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Xinhua News – China

Clinton Says Iran's Talks with World Powers Not "Open-Ended"

April 4, 2012

WASHINGTON, April 3 (Xinhua) -- U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on Tuesday pressed Iran for concrete commitments on its disputed nuclear program, warning that its upcoming talks with the world powers are not "open-ended."

The talks are "not an open-ended session for both parties to talk around each other without ever coming to any agreement," Clinton said at the Virginia Military Institute, referring to the upcoming talks between Iran and the six world powers, namely the United States, Britain, France, Russia, and China plus Germany, also known as G5+1.

"We expect to see concrete commitments from Iran that it will come clean on its nuclear program and live up to its international obligations," she said.

Clinton said on Saturday in Saudi Arabia that six world powers and Iran had agreed on meeting in Turkey's Istanbul on April 13. However, reports said on Monday that the time and venue for the talks have not been finalized yet.

Vowing to enforce "the most comprehensive package of sanctions in history" against the Islamic state, Clinton said, while receiving the Distinguished Diplomat Award at the military institute, that the pressure is forcing Iran's leaders back to the negotiating table, and hoped that it will result in a peaceful resolution of its controversial nuclear program.

At the end of last year, U.S. President Barack Obama signed the National Defense Authorization Act, a part of which is aimed at choking off Iran's crucial oil revenue by targeting its central bank and financial sector. The law allows the Obama administration to slap sanctions on foreign banks that engage in oil transactions with Iran's central bank and cut them off from the American financial system.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2012-04/04/c_131506082.htm

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Press TV – Iran

Iraqi Foreign Minister Welcomes Proposal for hosting Iran-P5+1 Talks

Wednesday, April 4, 2012

Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari says Baghdad welcomes the idea of hosting a fresh round of negotiations between Iran and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany (the P5+1).

Iraq's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement on Tuesday that Zebari welcomed a proposal put forward by Tehran calling on Baghdad to host the new round of comprehensive talks between Iran and P5+1.

The foreign minister confirmed that he will carry out the necessary contacts with relevant parties on the proposal.

Iran's proposal was made during a meeting between Zebari and a high-ranking Iranian delegation, headed by Deputy Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Ali Baqeri and the SNSC Director General for Arab Affairs Reza Amiri in Baghdad on Tuesday.

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said on Saturday that the talks between Iran and the P5+1 will resume in Turkey on April 13-14.

Iran's Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi, however, said on Wednesday that the SNSC Secretary Saeed Jalili would announce the venue for the talks in the near future.

Speaking to the reporters, he expressed optimism about the outcomes of the upcoming negotiations, saying, "I think that future talks will result in better achievements and (the parties involved) will take a step forward."

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Iran and the P5+1 have held two rounds of multifaceted talks, one in Geneva in December 2010 and another in the Turkish city of Istanbul in January 2011.

Tehran says it is ready to resume the talks based on common grounds; however, it has repeatedly made it clear that it will not negotiate on any of its nuclear rights.

Iran maintains that, as a signatory to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency, it has every right to acquire and develop nuclear technology for peaceful objectives.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/234532.html>

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Gulf News – U.A.E.

Iran Playing Games over Venue for Talks

Tehran dismayed at Turkey's Syria stance

By Jumana Al Tamimi, Associate Editor

April 5, 2012

Dubai: Iran, preparing to hold new talks with world powers over its controversial nuclear programme later this month, is "sending messages" to Turkey and the West by trying to change the meeting venue, according to political experts.

The talks are due to take place in Istanbul, but Tehran has suggested a number of other options including Baghdad, Beirut, Damascus or even China.

The move is designed to show dismay at Ankara's position towards the situation in Syria, and to show the West the growing Iranian influence on the region, political experts in both Turkey and Iran said.

Apart from trying to "blackmail" Turkey, Iran is also attempting to win some time by creating a debate over the venue of the talks, the experts added.

Both Turkey and western powers have lacked balance in their views on several issues, including Syria, said Mohammad Sadeq Hussaini, a veteran Iranian expert.

"The Turks have shown an imbalance, confusion and hastiness towards the Syrian file, which is a sensitive one and of importance to all the people of the region and to Syria's neighbours," he told Gulf News, in reference to the solid opposition of Syrian president Bashar Al Assad in dealing with the protests. Iran is among few supporters of the Syrian regime, along with Russia and China.

"The West also, by insisting on holding the talks in Europe or in a European ally, is also taking an imbalanced [position]," Hussaini said.

On Tuesday evening, a statement posted on the Iraqi Foreign Ministry website said an "Iranian delegation expressed the desire for Iraq to host the international meeting on the Iranian nuclear file of the five permanent members of the [UN] Security Council plus Germany].

Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari "confirmed that he will undertake the necessary contacts with the relevant parties on the proposal", the statement added.

Change still on table

But yesterday, Iran's foreign minister, Ali Akbar Salehi, said Istanbul was Iran's first choice, but kept the possibility of changing the location on the table.

"Holding talks in Baghdad, and also China, as venue has been out there," Salehi was quoted as saying after a cabinet meeting in Tehran.

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"This is a course that both sides need to agree on."

US secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced recently that the talks were due to take place on April 13 and 14 in Istanbul.

But both European and Russian officials cautioned that the venue has not been definitely set, and a Turkish diplomat was quoted as saying no formal request had been received.

Meanwhile, Mohsin Rezai, former chief of Iranian Revolutionary Guards and a close ally of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, suggested Lebanon or Syria as possible venues.

The conflicting statements reflect divisions within Iran, said Ali Bakeer, a researcher at the Ankara-based International Strategic Research Organisation, a Turkish think tank. "Holding the talks in Istanbul is considered a plus to the Turkish diplomacy. There are people in Iran who don't want to give Turkey this gain for free," Bakeer told Gulf News.

Moreover, the main element among the suggested venues in the region is prominent Iranian influence in these places.

"Therefore, any talks being held on the territories of any of the three places will be according to Iranian schedule and under Iranian conditions," Bakeer said, adding that the Iranians are trying to include the Syrian case on the discussion table with the western powers. However, disagreement will surface on the venue in the coming days, and "we will witness a procrastination game, and time will be wasted."

<http://gulfnews.com/news/region/iran/iran-playing-games-over-venue-for-talks-1.1004350>

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Ha'aretz Daily News – Israel

5 April 2012

U.S. Report: Iran Nuclear Program Hit Obstacles in 2011

In annual CIA survey submitted to Congress, Director of National Intelligence James Clapper says Syria would have been able to produce weapons-grade plutonium had its secret reactor not been destroyed in 2007.

By Amir Oren

Iran continued to advance its nuclear program in 2011, a CIA report indicated this week, adding, however, that Tehran's nuclear ambitions were frustrated by what the survey said were "some obstacles."

The findings were cited in an annual report on the "Acquisition of Technology Relating to Weapons of Mass Destruction and Advanced Conventional Munitions," submitted to Congress by U.S. Director of National Intelligence James Clapper.

In the last few days, top U.S. administration officials have expressed concern as a result of what they said was Iranian activities aimed against American forces and their allies in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton described the risk of instability that the Iranian activity represents, warning, however, of the danger of taking military action to thwart it. The CIA report released this week mainly reiterates assertions made by Clapper, as well as those made by the Pentagon's intelligence director Ronald Burgess and other senior officials as well as repeating data presented in reports by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Mainly, the survey deals with Iran's actual capabilities, as opposed to estimates regarding what the Iranian leadership intends to do with those capabilities; the report equally excludes descriptions of Iran's behavior and the actions that could take place as a result of it.

According to Clapper, until the beginning of November 2011, Iran produced about 4,900 kilograms of low-grade enriched uranium in its Natanz facility, compared to 3,200 kilograms by November of 2010, and 1,800 kilograms the year before.

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Following a further enrichment process, Iran accumulated, up until five months ago, 4,150 kilograms of uranium enriched to 3.5 percent and 80 kilograms of uranium enriched to 20 percent, which is still lower than weapons-grade enrichment levels.

In addition, while the number of centrifuges was reduced between August 2012 and November 2011 by about 10 percent – from 8,900 to 8,000 – the number of operational centrifuges in fact rose from 3,800 to 6,200.

Centrifuges, the report said, were installed in the underground facility in Fordo, near Qom, where Iran began enriching its uranium to 20 percent; the nuclear facility in Isfahan was shut down for maintenance from August 2009 to November 2011.

According to the report, Iran has almost exhausted its imported supply of "yellow cake," used in the enrichment process.

In the field of weapons development, the report claimed that Iran continued its work on long-range ballistic missiles, in addition to its development of missiles threatening naval vessels in the Persian Gulf; underground launch silos; satellite launching capabilities; and advanced communications systems.

Iran, in addition, is striving toward a completely independent ballistic missile assembly line, as it is still dependent on key foreign-made components, which it receives from firms, scientists, and engineers from North Korea, Russia, and China.

<http://www.haaretz.com/news/middle-east/u-s-report-iran-nuclear-program-hit-obstacles-in-2011-1.422754>

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AsiaOne News – Singapore

Pro-N. Korea Newspaper Hints at Nuclear Test

Agence France-Presse (AFP)

Wednesday, April 04, 2012

SEOUL - North Korea could carry out another nuclear test if the launch of its long-range rocket leads to the expected suspension of US food aid, a pro-North newspaper in Japan said on Wednesday.

North Korea says that it will launch a satellite between April 12 and 16 but the United States, South Korea and other nations see it as a pretext for a long-range missile test, which is banned by the United Nations.

Pyongyang in February agreed to suspend operations at its Yongbyon uranium enrichment plant and impose a moratorium on long-range missile tests and nuclear tests, in return for 240,000 tonnes of US food aid.

Washington said last week it was suspending plans to start food deliveries in light of the imminent rocket launch.

In return, the North may also row back on its nuclear pledge, said the Choson Sinbo newspaper, which generally reflects Pyongyang's official thinking.

"North Korea's commitment to a temporary moratorium on nuclear tests, long-range missile launches and uranium enrichment activity can be cancelled," it said.

The US aid move amounts to "turning the clock back to post-April 2009", Choson Sinbo said, referring to the North's second nuclear test in May 2009, a month after it launched a long-range rocket.

