to this stockpile if you only have peaceful intentions?" said Paul Brannan of the Institute for Science and International Security, a Washington think tank.

The IAEA also reported that its investigators had found a discrepancy of 44 pounds, or about 20 kilograms, of raw uranium metal at an Iranian laboratory. Iran cited accounting problems. But Western governments worry that materials could have been diverted for the testing of nuclear explosive devices.

The new IAEA report also revealed the continuing problems Iran faces in expanding its nuclear program.

In recent months, Tehran said it had begun installing more advanced centrifuge machines into the Natanz and Fordow facilities. Such machines could cut by as much as a third the time Iran would need to produce highly enriched uranium. But the new report said Iran has yet to significantly deploy any of these machines and indicated that Tehran has scrapped the development of some of them, possibly because of technical problems.

Iran also reported this month that it had begun installing domestically made nuclear fuel rods into the Tehran research reactor. But the IAEA reported that Iran still seemed to be in the testing phase of fueling the reactor.

The stalemate between Iran and the West over the nuclear issue has significantly increased tensions between the two sides in recent months.

The U.S. and European Union have drastically increased economic sanctions against Iran's oil exports and financial sector. And Iran has responded by threatening to shut the strategic Strait of Hormuz.

Still, Iranian officials at IAEA headquarters in Vienna have said this week that they continue to want to have new talks with the U.S. and other world powers on the nuclear issue.

Last week, Iran's nuclear negotiator, Saeed Jalili, sent a letter to the EU's foreign-policy chief, Catherine Ashton, calling for an immediate resumption of talks without preconditions. The Obama administration and EU are continuing to study the Iranian offer, according to American and European diplomats.

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970204778604577243722194656742.html?mod=WSJ_WSJ_News_BlogsModule



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Taipei Times – Taiwan
Sunday, February 26, 2012

US Agencies See No Iranian Move to Build Atomic Bomb

By NY Times News Service, Washington

Even as the UN's nuclear watchdog said in a new report on Friday that Iran has accelerated its uranium enrichment program, US intelligence analysts continue to believe there is no hard evidence that Iran has decided to build a nuclear bomb.

Recent assessments by US spy agencies are broadly consistent with a 2007 intelligence finding that concluded that Iran had abandoned its nuclear weapons program years earlier, according to current and former US officials. The officials said that assessment was largely reaffirmed in a 2010 National Intelligence Estimate and that it remains the consensus view of the US' 16 intelligence agencies.

At the center of the debate is the murky question of the ultimate ambitions of the leaders in Tehran. There is no dispute among US, Israeli and European intelligence officials that Iran has been enriching nuclear fuel and developing some necessary infrastructure to become a nuclear power.

However, the CIA and other intelligence agencies believe that Iran has yet to decide whether to resume a parallel program to design a nuclear warhead — a program they believe was essentially halted in 2003 and which would be necessary for Iran to build a nuclear bomb. Iranian officials maintain that their nuclear program is for civilian purposes.

In a US Senate testimony on Jan. 31, James Clapper Jr, the director of US national intelligence, stated explicitly that US officials believe that Iran is preserving its options for a nuclear weapon, but said there was no evidence it had made a decision on making a concerted push to build a weapon. CIA Director David Petraeus concurred with that view at the same hearing. Other senior US officials, including US Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta and General Martin Dempsey, the chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, have made similar statements in recent television appearances.

Critics of the US assessment in Jerusalem and some European capitals point out that Iran has made great strides in the most difficult step toward building a nuclear weapon, enriching uranium. That has also been the conclusion of a series of reports by the International Atomic Energy Agency's inspectors, who on Friday presented new evidence that the Iranians have begun enriching uranium in an underground facility near the city of Qom.

Once Iran takes further steps to actually enrich weapons-grade fuel — a feat the US does not believe Iran has yet accomplished — the critics believe it would be relatively easy for Iran to engineer a warhead and then have a bomb in short order.

Yet some intelligence officials and outside analysts believe there is another possible explanation for Iran's enrichment activity, besides a headlong race to build a bomb as quickly as possible. They say that Iran could be seeking to enhance its influence in the region by creating what some analysts call "strategic ambiguity."

Rather than building a bomb now, Iran may want to increase its power by sowing doubt among other nations about its nuclear ambitions. Some point to the examples of Pakistan and India, both of which had clandestine nuclear weapons programs for decades before they actually decided to build bombs and test their weapons in 1998.

To be sure, US intelligence analysts acknowledge that understanding the intentions of Iran's leadership is extremely difficult and that their assessments are based on limited information. David Kay, who was head of the CIA's team that searched for Iraq's weapons programs after the US invasion, was cautious about the quality of the intelligence underlying the current US assessment.

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“They don’t have evidence that Iran has made a decision to build a bomb and that reflects a real gap in the intelligence,” Kay said. “It’s true the evidence hasn’t changed very much” since 2007, he added, “but that reflects a lack of access and a lack of intelligence as much as anything.”

Divining the intentions of closed societies is one of the most difficult tasks for US intelligence analysts and the CIA for decades has had little success penetrating regimes, like Iran and North Korea, to learn how their leaders make decisions.

Amid the ugly aftermath of the botched Iraq intelligence assessments, US spy agencies in 2006 put new analytical procedures in place to avoid repeating the failures. Analysts now have access to raw information about the sources behind intelligence reports, to help better determine the credibility of the sources and prevent another episode like the one in which the CIA based much of its conclusions about Iraq’s purported biological weapons on an Iraqi exile who turned out to be lying. Analysts are also required to include in their reports more information about the chain of logic that led them to their conclusions and judgements that differ from the prevailing conclusions are featured prominently in classified reports, rather than buried in footnotes.

When an unclassified summary of the 2007 National Intelligence Estimate on Iran’s nuclear program was made public, stating that Iran had abandoned work on a nuclear bomb, it stunned then-US president George W. Bush’s administration and the world. It represented a sharp reversal from the intelligence community’s 2005 estimate on Iran and drew criticism of the CIA from European and Israeli officials, as well as conservative pundits. They argued that it was part of a larger effort by the CIA to prevent US military action against Iran.

The report was so controversial that many outside analysts expected that the intelligence community would be forced to revise and repudiate the estimate after new evidence emerged about Iran’s program, notably from the UN’s inspectors. Yet analysts now say that while there has been mounting evidence of Iranian work on enrichment facilities, there has been far less clear evidence of an ongoing weapons program.

Still, Iran’s enrichment activities have raised suspicions, even among skeptics.

“What has been driving the discussion has been the enrichment activity,” a former intelligence official said. “That’s made everybody nervous. So the Iranians continue to contribute to the suspicions about what they are trying to do.”

Iran’s efforts to hide its nuclear facilities and to deceive the West about its activities have also intensified doubts. However, some US analysts warn that such behavior is not necessarily proof of a weapons program. They say that one mistake the CIA made before the war in Iraq was to assume that because then-Iraqi president Saddam Hussein resisted weapons inspections — acting as if he were hiding something — it meant that he had a weapons program.

As Kay explained: “The amount of evidence that you were willing to go with in 2002 is not the same evidence you are willing to accept today.”

<http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2012/02/26/2003526392>

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BusinessWeek

Monday, February 27, 2012

Iran Dismisses Inspector Concerns While Tripling Uranium

By Jonathan Tirone

Feb. 24 (Bloomberg) -- Iran tripled its production of enriched uranium and rejected the international concerns about its possible pursuit of nuclear weapons that a team of United Nations inspectors carried to Tehran this week.

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Amid rising tensions about its nuclear research, Iran “dismissed the agency’s concerns,” the International Atomic Energy Agency said today in an 11-page restricted document obtained by Bloomberg News. “Iran considered them to be based on unfounded allegations,” according to the document.

The report, distributed to IAEA member states, was published three days after inspectors’ talks with Iran broke down. The inspectors said Iran has increased the number of machines it’s using to enrich uranium at its Natanz complex by 14 percent and has begun enriching material at its underground Fordo complex near the holy city of Qom.

Iran is now making almost 31 pounds (14 kilograms) of 20 percent-enriched uranium a month compared with almost nine pounds (4 kilograms) in November, according to the report.

“Iran has continued to pursue its uranium enrichment program in violation of multiple United Nations Security Council resolutions without demonstrating any credible or legitimate purpose for doing so,” Tommy Vietor, spokesman for the U.S. National Security Council, said today in an e-mailed statement.

‘Continued Stonewalling’

“Combined with its continued stonewalling of international inspectors, Iran’s actions demonstrate why Iran has failed to convince the international community that its nuclear program is peaceful,” he said.

Allegations about Iran’s possible military ambitions have led to economic sanctions targeting Iran’s oil and banking industries. The U.S. and Israel haven’t ruled out air strikes against the country’s atomic facilities, escalating tensions in a region that’s home to 54 percent of global oil reserves.

Oil climbed for a seventh day, the longest streak of advances since January 2010, as conflict with Iran threatens supplies and on signs of a global economic recovery.

Crude oil April delivery rose \$1.94, or 1.8 percent, to \$109.77 a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange, the highest settlement since May 3. The front-month contract increased 6.3 percent this week. Crude’s seven-day advance was the longest since the period ended Jan. 6, 2010.

IAEA Questions

Iran may be able to stockpile as much as 638 pounds of 20 percent enriched uranium, said Olli Heinonen, a senior fellow at Harvard University’s Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, in a Feb. 15 telephone call.

That’s enough to make as many as two nuclear weapons if Iran decided to continue enriching to weapons-grade, which is 90 percent, according to Heinonen, who as the IAEA’s chief inspector visited Iranian facilities until 2010.

The IAEA, while verifying that Iran hasn’t diverted declared uranium stocks, reiterated that the government in Tehran still hasn’t proved that its nuclear program is intended only for peaceful purposes. The U.S. and European allies accuse Iran of seeking the ability to make nuclear weapons, while the Persian Gulf nation’s leaders say they seek only energy and industrial applications from nuclear technology.

No ‘Credible Assurances’

“The agency is unable to provide credible assurances about the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities in Iran, and therefore to conclude that all material in Iran is in peaceful activities,” the IAEA reported.

