



USAF COUNTERPROLIFERATION CENTER
CPC OUTREACH JOURNAL
MAXWELL AFB, ALABAMA

Issue No. 986, 06 March 2012

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Arutz Sheva – Israel

Iran 'May have Tested Nukes in N. Korea in 2010'

Germany's Die Welt: two nuclear weapons tests in North Korea in 2010 might have been conducted for Iran.

By Gil Ronen

March 4, 2012

The Sunday morning edition of Germany's *Die Welt*, quoted by leading journalist David Goldman in *Pajamas Media*, reports that Western intelligence agencies detected two nuclear weapons tests in North Korea in 2010, and that one or both of them might have been conducted for Iran. The author is the respected German analyst and former top official Hans Rühle, who quotes new documentation showing that the Iranian regime began its drive for nuclear weapons as early as 1984, under the direct orders of Ayatollah Khomeini.

Evidence of the 2010 nuclear tests in North Korea was published February 3 in *Nature* magazine, citing the work of the Swedish nuclear physicist Lars-Erik de Geer. The scientist analyzed data showing the presence of radioisotopes that indicated a uranium bomb had exploded and after a year of work, wrote *Nature*, "concluded that North Korea carried out two small nuclear tests in April and May 2010 that caused explosions in the range of 50–200 tons of TNT equivalent."

Rühle reasons that North Korea would probably not have been secretive about the testing if it were carried out for its own nuclear arsenal, and notes that while its previous nuclear tests used bombs with a plutonium core, the 2010 tests apparently employed enriched uranium. The most likely explanation for this, Rühle concludes, "would be that North Korea conducted a nuclear test for a foreign entity, in this case, an Iranian explosive."

"Elements of Rühle's story can be challenged by experts, to be sure," writes Goldman. "But the German analyst is making a point that has been lost in the fog of spin in Washington: It is outrageously wrong to proceed against an opponent like Iran in the presumption that intelligence agencies can accurately assess the precise degree of progress towards a nuclear device so that the US government can fine-tune a response."

Yet this is precisely the claim that U.S. President Barack Obama has been making.

"The fact is that there are some Germans who do not want to be responsible for a second Holocaust," writes Goldman.

<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/153428>

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Arab News – Saudi Arabia

Obama: Not Hesitant on Force to Defend Interests

By BEN FELLER, Associated Press (AP)

March 4, 2012

WASHINGTON: President Barack Obama said Sunday the United States will not hesitate to attack Iran with military force to prevent it from acquiring a nuclear weapon, but he cautioned that "too much loose talk of war" recently has only helped Tehran and driven up the price of oil.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, standing his ground against what his country perceives as a threat to its existence, said that he perhaps most appreciated hearing Obama say that "Israel must be able to defend itself, by itself, against any threat."

Speaking to a powerful pro-Israel lobbying group, Obama appealed to Israel for more time to let sanctions further isolate Iran. He sought to halt a drumbeat to war with Iran and hold off a unilateral Israeli strike against Iran's nuclear facilities.

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“For the sake of Israel’s security, America’s security and the peace and security of the world, now is not the time for bluster,” Obama told thousands at the annual American-Israeli Public Affairs Committee’s policy conference. “Now is the time to let our increased pressure sink in, and to sustain the broad international coalition that we have built.”

Quoting President Theodore Roosevelt, Obama said he would “speak softly, but carry a big stick” — and warned Iran not to test US resolve.

Obama’s widely anticipated speech came one day before he meets at the White House with Netanyahu, who planned to address AIPAC late Monday. Three Republican presidential candidates — Mitt Romney, Rick Santorum and Newt Gingrich — were scheduled to speak to the conference via satellite on Tuesday, a critical day in the campaign when 10 states vote in the contest to choose a challenger to Obama in the November election.

To Israel and to Jewish voters in this country, Obama promoted his administration’s commitment to the Mideast ally.

“You don’t have to count on my words. You can look at my deeds,” Obama said. He defended his record of rallying to Israel’s security and political sovereignty, saying: “We have been there for Israel. Every single time.”

Obama’s comments were heavily laced with the politics of the campaign. He blamed distortions of his record on partisan politics.

Netanyahu, in brief comments to reporters before attending a conference of Jewish leaders in Canada, made no reference to the sanctions and diplomatic avenues that Obama wants to give time to work.

The Israeli president, Shimon Peres, spoke before Obama and said that a nuclear Iran would be a menace to the world, not just to Israel’s security.

“Iran is an evil, cruel, morally corrupt regime. It is based on destruction and is an affront to human dignity,” Peres said. He said Israel knows the horrors of war and does not seek one with Iran, “but if we are forced to fight, trust me. We shall prevail.”

Iran insists its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes. The US, Israel and many allies see no sign of that, and Israeli leaders openly have discussed the possibility of a military strike.

“Let’s begin with the truth that you all understand: No Israeli government can tolerate a nuclear weapon in the hands of a regime that denies the Holocaust, threatens to wipe Israel off the map and sponsors terrorist groups committed to Israel’s destruction,” Obama said.

Obama said he would use all sources of American power, but that the only true resolution would come from diplomacy.

US officials worry that an Israeli attack on oil-power Iran could drive up pump prices and entangle the US in a new Mideast confrontation during this year’s presidential election season. They want to give diplomacy and economic penalties more time to work.

The United States and Europe have pursued more severe banking and other economic penalties separately. The toughest take effect this summer and target Iran’s oil business and powerful central bank.

“I firmly believe that an opportunity remains for diplomacy — backed by pressure — to succeed,” Obama insisted. And in his greatest detail to date, Obama spelled out the consequences of a military campaign against Iran.

“I would ask that we all remember the weightiness of these issues,” Obama said. “Already, there is too much loose talk of war.”

The economic implications were on Obama’s mind, too, as gas prices soar to the forefront of American concern ahead of the election.

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In Israel, Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman said American pressure would not affect Israeli thinking on how to cope with the threat.

“We are an independent sovereign state, and at the end of the day, the state of Israel will make the most correct decisions as we understand them.”

Many analysts believe an Israeli attack would result in a region-wide conflict, including Iranian attacks on American troops in the Persian Gulf, and could damage the world economy by causing oil prices to skyrocket. It also remains unclear how much damage a military strike would do to Iran’s nuclear program. Many of the country’s nuclear facilities are buried deep underground.

The Republican presidential candidates have accused Obama of failing to slow down Iran’s nuclear pursuit. But Obama says the world is more united than ever against Iran, and he blames Republicans for trying to drive a wedge between him and Jewish voters.

“You’ve had no evidence that the president is prepared to take steps to stop Iran from getting nuclear weapons. They talk and the Iranians build. They talk and the Iranians build,” Gingrich, the former speaker of the House of Representatives, said in a television interview before Obama’s speech. “We’re being played for fools.”

The Iranian threat all but shoved aside the quest for peace between Israelis and Palestinians, the dominant theme of Obama’s speech to AIPAC last year, and the thrust of his Israeli policy focus to date. Peace talks between the two sides have stalled. On Sunday, Obama offered no new path, calling for the two sides to work toward separate states in peace.

<http://arabnews.com/world/article583189.ece>

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The Star – Malaysia
Sunday, 04 March 2012

Khamenei Allies Trounce Ahmadinejad in Iran Election

By Parisa Hafezi and Hashem Kalantari

TEHRAN (Reuters) - Clerical Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has tightened his grip on Iran's faction-ridden politics after loyalists won over 75 percent of seats in parliamentary elections at the expense of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a near-complete count showed.

The widespread defeat of Ahmadinejad supporters - including his sister, Parvin Ahmadinejad - is expected to reduce the president to a lame duck after he sowed divisions by challenging the utmost authority of Khamenei in the governing hierarchy.

The outcome of Friday's vote, essentially a contest between conservative hardline factions with reformist leaders under house arrest, will have no big impact on Iranian foreign policy, notably its nuclear stand-off with the West. But it will boost Khamenei's influence in next year's presidential election.

With 90 percent of ballot boxes counted, Khamenei acolytes were expected to occupy more than three-quarters of the 290 seats in the Majlis (parliament), according to a list published by the interior ministry on Sunday.

In the race for the 30 seats in the capital Tehran, a Reuters tally of preliminary returns showed Khamenei supporters had taken 19 and pro-Ahmadinejad candidates the rest. Leading in popularity was Gholam-Ali Haddad Adel, a key ally of Khamenei and father-in-law to the paramount leader's son, Mojtaba.

Pro-Khamenei candidates won in the Shi'ite Muslim holy cities of Qom and Mashhad and led in other major provincial centres including Isfahan and Tabriz, where over 90 percent of voters backed Ahmadinejad in the 2009 parliamentary election.

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Khamenei loyalists also appear to have swept up around 70 percent of seats in rural regions - hitherto bastions of Ahmadinejad and his populist nationalism that clerics see as a threat to their political primacy in the Islamic Republic.

Independents and women candidates fared relatively well in many provincial towns, where they campaigned on the immediate concerns - generally economic -- of their constituents.

Iran's energy-driven economy is suffering badly from Western sanctions - now expanding to block its lucrative oil exports - imposed over its refusal to halt sensitive nuclear activity and give unfettered access to U.N. nuclear inspectors.

The interior ministry said final results were expected by Monday but the exact makeup of the new parliament will not be known until April, following runoff elections for more than thirty seats.

AHMADINEJAD FIGHTBACK?

The results are hard to compare with the outgoing parliament since Khamenei and Ahmadinejad loyalists were united in the 2008 legislative elections, garnering about 70 percent of seats.

But analysts said the combative Ahmadinejad - who is constitutionally barred from running for a third presidential term - would not readily bow to the ballot box rout of his supporters and may fight back.

"Ahmadinejad's camp has not been demolished. We have to wait and see what happens after the new parliament convenes in June," said analyst Hamid Farahvashian.

"The vote showed that there is a deepening rift between the ruling elites. It might emerge in the coming weeks."

Ahmadinejad is likely to be summoned to an unprecedented hearing in the outgoing parliament by Friday to answer questions focusing on his rocky handling of the economy, while Khamenei kept ultimate control over foreign policy.

Critics say Ahmadinejad has inflicted higher inflation on Iranians by slashing food and fuel subsidies to cut spending and purge waste, and replacing them with cash handouts of around \$38 a month per person.

Parliament could impeach Ahmadinejad if his explanations are unconvincing, but Khamenei's green light would be needed.

Analysts said Ahmadinejad is likely to survive his term - but as a lame duck president.

"The establishment is under Western pressure and does not want to look divided," said analyst Babak Sadeghi. "Ahmadinejad will finish his term as a weak executive."

Under mounting Western pressure over its nuclear programme and concerns that Israel might attack, Iran's clerical elite needed a high election turnout to shore up their legitimacy damaged since Ahmadinejad's 2009 re-election, in which fraud allegations triggered eight months of anti-government protests.

Khamenei, 72, said a high turnout would be a message of defiance to "the arrogant powers bullying us," a reference to Western states and sanctions against Iran.

State officials said the turnout was over 64 percent, higher than the 57 percent in the 2008 parliamentary vote.

Absent from the vote were the two main opposition leaders. Mirhossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karubi, who ran for president in 2009, have been under house arrest for more than a year.

Iran denies Western suspicions that it is enriching uranium with the ultimate goal of developing nuclear weapons, saying the programme is for peaceful energy only.



But arch-adversary Israel has talked of war if diplomacy and sanctions do not bring about a peaceful outcome to the nuclear row. Iran will top the agenda when Israel's prime minister meets U.S. President Barack Obama in Washington on Monday.