North Korea will never give up its planned satellite launch, the newspaper added.

The North is preparing mass celebrations to mark the 100th anniversary on April 15 of the birth of Kim Il-Sung, the country's first and "eternal" president and founder of the dynasty which has ruled uninterrupted since 1948.



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A successful satellite launch would burnish the image of his grandson Kim Jong-Un as he seeks to establish his credentials as a strong leader.

<http://www.asiaone.com/News/AsiaOne%2BNews/Asia/Story/A1Story20120404-337803.html>

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Washington Times

Nuke Agency Wary of N. Korea's Invitation

Stalinist nation has announced test of a missile, despite U.S. objections

By George Jahn, Associated Press

Wednesday, April 4, 2012

VIENNA — As international tensions rise over a planned North Korean rocket launch, the U.N. nuclear agency is taking a wait-and-see attitude on an offer from the North to allow agency experts back into the country, according to a letter shared with the Associated Press.

In the March 30 letter, circulated internally among the International Atomic Energy Agency's 35 member nations, IAEA head Yukiya Amano expresses thanks for the March 16 overture by North Korean Atomic Energy head Ri Je Son and says "the IAEA will follow up on your invitation in a constructive spirit."

At the same time, the letter appears to make some linkage between an IAEA mission to the North and whether a Feb. 29 agreement between Pyongyang and Washington can be salvaged despite North Korean plans for a long-range rocket launch in mid-April - a launch the U.S. says would sabotage the deal.

North Korea says the missile launch is intended to place an observation satellite into orbit. But the U.S. and others among the five countries in sporadic talks with the North view the launch as a cover for a test of an intercontinental ballistic missile that one day could carry a nuclear warhead.

The rocket test was announced March 16, the same day Pyongyang invited the IAEA to visit.

Washington argues that the launch would abrogate the Feb. 29 deal, under which the North would freeze nuclear activities and observe a moratorium on nuclear and long-range missile tests in exchange for 240,000 metric tons of food aid.

The letter says the IAEA has "an essential role to play in verifying" the North's nuclear program. But it also notes that the tentative deal between Washington and Pyongyang that is now being threatened "is an important step in the right direction."

The letter - and another one with the invitation from the North - was given to the AP by a diplomat from a board member nation who demanded anonymity because he was not authorized to share privileged material.

In recent days, IAEA officials have said privately that the agency and the North are discussing timing and scope for any visit by agency experts as well as technical details.

But the careful diplomatic language in Mr. Amano's response nearly two weeks after the North's offer suggested the IAEA chief was awaiting events tied to the planned rocket launch before formally committing his agency to specifics.

Outreach by the United States, Russia, China, South Korea and Japan in recent years has failed to obtain a permanent commitment from the North to mothball its nuclear and missile programs.

IAEA inspectors most recently were expelled three years ago after the North quit talks with the five nations and restarted its nuclear facilities. Less than a month later, in May 2009, the North conducted its second nuclear weapons test.

It first expelled agency experts 10 years ago after the collapse of a 1994 deal with Washington.

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North Korea is under tough U.N. sanctions that were tightened after its second nuclear test and the launch of a long-range rocket.

In late 2010, Pyongyang unveiled a uranium enrichment facility that could give North Korea a second route to manufacture nuclear weapons in addition to a plutonium-based program at its reactor.

The IAEA sees its return to the North as crucial to its nonproliferation mission. But the letter from the North Korean official that also was shared with the AP indicated that any IAEA mission would be able to monitor only part of activities that could produce warhead material.

It offered a discussion of "technical issues with regard to the monitoring of [a] moratorium on uranium enrichment activities" but made no mention of access to its plutonium-producing reactor for verification that it remains out of commission.

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2012/apr/4/nuke-agency-wary-of-n-koreas-invitation/?page=all#pagebreak>

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Korea Times – South Korea

April 4, 2012

Rocket Plan Shows New NK Regime's 'Structural Intransigence': Lee Advisor

North Korea's determination to go ahead with a planned long-range rocket launch is indicative of the new regime's "structural intransigence" under young leader Kim Jong-un and a "self-defeating" choice, a South Korean unification policy advisor said Wednesday.

Hyun In-taek, a unification policy advisor to President Lee Myung-bak who served as Seoul's point man on North Korea for almost three years until last October, forecast a repeat of the North's provocations in 2009, when it last launched a long-range rocket in April then conducted its second nuclear test a month later.

Despite international condemnation, North Korea has vowed to go ahead with the launch of a long-range rocket between April 12 and 16, ostensibly to put a satellite into space orbit. South Korea, the United States and other countries have condemned the proposed launch as a disguised test of the North's improved ballistic missile technology.

The North's announcement also jeopardized a Feb. 29 agreement between the food-scarce nation and the U.S., in which Pyongyang would freeze its uranium enrichment program, allow U.N. inspectors back into the country and put a moratorium on nuclear and missile tests in return for 240,000 tons of food aid from Washington.

"North Korea's long-range missile launch is a clear case to reaffirm the structural intransigence of the North Korean regime," Hyun said in a prepared speech for an academic forum in Seoul on Wednesday.