The IAEA also said its investigators found a discrepancy of 44 pounds of raw uranium metal at an Iranian laboratory. Inspectors want Iranian officials to explain what happened to the material, which may have been used for testing before 2002, the senior officials said, adding that they were tipped off about the location of the metal by one IAEA member state.

The IAEA team also asked twice to investigate Iran’s Parchin military complex, where information received by the agency points to high-explosive testing that could be used to trigger a nuclear weapon. While Iran didn’t



categorically reject the IAEA's request, inspectors were disappointed that the mid-level officials they met with weren't empowered to make a decision, the officials said.

The U.S. is calling on Iran to "come into full compliance with UN Security Council resolutions by suspending its enrichment program and providing full and genuine transparency to the IAEA," said Vietor. "If it refuses to shift course, its isolation from the international community will only continue to grow."

Bomb Timeline

U.S. intelligence officials fear that Iran may be developing the different components of a nuclear weapon in scattered facilities, including Parchin and other military bases where it hasn't permitted IAEA inspections, said a U.S. official who spoke only on the basis of anonymity because intelligence matters are classified.

U.S. intelligence analysts have concluded that Iran could assemble a nuclear weapon in as little as two months if it succeeded in making all the components, enough weapons-grade uranium and a nuclear-capable missile or other delivery vehicle, said the official, who participated in the analysis.

Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin today said Russia opposes Iran developing a nuclear weapons capability because it would endanger global stability.

"We don't need to expand the nuclear club, and we're against this," Putin said in the Russian city of Sarov. "It would lead to greater risks to international stability."

Iran's Demands

The IAEA inspectors' talks with Iranian officials broke down after Iran insisted on imposing rules on the investigation, said two international officials with knowledge of the IAEA's investigation. The officials weren't allowed to be identified because the information isn't public.

Iran dismissed the agency's concerns in a 15-page letter rejecting a Nov. 8 IAEA report that outlined "credible" information pointing to nuclear-weapons work.

Iran began enriching uranium with more than 300 new centrifuges at Fordo, the underground site where the country is shifting production of 20 percent-enriched uranium. The centrifuges at Iran's underground Natanz enrichment hall grew to 9,156 from 8,000 in November, according to the report.

Low-enriched uranium can be used to fuel nuclear power plants and Iran has said the 20 percent enriched uranium is for use in a reactor producing medical isotopes.

Uranium Stockpiles

Iran increased its supply of 20 percent-enriched uranium to almost 240 pounds from just over 162 pounds reported in November, the IAEA said. Iran has produced almost 12,000 pounds of uranium enriched to less than 5 percent compared to slightly more than 10,828 pounds in the last IAEA report.

About 1,386 pounds of low-enriched uranium, if further purified, could yield the 33 pounds to 48 pounds of weapons-grade uranium an expert bomb maker needs to make a weapon, according to the London-based Verification Research, Training and Information Center, a non-governmental observer to the IAEA funded by European governments.

With assistance from Stepan Kravchenko in Moscow and Indira A.R. Lakshmanan in Washington. Editors: John Walcott, Terry Atlas.

<http://www.businessweek.com/news/2012-02-27/iran-dismisses-inspector-concerns-while-tripling-uranium.html>

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China Daily – China



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China Hopes for Resumption of Dialogue on Iran

February 27, 2012
(Xinhua)

BEIJING - China hopes relevant parties will resume the dialogue process on the Iranian nuclear issue at an early date, Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei said here Monday.

Iran has expanded its uranium enrichment activities in recent months, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said in its report on the country's disputed nuclear program. News agencies obtained the IAEA report on Friday.

The restricted quarterly report circulated to IAEA member states showed that the UN nuclear watchdog continues to have serious concerns regarding possible military dimensions to Iran's nuclear program.

"China is studying the report," Hong told a regular press conference.

Hong said that the IAEA, as an authoritative international institution in the field of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, plays an "irreplaceable role" in the proper handling of the Iranian nuclear issue.

The IAEA should maintain an objective and impartial manner and continue to be actively committed to dialogue and cooperation with Iran, Hong said, adding that Iran should show "flexibility and sincerity" in continuing to strengthen cooperation with the IAEA and be committed to easing the concerns of the international community.

The dialogue and cooperation process on the Iran nuclear issue is showing some positive momentum, he said.

China hopes all relevant parties will seize the opportunity, resume the dialogue process as early as possible and actively explore a comprehensive, long-term and effective way to properly resolve the Iranian nuclear issue, Hong said.

China will continue to play a constructive role in the settlement, he added.

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/usa/china/2012-02/27/content_14705505.htm

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Chicago Tribune

Iran May Be "Struggling" with New Nuclear Machines

By Fredrik Dahl Reuters
February 27, 2012

VIENNA (Reuters) - Iran is still relying on old technology to expand its nuclear program, in what may be a sign it is having difficulties developing modern machines that could speed up production of potential bomb material.

A report by the U.N. nuclear watchdog last week said Iran was significantly stepping up its uranium enrichment, a finding that sent oil prices higher on fears tensions between with the West could escalate into military conflict. Israel has threatened to launch pre-emptive strikes to prevent Iran getting the bomb and Defense Minister Ehud Barak has said Tehran's continued technological progress mean it could soon pass into a "zone of immunity," suggesting time was running out for an effective military intervention.

But, contrary to some Western media reports in the run-up to Friday's International Atomic Energy Agency report, Iran does not yet seem ready to deploy advanced enrichment equipment for large-scale production, despite years of testing.

Instead, the IAEA document showed Iran was preparing to install thousands more centrifuges based on an erratic and outdated design, both in its main enrichment plant at Natanz and in a smaller facility at Fordow buried deep underground.

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"It appears that they are still struggling with the advanced centrifuges," said Olli Heinonen, a former chief nuclear inspector for the Vienna-based U.N. agency.

"We do not know whether the reasons for delays are lack of raw materials or design problems," he said.

Iran says it is refining uranium to fuel a planned network of nuclear power plants so that it can export more of its oil and gas. The United States and its allies accuse it of a covert bid to acquire nuclear weapons capability.

Tehran often trumpets technical advances in its nuclear program, including the development of new centrifuges - machines that spin at supersonic speed to increase the concentration of the fissile material in uranium.

In mid-February, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said Iran now had a "fourth generation" centrifuge that could refine uranium three times faster than previously.

"Iran unveiled a third-generation model two years ago and then never said more about it," said Mark Fitzpatrick of the International Institute for Strategic Studies think tank.

"Now it says it has a fourth-generation model, which is probably a variation of the problematic second-generation machines."

MILLION DOLLAR QUESTION

The IAEA, which regularly inspects Iran's declared nuclear sites, has little access to facilities where centrifuges are assembled and the agency's knowledge of possible centrifuge progress is mainly limited to what it can observe at Natanz.

Asked whether Iran may keep more advanced centrifuges at a location which U.N. inspectors were not aware of, an official familiar with the issue said: "That is, of course, the million dollar question."

If Iran eventually succeeded in introducing the newer models for production, it could significantly shorten the time needed to stockpile enriched uranium, which can generate electricity or, if processed much further, nuclear explosions.

But it is unclear whether Tehran, subject to increasingly strict international sanctions, has the means and components to make the more sophisticated machines in bigger numbers.

"Iran has been testing its second-generation models for several years but they do not appear to be ready for full-scale use yet," said analyst Peter Crail of the Arms Control Association, a Washington-based research and advocacy group.

"Iran's ability to mass produce them is also uncertain."

The U.N. Security Council has long called on Iran to suspend uranium enrichment and Tehran's failure to comply has earned it four rounds of sanctions, as well much tougher U.S. and European Union measures that take direct aim at its biggest export, oil.

Western experts say Iran's stockpile of low-enriched uranium could be enough for about four atomic bombs if refined much more, should the Iranian leadership decide to do so.

"CRACK THE CODE"

Iran has for years been trying to develop centrifuges with several times the capacity of the 1970s-vintage, IR-1 version it now uses for the most sensitive part of its atomic activities.

Marking a potential step forward, Iran last year started installing larger numbers of more modern IR-4 and IR-2m models for testing at a research and development site at the enrichment facility near the central town of Natanz.

But last week's IAEA report suggested Iran was encountering problems testing them in interlinked networks known as cascades, said David Albright of the Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS) think tank.

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"The testing of advanced-centrifuge production-scale cascades ... is going far more slowly than expected," he said in an analysis. Iran's "advanced centrifuge program appears troubled," the ISIS report added.

The IAEA said Iran had informed it in early February of plans to install three new types of centrifuge - IR-5, IR-6 and IR-6s - as single machines at the Natanz R&D site.

When so many models are tested simultaneously, "it indicates that Iran has not yet reached a point where it can decide which would be the next generation centrifuge to be deployed," Heinonen, now at Harvard University's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, said.

Fitzpatrick said: "Sooner or later Iran will probably crack the code on advanced centrifuges and introduce them in larger numbers, but so far that hasn't been possible."

Editing by Robin Pomeroy

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/sns-rt-us-nuclear-iran-enrichmenttre81q0wr-20120227,0,5877576,full.story>

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Washington Times

Attacking Iran's Nuke Sites May Only Slow Progress

Experts note uncertainty of locations, possibility of retaliation

By Kristina Wong, The Washington Times

Monday, February 27, 2012

Former high-ranking defense officials and regional experts say that neither the U.S. nor Israel can stop Iran from producing a nuclear weapon.

The assessments counter remarks by Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta, who has said the U.S. will not allow Iran to develop an atomic bomb, and come amid reports that Israeli leaders are considering a military strike on the Islamic republic's nuclear sites.

Destroying nuclear facilities in a military strike does not "uninvent" the technology, retired Marine Corps Gen. James Cartwright said Monday in an interview. "The intellectual capital still exists.

"We could certainly bomb the place, but we don't know where everything is with any kind of certainty," added Gen. Cartwright, who retired as vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in August.

Natan Sachs, an expert on Israeli national security matters at the Brookings Institution, said it would be very difficult for Israel to stop a nuclear weapons program with a unilateral military action, noting that Iran's atomic installations are heavily fortified and scattered around the country.