Obama has said military action was among the options to prevent Iran acquiring nuclear weapons but has also argued against a pre-emptive Israeli strike.

Global oil prices have spiked to 10-month highs on tensions between the West and Iran, OPEC's second biggest crude producer.

Additional reporting by Mitra Amiri, Hossein Jaseb and Ramin Mostafavi; Writing by Parisa Hafezi and Marcus George; Editing by Mark Heinrich.

http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2012/3/5/worldupdates/2012-03-04T212110Z_3_TRE823068_RTPTT_0_UK-IRAN-ELECTION-RESULT&sec=worldupdates

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Chicago Tribune

Syria Tells UN Atom Body of Its "Delicate Situation"

** IAEA seeking access to reactor destroyed by Israel*

** Syria says it was non-nuclear military site*

By Reuters

March 5, 2012

VIENNA (Reuters) - Syria has asked the U.N. nuclear watchdog for understanding of the country's "delicate situation" in response to requests for Syrian cooperation with an investigation into suspected illicit nuclear activity, agency chief Yukiya Amano said on Monday.

The Syrian comments cited by Amano, director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, were an apparent reference to President Bashar al-Assad's campaign to stamp out a popular uprising, in which over 7,500 people have died by a U.N. count.

In a speech to a quarterly meeting of the IAEA's 35-nation governing board, Amano made clear that no progress had been made in the U.N. agency's almost four-year-old investigation regarding Syria.

The IAEA has been seeking access to a desert site at Deir al-Zor that U.S. intelligence reports say was a nascent, North Korean-designed reactor intended to produce plutonium for atomic weaponry before Israel bombed it to rubble in 2007.

The Vienna-based watchdog has also been seeking information about other sites that may have been linked to Deir al-Zor.

Amano said he had written a letter to Syria in November last year urging it to address the agency's questions.

"I received a reply from Syria dated 20 February 2012, which asked for understanding of 'the difficult circumstances and the delicate situation that Syria is passing through,'" Amano said, according to a copy of his speech to the closed-door meeting.

"The letter pledged that Syria would continue to cooperate with the Agency to resolve outstanding issues."

Syria says Deir al-Zor was a non-nuclear military facility but the IAEA concluded in May 2011 that it was "very likely" to have been a reactor that should have been declared to inspectors.



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In June last year, IAEA governors voted to report Syria to the U.N. Security Council, rebuking it for failing to cooperate with the agency's efforts to get concrete information on Deir al-Zor and other sites. Russia and China opposed the referral, highlighting divisions among the major powers.

"The agency continues to seek full access to other locations which the agency believes are functionally related to the (Deir al-Zor) site," Amano said. "I urge Syria to cooperate fully with the agency in connection with unresolved issues related to the Deir al-Zor site and other locations."

Reporting by Fredrik Dahl; Editing by Mark Heinrich

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/sns-rt-nuclear-syriaiaeal5e8e521z-20120305,0,303548,full.story>

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Jerusalem Post – Israel

IAEA: Possible Activity at Iranian Military Site

UN nuclear watchdog chief Amano says that Tehran could be developing weapons at Parchin military site; last year's IAEA report indicated that a large containment chamber for explosives tests had been built at site.

By Reuters

Monday, March 5, 2012

VIENNA (Reuters) - The United Nations nuclear watchdog chief said on Monday there were indications of "activities" taking place at an Iranian military site which his inspectors want to visit as part of an investigation into Iran's nuclear program.

Yukiya Amano, director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, did not give details about what may be occurring at Parchin nor say whether it could be an attempt to conceal any evidence ahead of a possible IAEA visit.

The Vienna-based U.N. agency asked for access to Parchin during two rounds of talks with Iran earlier this year, but the request was not granted.

"We have some indication that activities are ongoing at the Parchin site. It makes us believe that going there sooner is better than later," Amano told a news conference.

His comments confirmed comments made by IAEA-accredited diplomats to Reuters last week, with one referring to reports "we have heard about possible sanitation" of the Parchin facility that he called "very concerning."

Last year's IAEA report laid bare a trove of intelligence pointing to research activities in Iran relevant for developing the means and technologies needed to assemble nuclear weapons, should it decide to do so.

One key finding was information that Iran had built a large containment chamber at Parchin southeast of Tehran in which to conduct high-explosives tests that the IAEA said are "strong indicators of possible weapon development."

Amano also confirmed that Iran, instead of Parchin, had offered access to another site mentioned in an IAEA report in November that pointed to a nuclear weapons agenda in the Islamic state.

Diplomats told Reuters last week that Iran had made a last-minute offer, during talks in Tehran last month, of a visit to a site in Marivan but that this had been turned down by the IAEA.

Amano said the IAEA team, led by the agency's global chief of inspections, only learnt about the alternative site a few hours before it was due to leave Tehran. "With that we cannot do a serious job. That is why we didn't go to Marivan," he said.

Iran says its nuclear program is entirely peaceful and rejects allegations of planned weapons as forged and baseless.

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<http://www.jpost.com/IranianThreat/News/Article.aspx?id=260547>

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The Australian – Australia

Iran to Allow UN Inspectors into Complex

By Ali Dareini in Tehran, Associated Press (AP)

March 06, 2012

IRAN will grant UN inspectors access to a military complex where the UN nuclear agency suspects secret atomic work has been carried out, the semi-official ISNA news agency reports.

Tehran had previously banned UN inspectors from visiting the Parchin installation, southeast of Tehran, but a statement by Iran's permanent envoy to the International Atomic Energy Agency today said the visit would now be allowed in a gesture of goodwill.

However, it would require an agreement between the two sides on guidelines for the inspection, ISNA reported.

Inspecting Parchin was a key request made by senior IAEA teams that visited Tehran in January and February. Iran rebuffed those demands at the time, as well as attempts by the nuclear agency's team to question Iranian officials and secure other information linked to the allegations of secret weapons work.

The latest development comes a day after IAEA chief, Yukiya Amano, expressed growing concern that there was new activity at Parchin. Amano did not specify whether he believed the activity was linked to suspected new weapons experiments or attempts to clean up previous alleged work.

The Parchin complex has been often mentioned in the West as a suspected base for secret nuclear experiments - a claim Iran consistently denies. IAEA inspectors visited the site in 2005, but only one of four areas on the grounds and reported no unusual activities.

Last year, IAEA's report said there were indications Tehran has conducted high-explosives testing to set off a nuclear charge at Parchin. Iran denied the atomic activity and insisted that any decision to open the site rests with the armed forces since it was a military, not nuclear, facility.

Speaking yesterday in Vienna, Austria, Amano said the suspicions of "activities ... ongoing at the Parchin site" in Iran means "going there sooner is better than later" for IAEA inspectors seeking to probe suspicions that Iran has been - or is - working secretly to develop nuclear arms.

"We have our credible information that indicates that Iran engaged in activities relevant to the development of nuclear explosive devices," Amano said outside of a 35-nation IAEA board meeting in Vienna, describing his sources as "old information and new information".

Iran denies any intention of possessing nuclear weapons and says all of its atomic activities are peaceful, but the IAEA says it has intelligence-based suspicions that may not be the case based on thousands of pages of documentation.

"Given that Parchin is a military site, access to this facility is a time-consuming process and it can't be visited repeatedly," ISNA quoted the Iranian statement as saying. It added that following repeated IAEA demands, "permission will be granted for access once more".

The statement added that Tehran and IAEA need to agree on "modalities" before the visit can take place.

There was no immediate comment at the IAEA headquarters in Vienna on Tehran's decision. It comes as fears are growing that Israel's air force may soon strike Iran in an attempt to destroy its nuclear facilities.



President Barack Obama met with Benjamin Netanyahu in Washington yesterday and told the Israeli prime minister that the United States "will always have Israel's back," but that diplomacy is the best way to resolve the crisis over potential Iranian nuclear weapons.

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/breaking-news/iran-to-allow-un-inspectors-into-complex/story-fn3dxity-1226291226725>

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Khaleej Times – U.A.E.

Ashton Offers to Restart Talks with Iran

Agence France-Presse (AFP)

6 March 2012

BRUSSELS — Global powers on Tuesday offered to resume long-stalled talks with Tehran over its contested nuclear drive that are key to defusing continuing tension between Israel and Iran.

“On behalf of China, France, Germany, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, I have offered to resume talks with Iran on the nuclear issue,” said EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton.

A time and venue for what are variously known as the P5+1 or E3+3 talks — five UN Security Council members plus Germany, or three EU powers plus China, Russia and the US — needs to be agreed, added Ashton, who represents world powers in the talks.

British Foreign Secretary William Hague said world powers aimed to show Iran their willingness to seek a diplomatic solution “by testing its desire to talk and by offering it the opportunity to respond to our legitimate concerns.”

“It is for Iran to seize this opportunity,” Hague said in a statement. “It is time for Iran ... to show the world that it wants a peaceful, negotiated solution to the nuclear issue.”

Western powers suspect Iran is seeking to build a nuclear bomb, a charge denied by Tehran which says its atomic programme is for purely peaceful purposes.

The move came amid fresh criticism in Israel against US President Barack Obama for failing to flex muscle at Tehran in talks with Israeli leader Benyamin Netanyahu this week.

Obama gave a strong nod to Israel’s refusal to contemplate a nuclear-armed Iran, acknowledged its right to self-defence and vowed he would “not hesitate to use force” where necessary.

But he made clear he would only contemplate a military option after all diplomatic paths had been exhausted and as new sanctions took effect.

In her letter Tuesday to Iran’s chief nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili, Ashton said:

“Our overall goal remains a comprehensive negotiated, long-term solution which restores international confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran’s nuclear programme, while respecting Iran’s right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy consistent with the NPT (Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty).”

The last round of talks, which took place in Turkey in January 2011, broke down, according to Western diplomats, over Tehran’s demand to discuss “preconditions” before honing in on the nuclear dispute.

“The onus will be on Iran to convince the international community that its nuclear programme is exclusively peaceful, by taking concrete actions,” Hague said.

Global powers have offered to assist Tehran to develop civil nuclear power and cooperate in areas from political relations to economic development if convinced that Iran has no military intentions.



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In a February 14 letter to Ashton, Jalili had said Tehran was ready to resume the deadlocked negotiations at the “earliest” opportunity as long as the powers respected its right to peaceful atomic energy.

Jalili’s letter was a long-belated response to one from Ashton in October, stating a solution was possible only if the talks focused on addressing Western concerns over Iran’s nuclear programme.

US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton last month noted some positive signs in Tehran’s February note, saying it seemed to mark an acknowledgement from Tehran that the talks begin with a discussion of its nuclear programme.

In a twin-track strategy, world powers have offered Iran economic and diplomatic incentives to engage in negotiations to stop uranium enrichment work or continue to slap fresh sanctions on the country.

Economic sanctions were ramped up over the past three months after the UN’s International Atomic Energy Agency said in a report it had evidence the Islamic republic appeared to be conducting research on atomic warheads.

http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle09.asp?xfile=data/international/2012/March/international_March21_1.xml§ion=international

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Yonhap News – South Korea
March 3, 2012

Source Says N. Korean Envoy to Attend Meeting Hosted by US Think Tank

WASHINGTON, March 3 (Yonhap) -- A top North Korean nuclear envoy plans to attend a meeting hosted by an American foreign policy think tank following a seminar in Syracuse University this week, a diplomatic source here said Saturday.