"For the new Kim Jong-un regime, the forthcoming long-range missile launch will assuredly be an event just like the behavior of 'buttoning the first button in the wrong hole,'" Hyun continued. "Eventually this event will be self-defeating behavior for North Korea."

Many analysts have been puzzled by the North's timing of the announcement of its rocket launch plan, just 16 days after the deal with the U.S. was unveiled. While visiting Seoul late last month for the Nuclear Security Summit, U.S. President Barack Obama said it was uncertain who was "calling the shots" in North Korea under the young leader.

Hyun, however, said the North's moves were deliberately calculated to bolster legitimacy for the survival of its dynastic regime, casting doubts on whether North Korea seriously and sincerely intended to fulfill its agreement with the U.S.

"From North Korea's perspective, the Feb. 29 agreement was not destined to be dead-on-arrival by accident," Hyun said.



"It is highly likely North Korea's decision on the missile launch was made far before the agreement. Under this circumstance, the Feb. 29 agreement seems to be the result of a highly calculated tactic by North Korea," the former unification minister said.

The North's latest maneuver "shows us North Korea's foreign ministry is no more than an 'errand runner' of the military authority of North Korea," Hyun said.

Together with its nuclear weapons program, the North's missile program has long been a regional security concern.

North Korea is believed to have advanced ballistic missile technology, though it is still not clear whether it has mastered the technology to put a nuclear warhead on a missile.

"We already had the exact same situation in 2009," Hyun said. "The whole message North Korea tries to convey through its plan for a long-range missile launch is that a nuclear warhead can be loaded onto the missile.

"By doing this, North Korea thinks the effect of their blackmail will be greater. This is part of their underlying and careful political calculation. Therefore, it is highly likely they will follow the same pattern."

Hyun urged the international community to "respond to North Korea with determination."

"The behavior of North Korea we perceive now indisputably damages the stability and peace of the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia. If their behavior is tolerated, we will plunge into deeper security dilemmas," he said. (Yonhap)

http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2012/04/113_108312.html

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Korea JoongAng Daily – South Korea

'Blue House Tried to Buy Nuclear Rods from North'

April 05, 2012

By Ko Jung-ae

Following a revelation by a former White House official, a senior Blue House aide admitted that the Lee Myung-bak administration had made an attempt to purchase nuclear material from North Korea to stop its atomic arms programs, but the deal failed due to Pyongyang's high-priced demands.

In his latest book "The Impossible State," Victor Cha, a professor of Georgetown University who served as director for Asian affairs in the White House National Security Council during the George W. Bush administration, unveiled Seoul's failed attempt to buy the wasted fuel rods, the main ingredient to build nuclear bombs, from North Korea in 2009.

According to Cha, the Lee administration dispatched a delegation led by Hwang Joon-kook, then the deputy chief negotiator for the six-party talks, to Pyongyang in January 2009. Hwang's mission was to purchase 8,000 spent fuel rods in order to prevent the North from reprocessing the nuclear material, Cha wrote. The North demanded an exorbitant price, and President Lee rejected it, Cha stated. Hwang is currently deployed to the Korean Embassy in Washington.

A senior Blue House official confirmed on Monday that Cha's account of the failed attempt did take place.

"Chun Yung-woo, then the chief of the six-party nuclear talks, proposed to the North in 2008 that South Korea was willing to buy the spent fuel rods if they were sold at the international market price," the source said.

"But the North later demanded an unreasonably high price."

Chun is currently serving as Lee's senior secretary for foreign and security affairs.

At the time, Pyongyang was implementing the Feb. 13, 2007 North Korea-U.S. agreement, through which it would disclose all nuclear arms and development programs and disable the nuclear facilities in Yongbyon.



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In June 2008, the North demolished the cooling tower of the Yongbyon nuclear complex, the most visible symbol of its nuclear arms programs at the time.

Only two months later, however, the North suspended the dismantling process and resumed its nuclear arms programs. The Lee administration's failed attempt to purchase the spent nuclear fuel rods from North Korea appeared to come from an existing case.

A senior Blue House official recently said nuclear materials collected from dismantled warheads were largely used for commercial power generation in the United States.

<http://koreajoongangdaily.joinsmsn.com/news/article/article.aspx?aid=2951014&cloc=joongangdaily%7Chome%7Cnewslist1>

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Seattle Times

Thursday, April 5, 2012

NKorea Launch an Intel Opportunity for US, Allies

As the U.S. and its allies decry North Korea's planned rocket launch, they're also rushing to capitalize on the rare opportunity it presents to assess the secretive nation's ability to strike beyond its shores.

By ERIC TALMADGE, Associated Press

TOKYO — As the U.S. and its allies decry North Korea's planned rocket launch, they're also rushing to capitalize on the rare opportunity it presents to assess the secretive nation's ability to strike beyond its shores.

If North Korea goes ahead with the launch, expected to take place sometime between April 12-16, the United States, Japan and South Korea will have more military assets on hand than ever to track the rocket and - if necessary - shoot it out of the sky.

Behind the scenes, they will be analyzing everything from where the rocket's booster stages fall to the shape of its nose cone. The information they gather could deeply impact regional defense planning and future arms talks.