An attack on Iranian sites would be more complicated than Israel's strikes on nuclear sites in Iraq and Syria, he said. Syria's facility was in the very early stages of being built, and Iraq's facility was above ground and within the capability of the Israeli air force.

Mr. Sachs said an Israeli strike on Iran would require a synchronized attack by more than 100 fighter jets carrying heavy bombs and refueling over hostile territory, because a single bunker-busting bomb would not be enough to penetrate and destroy Iran's underground facilities. "It is not a one-shot thing," he said.

But Ehud Eilam, a former instructor for the Israeli Defense Forces, said a strike on Iran could postpone its program by two to five years, during which time international sanctions on the Islamic republic could work. He said Israel could opt to strike every four years to further delay the nuclear program.

"It's not the recommended option, but there is no good option," he said. "You take what you can get."

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Western nations and Israel have long suspected Iran of trying to build an atomic bomb, and the U.S. and European Union have imposed economic sanctions on Iran to change its leaders' actions. Iran repeatedly has said its nuclear program is aimed at peaceful, civilian purposes.

An Israeli attack likely would occur at night with little warning to the U.S. and sometime after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Ehud Barak visit Washington next week, Mr. Eliam said. "You might just wake up two months or a few weeks from now and hear that Israel has attacked Iran."

Mr. Sachs said any initial strike by Israel could trigger retaliatory rocket attacks by Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and possibly Hamas in the Gaza Strip, and Iran. The U.S. could be dragged into the fray if it appears that Israel could not defend itself against the retaliation, he said.

Gen. Cartwright said an attack could be counterproductive and persuade more Iranians to support their country's nuclear program. "You do more damage because you convince more people that they have to have it. It becomes a shield," he said.

Reza Marashi, director of research for the National Iranian American Council, said Gen. Cartwright's comments join a chorus of high-ranking former and current military officials who have come out recently against a military strike on Iran.

Mr. Marashi said he believes they are laying the groundwork for Mr. Obama to push back against Israel. "It's not a coincidence that they're all saying the same thing at the same time," said Mr. Marashi, a former State Department official.

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2012/feb/27/attacking-nuke-sites-may-only-slow-progress/>

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New York Times
February 28, 2012

Iran Calls Nuclear Arms Production a 'Great Sin'

By NICK CUMMING-BRUCE

GENEVA — Amid heightened tensions with the West over its nuclear program, Iran on Tuesday called for negotiations on a treaty banning nuclear weapons and condemned their production or possession as "a great sin."

There were two ways to engage with Iran on its nuclear program, engagement or confrontation, the Iranian Foreign Minister, Ali Akbar Salehi, said in a statement to the Conference on Disarmament here in Geneva. He said that Iran, "confident of the peaceful nature of its nuclear program, has always insisted on the first alternative."

Mr. Salehi's statement came only days after the United Nations nuclear watchdog agency expressed concern over the possible military dimensions of Iran's nuclear program. The watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, offered its assessment after a visit to Iran by its inspectors in which Iran denied them access to military facilities linked to the nuclear program.

The I.A.E.A. reported in November that it had "credible" information that the facilities at Parchin, south west of the capital, Tehran, included an explosives containment chamber used for experiments that were "strong indicators" of possible nuclear weapons development.

Echoing sentiments expressed in speeches by Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Mr. Salehi denied the nuclear program had a military purpose, saying Iran would be a stronger country without nuclear arms.

"We do not see any glory, pride or power in the nuclear weapons, quite the opposite," he said, adding that on the basis of a religious decree issued by Ayatollah Khamenei, "the production possession, use or threat of use of nuclear weapons are illegitimate, futile, harmful, dangerous and prohibited as a great sin."



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He said the existence of nearly 23,000 nuclear weapons in the world posed “the gravest threat” to sustainable international security and that as long as they existed there would always be a risk of their use and proliferation.

Mr. Salehi criticized the West as having double standards over its support of Israel, the only Middle East country possessing nuclear weapons and outside the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Iran was a strong advocate of a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East, he said.

Addressing the conference after Mr. Salehi, the American ambassador, Laura E. Kennedy, said Iran’s professed commitment to nuclear disarmament “stands in sharp contrast” to its failure to comply with international obligations. She said Iran continued to move forward with enrichment and heavy water-related activities and continued to resist the transparency that would allow the international community to verify the peaceful nature of its nuclear program. “This is hardly illustrative of a commitment to nuclear disarmament,” Ms. Kennedy said.

In a brief comment to journalists after giving his statement, Mr. Salehi said he expected the dialogue with the I.A.E.A. to continue and had offered to hold further talks in Tehran on a “new mechanism through which we can settle outstanding issues.”

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/29/world/middleeast/iran-calls-for-negotiations-on-treaty-banning-nuclear-weapons.html>

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China Daily – China

US Says Talks with DPRK 'Good Beginning'

February 25, 2012

(Xinhua)

SEOUL- A U.S. envoy said Saturday the latest round of talks with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) marked a "good beginning" in efforts to resume stalled talks over ending its nuclear program.

Glyn Davies, U.S. special representative for DPRK affairs, arrived in Seoul earlier in the day to brief Lim Sung-nam, South Korea's top envoy to the six-party talks, on the two-day talks in Beijing between him and his DPRK counterpart Kim Kye-kwan.

Davies said Friday there was "a little progress" in the Beijing talks, the first since the death of top DPRK leader Kim Jong Il last December stalled discussions over possible U.S. food assistance to the DPRK.

Before meeting Lim, the U.S. diplomat played down hopes for immediate resumption of the talks, saying, "We are so long away from anything like that."

"(The Beijing talks marked a) good beginning with the new government in the DPRK," Davies told reporters after sitting down with Lim.

"We agreed that the DPRK-U.S. talks provided a useful opportunity for discussions over resuming the six-party talks," Lim said.

The disarmament talks, which also involve China, Japan and Russia, were last held in December 2008. The DPRK unilaterally quit the forum in April 2009 but has expressed its wish to return to the negotiating table.

http://europe.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2012-02/25/content_14692923.htm

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Korea Times – South Korea

February 26, 2012

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N. Korean Leader Threatens Retaliation over South-US Drills

By Kim Young-jin

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has ordered troops to “make a powerful retaliatory strike” if South Korea breaches its borders, Pyongyang’s state media said Sunday, as Washington and Seoul prepared to hold joint military drills.

The official Korean Central News Agency said Kim issued the order during an inspection of frontline military units including the North Korean army’s 4th Corps in the southwestern part of the country, which was behind the deadly 2010 shelling of Yeonpyeong Island.

The twenty-something leader, who is taking power following the death of his father Kim Jong-il in December, said the strike should be made “should the enemy intrude even 0.001 millimeter into the waters of the country where its sovereignty is exercised.” The order came as South Korean and U.S. troops gear up for their joint Key Resolve exercise, the annual computer simulated war games meant to ready the allies for potential North Korean provocations. Pyongyang has already threatened to wage a “sacred war” over the drills, saying they are preparations for an invasion.

Seoul and Washington insist the drills, which mobilize more than 200,000 troops, are defensive in nature.

Separately, the allies will launch joint air, ground and naval field training exercises called Foal Eagle starting Thursday.

The North routinely threatens war in retaliation to the military drill by the South. On Saturday, it accused Washington of stepping up war efforts, hinting that Pyongyang had the ability to strike the U.S. mainland.

“Nuclear weapons are not the monopoly of the United States.

We have war means more powerful than the U.S. nukes and ultra-modern striking equipment which no one has ever possessed,” it said.

The North has pursued a nuclear weapons program in defiance of international pressure, conducting two nuclear tests. But many believe it is not yet able to mount nuclear warheads onto intercontinental ballistic missiles.

Some observers said the North’ spate of rhetoric seemed aimed at ratcheting up pressure to engage Pyongyang through the stalled six-party denuclearization talks.

Also Saturday, Washington’s point man on the North said progress had been made between the sides during high-level bilateral talks last week in Beijing, but that resumption of the negotiations was a “long way” off.

After two days of talks with his North Korean counterpart, Kim Kye-gwan, in Beijing, Glyn Davies said in Seoul that while it was encouraging that the new North Korean leadership appeared willing to engage, Pyongyang must still warm ties with the South in order for a diplomatic breakthrough.

The high-level talks were seen as a litmus test for the North’s attitude over its weapons program under Kim Jong-un. Observers said the rhetoric following the talks suggested the new leadership will continue to hold tightly to its program while seeking to resume the lucrative negotiations.

The two sides struck a deal just prior to the late Kim’s death under which the North agreed to suspend its uranium enrichment in return for 240,000 tons of nutritional assistance, which would have paved the way for resumption of the multilateral forum.

Davies told reporters that the North Korean side raised the issue of food aid during the Beijing talks and Washington would make a decision “based on need, based on availability of assistance it provides.” He added there was “no direct linkage between the nuclear issue and the issue of nutritional assistance.” The six-party

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framework has been defunct since 2009 when the North walked away in response to sanctions for its nuclear and missile tests.

http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2012/02/113_105753.html

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Yonhap News – South Korea

February 27, 2012

Ex-Envoy Pessimistic on NK Nuclear Talks

The former chief South Korean negotiator to the six-party talks to rid North Korea of its nuclear weapons program said Monday he was less optimistic than previously about the prospects for a resumption of the multilateral talks.

Wi Sung-lac, who held the post from February 2009 to October 2011 and now serves as Seoul's top diplomat to Moscow, told reporters in Seoul the chances of improving ties with North Korea have dimmed since the death of Kim Jong-il.

After the first nuclear talks between North Korea and the U.S. since the death of Kim, held in Beijing last week, chief U.S. negotiator Glyn Davies reported "a little bit of progress," while downplaying expectations of any immediate deal with the North's new regime under young leader Kim Jong-un, the youngest son of the late Kim.

Asked about the prospect of reopening six-party talks following the Beijing encounter last week, Wi replied, "It's too early to predict and judge, but I am not optimistic."

Wi held two rounds of nuclear talks with his North Korean counterpart, Ri Yong-ho, last year, laying groundwork that was widely expected to get Pyongyang back to the negotiating table.