Vice Foreign Minister Ri Yong-ho plans to visit New York from Wednesday until Friday for an academic forum sponsored by the Maxwell School at Syracuse University, according to the State Department. The school's dean is James Steinberg, a former deputy secretary of state.

The trip comes a week after North Korea and the U.S. announced a set of deals reached in their high-level talks in Beijing earlier this month.

Under the agreement, Pyongyang has agreed to freeze its uranium-enrichment facilities and temporarily halt its nuclear and long-range missile tests in exchange for 240,000 tons of food aid from the U.S.

The North has also agreed to allow the return of monitors from the International Atomic Energy Agency to its main nuclear complex in Yongbyon.

Ri plans to attend a meeting of the National Committee on American Foreign Policy, a non-partisan foreign policy think tank, on March 10, said the diplomatic source on condition of anonymity, citing policy.

The source said Glyn Davies, the U.S. special representative for North Korea policy, and Clifford Hart, the U.S. special envoy for the six-party talks, could also attend the session of the National Committee on American Foreign Policy, though no final decision has been made yet.

The North Korean envoy could also meet with South Korea's chief nuclear envoy, Lim Sung-nam, who is scheduled to attend the academic forum of the Maxwell School at Syracuse University.

The recent nuclear deal between North Korea and the U.S. raised hope that the six-party talks on ending Pyongyang's nuclear weapons programs could be resumed.

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The North quit the disarmament-for-aid talks in April 2009 and conducted a second nuclear test a month later. The talks also involve South Korea, China, Japan and Russia.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2012/03/04/43/0401000000AEN20120304001100315F.HTML>

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Chicago Tribune

Fresh from Deal with U.S., North Korea Vows "Sacred War" on South

By Sung-won Shim Reuters

March 4, 2012

SEOUL (Reuters) - North Korea threatened "sacred war" against the South in a huge rally in the capital Sunday just days after the secretive state agreed with the United States to suspend its nuclear weapons tests and allow back international nuclear inspectors.

Tens of thousands of slogan-chanting North Koreans rallied in Pyongyang vowing to "wipe out" South Korean President Lee Myung-bak's "traitors" whom they accused of defaming their new leader, Kim Jong-un, and of staging inflammatory war games with the United States.

About 150,000 protesters, including many soldiers and students, shouted "Destroy Lee Myung-bak" and "Let's safeguard Supreme Leader Kim Jong-un."

The rally, broadcast live by state TV, appeared to be the largest such event since the young Kim took power after the death of long-time dictator Kim Jong-il in December.

Ri Yong-ho, an army general believed to be one of the fledgling leader Kim's closest confidants in the army, recited a statement issued by the military Friday, threatening again to wage a "sacred war" against the South.

"The Supreme Command of the Korean People's Army solemnly declares once again that it will indiscriminately stage its own-style sacred war to wipe out the group of traitors," Ri read.

The rally ended with a series of military-style marches in groups of hundreds, with protesters waving huge banners and flags in response to cheers from the crowds.

North and South Korea are still technically at war after their 1950-53 conflict ended in a truce, not a peace treaty.

Pyongyang's state media has recently beefed up the rhetoric against South Korea's Lee and military leaders, accusing them of allowing an army unit to hang portraits of the two Kims and "scrawl unspeakable defamatory words" below them.

The North also accused Lee of "the hideous act aimed at escalating confrontation" during mourning for Kim Jong-il.

South Korean media has said soldiers at a military unit in the western city of Incheon posted the photos of both Kim Jong-un and his father inside a building, along with the inscription: "Let's kill Kim Jong-un."

North Korea regularly warns of retaliation against Seoul and Washington for joint military drills, currently under way, which it sees as an unforgivable provocation.

In 2010, the North shelled a South Korean island near the disputed inter-Korean sea border, killing four people, in retaliation for live-fire exercises by the South.

Many North Korea watchers say the saber-rattling is aimed at consolidating Kim's grip on power and attaining an advantage in the latest round of disarmament-for-aid talks with the United States.

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Wednesday, Washington and Pyongyang announced the North had agreed to suspend nuclear tests, uranium enrichment and long-range missile launches and to allow checks by international nuclear watchdog inspectors in return for food aid.

The agreement has been hailed as a path to resuming long-stalled six-party talks, joining the two Koreas, the U.S., China, Japan and Russia, designed to block the North from nuclear arms development.

But North Korea has walked out of such talks many times before, claiming lack of sincerity by the United States.

In the latest saber-rattling, state TV said Saturday Kim Jong-un had visited Panmunjom, the village overseeing the armistice along the world's most heavily-fortified border between the two Koreas.

It was Kim's first trip to the village since his father's death.

KCNA said Kim told soldiers there to "maintain the maximum alertness as they are standing in confrontation with the enemy at all times."

Reporting by Sung-won Shim; Editing by Nick Macfie

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/sns-rt-us-korea-northtre823051-20120304,0,6390265.story>

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New York Times

March 4, 2012

Continuing Buildup, China Boosts Military Spending More Than 11 Percent

By JANE PERLEZ

BEIJING — China announced a double-digit increase in military spending on Sunday, a rise that comes amid an intensifying strategic rivalry between the United States and China in Asia and concerns in Washington about the secrecy surrounding the Chinese defense budget.

The increase, reported to be 11.2 percent, is in step with the increased pace of military spending by China over the past decade, but the official statement did not give details of what weapons systems China is developing or offer a description of military strategy beyond protection of the country's sovereignty. China analysts said the true figure was probably significantly higher and was underreported because much of the military's decision-making is kept opaque.

Washington has pressed China to be more forthcoming about its military intentions, an openness that the Americans say is necessary to ease growing unease in a region where the United States maintains important alliances and treaty obligations.

President Obama declared in November that American military interests in the Asia-Pacific region would be immune from cuts to the Pentagon budget, a commitment that was interpreted in Beijing as a response to China's growing power.

For its part, China, which is heavily dependent on imported energy, has shown that it wants greater control of the sea lanes off its coast and wants to protect the heavily populated and increasingly wealthy cities on its east coast.

This strategy, known in Washington as the "anti-access, area denial" policy, has in turn prompted calls from the Pentagon for new weapons systems that can overcome China's eventual capabilities in its coastal waters.

The spokesman of the National People's Congress, Li Zhaoxing, said at a news conference on Sunday, a day before its annual conclave, that the military spending increase was in line with China's economic development. He added

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that the increase was relatively low, as a percentage of gross domestic product, compared with other countries, specifically the United States and Britain.

The total defense budget for 2012 would be increased to \$106 billion from \$95.6 billion last year, he said. The Obama administration's proposed defense spending for 2013 calls for a budget of \$525.4 billion, a cut of about \$5 billion from 2012.

Although Mr. Li said the budget covered research and development and new weapons systems as well as personnel costs, Western and Chinese analysts said the announcement represented an undercounting of the real expenditure.

The Chinese Navy, Air Force and the Second Artillery Corps, which runs the strategic nuclear forces, benefit most from the increased defense spending, experts in both countries say.

Among the navy's acquisitions are a new class of nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines and more sophisticated radar systems that allow for improved over-the-horizon targeting, according to the Pentagon's 2011 report to Congress on the Chinese military.

Vital elements of the Chinese military buildup, including cyberwarfare and space capabilities and foreign procurements, were not included in the announced budget, the analysts said.

Because of the opaqueness of the Chinese military system and secrecy about the workings of its uppermost body, the Central Military Commission, the real expenditures were not known, they said.

Last year, the Pentagon estimated that China would spend \$160 billion instead of the announced \$95.6 billion.

But given the dearth of information, the Pentagon's estimates of Chinese military spending were probably not reliable, said Dennis Blasko, a former United States Army attaché at the American Embassy in Beijing.

"Whatever the true numbers may be, the Chinese military has a much larger pot of cash to spend on fewer troops than it did 15 years ago," said Mr. Blasko, the author of "The Chinese Army Today: Tradition and Transformation for the 21st Century." Overall, he said, China's defense spending continued to be in line with its economic growth rates.

During a visit to Washington last month by Vice President Xi Jinping, who is expected to be the next leader of China, the Obama administration specifically asked for greater transparency in the Chinese military budget and for deeper communications between the two militaries, administration officials said.

Mr. Xi, who is one of two civilian members of the Central Military Commission, appeared to recognize the significance of Washington's concern.

In remarks at the Pentagon with Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta at his side, Mr. Xi said he looked forward to an exchange on the "overall relationship, but especially our mil-to-mil relationship," shorthand for military to military.

In an effort to coax the Chinese military to be more open, Washington started formal talks known as a strategic security dialogue last year. They were attended by senior civilian and military officials from Beijing and Washington, Obama administration officials said.

The results were meager, but the administration was pushing for another round of the talks to take place in several months, the officials said.

Some Chinese analysts back the idea of more clarity and greater contact between the two defense establishments.

"China needs more transparency in explaining to others," said Chu Shulong, a professor of international relations at the School of Public Policy and Management at Tsinghua University. "China is aiming to deny the capability of possible American intervention in the western Pacific. That has been clear since 1996."



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He described the Chinese military as fearful of overhauls, but he said a public explanation of military strategy was necessary because “if you are not clear to others, they have suspicions.”

In Washington, anxieties are being driven in part by the fact that, unlike in the cold war period, when grainy satellite images were the main source of information, Chinese Web sites are filled with striking images of new weaponry, said Jonathan D. Pollack, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution.

The new hardware is being displayed at a time when there is a growing gap between China’s rising military expenditures and slowing spending by other countries in the region, many of them American allies.

That gap has reinforced the realization that the United States may not remain the singularly dominant power in the Asia-Pacific region if Chinese military spending keeps escalating.

“The deeper American concern is a mirror image of what Albright said to Powell in the mid-’90s: What’s the point of all this equipment if you’re not going to use it?” Mr. Pollack said, referring to an argument over American involvement in Bosnia between Madeleine K. Albright, then the United States ambassador to the United Nations, and Gen. Colin L. Powell.

At the news conference on Sunday, Mr. Li said that China had sent 2,044 peacekeepers to 12 trouble spots around the world last year, reflecting a bigger role by China in quelling conflicts, a development that the Obama administration has praised.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/05/world/asia/china-boosts-military-spending-more-than-11-percent.html?pagewanted=all>

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Korea Times – South Korea
March 5, 2012

'N. Korea Shuns Risk in Nuke Test Moratorium'

By Kim Young-jin

North Korea’s new regime potentially had as much to lose as gain by conducting nuclear and missile tests in the near-term, a calculation that may have factored into Pyongyang’s recent pledge to the United States to suspend the activities, an expert said.

Under the agreement announced last week — the North’s first under new leader Kim Jong-un — Pyongyang also promised to freeze its uranium enrichment facility in Yongbyon in exchange for food aid and other significant U.S. considerations, paving the way for resumption of multilateral negotiations.

Bruce Bennett, a senior defense analyst at the RAND Corporation said the North appeared simply to have given up activities that were either politically risky or losses that could be reversed.

“I’m sure within senior leadership in North Korea, this is going to be depicted as a great victory for Kim Jong-un,” Bennett, who was visiting Seoul, said in an interview. “He got it for agreeing not to do things that they don’t have to do in the immediate future.”

The world has paid particular interest to the development as it represents the young leader’s first major foray into foreign policy after becoming leader following the recent death of his father Kim Jong-il. Analysts had speculated the twenty-something leader could order further testing to burnish his military credentials.

Such tests, should they fail, would make Kim Jong-un look weak in the early days of the regime, Bennett said.