Military planners want to know how much progress North Korea has made since its last attempt to launch a satellite three years ago. Arms negotiators will be looking for signs of how much the rocket, a modified ballistic missile launcher, depends on foreign technology.

"There are a number of things they will be watching for," said Narushige Michishita, a North Korea expert with Japan's National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies. "If North Korea does get a satellite into orbit, that means it could deliver an object anywhere on the globe, and that has intercontinental implications."

One thing analysts could quickly put to the test is North Korea's insistence that the satellite launch is a peaceful mission. Experts can easily estimate from photographs the rocket stages' mass ratio - a measure of their efficiency - and that will give a quick indication of whether the rocket is designed primarily to be a space vehicle launcher or long-range missile.

They also will be watching where the rocket goes.

North Korea says it will fire the satellite into a polar orbit. The "splash zones" for the booster stages suggest it will travel south over the East China Sea and the Pacific, rather than the easterly path it chose for a launch in 2009 that sent the rocket directly over Japan's main island.

That could indicate North Korea is being more cautious about its neighbors' reactions - though it has alarmed others such as the Philippines which could be in the rocket's path. But the launch could also have military implications.

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If North Korea were to attack the United States, Michishita said, it would likely launch to the north. It can't feasibly conduct such a test, because that would anger Russia and China, which would be under the flight path. Launching to the south can provide similar data.

Actually reaching the splash zones is another hurdle. In its 2009 launch, the stages barely made their zones, suggesting they had lower thrust than expected.

Analysts stress that success by no means suggests North Korea could pull off an attack on the U.S.

North Korea has a long way to go in testing the technologies required for re-entry - a key to missile delivery that is not tested in satellites. And while it is believed to be capable of producing nuclear weapons - and almost certainly wants to put them on a military-use missile - it is not yet able to make them small enough to load into a warhead. Doing so will likely require another nuclear test, which North Korea hasn't done since 2009.

The launcher itself is another issue - and it has a history of failure.

The Unha-3 rocket that will be used in the launch is believed to be a modified version of North Korea's long-range Taepodong-2 ballistic missile, which mixes domestic, Soviet-era and possibly Iranian designs.

North Korea launched its first Taepodong-2 in 2006 and it exploded just 40 seconds after liftoff. A follow-up attempt in 2009 got off the launch pad and successfully completed a tricky pitching maneuver, but analysts believe its third stage failed to separate properly, sending it and the satellite it carried into the Pacific.

Even so, physicists David Wright and Theodore Postol of the Union of Concerned Scientists say the 2009 launch displayed major strides over the Taepodong-1. If modified as a ballistic missile, they say, it would potentially give the North the capability to reach the continental United States with a payload of one ton.

In an analysis of the 2009 launch, Wright and Postol suggested North Korea relies heavily on a stockpile of foreign components, likely from Russia. If data from the upcoming launch confirms that, it may mean Pyongyang's missile program is severely limited by the isolated country's ability to procure new parts from abroad.

That could figure into future arms talks. If North Korea is running out of the parts it needs, it isn't likely to conduct frequent missile tests, and may be more willing to agree to test moratoriums. More emphasis on blocking its imports would also make sense if the North cannot manufacture what it needs.

What analysts find out will figure into regional security planning for years to come - as North Korea's first attempted satellite launch did in 1998.

Japan and the United States responded to that launch by pouring billions of dollars into the world's most advanced ballistic missile shield. That shield includes a network of sea-based SM-3 interceptor missiles and land-based PAC-3 Patriot missiles.

Japan is now mobilizing PAC-3 units in Okinawa, which is near the path of the upcoming launch and where more than half of the 50,000 U.S. troops in Japan are deployed. It's also mobilizing PAC-3 units in Tokyo, which is much farther from the rocket's expected path. South Korea is taking similar steps - which it didn't do in 2009.

The U.S. will be watching with equipment that was unavailable in 2009: a Sea-Based X-Band radar system, aboard a Navy ship that left Pearl Harbor late last month.

U.S. officials claim the SBX system is so powerful it can track a baseball-sized object flying through space 2,500 miles (4,000 kilometers) away. Further, if U.S. military satellites detect a flash of heat from a missile launch in North Korea, within a minute computers can plot a rough trajectory and share that information with Japan.

Tokyo and Seoul warn they will use their interceptors on anything that threatens their territory, though that is highly unlikely. No country has ever shot at another country's satellite launch, and, barring any major surprises, the North Korean rocket will be traveling mostly over water, not populated areas.



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"Whether it comes close to our southwestern islands or not, this will have significant implications for our missile defenses, and how they should be adjusted in the future," said Hiroyasu Akutsu, a senior fellow and Korea expert with the National Institute for Defense Studies, a think tank run by Japan's Defense Ministry.

http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/nationworld/2017911912_apasnkoreaintelligencebounty.html

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Korea Times – South Korea

April 5, 2012

'N. Korea's Rocket Launch Highly Likely to Succeed'

By Kim Young-jin

North Korea could very well succeed in its bid to launch a satellite into orbit on a long-range rocket, an expert said Thursday, citing the Stalinist state's suspected cooperation with Iran on missile technology.