Shortly before Kim's death, North Korea and the U.S. appeared to be ready to announce a breakthrough concerning the six-nation talks. North Korea left the six-party talks, which also involve China, Japan and Russia in April 2009 and conducted a second nuclear test a month later.

"I think it is more difficult than before because inter-Korean relations are clogged after the passing of Kim Jong-il," Wi told reporters during a visit to Seoul.

There has been no word from North Korea about the results of the Beijing talks, but Pyongyang stepped up its rhetoric against joint military drills this week by South Korea and the U.S. The drills have been routinely cited by the North's regime as a rehearsal for a northward invasion.

Last week's Beijing meeting offered a rare opportunity to take the pulse of the North's new regime and Davies said he noticed no change in the North's negotiating style, despite the leadership change.

Wi also said North Korea seems to remain stable, at least for now.

"As I observe things that happened in North Korea over the past months, there were no indications of instability," said Wi, who formally took up the post as South Korean ambassador to Russia in November.

"So, there are no circumstances that suggest instability in North Korea," Wi said.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2012/02/27/0401000000AEN20120227004000315.HTML>

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Deccan Herald – India

Induction of Nuke Submarines by India Cause of Concern: Pak

New Delhi, February 25, 2012



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Press Trust of India (PTI)

Terming the proposed induction of two nuclear submarines into the Indian Navy as a "cause of great concern", Pakistan has said it is taking "necessary measures" to restore the strategic balance in the emerging situation.

Pakistan Navy Chief Admiral Muhammad Asif Sandila said Islamabad can neither afford nor plans to match the Indian Navy in terms of numerical strength.

"The strategic dimension of India's naval buildup is a cause of concern not only for us but for the entire Indian Ocean Region (IOR). I feel nuclearisation of the IOR does not augur well for peace and stability in the region.

"We are mindful of this development and taking necessary measures to restore the strategic balance," Sandila told American weekly 'Defensenews' in an interview.

He was asked how Pakistan would respond to the Indian nuclear-powered, nuclear-armed ballistic submarines.

India is scheduled to induct two nuclear submarines in the near future which will include its indigenous INS Arihant and the Russian-leased Akula class INS Chakra.

Experts feel that to match Indian nuclear submarine programme, Pakistan would seek help of the Chinese.

"Pakistan and China are militarily very close and they may seek help of the PLA Navy to deploy its nuclear submarines in its waters to match Indian capabilities," Commander (ret'd) Sunil Chauhan said on the possible measures to be taken by Pakistan.

Sandila said his country can "neither afford nor do we plan to match it (Indian Navy) in terms of numerical strength, be it the number of Pakistan Navy personnel or platforms."

"We have our own employment strategy... It is not exclusively Indo-centric. It is essentially based on achieving certain capabilities that we hope will help us deliver in the hour of need," he said.

<http://www.deccanherald.com/content/229956/induction-nuke-submarines-india-cause.html>

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Daily News & Analysis – India

Indian Navy to Induct Russian-Origin Nuclear Submarine Next Month

Tuesday, February 28, 2012

Press Trust of India (PTI)

New Delhi: In a major boost to its underwater strike capabilities, India will receive its Russian-origin nuclear-powered Akula II class submarine next month.

The nuclear submarine 'Nerpa' will arrive Vishakhapatnam next month on a ten-year lease, Defence Ministry sources said in Delhi.

The submarine is scheduled to arrive at its home base Vishakhapatnam in the second half of March, they said, adding the deal is worth \$920 million.

An Indian crew had set sail with the the Akula II class rechristened as INS Chakra to India at the end of January.

After the 'INS Chakra' joins the naval fleet, it would be for the first time in more than two decades that the Indian Navy would have a nuclear attack submarine. This will also propel India in the elite league of six nations operating nuclear submarines.

India is also working on developing indigenous nuclear submarines of the Arihant class. The first submarine named INS Arihant was launched for sea trials recently and is expected to start operational patrols by the end of this year.

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The Navy will have three submarines of this class by the end of this decade.

India already possesses or is in the process of developing a family of nuclear-capable missiles including the Agni series, Prithvi variants, naval missile Dhanush, and submarine-launched Sagarika.

http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report_indian-navy-to-induct-russian-origin-nuclear-submarine-next-month_1656187

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

No Unilateral Disarmament for Russia - Putin

24 February 2012

Russia will not take any unilateral steps on nuclear disarmament, because any moves toward disarmament need to be general and comprehensive, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin said on Friday.

All nuclear powers should be involved in the disarmament process, he said.

“We cannot disarm endlessly while some nuclear powers are arming themselves,” Putin said.

“No way.”

Moscow counts on effective cooperation with Washington in restraining the nuclear arms race, he said.

“We won’t allow a [new] arms race,” Putin said.

He also said Russia will not give up its nuclear weapons until it develops conventional weapons with comparable effect.

He admitted that Russia’s foreign partners “are ahead of us in some respects, especially precision-guided weapons.”

Modern conventional warheads feature yields, accuracy and delivery time that “make them comparable in their effects to weapons of mass destruction,” Putin said.

“We will only abandon nuclear weapons when we have such systems, and not a day earlier,” he said.

“No one should have any illusions about that.”

SAROV (Nizhny Novgorod region), February 24 (RIA Novosti)

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20120224/171516695.html>

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Minneapolis Star Tribune

Putin Touts Russia's Nuclear Weapons, Says US Should Be More Constructive on Missile Defense

By Associated Press

February 24, 2012

MOSCOW — Prime Minister Vladimir Putin is touting Russia's nuclear weapons, saying the country has enough strength that the U.S. should seek a more constructive approach to a dispute over European missile defense plans.

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Russia has previously threatened retaliatory moves if Washington goes ahead with plans to elements of a missile defense system in Eastern Europe. Putin, speaking Friday to a security round-table in the city of Sarov, did not mention specific actions, but was clearly challenging.

His comments came 10 days before Russia's presidential election, in which Putin seeks to return to the Kremlin leadership he held in 2000-2008. In the weeks before the election, he has repeatedly alleged that Washington seeks to weaken Russia.

Putin has repeatedly dismissed the U.S. claim that the prospective missile shield is intended to counter the Iranian missile threat, saying that its real goal is to erode Russia's nuclear deterrent.

On Friday, he claimed the U.S. had derided the Russian military several years ago.

Washington, Putin said, "told its colleagues in the (NATO) bloc 'Let Russia potter around, we're not very interested, they have nothing left but rust.'"

"This isn't so. Today, it's completely not so," he said, according to Russian news agencies.

He countered that Russia has new intercontinental ballistic missiles and put two nuclear submarines into service in the past three years.

"We have something to prompt our colleagues and partners to be more constructive, but we haven't seen this so far," said.

Putin also asserted that Russia would not bend to others in its foreign policy. "I think our position on Syria in the U.N. Security Council shows that we will not echo anyone," he said.

Russia this month vetoed a Security Council resolution aimed at ending the Syrian conflict.

<http://www.startribune.com/world/140318443.html>

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Global Security Newswire

U.S. Air Force Plans Two-Year Delay in Developing New Cruise Missile

February 24, 2012

By Elaine M. Grossman, *Global Security Newswire*

WASHINGTON -- The Air Force now plans a two-year delay in the development of a new \$1.3 billion weapon to replace today's nuclear-capable Air Launched Cruise Missile aboard bomber aircraft, according to budget documents submitted to Congress last week (see *GSN*, Feb. 14).

Under current plans, the service in fiscal 2013 would spend \$2 million to continue work on a secret "Analysis of Alternatives" that weighs various technological options for the new missile, called the Long-Range Stand-Off weapon or "LRSO" for short.

However, the "LRSO program start [is] delayed two years," the Air Force states in newly released charts on research and development funding. The service will save \$39.4 million in its five-year budget plan by postponing the beginning of the cruise missile's technology development phase from fiscal 2013 to 2015, according to the documents.

In debuting its 2013 budget request on Feb. 13, the Defense Department announced a number of delays to other nuclear weapons programs. Those included two-year schedule slips for fielding both the Ohio-class replacement submarine and refurbished versions of the B-61 bomb.

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The Pentagon did not reveal in several budget rollout reports and press conferences, though, that it was planning a similar two-year delay for the new cruise missile. A Defense Department spokeswoman this week deferred comment on the omission to the Air Force, which did not respond by press time to a question on the matter.

Maj. Gen. William Chambers, the Air Force assistant chief of staff for strategic deterrence and nuclear integration, did acknowledge the delay during a Feb. 17 appearance at a nuclear weapons symposium in Arlington, Va., according to the independent news publication InsideDefense.com.

An official in the Air Force's nuclear office on Friday said the service postponed launching the cruise missile program because other efforts simply proved more important as defense spending tightens.

"The LRSO contract award was delayed until [fiscal] '15 to accommodate higher priorities in a constrained budget," Michael Hargrove, a technical adviser at the Air Force's strategic deterrence and nuclear integration directorate, said in a written response to questions. "We are slowing modernization, terminating or deferring numerous acquisition programs, but at the same time protecting the key programs most critical to future Air Force capabilities."

"It was purely a budget-driven decision," agreed one retired Air Force cruise missile program official in an interview this week. The former official requested anonymity in describing closed-door Pentagon discussions.

The Air Force had previously intended to spend more than \$800 million on the LRSO research and development effort by 2015 (see **GSN**, March 9, 2010). Given the latest program changes, the service is now slated to spend roughly \$625 million on design and development of the new cruise missile by 2017, according to the new budget figures.

To meet a congressional spending-reductions mandate passed into law last year, the Defense Department has cut \$259 billion from its five-year budget plan and a total of \$487 billion over the next decade.

Conservative nuclear-weapon advocates on Capitol Hill view the multiple program delays as signaling failure by President Obama to fully fund nuclear armament and platform programs in coming years. The White House promised increased funding for nuclear arsenal and infrastructure modernization in the run-up to the Senate's December 2010 ratification of the U.S.-Russian New START arms control agreement.

"Delays of this [LRSO] program would only further confirm the administration's abandonment of its promises to modernize our nuclear forces," Representative Michael Turner (R-Ohio) said on Thursday in response to questions.