A third nuclear test runs the risk of not producing a nuclear yield much bigger than the previous one in 2009, he said. A long-range missile test could also fail, as experts said the previous three did.

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If a nuclear detonation did achieve a large yield, it could push South Koreans to vote for a conservative candidate with a tough Pyongyang policy in the presidential elections in December.

As far as the halting of uranium enrichment, Pyongyang can kick out U.N. inspectors as it has in the past and enrich stored nuclear material, "so that in reality they will not have lost too much in the way of momentum," he said.

On the other hand, Bennett said further testing does hold plenty of potential benefits for Pyongyang, highlighting the need for continued diplomacy.

A third test "might achieve a nuclear weapon yield more than 10 kilotons, which would confirm that it has mastered some aspects of nuclear weapons," the expert said. "If so, many in the world will say that North Korea is a nuclear power."

If it gets a nuclear yield greater than 25 kilotons, it would show that it has mastered the technology, which causes a much hotter reaction through fusion, testifying advanced military prowess, he added.

So what does the North get in return for its concessions?

Bennett said the "big gains" come in the form of Washington's reaffirmation that it holds no "hostile intent" toward Pyongyang and recognition that the armistice that ended the 1950-53 Korean War is the "cornerstone of peace and stability" on the peninsula.

"In short, if there is instability in the North, the U.S. will not threaten to intervene because the armistice would preclude intervention," Bennett said. "This is something even his father was unable to achieve."

A peace treaty has never been signed to end the 1950-53 Korean War.

Given the risks associated with further tests, the expert said that further dialogue including through the six-party talks was needed.

"Talks to mitigate and to make sure that the agreement is not just a year-long one but turns out to have a longer duration are important, he said.

http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2012/03/116_106316.html

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Kansas City Star
March 5, 2012

UN Nuke Chief: Inspectors Ready for NKorea

The Associated Press (AP)

The head of the U.N. nuclear agency says his inspectors could be back in North Korea within a few weeks, once the North and his agency's board approve such a mission.

International Atomic Energy Agency chief Yukiya Amano says an expert IAEA team could be on site "perhaps within a few weeks," once-the go-ahead is given.

Amano suggests that's the easy part. He told reporters Monday that a precise outline of what the agency would be tasked with will likely take longer.

He says, "We need to clarify the arrangement, we need to identify the possible activities that we would undertake at Yongbyon," he said, referring to North Korea's nuclear reactor.

The IAEA's most recent presence in North Korea ended about three years ago.

<http://www.kansascity.com/2012/03/05/3469641/un-nuke-chief-inspectors-ready.html>



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Montreal Gazette – Montreal, Canada

No Policy Shift from New North Korea Leader Despite Nuclear Deal

By Benjamin Kang Lim and Brian Rhoads, Reuters

Tuesday, March 6, 2012

BEIJING (Reuters) - North Korea's willingness to cut a surprise deal with the United States on the future of its nuclear program does not signal any policy shift by the reclusive state's young new leader, a source with links to both Pyongyang and Beijing said.

The source, speaking on condition of anonymity, also warned against applying pressure similar to sanctions on Iran to get it to jettison its nuclear ambitions, saying any perceived insincerity from Washington would quickly drive Pyongyang from the table.

Just weeks after Kim Jong-un succeeded his father, North Korea agreed with the United States last week to suspend nuclear and long-range missile tests, uranium enrichment at a nuclear facility, and to allow nuclear inspectors back. At the same time Washington pledged to resume food aid.

Despite the agreement, the source told Reuters not to read too much into it. "There has been no change (in policy). The door has always been open" from Pyongyang's perspective, he said. The source has correctly predicted events in the past, telling Reuters about the North's first nuclear test in 2006 before it took place.

The secretive state still clings to the teachings of Kim's grandfather, the late Kim Il-sung, whose ultimate goals include a peace treaty, the removal of nuclear weapons from both Koreas, and diplomatic recognition from Washington, he said.

The United States, which has nearly 30,000 troops in the South, says it has no nuclear weapons on the peninsula.

From Pyongyang's perspective, last week's deal was possible because it believed that the United States was the one that returned to the table willing to make concessions.

"In the past, either the United States did not trust North Korea or deliberately made North Korea an enemy. The United States straightened out its thinking this time," the source told Reuters, explaining the North Korean view.

The two sides have held nuclear talks on-and-off for nearly two decades, but relations hit a low in 2009 when the North conducted a second nuclear test and a long-range missile launch. Washington imposed sanctions, and Pyongyang walked out of regional denuclearization talks.

The latest deal came about two months after Kim Jong-un, believed to be in his late 20s, inherited the leadership to become the third member of his family to rule the state. North Korea was founded after World War Two by Kim Il-sung, whose own son Kim Jong-il ruled for 17 years before his death in December.

The U.S.-North Korea deal could pave the way for the resumption of long-stalled nuclear disarmament talks involving the two Koreas, the United States, China, Japan and Russia.

The breakthrough has been met with guarded optimism by analysts and diplomats who noted that efforts to defuse tensions on the divided Korean peninsula had seen many false dawns. They also doubt the North will ever give up their nuclear card, which Pyongyang sees as the ultimate deterrent and bargaining chip.

Asked why the unpredictable North repeatedly reneged on past deals, the source defended Pyongyang, saying denuclearization is "an end for the United States, but just a means for North Korea" to achieve its ultimate objective, survival.

"It is not fair to wholly blame North Korea," he said.



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Pyongyang's suspicions of Washington run deep. In 2001 then U.S. president George W. Bush branded North Korea part of an "axis of evil" along with Iraq and Iran. Pyongyang fears it could be the next after the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the continuing pressure on Iran.

It all could unravel swiftly, the source added.

"If the United States stops taking steps and treats North Korea as a foe instead of a friend, North Korea will be forced to deviate," he said.

The Koreans remain technically at war since their 1950-53 conflict ended in an armistice. Pyongyang wants a peace treaty to formally bring an end to that technical state of war, but it ultimately prefers a "one country, two governments" model that allows both to co-exist in a form of commonwealth, he said.

Progress towards such an end would be slow. The source said North Korea will not deal with South Korean President Lee Myung-bak because it regarded him as "hostile." Lee's mandatory single five-year term ends next year.

Editing by Jeremy Laurence

<http://www.montrealgazette.com/news/policy+shift+from+Korea+leader+despite+nuclear+deal/6256496/story.html>

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Economic Times – India

Pakistan Test-Fires Nuclear Capable Hatf-II Ballistic Missile that Can Hit Targets in India

By Press Trust of India (PTI)

5 March 2012

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan today test-fired the nuclear-capable Hatf-II short range surface-to-surface ballistic missile that can hit targets in India as part of the process of validating its land-based missile systems.

The test was conducted successfully, a military statement said.

The Hatf-II or Abdali has a range of 180 km and can carry nuclear and conventional warheads with "high accuracy".

The Hatf-II "provides an operational level capability to Pakistan's Strategic Forces, additional to the strategic and tactical level capability which Pakistan already possesses", the statement said.

The authorities did not say where the test was carried out.

The test was witnessed by Strategic Plans Division chief Lt Gen (retired) Khalid Kidwai, Army Strategic Force Command chief Lt Gen Tariq Nadeem Gilani, senior officers of the armed forces, scientists and engineers of strategic organisations.

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics/nation/pakistan-test-fires-nuclear-capable-hatf-ii-ballistic-missile-that-can-hit-targets-in-india/articleshow/12144414.cms>

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

Moscow Wants Missile Defense Talks at NATO Summit

6 March 2012

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The Russian president is unlikely to attend a NATO summit in Chicago if the missile defense issue is not on its agenda, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said on Tuesday.

"Russia has an invitation to the NATO summit; everything depends on the agenda," he said.

However, if the issue of the NATO missile defense system remains unchanged, then the chances of the Russian president attending the summit "will be even smaller," he added.

"We have a considerable amount of work in progress but in the absence of [a discussion] on missile defense there would probably not be enough to take part in the summit," Ryabkov said.

NATO members agreed to create a missile shield over Europe to protect it against ballistic missiles launched by so-called rogue states, such as Iran and North Korea, at a summit in Lisbon, Portugal, in 2010.

Russia has demanded that NATO provide written, legally binding guarantees that its missile shield will not be directed against Moscow but the alliance has been reluctant to meet the demand.

MOSCOW, March 6 (RIA Novosti)

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20120306/171790591.html>

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London Guardian – U.K.

Trident Nuclear Deterrent Upgrade 'Nonsensical', Says Liberal Thinktank

CentreForum says £25bn plans are a costly and illogical decision for armed forces squeezed by budget cuts

By Nick Hopkins, *The Guardian*

Sunday, 4 March 2012

The UK's plans to spend more than £25bn on a new nuclear deterrent are "nonsensical" and should be scrapped because there is no foreseeable threat to the country, says a study published on Monday.

The paper, from CentreForum, an independent liberal thinktank, says the government is sleepwalking into taking a costly and illogical decision when the army, navy and air force are being squeezed by budget cuts.

It urges the immediate retirement of Trident with all the saved money being reinvested to upgrade the military's conventional weapons.

The 60-page study, *Dropping the Bomb: A Post-Trident Future*, is believed to reflect the views of many senior Lib Dems who are trying to force a debate on whether the UK still needs an independent nuclear deterrent.

The armed forces minister, Nick Harvey, is overseeing a review of alternatives to Trident. Due to report later this year, it is likely to challenge many of the assumptions that have made the Tories and Labour commit themselves to replacing the weapons system. A final decision on whether to replace Trident will take place in 2016.

CentreForum says the rationale that led the UK to seek an independent nuclear deterrent during the cold war no longer applies. Instead, it should move to "a nuclear threshold posture" – retaining some fissile material and engineering capability just in case there was ever "a substantial deterioration in the international climate" that led Britain to need a bomb within 12 months. The report makes clear this fallback position is unlikely to be needed.

It says: "There is no credible nuclear threat to the UK or her allies that will be deterred by a British nuclear weapons programme that is not already deterred by the United States' nuclear forces today or for the foreseeable future."

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The paper's author, Toby Fenwick, says the UK only insisted on developing its own nuclear deterrent in the 1950s and 1960s because of "the unenunciated fear" that the US would not protect its allies in Europe, or that the Soviet leadership believed this was the case.

But the US has emphasised in "nuclear security guarantees" that it would respond if any Nato country were attacked. The report says: "As President [Obama] made clear, all Nato members have an explicit American nuclear security guarantee under Article V of the 1949 North Atlantic Treaty, noting, 'An attack on one is an attack on all. That is a promise for our time, and for all time'."

Though the paper accepts, for the sake of argument, that there are theoretical threats posed by Iran, Pakistan and North Korea, it says the UK is still protected under the US security umbrella. Retaining Trident would only provide an "incremental deterrent effect over and above that provided by the United States' nuclear arsenal".

CentreForum also dismisses those who claim the UK would lose its seat on the UN security council without a nuclear deterrent.

"Britain cannot lose its permanent seat without agreeing to do so ... Linking possession of nuclear weapons as a sine qua non of holding security council permanent membership is both historically inaccurate and deeply unhelpful in the fight against nuclear proliferation ... notions of national status have governed UK nuclear weapons policy. This is strategically myopic."

The paper also balks at the cost of replacing Trident, which is likely to put added stress on a defence budget that has been slashed in the past 18 months.

The government's plans to revitalise the military with new aircraft carriers and a range of other equipment – known as Future Force 2020 – are being put in peril, the paper insists.