Slated for between April 12 and 16, Pyongyang says the satellite is for purposes of science. But the plan has sent tensions soaring as Seoul and Washington believe it is thinly-veiled cover for a long range missile test.

The North has twice tried to send a satellite into orbit but Western observers say both failed, most recently in 2009, when the third stage of its Unha-2 rocket failed to ignite, according to experts. It is suspected to roll out a modified version of that rocket for the launch this month.

Yun Duk-min, a professor at the Korea National Diplomatic Academy, said the North's suspected missile cooperation with Tehran made success "highly likely" this time around, given Tehran's 2009 launching of a satellite atop its Safir 2 rocket.

"The two countries have worked closely together. This, in addition to the information that North Korea gained from its previous launches, makes it highly likely they will succeed this time," he said over the phone.

Many in the international community are worried that the test could further the North in a bid to build a missile capable of delivering a nuclear warhead as far as the United States.

Pyongyang and Tehran have long been suspected of swapping missile parts and technology and that the cooperation was particularly high during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war.

Washington has claimed that the North has assisted Tehran on its ballistic missile program. In 2006, former undersecretary of state for arms control Robert Joseph said Pyongyang had been "the principal supplier to Iran of ballistic missile technologies." The Arms Control Association reported that Iran's Shahab-3 missile is based on North Korean technology.

The North's rocket is expected to be launched from its new site in Dongchang-ri in the northwest part of the country and fly south before landing somewhere off the shores of the Philippines.

Sheila Smith, a senior analyst with the Council on Foreign Relations, said that the launch will trigger a strong U.S. response, success or failure, setting up potential tensions with China.

Beijing, Pyongyang's closest ally, protested the deployment of a U.S. nuclear-powered aircraft carrier to the West Sea for military drills with the South in response to the deadly 2010 shelling of Yeonpyeong Island.

"It will therefore evoke an alliance response for the U.S.-ROK alliance, the U.S.-Japan alliance and the U.S.-Philippine alliance," Smith said at a forum this week. "You will find that the Yellow Sea, the East China Sea and the sea between Japan and Philippines will be very full in and around the time the missile test happens. Beijing cannot be very comfortable with this turn of events."

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The North's move has already brought a strong response from the international community. In addition to Seoul and Washington, Tokyo and Moscow have said the launch would violate U.N. Security Council resolutions, while China said it was working to persuade its ally to refrain.

Analysts suspect the launch is tied to the regime's efforts to bolster the reputation of the inexperienced Kim Jong-un, who is taking power after the December death of his father, Kim Jong-il. Some also say it is part of Pyongyang's efforts to sell missile technology.

http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2012/04/116_108442.html

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Yonhap News – South Korea
April 6, 2012

N. Korea Says Interception of Its Satellite Is an Act of War

SEOUL, April 6 (Yonhap) -- North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has ratcheted up his regime's militaristic rhetoric as Pyongyang threatened to retaliate against any country that intercepts a North Korean rocket booster or collects the rocket debris.

The North has vowed to launch a rocket sometime between April 12 and 16 to put an earth observation satellite into orbit, a move widely seen as a pretext to disguise a banned test of its ballistic missile technology. The Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of Korea in Pyongyang warned that interception of the satellite would be "an act of war" and would cause a tremendous catastrophe.

Whoever "intercepts the satellite or collects its debris will meet immediate, resolute and merciless punishment" from the North, the committee said in an English-language statement carried by its Korean Central News Agency late Thursday.

The warning came days after South Korea said it was exploring measures to intercept the rocket booster in case it veers off its trajectory. Japan has also ordered its troops to shoot down the rocket if there is concern it or parts of it could land on Japan.

South Korea expects the rocket's first-stage booster to land in international waters, some 170 kilometers south of its southwestern city of Gunsan, before the rocket's second stage booster falls east of the Philippines.

The North has said it chose a safe flight path to ensure carrier rocket debris jettisoned during the flight will not impact on neighboring countries.

The statement also warned South Korea against any provocation, noting any attack by Seoul on Pyongyang would mean the "end of everything in South Korea."

South Korea is within striking distance of North Korea's missiles. Seoul, the South Korean capital city of more than 10 million people, is also within range of North Korea's conventional artillery.

North Korea "will mete out the unimaginable and the most miserable punishment to its rival if it dares fire into the sky above the (North), Pyongyang, in particular," the statement said.

The North's threat came after South Korea vowed it would attack the North's capital in retaliation if the communist country strikes Seoul.

South Korea has set up a policy of tit-for-tat retaliation in dealing with possible aggression by the North against Seoul and adjacent areas.

South Korea came under public fire for its weak response to the North's deadly shelling of a South Korean western border island in November 2010.



Meanwhile, North Korean leader Kim has also ordered his troops to bury the nation's enemies at sea if they "dare intrude into the territorial waters" of the North. Kim made the comment during his inspection trip to a navy unit that seized a U.S. spy ship, Pueblo, in 1968, the KCNA said in a dispatch on Friday.

Kim, who took over the country following his father Kim Jong-il's death in December, issued the same order during a separate tour to an islet on the east coast in recent days.