Turner, who chairs the House Armed Services Strategic Forces Subcommittee, recently led nearly three dozen other GOP lawmakers in calling on the White House to protect nuclear efforts from spending cuts (see **GSN**, Feb. 21).

He has also signaled plans to introduce new legislation aimed at holding Obama to nuclear program funding levels laid out more than a year ago in a so-called "Section 1251 Update" report (see **GSN**, Feb. 9). The White House had committed to requesting more than \$85 billion over the next 10 years for constructing new nuclear research and production facilities and overhaul aging warheads (see **GSN**, Dec. 22, 2010).

Additional billions of dollars would be spent on modernizing nuclear delivery platforms including submarines, bomber aircraft and missiles.

In a dueling legislative initiative, Representative Edward Markey (D-Mass.) and 34 other like-minded lawmakers on Feb. 8 introduced the so-called "SANE" Act of 2012, short for a "Smarter Approach to Nuclear Expenditures."

Formally dubbed H.R. 3974, the measure would cut \$100 billion in nuclear spending over the next decade by reducing new ballistic missile submarines from 12 to eight, delaying development of a nuclear-capable bomber aircraft, and reducing the number of fielded ICBMs, among other provisions.



In response to questions, Markey on Friday said he would support a delay in the LRSO cruise missile effort and a reassessment as to whether the weapon is even needed at all. The SANE Act does not address planned funding for this missile.

“A delay is prudent in this budget environment, but really we should reconsider whether this nuclear capability is even necessary for our 21st century needs,” said Markey, who sits on the House Energy and Commerce Committee.

The Massachusetts Democrat would additionally support canceling the nuclear mission for the future bomber, known as the Long-Range Strike aircraft, though such a provision also is not included in the legislation he is co-sponsoring, his office told **Global Security Newswire**.

With today’s cruise missile gradually aging, it is unclear whether the two-year delay for the LRSO missile would pose a problem for equipping the aging B-52 bombers or the future nuclear-capable Long-Range Strike bomber. The reams of new budget documents do not appear to include a fielding date for the new missile.

In the fiscal 2013 budget, the Pentagon preserved plans to go forward with developing and building 80 to 100 of the new-design bomber aircraft, adding that it could avoid unnecessary development expense by employing many technologies available today.

The future strike aircraft “will not need the same capabilities that were planned for the previous Next Generation Bomber,” according to a Defense budget overview report. “The new bomber will incorporate many subsystems ... and technologies that are already proven.”

The Long-Range Strike bomber -- which the Air Force now estimates at \$550 million per aircraft -- will be ready for initial fielding in the mid-2020s, according to a service spokeswoman.

The Obama administration’s 2010 update report on nuclear efforts said that today’s B-52 aircraft -- the only bomber that carries nuclear-tipped Air Launched Cruise Missiles -- will remain “in the inventory through at least 2035 to continue to meet both nuclear and conventional mission requirements.”

The Air Force said in its 2013 budget documents that it plans to retain today’s Air Launched Cruise Missiles through 2030, and is currently undertaking a maintenance program to ensure the weapon continues to perform properly. Roughly 1,140 of the cruise missile’s nuclear version, the AGM-86B, are currently in the Air Force arsenal.

“Service life extension of this critical weapon is essential to meet United States Strategic Command deliberate planning requirements,” the new Air Force research and development planning charts state. The service in 2013 plans to spend more than \$430,000 on an “aging and surveillance program” aimed at keeping the cruise missile’s key components functioning.

In the meantime, the Air Force is working on the LRSO Analysis of Alternatives, which will “define the platform requirements, provide cost-sensitive comparisons, validate threats, and establish measures of effectiveness, and assess candidate systems for eventual procurement and production,” according to the Section 1251 Update report.

Hargrove, the Air Force technical adviser, said that despite the funding crunch, the Air Force was able to include the \$2 million in its 2013 plan so it could complete the major analysis, which began over the past few months.

The Air Force is also drafting its acquisition and contracting strategy for the future missile, according to the 2013 budget documents. The service plans to take Long-Range Stand-Off missile program plans to the Pentagon’s top-level Defense Acquisition Board before the end of calendar 2013 for formal review and approval, which would allow it to move into the technology development phase.



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Air Force documents show that this “Milestone A” decision -- led by the Pentagon’s top acquisition official -- is to be taken during the first quarter of fiscal 2014, which begins on Oct. 1, 2013. A contract award for initial technology development would be made a year later, during the first quarter of fiscal 2015.

Some concerns, though, are already bubbling about the projected pace of development for the future missile.

After funding the LRSO effort in the single-digit millions of dollars in fiscal 2013 and 2014, the Air Force intends to boost spending on the cruise missile’s development to \$41.7 million in 2015. Research and development funding then would leapfrog more than 400 percent to \$209.1 million in fiscal 2016, followed by nearly 70 percent growth to \$352.9 million in 2017, according to service budget charts.

The former cruise missile official said there is talk in some Defense and industry circles that the ramp-up in funds may be “too steep,” and that a race to get the new system procured could increase risks that the weapon would not meet technology expectations. The deeper concern is that the LRSO missile, if rushed, could fall short of military needs.

Pentagon leaders have “said they’ve slipped SSBN(X) and B-61 by two years,” said the former official, referring to the future ballistic missile submarine and the nuclear bomb life-extension effort. “They’ve said that will give them more time to design and mature their plans.”

The question now, the cruise missile expert said, “is that if you go from spending \$2 million in 2013 to \$200 million in 2016, [are] you ramping up [the LRSO program] too fast?”

One alternative approach, the former official added, could be to design and build one or two prototype LRSO cruise missiles, put them through flight tests to ensure the technology works, and then make any necessary changes before committing to the major funding that final development and production would demand.

<http://www.nti.org/gsn/article/us-air-force-plans-two-year-delay-developing-new-cruise-missile/>

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Sun Herald – Biloxi-Gulfport, MS

AP Interview: US General: Missile Defense on Track

February 26, 2012

By Dusan Stojanovic, Associated Press

American forces are now manning a new radar defense site in Turkey that could help defend Europe from a potential Iranian ballistic missile attack, the U.S. Army’s commander in Europe said Sunday.

“We have the forces in place ... at a radar site in southern Turkey,” Lt. Gen. Mark Hertling said in an interview at Montenegro’s main military airport in its capital.

It is the first time a senior U.S. commander has confirmed reports that the NATO defense shield radar — which has caused tensions between Turkey and its Muslim neighbor Iran — has been operational in the past few weeks. The radar is a key element in a planned ballistic missile defense system that also would put other land- and sea-based radars and anti-missile interceptors in several European locations over the next decade.

“I can only speak for the ground base air defense units,” Hertling said. “But I will tell you that we make constant coordination (with the U.S. Navy and Air Force), and I think we are well on track to conduct missile defense.”

The deal with Turkey last year to station the sophisticated radar on its territory was hailed by U.S. officials as the most significant military cooperation agreement between the U.S. and Turkey, NATO’s biggest Muslim member, since 2003, when Turkey angered American officials by refusing to allow an armored division to cross Turkish territory to join the invasion of Iraq.

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Tensions between the West and Iran have risen in recent months over Tehran's nuclear program. Iran denies Western claims it seeks to develop atomic weapons, and says its disputed nuclear program is designed to produce energy and medical isotopes.

The U.S. says the missile defense shield is designed to counter the Iranian missile threat. Besides the radar in Turkey, the defense shield also will contain interceptor missiles stationed in Romania and Poland, four ballistic missile defense-capable ships in Rota, Spain, and an operational headquarters in Germany.

The X-band radar in Turkey is part of a system designed to intercept short- and medium-range missiles at extremely high altitudes. It is located at a military base near Kurecik, a town about 435 miles (700 kilometers) west of the Iranian border.

"From an Army perspective, the missile defense plans are going as scheduled," Hertling said.

Russia has threatened retaliatory moves if Washington goes ahead with plans regarding the elements of the missile defense system in Eastern Europe. Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin has repeatedly dismissed the U.S. claim that the prospective missile shield is intended to counter the Iranian missile threat, saying that its real goal is to erode Russia's nuclear deterrent.

Hertling was in Montenegro to visit U.S. crews flying two Black Hawk helicopters that are part of an aid operation in the areas of the tiny Balkan state hit by the heaviest snowfall in 60 years.

Slobodan Lekic contributed from Brussels.

<http://www.sunherald.com/2012/02/26/3777999/ap-interview-us-general-missile.html>

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Foreign Policy

OPINION/The Cable

Exclusive: State Department Quietly Warning Region on Syrian WMDs

By Josh Rogin

Friday, February 24, 2012

The State Department has begun coordinating with Syria's neighbors to prepare for the handling of President Bashar al-Assad's extensive weapons of mass destruction if and when his regime collapses, *The Cable* has learned.

This week, the State Department sent a diplomatic demarche to Syria's neighbors Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia, warning them about the possibility of Syria's WMDs crossing their borders and offering U.S. government help in dealing with the problem, three Obama administration officials confirmed to *The Cable*. For concerned parties both inside and outside the U.S. government, the demarche signifies that the United States is increasingly developing plans to deal with the dangers of a post-Assad Syria -- while simultaneously highlighting the lack of planning for how to directly bring about Assad's downfall.

Syria is believed to have a substantial chemical weapons program, which includes mustard gas and sophisticated nerve agents, such as sarin gas, as well as biological weapons. Syria has also refused IAEA requests to make available facilities that were part of its nuclear weapons program and may still be in operation.

The State Department declined to provide access to any officials to discuss the private diplomatic communication on the record, such as the author of the demarche Assistant Secretary of State for International Security and Nonproliferation Tom Countryman. In a meeting with reporters earlier this year, Countryman expressed confidence that the United States knows where Syria's WMD stockpiles are, but warned that they could become a very serious security issue for Syria and the region going forward.

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"We have ideas as to the quantity and we have ideas as to where they are," Countryman said. "We wish some of the neighbors of Syria to be on the lookout... When you get a change of regime in Syria, it matters what are the conditions -- chaotic or orderly."