"To spend a major part of the defence budget to protect against the distant possibility that a potential threat might arise on the outer edges of the UK's strategic interests, however, seems irrational, especially at the expense of conventional real-world capabilities."

It adds: "Spending more than £25bn in capital costs alone to replace Trident when it has no additional deterrent role to play in current or likely future UK security scenarios is inexplicable. Consequently, the UK should withdraw Trident from service immediately, and plough the savings into the UK's conventional forces to make the Future Force 2020 vision reality."

At the moment, Future Force 2020 is falling between two stools. "It was scaled back so that it is theoretically deliverable (making it too small to be operationally useful) but it remains unaffordable (making it unachievable)."

An MoD spokesman said: "The government is committed to maintaining a continuous submarine-based nuclear deterrent. Following a Trident value for money study, carried out as part of the strategic defence and security review, we are proceeding with the renewal of Trident."

"As part of the coalition agreement the Liberal Democrats will continue to explore the possibility of an alternative approach to delivering a credible nuclear deterrent. This work is led by the Cabinet Office and will report to the prime minister and deputy prime minister later this year."

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2012/mar/05/trident-nuclear-deterrent-upgrade?newsfeed=true>

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InDepth News (IDN)

'ICAN' Discloses Funders and Makers of 20,000 Nuclear Weapons

March 5, 2012

By R. Nastranis, IDN-InDepth News Report

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BERLIN (IDN) - The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), a global grassroots organisation, has thrown a virtual bombshell: In a trailblazing report, it reveals the funders and manufacturers of 20,000 nuclear weapons in the possession of nine nuke-armed nations, which have a collective destructive force equivalent to 150,000 Hiroshima-sized bombs.

Yet, undeterred by the annihilation their existing arsenal can cause, each year, the nine – the U.S., Russia, China, the UK, France, Pakistan, India, Israel and North Korea – are spending a combined total of more than US\$100 billion on weapons of mass destruction by assembling new warheads, modernizing old ones, and building ballistic missiles, bombers and submarines to launch them.

Don't Bank on the Bomb: The Global Financing of Nuclear Weapons Producers is the first major global report on the financing of companies that manufacture, modernize and maintain nuclear weapons and their delivery vehicles. It identifies more than 300 banks, insurance companies, pension funds and asset managers from 30 countries that invest significantly in 20 major nuclear weapons producers.

According to the 180-page study, released on March 5, 2012, much of the work is being carried out by corporations such as BAE Systems and Babcock International in the United Kingdom, Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman in the United States, Thales and Safran in France, and Larsen & Toubro in India.

Of the 322 financial institutions identified in the report, roughly half are based in the United States and a third in Europe. Asian, Australian and Middle Eastern institutions are also listed. The institutions most heavily involved in financing nuclear arms makers include Bank of America, BlackRock and JP Morgan Chase in the United States; BNP Paribas in France; Allianz and Deutsche Bank in Germany; Mistubishi UJF Financial in Japan; BBVA and Banco Santander in Spain; Credit Suisse and UBS in Switzerland; and Barclays, HSBC, Lloyds and Royal Bank of Scotland in Britain.

ICAN is appealing to financial institutions to stop investing in the nuclear arms industry. "Any use of nuclear weapons would violate international law and have catastrophic humanitarian consequences. By investing in nuclear weapons producers, financial institutions are in effect facilitating the build-up of nuclear forces. This undermines efforts to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world and heightens the risk that one day these ultimate weapons of mass destruction will be used again," says ICAN campaigner Tim Wright, a co-author of the report.

Unethical

The report also examines selected institutions' policies on financing nuclear weapons: It points out that many financial institutions, funding nuclear weapons programmes, claim to apply ethical standards – such as the UN Principles for Responsible Investment – when deciding how to invest their funds. These standards take into account environmental, social and corporate governance factors.

Some financial institutions, in addition to maintaining general policies on ethical or sustainable investment, specifically state that they will not invest in nuclear armaments. But the report shows that "their policies on nuclear weapons investments often fall short of imposing a blanket ban on the financing of nuclear weapons companies."

For example, some banks rule out providing loans specifically for nuclear weapons projects, but they are willing to provide loans to nuclear arms makers for general purposes, says the report, adding: "Investing in companies that manufacture and modernize nuclear weapons is a grave breach of ethical investment norms, as nuclear weapons are illegal to use and cause catastrophic humanitarian and environmental harm."

All nuclear weapons companies, listed in the ICAN study, are engaged in a diversity of enterprises, many of which are non-nuclear in nature – for example, Boeing builds commercial jetliners. These companies generally do not source direct finance from banks solely for the purpose of carrying out nuclear weapons work.

Instead, they raise money through corporate loans, syndicated loans, bond issues, share placements and share ownership. This money is allocated in whatever way a company sees fit. However, "whether or not the financier or

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investor intended the money to be used for nuclear weapons production makes little practical difference," says the report.

It argues: When nuclear weapons companies raise finance for "general corporate purposes", a proportion of the funds they raise will likely be used to produce nuclear weapons. It is important therefore that "if banks and other financial institutions wish to avoid facilitating the manufacture of nuclear, they must adopt more stringent policies that exclude the financing of nuclear weapons companies altogether." But the existing policies of some financial institutions have little if any practical effect.

Divestment

The report emphasizes the humanitarian, legal and environmental arguments for divestment, noting the unique destructive potential of nuclear weapons. Setsuko Thurlow, a survivor of the US atomic bombing of Hiroshima in 1945, writes in the report: "Anyone with a bank account or pension fund has the power to choose to invest his or her money ethically – in a way that does not contribute to this earth-endangering enterprise."

In addition to stating the ethical case for divestment, the report also warns of the reputational risks associated with financing nuclear arms, and highlights the positive role that financial institutions could play in the quest for a world free from such weapons.

South African activist and Nobel Peace Prize winner Desmond Tutu, a supporter of ICAN, contributed the foreword to the report, in which he calls on financial institutions to "do the right thing and assist, rather than impede, efforts to eliminate the threat of radioactive incineration", noting that divestment was a vital part of the successful campaign to end apartheid in South Africa.

"Today, the same tactic can – and must – be employed to challenge man's most evil creation: the nuclear bomb. No one should be profiting from this terrible industry of death, which threatens us all," writes Tutu.

Since the present situation is not God given, with the information and arguments contained in the ICAN report, concerned citizens can put pressure on listed and other financial institutions around the world to end their support for the nuclear weapons industry.

By lending money to nuclear weapons companies, and purchasing their shares and bonds, banks and other financial institutions are indirectly facilitating the build-up and modernization of nuclear forces, thereby heightening the risk that one day these ultimate weapons of terror will be used again – with catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences.

According to disarmament campaigners, divestment from nuclear weapons companies is an effective way for the corporate world to advance the goal of nuclear abolition.

<http://www.indepthnews.info/index.php/global-issues/779-ican-discloses-funders-and-makers-of-20000-nuclear-weapons>

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New York Times
March 6, 2012

Amateurs Are New Fear in Creating Mutant Virus

By CARL ZIMMER
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Just how easy is it to make a deadly virus?

This disturbing question has been on the minds of many scientists recently, thanks to a pair of controversial experiments in which the H5N1 bird flu virus was transformed into mutant forms that spread among mammals.



After months of intense worldwide debate, a panel of scientists brought together by the World Health Organization recommended last week in favor of publishing the results. There is no word on exactly when those papers — withheld since last fall by the journals Nature and Science — will appear. But when they do, will it be possible for others to recreate the mutant virus? And if so, who might they be and how would they do it?

Scientists are sharply divided on those questions, as they are on the whole complex of issues surrounding the mutated virus known as mutH5N1.

On the question of who, while terrorists and cults have long been a concern in biosecurity circles, some scientists also fear that publication may allow curious amateurs to recreate the mutated virus — raising the risk of an accidental release.

Over the past decade, more amateur biologists have started to do genetic experiments of their own. One hub of this so-called D.I.Y. biology movement, the Web site DIYbio.org, now has more than 2,000 members.

“I worry about the garage scientist, about the do-your-own scientist, about the person who just wants to try and see if they can do it,” Michael T. Osterholm of the University of Minnesota said last week at a meeting of biosecurity experts in Washington.

Dr. Arturo Casadevall of the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York City, who along with Dr. Osterholm is a member of the scientific advisory board that initially recommended against publishing the papers, agreed. “Mike is right,” he said in a telephone interview. “Humans are very inventive.”

Advocates of D.I.Y. biology say such fears not only are wildly exaggerated, but could interfere with their efforts to educate the public.

“I am really sick and tired of folks waving this particular red flag,” said Ellen D. Jorgensen, a molecular biologist who is president of Genspace, a “community biotechnology lab” in Brooklyn.

There are many ways to make a virus. The simplest and oldest way is to get the viruses do all the work. In the 19th century, doctors produced smallpox vaccines by inoculating cows with cowpox viruses. The viruses replicated in the cows and produced scabs, which were then applied to patients, protecting them from the closely related smallpox virus.

By the turn of the century, scientists had discovered how to isolate a number of other viruses from animals and transfer them to new hosts. And by midcentury scientists were rearing viruses in colonies of cells, which made their study far easier. (Viruses have to infect host cells to reproduce; they cannot replicate on their own.)

More recently, scientists discovered how to make new viruses — or at least new variations on old ones. The biotechnology revolution of the 1970s enabled them to move genes from one virus to another.

Flu vaccines can be made this way. Scientists can move some genes from a dangerous flu strain to a harmless virus that grows quickly in chicken eggs. They inject the engineered viruses into the eggs to let them multiply, then kill the viruses to prepare injectable vaccines.

Scientists have also learned how to tweak individual virus genes. They remove a portion of the gene and then use enzymes to mutate specific sites. Using other enzymes, they paste the altered portion back into the virus’s genes.

Another way to make altered viruses is to harness evolution. In a method called serial passage, scientists infect an animal with viruses. The descendants of those viruses mutate inside the animal, and some mutations allow certain viruses to multiply faster than others. The scientists then take a sample of the viruses and infect another animal.

Viruses can change in important ways during this process. If it is done in the presence of antiviral drugs, scientists can observe how viruses evolve resistance. And viruses can become weak, making them useful as vaccines.

At the biosecurity meeting in Washington last week, Ron Fouchier, who led the Dutch team that created one of the mutant H5N1 viruses, described part of the experiment.



The scientists used well-established methods: First they introduced a few mutations into the H5N1 flu genes that they thought might help the bird flu infect mammals. They administered the viruses to the throats of ferrets, waited for the animals to get sick and then transferred viruses to other ferrets. After several rounds, they ended up with a strain that could spread on its own from one ferret to another in the air.

If trained virologists could see the full details of the paper, there would be several ways they could make mutH5N1 for themselves. The most sophisticated way would be to make the viruses from scratch. They could take the publicly available genome sequence of H5N1 and rewrite it to include the new mutations, then simply copy the new sequence into an e-mail.

"It's outsourced to companies that do this for a living," said Steffen Mueller, a virologist at Stony Brook University on Long Island, who regularly synthesizes flu viruses to design new vaccines.

A DNA-synthesis company would then send back harmless segments of the flu's genes, pasted into the DNA of bacteria. The scientists could cut out the viral segments from the bacteria, paste them together and inject the reconstructed virus genes into cells. If everything went right, the cells would start making mutH5N1 viruses.

The synthesis companies are on the lookout for matches between requested DNA and the genomes of dangerous pathogens. But some experts say such safeguards are hardly airtight. "You could imagine a determined actor could cleverly disguise orders," Dr. Casadevall said. "I have a lot of respect for human ingenuity."