Kim "set forth the tasks for rounding off combat preparations and bolstering the combat capability," the dispatch said.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2012/04/06/8/0401000000AEN20120406001600315F.HTML>

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IBNLive – India

India to Be 6th in World to Have N-Powered Submarine

By Andhra Pradesh
April 04, 2012

VISAKHAPATNAM: India will become the sixth country in the world to operate a nuclear-propelled submarine, as the Indian Navy will induct the Russian-built Akula class Nerpa submarine in its fleet on Wednesday.

India is the 6th country, after the US, Russia, France, Britain and China, to have such a nuclear attack submarine. Rechristened as INS Chakra, the submarine was handed over to India in January this year. An Indian crew, trained in Russia, had brought the platform home. On Wednesday, Union Defence Minister AK Antony will formally induct the platform, which reached the eastern shores of the country a few days ago.

INS Chakra is considered to be one of the stealthiest nuclear submarines in the world. With its induction, Indian Navy will be operating a nuclear submarine after two decades. A projection of India's growing power in the region, the submarine will give the country sea denial capabilities.

Even though the vessel is not equipped with nuclear weapons, it would provide experience to the Indian Navy in operating similar platform with indigenous nuclear submarine programme, INS Arihant, inching closer towards completion. INS Arihant will complete India's nuclear triad - the capability of delivering nuclear weapons by air, land and water. The nuclear submarine is in sync with Indian nuclear policy of "no first use" and will act as a "deterrence" for the adversaries. The home coming of INS Chakra will mark the materializing of the \$920 million defence deal with Russia made in January 2004 that has been wrapped under a veil of secrecy so far.

<http://ibnlive.in.com/news/nuclear-submarine-india-to-be-6th-in-world/245537-60-114.html>

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Express Tribune – Pakistan

India Inducts New Russian-Made Nuclear Submarine

Indian Defence Minister AK Antony formally commissioned INS Chakra II at its base in Visakhapatnam.

By Agence France-Presse (AFP)
April 4, 2012

NEW DELHI: India returned to the elite club of countries with a nuclear-powered submarine on Wednesday when it inducted a new vessel leased from Russia.

Indian Defence Minister AK Antony formally commissioned the INS Chakra II at its base in Visakhapatnam, a naval shipyard on the country's southeast coast in the state of Andhra Pradesh.



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India is particularly keen to strengthen its maritime capabilities, given China's pursuit of a powerful "blue water" navy which Delhi sees as a threat to key shipping routes in the Indian Ocean and Indian energy assets in the South China Sea.

"This will be a big boost for the Indian navy," Antony told reporters after commissioning the vessel.

"The INS Chakra will ensure security and sovereignty of the country," he said in televised remarks.

The 8,140-tonne submarine, capable of firing a range of torpedoes as well as nuclear-tipped Granat cruise missiles, was offered to India by Moscow on a 10-year lease — a deal greeted with alarm and anger by arch rival Pakistan.

India is currently completing the development of its own Arihant-class nuclear-powered submarine and INS Chakra II is expected to help crews train for the domestic boat's introduction into service this year.

"Our crews will get the experience of operating under water for several months at a go, unlike with the conventional diesel electric submarines, which have to come to surface at regular intervals," an unnamed navy official told the PTI news agency.

The Akula II-class craft is the first nuclear-powered submarine to be operated by India since it decommissioned its last Soviet-built vessel in 1991.

With INS Chakra and the INS Arihant expected to start operational patrols by the end of the year, India will soon have two nuclear submarines guarding its vast maritime boundaries.

India signed up for the Russian submarine, formally known as Nerpa, in 2004 and it was slated to be handed over in 2009 but testing problems delayed the delivery.

The submarine was undergoing trials in the Sea of Japan in 2008 when its firefighting system accidentally went off, filling it with a toxic gas that killed 20 people on board.

Media reports also said India had complained that the weapons navigation system did not work to New Delhi's specifications.

Russia supplies 70 percent of India's military hardware but New Delhi has been unhappy about delays to arms orders from Moscow and has looked to other suppliers including Israel and the United States in recent years.

Five other countries deploy nuclear-powered submarines — Britain, China, France, the United States and Russia.

India has promised not to arm the submarine with nuclear-tipped cruise missiles under its obligations to international treaties it adopted after conducting a series of atomic tests in the 1990s.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/359577/india-inducts-new-russian-made-nuclear-submarine/>

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Indian Express – India

Navy to Operate Five Nuclear Submarines by End of Decade

By Agencies

Thursday, April 05 2012

Visakhapatnam: Indian Navy is all set to operate five nuclear submarines by the end of this decade, including two leased from Russia and three built indigenously.

India is considering a proposal to induct another nuclear submarine built in Russia and has plans of indigenously building two more Arihant Class underwater vessels to guard its maritime boundaries, Defence Minister A K Antony said.

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The Navy yesterday formally commissioned the Akula-II Class INS Chakra in Vishakhapatnam and is set to launch the INS Arihant for sea trials soon.

On India's plans to expand its nuclear submarine fleet, Antony said the government was considering a proposal in this regard and the country can afford to buy another such vessel.

"There is a proposal... Cost is not necessary. India can afford it... In the next few years, the Navy will get more submarines," the Defence Minister said at the commissioning of INS Chakra.