Today, in response to inquiries from *The Cable*, a State Department official offered the following statement:

"The U.S. and our allies are monitoring Syria's chemical weapons stockpile. These weapons' presence in Syria undermines peace and security in the Middle East, and we have long called on the Syrian government to destroy its chemicals weapons arsenal and join the Chemical Weapons Convention," the State Department official said. "We believe Syria's chemical weapons stockpile remains under Syrian government control, and we will continue to work closely with like-minded countries to prevent proliferation of Syria's chemical weapons program."

The demarche made four specific points, according to other U.S. officials who offered a fuller account to *The Cable*. It communicated the U.S. government's recognition that there is a highly active chemical warfare program in Syria, which is complemented by ballistic-missile delivery capability. It further emphasized that that any potential political transition in Syria could raise serious questions about the regime's control over proliferation-sensitive material.

Third, the State Department wanted Syria's neighbors to know that should the Assad regime fall, the security of its WMD stockpile -- as well as its control over conventional weapons like MANPADS (shoulder-fired rocket launchers) -- could come into question and could pose a serious threat to regional security. Lastly, the demarche emphasized that the U.S. government stands ready to support neighboring countries to provide border-related security cooperation.

"It's essentially a recognition of the danger to the regional and international community of the stockpiles that the regime possesses and the importance of working with countries, given the potential fall of the regime, to prevent the proliferation of these very sensitive weapons outside of Syria's border," one administration official said. "It's an exponentially more dangerous program than Libya. We are talking about legitimate WMDs here -- this isn't Iraq. The administration is really concerned about loose WMDs. It's one of the few things you could put on the agenda and do something about without planning the fall of the regime."

The administration is also working closely with the Jordanians on the issue. A Jordanian military delegation was at the Pentagon Thursday to meet with Defense Secretary Leon Panetta.

In addition to the danger of proliferation, there is a concern that Assad could actually use his WMDs if his situation becomes desperate.

"The WMD program is in play now, and that's important because it highlights the innate danger that the existence of this regime poses to U.S. security and regional interests," the administration official said. "[The demarche] puts Syria's neighbors on notice and it reflects the recognition that a dangerous Assad regime is willing to do anything to save its own skin. If they are willing to kill the country to save the regime, they might be willing to do a great deal more damage throughout the region."

Some officials inside and outside the administration see the WMD activity as helpful, but lament that such a high degree of planning is not taking place on the issue of how to precipitate the downfall of the Assad regime as quickly and as safely as possible.

Over 70 countries met in Tunis today to develop a unified message on the transition of power in Syria and urge the Assad regime to allow humanitarian access. The Saudi delegation actually walked out of the meeting, complaining of "inactivity" and urging the international community to arm the Syrian opposition.

The Obama administration has consistently rejected calls by the Syrian National Council and others to prepare for a military intervention in Syria and no real strategy exists internally to force Assad from power, another administration official said.



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"Our strategic calculus can't be solely about what comes after Assad without taking a hard look at how to bring about Assad's downfall as safely as possible," said this official. "The reality is, at some point, there will be a recognition you can't plan for a post-Assad scenario without planning how to shape the downfall itself. You can't separate the two."

Concern about a gap in planning for how to oust the Assad regime is shared by some in Congress, including Sens. John McCain (R-AZ), Joe Lieberman (I-CT), and Lindsey Graham (R-SC), who issued a statement today urging the administration to start directly aiding the Syrian rebels and protecting Syrian civilians.

"Unfortunately, speeches and meetings by themselves will do nothing to stop the unacceptable slaughter in Syria, which is growing worse by the day," the senators said. "We remain deeply concerned that our international diplomacy risks becoming divorced from the reality on the ground in Syria, which is now an armed conflict between Assad's forces and the people of Syria who are struggling to defend themselves against indiscriminate attacks."

In her prepared remarks in Tunis, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said she supported more sanctions on the Assad regime but she declined to endorse any direct help to the Syrian opposition without the consent of the Syrian government, saying only, "We all need to look hard at what more we can do."

Josh Rogin reports on national security and foreign policy from the Pentagon to Foggy Bottom, the White House to Embassy Row, for The Cable.

http://thecable.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/02/24/exclusive_state_department_quietly_warning_region_on_syrian_wmds

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Al Arabia – U.A.E.
OPINION/Columnist

Iran Will Bend When Facing an Unwinnable Conflict

By David Ignatius
Sunday, 26 February 2012

"We are of the opinion that the Iranian regime is a rational actor," said General Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, last Sunday on CNN. That sounds about right to me, but his comment raises a tricky question: How much pressure will it take to get this "rational" country to curb its nuclear program?

The answer here isn't comforting: Recent history shows that the Iranian regime will change behavior only if confronted with overwhelming force and the prospect of an unwinnable war. Short of that, the Iranians seem ready to cruise along on the brink, expecting that the other side will steer away.

I count two clear instances when Iran has backed down, and two more "maybes." These examples remind us that the Iranian leaders aren't irrational madmen – and also that they drive a hard bargain. Here are the two documented retreats:

First, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in July 1988 "drank the cup of poison," as he put it, and agreed to end the Iraq-Iran war. He accepted a U.N.-sponsored truce, but only after eight years of brutal fighting, Iraqi rocket attacks on Iranian cities, and the use of poison gas against Iranian troops. Khomeini's decision followed the shooting down of an Iranian civilian airliner on July 3 by the USS Vincennes – unintended, but a demonstration of overwhelming American firepower in the Persian Gulf.

And second, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's regime halted its nuclear weapons program in the fall of 2003 because of "international pressure," according to a 2007 U.S. National Intelligence Estimate. The decision came after the March 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, which the Iranians apparently feared was the prelude to an attack on their soil.

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The Iranians also agreed in 2003 to start talks with European nations on limiting their enrichment of uranium – beginning the haggling that continues to this day.

Two other examples are less obvious, but they illustrate the same theme of rational Iranian response to pressure. In both cases the trigger was a strong back-channel message from the United States:

In March 2008, Iran restrained its Shiite allies in Iraq after a U.S. warning about shelling the Green Zone. The Mahdi army had been firing heavy rockets and mortars into the enclave, causing rising U.S. casualties. Gen. David Petraeus, then U.S. commander in Baghdad, sent a message –“Stop shooting at the Green Zone”– to Gen. Qassem Soleimani, head of the Quds Force. The intermediary was Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, who had close relations with both generals. The shelling tapered off.

And last month, Iran toned down its threats to close the Strait of Hormuz after a U.S. back-channel warning that any such action would trigger a punishing U.S. response. The private message paralleled a public U.S. statement: “The United States and the international community have a strong interest in the free flow of commerce and freedom of navigation in all international waterways.”

Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi subsequently offered reassurance: “Iran has never in its history tried to prevent, to put any obstacles in the way of this important maritime route.”

The Iranians’ behavior in negotiations, too, has seemed to wax and wane based on their perception of the West’s seriousness. When Russia and China supported U.N. sanctions in 2010, the Iranians got nervous. When India and China reduced oil purchases recently, Tehran took notice.

Clear messaging to Iran – and to Israel, too – is important as the tension mounts over a possible Israeli attack on Iranian nuclear targets. The most direct public message yet came from Dempsey in his appearance on Fareed Zakaria’s show, “GPS.” It’s worth looking carefully at just what the nation’s top military officer said.

“The Iranian regime has not decided that they will embark on the effort to weaponize their nuclear capability,” Dempsey said, thereby offering Tehran a chance to save face in any deal. He argued that because Iran isn’t yet building a weapon, it would be “premature” and “not prudent” for Israel to attack. “A strike at this time would be destabilizing and wouldn’t achieve their long-term objectives,” he cautioned. But he conceded that the United States hasn’t yet persuaded Israel to hold off.

The signal to Israel was very clear: Don’t attack! But what about the message to Iran? History shows that the clerics in Tehran won’t accept a deal unless they conclude there’s no alternative but a punishing war. Somehow, the U.S. must convince Iran this confrontation is deadly serious – and then work to find the rational pathway toward agreement.

Prominent columnist David Ignatius frequently writes for The Daily Star, where this article was first published on Feb. 23, 2012

<http://english.alarabiya.net/views/2012/02/26/197044.html>

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Politico.com
OPINION/Op-Ed

The Case for Considering Arms Cuts

By Paul Monroe
February 26, 2012

The media reported recently that President Barack Obama, as commander in chief, has asked our military leadership to present him with a range of options for the future nuclear force. Reportedly the options run the gamut from a force of 300 nuclear weapons to maintaining the status quo.



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Predictably, the most ardent defenders of nuclear weapons had fits. One member of Congress declared the study “reckless lunacy,” while another claimed it was an effort aimed at “catering to [Obama’s] liberal base.” The initial story, purposely leaked by someone who wanted to torpedo any chance of reductions, left out the important fact that the president has not even laid eyes on a nuclear options paper yet.

Hysterics are rarely the basis of sound policymaking, however, and in this instance, they are almost entirely divorced from the reality of how America’s military assesses strategic options.

Defense assessments are quite common and have been going on since President Dwight D. Eisenhower held office. Over time, the Pentagon and its various defense boards and commissions have been tasked to look at a range of stockpile sizes under Republican and Democratic administrations. These military professionals are not in the business of catering to anyone’s political base, and the president was seeking recommendations from our military leadership on how to make America most secure.

In point of fact, there are very solid grounds for re-evaluating our nuclear force structure. In an era in which our most serious threats are terrorism, weapons proliferation and cyberattack, it would be irresponsible not to evaluate whether maintaining a large nuclear arsenal is relevant to addressing those threats, and whether some of the hundreds of billions spent on that large arsenal would be better spent on other defense priorities. We are in a time of tightening budgets, and our troops require the very best possible equipment. We must evaluate the relative value of committing billions of dollars to Cold War nuclear weapons programs against the needs of equipping and training our troops for 21st-century threats.

While it may have made sense to maintain a large arsenal in 1962, many of the justifications for maintaining an arsenal of as many as 1,500 nuclear weapons look a little flimsy in 2012, especially when weighed against the other needs of our troops.

A 2010 study by three Air Force analysts in *Strategic Studies Quarterly* concluded, among other things, that the United States could “draw down its nuclear arsenal to a relatively small number of survivable, reliable weapons dispersed among missile silos, submarines and airplanes.” In their view, the force might number only 311 nuclear weapons.