Synthesizing viruses has a high-tech glamour about it, but trained virologists could use a simpler method. Knowing the mutations acquired by mutH5N1, they could simply alter ordinary H5N1 viruses at the same sites in its genes to match it.

Virologists might even be able to figure out how to make mutH5N1 from the few details that have already emerged. According to reports, there were only five mutations in the Dutch viruses, and these were most likely at key sites involved in getting viruses into host cells.

Matthew B. Frieman, a virologist at the University of Maryland School of Medicine, said that a review of the scientific literature could point to where the mutations were inserted. "It's not like nuclear fission," he said.

Some of the equipment that scientists use to work on viruses has grown so inexpensive that it is no longer limited to university labs. Devices for duplicating pieces of DNA sell for a few hundred dollars on eBay, for example.

Those falling costs have spurred the rise of the D.I.Y. biology movement; they have also generated concerns about what a do-it-yourselfer might be able to accomplish.

D.I.Y. biologists sometimes laugh at the sinister powers people think they have. "People overestimate our technological abilities and underestimate our ethics," said Jason Bobe, a founder of DIYbio.org.

Todd Kuiken, a senior research associate at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington who specializes in the movement, points out that typical D.I.Y. projects are relatively simple, like inserting a gene into bacteria to make them glow. Producing viruses involves much more expensive equipment to do things like rearing host cells. "It's not going to happen in someone's basement," he said.

Nor do these amateurs have the years of training it takes to grow viruses successfully. "It's like I say, 'I want to be a four-star chef,'" said Dr. Jorgensen, the president of Genspace, who worked with viruses for her Ph.D. "You can read about it, but unless someone teaches you side by side, I don't think you're going to get far."

It is hard to predict how the future evolution of biotechnology will affect the risk of homegrown pathogens.

"There ought to be oversight down the road," Mr. Bobe said. But he and others question whether holding back scientific information can reduce the risk. While it might be challenging to make one particular flu virus, like mutH5N1, it is not hard to try to breed new flu viruses.



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“If you are a farmer somewhere in China, you could do it,” said Dr. Mueller, the virologist at Stony Brook. All that would be necessary is to bring some sick chickens in contact with ferrets or other mammals. “Without knowing what you’re doing, you could do it anyway.”

Of course, someone trying to make a new flu this way might well end up its first victim.

And some experts say that regardless of how a lethal virus might arise, the important thing is to be able to defeat it when it appears, so that we can avoid a global catastrophe like the 1918 flu pandemic, which killed 50 million people.

“The only thing that can be done, and to my mind should be done,” said Ron Atlas, a University of Louisville microbiologist and expert on bioterrorism, “is to have a vaccine that protect against this. We need an urgent program for a generalized influenza vaccine. We would take off the table another 1918-type event.”

http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/06/health/amateur-biologists-are-new-fear-in-making-a-mutant-flu-virus.html?_r=1&pagewanted=all

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The Hindu Business Line – India
OPINION/Columnist

Iran's Dangerous Nuclear Game

Sanctions may push Iran into reassessing its nuclear policy.

By BHASKAR BALAKRISHNAN

March 4, 2012

The recent visit by an International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) team to Iran has failed to resolve the controversy over the Islamic Republic's nuclear programme. Iran has remained legally within the ambit of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) which it has signed and ratified.

But there is considerable concern that it has pursued a nuclear programme that seeks to bring it within striking distance of going in for a nuclear weapon if it so decides. This poses a growing challenge to security in the region.

The key components of a weapons programme are firstly the availability of weapons grade fissile material (either Uranium-235 or Plutonium-239) in adequate quantities; a working warhead design (usually based on implosion); and a credible delivery system. In all three areas, Iran has made steady progress, while ostensibly remaining within the limits of the NPT.

Fordow plant

In the area of fissile material, Iran has set up centrifuge uranium enrichment chains, including the controversial plant at Fordow located deep underground (to protect it against air attacks).

While enrichment to 3-5 per cent Uranium 235 is legitimate for nuclear power reactors, Iran has gone much further and started large-scale enrichment to 20 per cent, ostensibly for fuel for its research reactor to produce useful isotopes for peaceful purposes.

However, the NPT and the IAEA safeguards regime require that all such facilities be subjected to inspections and careful accounting undertaken for all fissile and nuclear materials.

If the 20 per cent enriched Uranium is indeed required for research reactor fuel, then it should be processed into fuel rods and a reasonable fuel inventory established.

The capacity at Fordow is far more than necessary for one research reactor. Any large unaccounted accumulation of 20 per cent enriched Uranium would give rise to suspicions that this could be rapidly further enriched to weapons grade uranium (over 80 per cent U-235; enough for one bomb per 6 months) for possible weapons use.

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Israel's might

In comparison, Israel's nuclear capability is much greater. It has around 200 nuclear warheads including sophisticated thermonuclear and miniaturised warheads. It has missiles such as Jericho III (range 5,000-11,000 km, payload 1 tonne) capable of reaching even the US. Israel is not a party to the NPT like India and Pakistan, and follows a policy of not openly declaring its nuclear capability.

Israel regards the acquisition of nuclear weapons capability by any other State in the region as a threat to its security. It has not hesitated to strike at nuclear facilities in nearby Iraq and Syria, though it has been unable to counter Pakistan's nuclear capability.

The case of Iran falls somewhere in between, and there is intense debate in Israel over the feasibility of a military option, even though some Iranian leaders have called for the elimination of Israel. There is justified international concern that Iran is keeping open the option of breaking away from the NPT regime (which requires three months' notice) and going in for nuclear weapons.

If this is so, then attention must be devoted to the circumstances that might lead the Iranian leadership to take this extreme step. Such a step could only be taken in the face of a direct existential threat to the Islamic Republic. A military strike against Iran, from Israel or the West, would most likely compel Iran to go nuclear.

Internal politics

A country's external policy is deeply influenced by internal politics — 90 per cent of Iran's 79 million population belong to the Ithnasharya (Twelvers) sect of Shia Islam, the largest such concentration in the world. Iran is going through a legislative election, in which a large component of society representing reformist opinion feels excluded.

Within the conservative camp, there is a tussle for supremacy involving the aging 72-year-old Khamenei, the Supreme Leader and those close to President Ahmedinejad. The latter has been accused in major corruption scandals.

Within Iran, the Revolutionary Guards (widely interpreting their constitutional role of “protecting the Islamic revolution) have emerged as a State within a State, enlarging their influence in social, political and economic activities and amassing riches and power. Like the ISI in Pakistan, or the military in Turkey, the IRGC has built up its empire with hardly any systemic constraint. With a presidential election looming in 2013, no influential conservative leader in Iran can be seen as being soft on the West or Israel.

Internal political currents are visible in Israel and the US which is facing a presidential election. A recent poll showed 64 per cent of Israelis were now in favour of a nuclear weapons free zone in West Asia . The US has so far resisted Israeli pressures to go in for a military option.

What seems likely is further intensification of economic and financial sanctions against Iran, and covert operations to cripple its nuclear programme. In fact the sanctions have already had a severe negative impact on the Iranian economy. The market value of the riyal dropped by 50 per cent in January. Further impact is likely later this year when the EU's sanctions kick in.

Growing inflation and unemployment, together with political alienation of the moderates and reformers, may encourage opposition forces. This may induce the regime to reassess its nuclear policy, and come to the conclusion that it may be better to reach agreement with the IAEA.

The recent example of North Korea is a lesson that sanctions and persistent diplomatic pressure can achieve better results than force.

The author is a former Ambassador of India and has been a member of the Foreign Investment Promotion Board

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/columns/bhaskar-balakrishnan/article2960888.ece?homepage=true>

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

North Korea Does its Bombs-for-Food Routine

5 March 2012

RIA Novosti military commentator Konstantin Bogdanov

North Korea has agreed to suspend its missile and nuclear programs in exchange for food aid from the United States. But North Korea has made progress in its military projects over the course of the past several years. Is Pyongyang serious about abandoning its achievements for food aid?

Price to pay: Missiles

North Korea is the center of global missile technology proliferation, operating outside of any external oversight. According to Forecast International, Pyongyang sold about 1,200 missiles abroad, mostly short-range missiles, from 1987 to 2009. Customers include Middle Eastern and South Asian countries, Pakistan and Iran. Missile exports are a good source of hard currency for the cash-strapped Communist nation.

To be sure, the North Koreans run a tight ship, and tracking down the origin of some of these North Korean missile technologies is incredibly difficult. For example, Pyongyang demonstrated BM25 Musudan medium-range (3,000 – 4,000 km) missiles in 2010. Frankly, the missile looked strangely familiar, resembling in many ways the Soviet sea-based nuclear missile R-27.

However, there's no reliable evidence of tests or deployments of this system. No one knows anything about the origin of this hardware or how it ended up in Korea.

The Americans love to talk about technology and document leaks from the Makeyev Design Bureau (the one that designed the R-27 missile) in Miass, Russia, or straight from the Russian Navy. There is, though, a less dramatic and more believable scenario: Iranian students who studied in Russian military-technical universities up until late 1990s could be the source of the leaks.

Admittedly, North Korea either doesn't have any truly long-range and reliable missiles or has just a handful. Pyongyang's arsenals include mostly Hwasong missiles, a well-known design based on the Soviet R-17 tactical missile. It's better known under its NATO moniker Scud, and its manufacture is a well-trodden path for the countries willing to establish their own military missile production.

North Korea's Hwasong-6 with a range of about 700 km was sold to Iran and became the prototype for its Shahab missiles. Syria also bought some. According to experts, Korea made anywhere from 500 to 1,000 such missiles, of which at least half were sold abroad.

In late 1990s, North Koreans used the Hwasong missile as the foundation for its Nodong and Taepodong missiles, which boast a significantly longer range of 1,200 – 2,000 km.

Taepodong-1 was used to design the Taepodong-2 booster, which was officially proclaimed an intercontinental missile. According to official information from Pyongyang, North Korea's first artificial satellite was launched into space in the spring of 2009 using the Taepodong-2 space booster. In fact, the satellite went down before making it past Hawaii.

Still, the Taepodong-2 range is estimated between 4,000 and 6,000 km. The upper range is obviously overstated, especially when adjusted for operational load and actual system reliability. As of today, this missile is to a certain extent a propaganda missile intended for the United States, but further work on it during the next decade or so could give Pyongyang a booster capable of delivering a nuclear warhead to the West Coast of the United States.

Price to pay: Nuclear program



North Korea is a nuclear power, confirmed not only by official statement but by real deeds.

There were two official nuclear tests on October 9, 2006 and on May 25, 2009. But there are several more instances in the nuclear history of North Korea that haven't yet been properly interpreted.

A powerful, unexplained explosion took place in the Yangando province on September 9, 2004. Characteristic isotope emissions were detected in the spring of 2010, which could be the result of subcritical experiments – possibly accidents involving spontaneous chain reactions – or an attempt to assemble a nuclear explosive device using power plutonium.

Although the North Korean nuclear program is carried on using poor technology and low-grade materials, it is still advancing and has been doing so at a particularly fast clip over the past five to six years when North Korea's relations with the United States cooled.

However, there's a great distance between the ability to put together a nuclear device – which Pyongyang managed to achieve, albeit, with great difficulties – and the serial production of nuclear weapons, in this particular case, in the form of ballistic missile warheads. So far, we know nothing about the actual size of North Korean products or whether the manufacturing processes available in North Korea allow them to make a weapon of a manageable size and with proper protections, including protection against takeoff vibration.