Every Trident sub in today’s fleet has missiles that can destroy every major city in China or Russia and completely obliterate smaller nations. If a credible threat is the essence of deterrence, then it is safe to say we can make significant reductions with no impact whatsoever on our deterrent capacity.

Other arguments for a large redundant force don’t hold up, either. In response to those who might argue that the U.S. must retain a larger force given the threats we must deter, our obligations to our allies, or that such a small force might be vulnerable to a first strike, the authors of the Air Force study concluded that “this thinking simply ignores the vast conventional superiority of the United States, and is also undermined by the fact that the United States is deterred in most contingencies by China, which has a much smaller force structure.”

Those who think it is surprising that a study has been commissioned outlining a range of nuclear force options don’t understand history or how to defend our nation. Their greatest fear appears to be that a change to the status quo Cold War force is even being contemplated.

History’s greatest military minds and powers have been marked by their willingness to explore all options and make informed decisions. At the same time, closed-minded resistance to change and unwavering defense of bureaucratic inertia have been at the root of a great many historic and strategic blunders.

Though the initial story was the result of a leak aimed at embarrassing the president and pre-emptively limiting the range of possible actions he may consider, most would agree that the time-honored Washington tradition of leaking stories to try to limit options and protect bureaucracies and pork-barrel funding is not what the nation deserves when it comes to making national security policy.

It is in our nation’s interest to take a hard look at the nuclear force we really need.

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Retired Maj. Gen. Paul Monroe served more than 46 years in the U.S. Army and the California Army National Guard. From 1999 to 2004, he was adjutant general of the California National Guard.

<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0212/73295.html>

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Defpro.com
OPINION/Commentary
February 27, 2012

Opponents of U.S. Nuclear Cuts: Still Being Chased by the Russian Bear?

By Greg Thielmann, Arms Control Association (ACA)

Last week, the press reported on Defense Department options for Presidential guidance that were being prepared as part of the Nuclear Posture Review implementation study. The notion that the President might consider deep cuts in U.S. nuclear forces unleashed some intemperate reactions that brought to mind Shakespeare's most famous stage direction (in "The Winter's Tale"): "Exit, pursued by a bear."

Just as thespians have struggled over the years with staging the bear's pursuit of Shakespeare's character Antigonus, critics of further reductions in U.S. nuclear weapons have difficulty figuring out how to represent the Russian bear following the end of the Cold War. The U.S. nuclear deterrent is still primarily sized and shaped by, and oriented against, the Russian Federation. Moscow's strategic forces still retain the ability to annihilate the United States. And even though the ideological conflict is over and Russia now contains far fewer targets and weapons than did the Soviet Union, Cold War assumptions and calculations still govern nuclear force planning.

The critics of nuclear cuts ratchet back and forth on Russia - in one moment warning of the threat, citing Moscow's surly rhetoric and stated intention of re-investing in Russia's strategic defense budget - and in the next breath, dismissing U.S.-Russian arms control efforts as unnecessary and irrelevant for addressing more urgent threats from a powerfully resurgent China, a nascent nuclear North Korea, and a recalcitrant and potentially nuclear Iran.

Policymakers need to engage in a serious discussion about what the U.S. nuclear arsenal can and should deter. This dialogue must absorb the new reality of an often contentious, but no longer zero-sum U.S.-Russian relationship. It must re-examine the archaic premise that the United States needs to maintain not only a capability to assure the survival of its retaliatory forces in the event of a Russian first-strike, but also to launch a pre-emptive first-strike against Russia.

REALITY CHECK

However, a prerequisite for that fundamental and overdue debate is undertaking a sober and realistic accounting of the existing balance of forces. That has not yet been done by the vocal critics of nuclear cuts. Thirty-four Republican members of the House of Representatives wrote to President Obama last week, referring to "the growth in quantity and quality of nuclear weapons capabilities in Russia, the People's Republic of China, India, Pakistan, North Korea and, perhaps soon the Islamic Republic of Iran..." The Representatives did not provide a time frame for this "growth," no doubt because the reduction in Russian strategic forces during recent years has actually led to an overall decline in aggregate numbers of nuclear weapons possessed by America's potential enemies.

The U.S. House members also cited the "...ambitious nuclear weapons modernization programs of Russia, communist China, Pakistan and others..." In this context, it would seem relevant to mention that China's "ambitious" program has added, over the last three decades, about 30 warheads that could reliably reach the United States. China now fields some 40-50 warheads on intercontinental systems, compared to the 1,790 deployed by the United States that could reach China.

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China's strategic nuclear systems are relatively less sophisticated and diverse than those of the United States. China's newest-class ballistic missile submarine, which will provide the sea-based leg of its nuclear deterrent, is very noisy, according to an unclassified report of the Office of Naval Intelligence. These strategic submarines would thus be very vulnerable to stalking and destruction by much quieter U.S. attack submarines. Moreover, China has no intercontinental bombers, no adequate strategic warning, and no multiple warheads on its ballistic missiles - four decades after MIRVs were first deployed by the United States.

THE SHRINKING BEAR

In a February 16 Senate Floor speech, Sen. Jon Kyl continued his jihad against the New Strategic Arms Reductions Treaty (New START) by noting: "Not a country in the world has reduced warheads since the signing of the New START treaty except the United States." In so doing, Kyl focuses on a slight uptick in Russia's deployed warhead count from six months earlier, ignoring a slight numerical reduction in the number of Russia's deployed ICBMs, SLBMs, and heavy bombers over the same period. More importantly, he obscures the long-term trend line, which shows Russia today with some 300 warheads fewer than two years ago and projects further reductions of similar magnitude over the next few years, putting Russia well below New START's warhead ceiling.

It is appropriate to consider carefully Russian nuclear force trends when considering future U.S. nuclear policy. After all, Russian strategic forces dwarf those of all other countries against which U.S. nuclear weapons could be used. U.S. and Russian strategic forces together contain over 90 per cent of all nuclear weapons in the world. Moreover, Russia is the only country, which has any counter-force capability against the U.S. nuclear deterrent.

However, such consideration reveals a conspicuous and continuing decline in Russian strategic forces from the robust base Moscow inherited from the Soviet Union. Because the warhead-rich SS-18 and SS-19 ICBMs are reaching the end of their service lives and the new Bulava SLBM has suffered delays, the decline promises to last for years, even if Moscow moves forward with development and deployment of a new, heavy, multiple-warhead ICBM.

The latest figures exchanged under New START show that Russia had 1,566 warheads on deployed ICBMs, deployed SLBMs, and deployed heavy bombers (counted-as-one for each aircraft)--224 less than the United States. While both parties are obligated to reduce operational warhead levels further before the treaty's 1,550 ceiling enters into effect in February 2018 many U.S. and Russian experts predict that Russia's warhead count may fall significantly below that ceiling. For example, Russian academician Alexei Arbatov, says Russia's New START accountable warhead count could total only 1,000-1,100 within the decade as the deployment of new systems fails to keep pace with the retirement of legacy systems.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

Rather than induce Russia to build up its strategic nuclear forces, it is in the security and financial interests of both countries to pursue further, parallel reductions in such forces. An updated look at the nuclear balance and the narrowed function of nuclear weapons proclaimed by President Obama should lead to a number of important changes in nuclear policy guidance:

Entire categories of targets -- only appropriate for nuclear war-fighting rather than deterrence -- should be eliminated from U.S. nuclear war plans.

Overblown requirements for damage expectancy should be scaled back.

Requirements for rapid launch capabilities should be eased, removing pressure from national command authorities for hasty decisions and reducing overall force requirements - for example, for the number of SSBNs on station.

Empowered with updated presidential guidance, force planners can responsibly and significantly reduce the number of weapons in the U.S. nuclear arsenal.

"Chased by a bear" may work as stage direction for dramatic performances to an early 17th Century English audience, which was accustomed to bear baiting as public entertainment. It is less suitable as a framework for U.S.

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nuclear policy in the 21st Century, which needs to be based on honest assessments of nuclear threats and an accurate understanding of the limited role of nuclear weapons. The bear chase is over.

The Arms Control Association (ACA) is an independent, membership-based organization dedicated to providing information and practical policy solutions to address the dangers posed by the world's most dangerous weapons.

<http://www.defpro.com/news/details/32789/?SID=656c41b24efa09ee8b0314f7d1da3d61>

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Boston Globe
OPINION/Columnist

Smart Nuclear Reduction

The US could save billions of dollars and still have plenty of bombs

By Juliette Kayyem, *Globe Columnist*

February 27, 2012

THERE ARE many ways for war to end: a decisive win, a painful defeat, a slog toward a tenuous political transfer, or even a “surge” in the guise of an exit. Any way you look at it, President Obama has gotten us out of two long wars.

Surely, the Cold War can't be harder? But wait, it's already been won. Nonetheless, from the cacophony of chest-thumping hard-liners over the mere suggestion, leaked to the press, that the White House may be considering reductions in our nuclear arsenal, the good old days of duck-and-cover live on.

So, just to make this clear: America still needs the Bomb.

Everybody together now: We Love the Bomb.

President Obama, you the loudest: The Bomb is My Friend.

Reductions in the kill-them-a-thousand-times-over nuclear weapons program are not a sign of weakness or a reversion to a 1960s peace campaign. They are the consequence of reality. Size no longer matters.

There are over 20,000 deployed and reserve nuclear weapons somewhere on the earth. Between Mother Russia and America, we own about 95 percent of them. The New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) between Russia and the United States still allows both countries to maintain 1,550 deployed strategic nuclear weapons, plenty by any accounting measure.

Today, under the mandate of a 2010 Nuclear Posture Review, the Pentagon is considering additional reductions to 1,000, 700, or, in one option, 300 deployable weapons. Conservative pundits and House Republicans criticized the mere suggestion of a review as reckless lunacy, part of America's strategic retreat.

Republican presidents, of course, have overseen the largest reductions in our nuclear weapons, proof that this issue continues to have bipartisan support among those in the know. The first President Bush nearly halved the count from over 22,000 deployed weapons to 13,500 warheads. Then, after further reductions in the Clinton administration, President George W. Bush cut the stockpile he inherited by half again; by most accounts, he left Obama 1,968 deployed warheads to manage. These numbers do not include warheads held in reserve.

Obviously, reviewing our nuclear weapons cache is an exercise in resource allocation. For example, a reduction to 1,000 weapons would save \$120 billion on the number of submarines required to maintain them.

But money aside, here's the not-so-shocking reality of our times: the likelihood of nuclear Armageddon between the Cold War players is negligible.

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America's nuclear posture no longer needs to be death by annihilation; there is no "winning" nuclear war, and that hardly seems a radical notion. Instead, almost every review of a post-Cold War deterrence suggests that the numbers should reflect a strategy of proportional deterrence: having enough weapons to threaten our enemies and their strategic interests, and to guarantee nuclear security to our allies.

Sadly, a reduction of nuclear weapons would have almost no impact on the most pressing nuclear issues of our time: nuclear proliferation by unsavory nations and nuclear terrorism. Neither can be discouraged by the sheer threat of the massive nuclear arsenal maintained by the United States or Russia. Ironically, fears about Iran acquiring such weaponry are a case study in how just a few bombs (or none at all) can alter the course of foreign policy.

Nor would a 2,000-bomb arsenal protect us against a future superpower, such as China. For those who fear Chinese power, the bad news is that China is way ahead of us in perfecting the 21st-century nuclear strategy of proportional deterrence. It has, possibly, up to 300 nuclear weapons in its entire stockpile.

The nuclear debate in Washington is only about the past, about a notion of this nation as the better of only two options. It's as if the critics are wondering: why must we tinker with everything that made America once spectacular? Endless discussions about whether America is exceptional or not (and whether this president thinks we are or not) are preconditioned on a memory that equates the size of our nuclear arsenal with our own relevance. It is simplicity in its most perverse form. What makes us exceptional is our capacity to adapt to a world that has changed, not holding onto a world dynamic that ended long ago.

All together now: We still love the Bomb. We need the Bomb.

We just don't need so many of them.

Juliette Kayyem, served in the Obama administration as the assistant secretary of homeland security.

<http://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2012/02/27/smart-nuclear-reduction/rTCxqBbbpod94UoM8V4PiJ/story.html>

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Washington Post
OPINION/Fine Print

Nuclear Weapons Modernization: Not Fast Enough for Kyl

By Walter Pincus
February 27, 2012

The United States is moving on a costly modernization of its nuclear Triad: the submarines, strategic bombers and land-based missiles that can deliver nuclear weapons to targets across the world.

But the pace is apparently not fast enough for Sen. Jon Kyl (Ariz.), the leading Republican spokesman on the subject.

Speaking about reductions in the 2013 Pentagon budget, Kyl recently said that President Obama had broken the modernization promises he made last year to gain Republican support for ratification of the new Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (START) with Russia. "Congress is going to have to address that," Kyl vowed, speaking at a Feb. 16 conference put together by the American Enterprise Institute, the Foreign Policy Initiative and the Heritage Foundation.

Let me review Kyl's concerns one at a time.

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He said the follow-on Ohio-class ballistic missile submarine “has been delayed by two years.” That’s true, but there is \$565 million in the Navy’s 2013 research and development budget for the program, on top of \$2 billion already spent. Another \$1 billion is in the 2013 budget for the sub’s nuclear propulsion reactor.

Work is being done on designing the missile-launch system as well as the compartments that hold the missiles. The new sub will hold 16 or 20 missiles where the older ones have 24. To aid the new sub’s stealth capability, testing is underway to hide its wake and electric signatures as well as sensors used to determine threats.

The now-projected two-year delay means that the U.S. fleet of nuclear-armed submarines will dip below 12 for a year or two around 2030; the Pentagon says a dozen of the subs are needed to maintain patrols.

Kyl also said he was concerned about “funding for a new strategic bomber, [which is] basically just on the drawing boards and there is no commitment that it will be nuclear certified.”

The Air Force’s 2013 budget has \$292 million for what is now called the Long-Range Strike-B (LRS-B) program, a stealth bomber capable of carrying nuclear weapons that could be flown by remote control. “This follow-on bomber represents a key component to the joint portfolio of conventional and nuclear deep strike capabilities,” according to Air Force budget documents. The initial aircraft will be for use with conventional weapons, although they will be structured to carry nuclear weapons in later versions.

Air Force officials have set an initial target price of \$550 million each for the aircraft. One hint of the importance of the program is the sharp increase in proposed spending over the years leading up to 2017. In 2014, spending on the strategic bomber program is set at \$560 million, the next year \$1 billion, followed by \$1.7 billion in 2016 and \$2.7 billion in 2017.

Meanwhile the Air Force plans to retain the upgraded B-52s through at least 2035.

Kyl also said, “there’s no clear plan for a new” intercontinental ballistic missile. But the 2013 budget contains \$11.7 million to begin analysis of alternatives for the successor to the Minuteman III ICBM, picking up from a long-range planning project begun in earlier years. Budget documents show the technology development phase is to begin in 2015 and be completed by 2017.

Last year, the Air Force produced a detailed Intercontinental Ballistic Missile Master Plan to upgrade Minuteman IIIs for service through 2030 and keep the industrial base viable while examining potential follow-on systems under the newly named Ground-Based Strategic Deterrence program.

Today the United States has about 1,800 warheads deployed and available for delivery on 450 land-based Minuteman III ICBMs, 14 ballistic missile submarines and 60 strategic bombers. The number of warheads will drop to 1,550 by 2018 under START.

Kyl is right that it would be almost unthinkable for Obama to propose that the United States go down to 300 to 800 warheads, a possibility mentioned in a recent news report. Even fewer than 1,000 would probably bring criticism because of the political and foreign policy reasons that Kyl noted.

But Kyl also said the 300 lower number would not permit the United States to hold an enemy’s “military assets at risk.”

“If you just have a few, your deterrent is essentially to hold civilians at risk, innocent civilians in cities, because that’s all the weapons you have to put against targets,” he said.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki were deemed military targets. Just two atomic bombs, each having much less than half the explosive power of almost all U.S. strategic warheads, killed or wounded half the citizens of both those cities. Nuclear weapons are terror weapons. If any are ever used again, civilians will bear the brunt of the attack, no matter what the “target.”

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http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/nuclear-weapons-modernization-not-fast-enough-for-ky/2012/02/25/gIQANAJoeR_story.html

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Voice of Russia – Russia
OPINION/Commentary

Putin's Asymmetric Response

By Ilyashenko Andrei
February 28, 2012

PM Vladimir Putin's latest comments on the state of international affairs, made both in his newspaper articles and during his meetings with the Russian military and experts, come ahead of the presidential elections in Russia. In his statements, Putin largely defines the country's foreign policy for the upcoming years, which will directly involve our foreign partners.

Speaking with Russian political pundits in Sarov, Putin weighed in on a possible reply to US disarmament initiatives, stressing that further steps must be integrative and involve all nuclear powers.

In other words, Vladimir Putin suggests that talks on strategic armaments and other weapons of destruction should be carried out in a multilateral format. This is the first statement of the kind made by the Russian premier. It could even be interpreted as Moscow's diplomatic "asymmetric response," which unlike its military technical version is far cheaper and safer.

The idea isn't new. Back in the Soviet days, negotiators demanded that France's and Britain's nuclear stockpiles should be taken into account. Their efforts, coupled with steps taken by their American colleagues, forwarded the process of nuclear disarmament to the point where the global strategic picture already started to change.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov wrote in the "International Life" magazine that "The deep cuts in strategic offensive arms undertaken by Russia and the United States mean the appearance of a qualitatively new situation in the sphere of nuclear disarmament – the quantitative reduction in the gap between our countries' arsenals and those of the other members of the "nuclear five" will inevitably lead to the fact that the nuclear potentials of these states can no longer remain outside the process of further concerted reductions." Mr. Lavrov also stressed the importance of "comprehensively strengthening the multilateral arms control."

Now this need is overdue.

In mid February, the "Washington Post" said that the White House had ordered another US-Russian agreement on strategic nuclear reductions to be mapped out. The Associated Press reported that the Obama administration was weighing options for potentially deep cuts in the number of deployed long-range nuclear weapons, including the possibility of dipping to as low as 300 to 400 warheads. "That would be the lowest number since the early days of the Cold War," the agency noted. At the moment the sides are limited to 1550 warheads each.

A major stumbling block seems to be that, straight after being sworn in, the newly elected Russian president will take part in the G8 summit in May, which Chicago will host together with regular NATO consultations. Moscow hasn't decided yet whether it will participate in the Russia-NATO Council due to a deep US-Russian controversy over the European missile defense shield.

On the other hand, Russia could use the upcoming NATO meetings, not to mention the G8 summit, as a tribune for speaking out against the US anti-missile defense plans, stressing the possibility of an "asymmetric response" in the sphere of military technologies, which could spark off another arms race right ahead of the American presidential elections.

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In this sense, US proposals on further strategic arms reductions would at least compensate for this outburst of Moscow's polemical ardor or even reinvigorate Obama's idea of total elimination of nuke stockpiles, the idea that once fetched him a Nobel Peace Prize.

Moscow seems to have nothing against this. However, during his Sarov campaign trail Putin pointed to at least two prerequisites. First, the implementation of an integrated approach towards strategic non-nuclear carriers, tactical nuclear weapons, high-precision weapons etc. Still, more important is that Moscow is now insisting solely on multilateral talks with other members of the official "nuclear club," such as Britain, France and China. That would mean a major turn in the negotiating process placing responsibility for both ABM and TNW on all nuclear powers.

China appears to be yet another significant issue.

When commenting on the global strategic situation at a recent press-conference, Sergei Rogov of Russia's USA and Canada Institute said that US military planning clearly endorsed a "disarming attack" against China, while the rest of the missiles would be intercepted by missile defense systems in Alaska and California. In this respect, the pro-Kremlin political pundit virtually "chided" China for not joining in the ABM talks.

The multilateral nuclear arms talks that Putin is now pushing through most probably imply further polarization, where Russia and China will supplement each other, like they did in the conflicts around Syria and Iran.

http://english.ruvr.ru/2012_02_28/67099141/

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