It's likewise difficult to assess the stock of fissionable weapon-grade materials available to North Koreans, but it's not large as far as we can tell. If the assumption that the 2010 spring tests were conducted to check the usability of the power plutonium, which can be developed using light water reactors, is confirmed, then this will mean that Pyongyang is either experiencing a severe shortage of weapon materials, or is getting itself ready for tougher international control.

Will the swap take place?

The question about whether Pyongyang is truly prepared to abandon its arsenals is to a large extent rhetorical. North Korea is in very bad economic shape. As a matter of fact, it managed to survive over the past 10 to 15 years only because the authorities of all levels have been turning a blind eye to the country's massive black market. This breeds corruption, including among party members, and forms a class of people who may be interested in liberalizing the regime. This social group may, in fact, welcome such a strategic exchange of nuclear missile capability for property guarantees and the monetization of bureaucratic privileges.

On the other hand, no one is ever going to issue them such guarantees, and even if they do, building insurance arrangements doesn't look practicable. The removal of the "iron curtain" and transition to a market economy will destroy the Juche system, which, given the unsettling gap between the standard of living of the South and that of the North, will instantly result in drastic political changes in North Korea.

In the event of Korean unification, which is a nightmare scenario for all regional powers, except, perhaps, Russia, North Korean elites will be absorbed and dissolved by South Koreans with their strong financial and international clout – that is, if the South Koreans are prepared to implode their labor market and pay a "reunion tax" for the next 20 or more years in order to level infrastructure disparities between the two countries.

North Korean elites have no other course of self-preservation other than to keep reinforcing the wall and making more nuclear missiles. Neither Japan, China nor the United States need a unified Korea. Therefore, the "black hole" on the Korean Peninsula will remain indefinitely.

The views expressed in this article are the author's and may not necessarily represent those of RIA Novosti.

<http://en.ria.ru/analysis/20120305/171745332.html>

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Korea Times – South Korea



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OPINION/Op-Ed
March 5, 2012

Limited Progress, But No Breakthrough

By Ralph A. Cossa

The recent "food for freeze" agreement between the United States and North Korea has been described (accurately) by the State Department as reflecting "important, if limited, progress" and (inaccurately) by the media as constituting a "breakthrough" in the seemingly endless march toward Korean Peninsula denuclearization.

The good news is the agreement makes a future breakthrough once again possible, after more than three years of stalemate (which began when the six-party talks broke down during the Bush administration, in the fall of 2008). The bad news is we are not any closer today to actual denuclearization than we were three years ago and have a long uphill slog ahead of us, something that the Obama administration readily admits.

The first thing that should be noted is that the "agreement" was actually two unilateral, and not exactly alike, statements, that both essentially had the same bottom line: The U.S. was going to provide the North with 240,000 metric tons of nutritional assistance "with the prospect of additional assistance based on continued need" and the North will implement a moratorium on long-range missile launches, nuclear tests, and nuclear activities at Yongbyon, including uranium enrichment activities "while productive dialogue continues."

The U.S. said the North agreed to the moratorium "to improve the atmosphere for dialogue and demonstrate its commitment to denuclearization," while the North said it was doing it "upon request by the U.S. and with a view to maintaining positive atmosphere for the DPRK-U.S. high-level talks." (The DPRK stands for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea). The North did acknowledge, however, that both sides would "push ahead with the denuclearization through dialogue and negotiations."

Both statements noted the return of inspectors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to monitor the moratorium on uranium enrichment activities at Yongbyon but only Washington's statement says they will also "confirm the disablement of the 5-megawatt reactor and associated facilities." The IAEA's return, however it is couched, is a major step forward, especially given the DPRK's previous, strongly-expressed distrust for this organization. It remains to be seen how much unrestricted access the IAEA inspectors will have to all facilities at Yongbyon, however; this will be a real test of Pyongyang's sincerity.

In its statement, the U.S. "reaffirms that it does not have hostile intent toward the DPRK." The North claimed that the U.S. "reaffirmed that it no longer has hostile intent toward the DPRK." A petty point, but one significant to Pyongyang, given its prior accusations. More importantly, both reaffirmed their commitment to the Sept. 19, 2005, Joint Statement that laid out the original framework for denuclearization and cited the 1953 Armistice Agreement as the "cornerstone" of peace and stability on the peninsula, although the North added "until the conclusion of a peace treaty." This is significant, nonetheless, given various statements by the North in the past few years claiming that the armistice no longer applied.

The U.S. statement made no reference to a peace treaty. Nor did it specifically discuss the resumption of the six-party talks — administration spokesmen have subsequently made it clear that a number of important (unspecified) steps remain before such talks could resume. The North's statement made several references to the resumption of the six-party talks, stating further that once they are resumed, "priority will be given to the discussion of issues concerning the lifting of sanctions on the DPRK and provision of light water reactors (LWRs)." Washington had previously made it clear that the provision of LWRs was not in the cards, at least not in the near term.

While there are some unilateral U.S. sanctions (which the Obama administration would have great difficulty lifting in an election year absent some significant gestures on Pyongyang part), the major sanctions were put in place by the U.N. Security Council and would require UNSC approval to lift. Curiously, Pyongyang insisted and Washington agreed that U.S. sanctions "are not targeted against the livelihood of the DPRK people." There are a number of other areas where the two statements differ in content or emphasis. But it's more important to focus on the issues

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neither addressed at all. The U.S. statement did acknowledge that "profound concerns" remained "across a wide range of areas," but did not articulate them. Hopefully these include the issue of verification, which was the straw that broke the previous camel's back. Recall that former U.S. six-party talks negotiator Christopher Hill thought he had a verification accord worked out with the North, only to have the rug pulled out from under him at the final round of talks.

Under earlier agreements, Pyongyang was supposed to provide a "complete and correct declaration of all its nuclear programs." What it provided previously was neither complete nor correct; is it now prepared to take this step? The two unilateral statements only make mention of Yongbyon. How about other facilities? The North's nuclear weapons were fabricated and tested elsewhere. Will these facilities be identified and open to inspection? It's a pretty safe bet that IAEA inspectors, if permitted to inspect the centrifuges at Yongbyon, will find that they are not (presently) configured to produce weapons-grade highly enriched uranium. But it is widely believed that other uranium enrichment facilities also exist. Will the North acknowledge these?

Also conspicuously missing from either statement is any reference to South Korea. The U.S. has previously made it clear that "the road to improve (U.S.-DPRK) relations runs through Seoul for North Korea." Does Pyongyang now have a shortcut? This would be a huge mistake. While the North remains intent on marginalizing the current Seoul administration, Washington must continue to insist on meaningful South-North dialogue as one of the steps that must still be taken prior to the resumption of the six-party talks.

It appears that Washington's "strategic patience" in dealing with the North may finally be paying some dividends. But the real strength of this approach was that Washington and Seoul remained in lockstep throughout the process. The U.S. needs to proceed cautiously, in a way that continues to validate both its own and Seoul's cautious approach to the North. If we can do this, then a real breakthrough may one day be possible.

Ralph A. Cossa is president of the Pacific Forum CSIS, a Honolulu-based nonprofit research institute affiliated with the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, and senior editor of Comparative Connections, a tri-annual electronic journal.

http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/opinion/2012/03/198_106284.html

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World Politics Review

OPINION/Column

Global Insights: U.S.-Russia Arms Control Prospects Under Putin

By Richard Weitz

06 March 2012

This weekend's election in Russia has unsurprisingly returned Vladimir Putin to the country's presidency. In contrast to the preordained outcome of the Russian voting, the winner of this November's U.S. presidential election is not yet known. But whoever occupies the White House in 2013 will need to consider the bilateral arms control relationship with Russia in coming years. And although the implementation of the New START agreement is going well, there are sharp differences in Washington and Moscow over where to go next.

Moscow's main concerns focus on U.S. missile defense and U.S. superiority in conventional forces. Both conditions work against Russia's willingness to cut its offensive nuclear forces even further, which is the U.S. priority, especially with regard to the issue of Russian tactical nuclear weapons.

In his recent Moscow News article on Russian foreign policy, Putin railed against what he called the U.S. quest for "absolute security." In his words, the problem is that "absolute invulnerability for one country would in theory require absolute vulnerability for all others." Instead, Putin again insisted on the right of all states to equal

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security, as well as Russia's right to maintain the capacity to attack the United States with nuclear weapons if necessary.

Putin argued that faced with U.S. plans for deploying a European-based missile defense system, Russia had two options: a symmetrical response of creating its own system or an asymmetrical strategy of strengthening Russia's offensive strategic weapons to ensure that they are capable of overcoming any NATO system and thereby preserving mutual deterrence. The first choice being too costly and technically challenging, he said Russia would follow the second course.

In Moscow's view, the problem of equal security also applies to the imbalance in conventional forces in Europe. The United States recently followed Russia's lead in ending implementation of the original Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty. Russian officials have also given up on the idea of ratifying the Adapted CFE Treaty, since NATO insists that Russia withdraw its military forces from Georgia as part of its Istanbul Commitments. Given these complications, Russians are uninterested in various U.S. proposals for a "grand bargain" that would seek to address the CFE and tactical nuclear weapons in Europe simultaneously.

Russian policymakers have also expressed a new complaint in the form of their open doubt over the United States' ability to ratify the kinds of binding legal agreements that Moscow demands. They note the difficulties that the Obama administration had in securing U.S. Senate ratification of New START, which required a White House commitment to modernize the U.S. nuclear arsenal, even if that is now falling victim to budgetary pressures. Russians insist that they want another legally binding agreement to constrain U.S. missile defenses.

The Obama administration has been offering a politically binding agreement on missile defense, but has refused to accept legally binding constraints on how the missile defense program might develop. Although U.S. officials stress that they will not try to negate Russia's nuclear deterrent, whose massive size and great sophistication would make such an effort impossible in any case, Congress would never accept a legally binding agreement that commits the United States to deliberately constrain its ability to protect Americans and their allies from foreign missile attacks. At best, the administration is willing to offer nonbinding political guarantees that they will not seek to negate Russia's strategic nuclear deterrent.

Russian officials refuse to accept mere political declarations on such important issues. They claim the United States earlier violated such agreements when it enlarged NATO after the Cold War and moved NATO forces into former Soviet-bloc states. In contrast, they note that even when the United States withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 2001, the predictable and legal manner in which the withdrawal was carried out reassured Putin and others in Moscow who opposed the U.S. decision. Russians also point out that political agreements lend themselves to different interpretations depending on who is viewing the issue. Although they do not seem to worry about another Obama presidency, they claim to fear that some future U.S. administration will try to expand U.S. missile defenses to be able to intercept Russian strategic missiles.

These differences highlight the uncertain climate surrounding the nuclear arms control agenda, which is compounded by Russian concerns about U.S. space, cyber and other weapons. But progress could be possible in several other areas.

First, Russians are eager to help counter nuclear terrorism through the mechanisms of the Nuclear Security Summit forums and the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. Both countries want to revive the civilian use of nuclear power under safe and secure conditions, making sure that those countries now considering starting nuclear energy programs receive training and guidance on how to avoid accidents and protect the nuclear material at their facilities.

Second, Russian-U.S. collaboration on regional proliferation challenges is important, since both countries are veto-wielding members of the U.N. Security Council. Russian officials are unlikely to accept any more U.N. sanctions on Iran given their different assessment of Iranian motives, unless incontrovertible evidence that Tehran is seeking a



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nuclear weapon emerges. But cooperation is possible regarding North Korea, where Russia and the United States share the goal of stabilizing the Korean Peninsula.

Third, the Carnegie Endowment and other institutions have been developing a number of potential informal confidence and transparency-building measures that the two sides could pursue. These would help to lead toward a new strategic arms control treaty in a few years if the bilateral relationship improves, but could serve a valuable stabilizing function even without one. These measures include renewed efforts to expand the application of restrictions in the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty and other bilateral arms control agreements to other countries, as well as measures to increase transparency regarding the capacity of each sides' nuclear weapons-production complexes to construct new nuclear forces in any attempt to rapidly break out of a strategic arms control agreement.

Finally, Russians are eager to work on civilian nuclear energy cooperation with the United States. The two sides' recently ratified 123 agreement allows Russian and U.S. firms to cooperate to produce new types of civilian power reactors that would be less prone to proliferation than existing models. Such collaboration could prove very useful in helping develop new commercial stakeholders in both countries that have an interest in maintaining good Russian-U.S. relations. The economic relationship between Russia and the United States remains relatively undeveloped, since Americans buy Russia's main exports -- oil, gas and weapons -- elsewhere, while various impediments hobble mutual investments. At present, the constituencies favoring strong bilateral ties in both countries are small, consisting mainly of arms control advocates and foreign policy experts.

As a result, the Russian-U.S. agenda is still dominated by Cold War-type issues, including nuclear arms control, which position the two parties in an adversarial relationship. Only by moving away from this orientation can both sides begin to overcome the mutual confidence gap that exacerbates many of their other differences. Though Putin's return to the presidency could augur a hard line on a number of issues where the U.S. and Russian positions diverge, his pragmatism and opportunism could lead to progress in the areas where the two sides' interests overlap.

Richard Weitz is a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute and a World Politics Review senior editor. His weekly WPR column, Global Insights, appears every Tuesday.

<http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/11681/global-insights-u-s-russia-arms-control-prospects-under-putin>

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Asia Times – Hong Kong
OPINION/Op-Ed
March 7, 2012

Holes in North Korea Nuke Deal

By Naoko Aoki

WASHINGTON - Last week's agreement between the United States and North Korea over Pyongyang's nuclear program - the first negotiated progress on the issue in four years - has spurred debate about whether the new deal will stick.

While there has been widespread speculation about whether North Korea will really suspend work at its uranium enrichment plant at Yongbyon, refrain from nuclear and missile testing, and allow the return of international inspectors in exchange for 240,000 tons of US food aid, little attention has been given to the impact those actions would actually have on Pyongyang's nuclear program.

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So are the deal's undertakings mostly symbolic confidence-building gestures, or will they have bite? A closer inspection of North Korea's promised actions shows that while the measures could slow the pace of progress of its nuclear development, they will not necessarily completely halt the program.

Significantly, the deal does not cover any nuclear weapons that North Korea has already produced - and the outside world may remain in the dark about the size and sophistication of those weapons for some time to come.

A key feature of the agreement announced on February 29 was North Korea's promise to halt operations at its uranium enrichment facility in the Yongbyon nuclear complex. The new modern centrifuge plant, which could be producing material for nuclear weapons, became public knowledge after it was shown to a group of US academics including Stanford University Professor Siegfried Hecker in November 2010.

While the announced suspension has been widely greeted as a positive development, there is an important catch: the facility at Yongbyon is unlikely to be the only uranium enrichment plant North Korea currently operates. In other words, a promised moratorium at the Yongbyon facility does not necessarily put a stop to all uranium enrichment activities in the country.

"When you build an enrichment plant like this, you need to have a place to do your research and development and testing," Olli Heinonen, a senior fellow at Harvard University's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, said in a telephone interview. "So most likely there is at least one location where they have been doing this," said the former deputy director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Hecker, who headed the Los Alamos National Laboratory from 1986 to 1997, has also concluded that North Korea must also have a pilot-scale centrifuge plant at an undisclosed location. "We are still not certain of what they can produce at an undisclosed site, but I believe it is limited," Hecker said in an e-mail message to Asia Times Online.

Diplomats have pointed out that even without concrete evidence, it would be logical for North Korea to maintain uranium enrichment facilities outside of Yongbyon. The fact that Yongbyon's nuclear capabilities have been shown to an American delegation and is also visible in satellite images makes it a potential target for a military attack. The diplomatic logic follows that North Korea would not risk putting their investment and technology all in one place, and therefore should have at least one other facility elsewhere.

How much progress North Korea has made at the uranium enrichment facility in Yongbyon is difficult to assess, but both Hecker and Heinonen indicate it could be limited, as North Korea has claimed, if it became operational shortly before Hecker's visit there in 2010. Low-enriched uranium is used as fuel for light-water reactors. Material for nuclear weapons must be enriched further to what is called weapons-grade or high-enriched uranium.

"It typically takes a lot of time and effort to get centrifuge cascades to work perfectly," Hecker said in the same e-mail message. "They may have perfected the operations and produced some low-enriched uranium. ... On the other hand, it is also possible that they are still struggling to make the centrifuge facility work smoothly."

Limited inspections

Clues to how far North Korea has come in its uranium enrichment program will become available when IAEA inspectors return to the Yongbyon complex, as promised in the new deal. It will represent the first time IAEA inspectors are allowed to enter the facility since they were kicked out of the country in April 2009. Details of when and under what conditions the inspectors will be allowed access to the facility have yet to be determined.

In the agreement, North Korea also promised to refrain from carrying out new nuclear tests. This is expected to help limit the sophistication of North Korea's existing nuclear weapons, as many experts believe Pyongyang's tests in 2006 and 2009 have not yielded enough data and confidence to put nuclear warheads on missiles.

One expert, however, argues that North Korea may already have enough data to move ahead with the development of nuclear warheads that can be mounted on shorter-range missiles that could reach neighboring South Korea and Japan.



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Larry Nicksch, who analyzed North Korea for 43 years at the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service, said in a telephone interview that given such factors as information that North Korea gleaned from A Q Khan, the "father" of Pakistan's nuclear bomb, Pyongyang probably has enough information to weaponize its nuclear capabilities.

"I don't think they have to test in order to move ahead with nuclear warheads for the Nodong missiles," said Nicksch, who is now a senior associate at the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies. Nodong (or Rodong) missiles armed with conventional weapons or weapons of mass destruction have the range to reach US military bases in Japan. The moratorium on nuclear tests, therefore, is likely to have little or no benefit to Japan or South Korea, Nicksch added.

The moratorium on long-range missile launches has been welcomed by many observers as both a confidence-building measure and a move to constrain North Korea's development of missile technology. But some view the moratorium with skepticism, arguing that North Korea has already found a way to work around the inability to carry out its own missile tests.

"North Korea has been able to enlist surrogate countries as testers, in order to in effect bypass their own missile moratorium," Nicksch said. He said that North Korea has benefited from Pakistan's and Iran's tests of their versions of the Rodong missile - the Ghauri and Shahab-3 respectively - as well as Iran's reported testing of the longer-range Musudan missile developed by North Korea.

It is also significant that the recent agreement is not designed to deal with the nuclear materials North Korea has already developed - a stockpile of what US security analysts estimate to be 30 to 50 kilograms of separated plutonium, or enough for at least six nuclear weapons. Hecker's estimate is between 24 to 42 kilograms of plutonium, which he believes is enough for four to eight crude nuclear bombs.

Hecker says North Korea is unlikely to have added to that stockpile as the 5-megawatt-electric nuclear reactor in the Yongbyon complex that was shut down in 2007 as part of the Six-Party Talks agreement remained inactive when he visited the site in November 2010, and that there is reason to believe that it has remained in a stand-by status since.

Yet the exact size and sophistication of North Korea's plutonium stockpile remains shrouded in mystery to the outside world, and how to deal with it will be left to further discussions beyond the recently agreed deal. A comprehensive assessment of North Korea's nuclear development will remain difficult until the IAEA gains nationwide access, Nicksch said.

"You really have to get the IAEA in North Korea and they have to be able to conduct inspections throughout North Korean territory, not just Yongbyon," Nicksch said. If North Korea is determined to make progress with their nuclear and missile programs, the obligations in the deal "will not really prevent them from moving ahead," he added.

Naoko Aoki is a journalist based in Washington DC. She formerly covered Japanese domestic politics and economic policy for Japan's Kyodo News before serving as the news service's Beijing correspondent from 2004 to 2009. She has visited North Korea on 18 separate occasions.

<http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Korea/NC07Dg02.html>

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Chicago Tribune
OPINION/Editorial

Snookered Again by North Korea?

Need for food could be dire enough to compel young new leader Kim Jong Un to stick to his word

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Last week came word that North Korea's young leader, Kim Jong Un, has agreed to yet another deal that supposedly would rein in his rogue government's nuclear program. Under the terms, North Korea will suspend nuclear weapons tests and uranium enrichment and will allow international inspectors back into the country. The price: America's delivery of 240,000 metric tons of food for Pyongyang's hungry populace.

Washington has been snookered again, critics say. "We've bought this bridge several times before," said U.S. Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, R-Fla.

She has history on her side. For two decades, North Korea's negotiating strategy under Kim Jong Il was predictable: Make big promises. Extract huge concessions from the West. Then renege on a technicality and demand more payments. Escalate threats. Win new concessions. Repeat.

In six-party talks in September 2005, North Korea agreed to abandon its nuclear weapons program. A year later, after a series of disputes and escalating demands, Pyongyang detonated its first nuclear test explosion. In 2008, a deal to dismantle the country's nukes collapsed over squabbling about details of verification. In May 2009, North Korea punctuated that failure with its second underground nuclear test.

Will history repeat itself in 2012? Maybe. But maybe not. This time there are three reasons why North Korea might be willing to negotiate away its ability to create more nuclear fuel and build more bombs.

Reason one: North Korea has an arsenal of eight to 12 nuclear bombs. It's easy to understand why Pyongyang wanted to go from zero to eight nukes: The bomb is a powerful deterrent, which North Koreans think they need against the country that slotted them into the "axis of evil." Nuclear weapons, with their capacity to wreak destruction, confer instant status on a country that otherwise would be a global asterisk. But North Korea doesn't need any more nukes to deter an attack. Eight can do that job as well as 80.

Reason two: The only other rationale to keep building nukes is to sell them on the sly to rogue nations or terror groups. That would be lucrative but extremely dangerous, because North Korea would be held responsible for the weapons' use. North Korea's leaders may now figure they have more to gain if economic sanctions against them are lifted and the country is allowed back into international markets.

Reason three (and the most diabolical): Freezing its program wouldn't stop North Korea from marketing nuclear technology and technical know-how, as it has to Iran, Syria, Pakistan and others. That has proved difficult for international authorities to stop.

So if you're pessimistic, tell yourself the whole deal is bound to collapse when North Korea once again finds a loophole to wiggle through. Expect tensions to heighten as North Korea improves its missile capacity to deliver long-range nukes.

If you're optimistic, tell yourself that Pyongyang truly will relinquish an expendable asset for something of more urgent value — food. The young leader will solidify his grasp on power by edging his nation back in from the cold. And he'll show that his regime can tame the hard-liners in North Korea's military.

We should know soon: Is Kim Jong Un playing by his father's manipulative rules? Or is he selling the West a sturdier bridge?

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/opinion/editorials/ct-edit-northkorea-0306-20120306,0,5280699.story>

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