The Navy which currently operates more than 10 conventional diesel-electric submarines of the Kilo and HDW Class, has plans of inducting a dozen more in the next decade.

Six Scorpene submarines are being constructed at Mazagon Dockyards in Mumbai in collaboration with French DCNS and six more are planned to be built under the Project-75 India.

Terming its relation with India as "privileged strategic partnership," Russian Ambassador Alexander M Kadakin had said "Russia can give everything India needs".

Russia is also helping India in building three follow-on Talwar class guided missile frigates of which two are expected to be inducted this year.

<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/navy-to-operate-five-nuclear-submarines-by-end-of-decade/933060/>

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

McFaul Statement on Missile Defense ‘Arrogant’ - Lavrov

4 April 2012

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Wednesday described as "arrogant" a recent statement by U.S. Ambassador to Moscow Michael McFaul on missile defense.

"Yesterday our colleague – the U.S. ambassador - made a very arrogant statement that there will be no changes on the missile defense system, but as an ambassador he should understand that interests of the other state should also be taken into account," Lavrov said in Baku.

The United States will accept "no limits" on its missile defense plans but will work with Russia in the coming years to assuage Moscow's concerns over the project, McFaul said in an interview with RIA Novosti issued on Tuesday.

"We are going to accept no limitations on that whatsoever because the security of our people, of our allies, is the number-one top priority," U.S. Ambassador Michael McFaul told RIA Novosti in an interview Monday.

McFaul downplayed an assurance from U.S. President Barack Obama to his Russian counterpart, Dmitry Medvedev, that Washington would be more "flexible" on the missile defense issue after U.S. presidential elections next November.

Asked about the meaning of that assurance, overheard by reporters in what Obama apparently thought were private remarks to Medvedev as the two leaders met last month in South Korea, McFaul said: "It means we are going to build whatever missile defense system we need."

The U.S.-led NATO alliance and Russia agreed in 2010 to cooperate on building missile defenses in Europe. Russia has however demanded legally-binding, written guarantees that the project would not undermine Russian security, something Washington has declined to provide.

BAKU, April 4 (RIA Novosti)

http://en.rian.ru/military_news/20120404/172599979.html

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

CLARIFICATION: US Ambassador's Comments on Missile Defense

5 April 2012

In an interview with RIA Novosti on April 2, the US ambassador to Russia, Michael McFaul, stated that the United States would “accept no limitations” on plans for a new missile defense system that Russia views with concern. McFaul also reiterated the US assurance that any such system would not affect the strategic balance between the two countries and affirmed that Washington sought to cooperate with Moscow on this issue.

In the process of video editing, some important remarks by McFaul were omitted, resulting in a brief clip that did not reflect his full response on this topic. For the record, RIA Novosti has published a more complete clip containing McFaul's full remarks. The video of the entire interview is also available in the “Video” section on our website. RIA Novosti is dedicated to fair, balanced and objective reporting and regrets any confusion this error may have caused.

MOSCOW, April 5 (RIA Novosti)

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20120405/172635305.html>

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RT – Russia

US Missile Defense Plans may Signal Strike on Iran, Russia Warns

06 April 2012

By Robert Bridge, RT

A unified missile defense system comprising the United States and six Arab states is a signal that a military strike on Iran could be on the horizon, says the Chairman of the State Duma's International Affairs Committee.

"The formation of the missile defense system is a new step to signal the possibility of a military strike on Iran, at least in a political context," Alexey Pushkov told a round table conference on Iran at the State Duma.

Pushkov was commenting on reports that the Pentagon has agreed to form a single missile defense system with six Arab states – Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait and Qatar.

"A missile defense system is only needed in the event that Iran decides to retaliate, since there are no reasons to think that Iran would be the first to launch a strike all of a sudden," Pushkov said.

These latest developments come as the sextet of international mediators – the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany – are preparing for talks with Iran on April 13-14. The talks will focus on Iran's nuclear research activities, which some countries, including the United States and Israel, believe are being pursued with the aim of building a nuclear weapon.

Tehran vehemently denies the accusations, and says it is developing nuclear energy for the civilian sector.

Some experts say that Israel may be more inclined to launch a preemptive attack on Iran's nuclear weapons sites at this time, as the United States is occupied with its presidential election season, and President Obama is not in a position to appear weak before the pro-Israeli Republican opposition. Other factors, including Germany's decision to sell six Dolphin-class submarines to the Israeli Navy, also seem to point to a worst-case scenario brewing.

Pushkov believes Tehran may be underestimating the dangers it faces.

"Iran is underestimating the seriousness of the military threat, I think," he said. "The surgical operation the public opinion is being prepared for may deteriorate into a vast and full-scale regional war."



Pushkov went on to express what could best be described as cautious optimism over the chances of a breakthrough during the upcoming negotiations.

"Much will depend on the talks on Iran's problem," Pushkov told the Russian lawmakers. "Everyone hopes that these talks will be effective. But there is skepticism, too, given that the situation is not abating, but deteriorating, despite a flurry of political and diplomatic activity surrounding the Iranian problem."

There are indications that the situation around Iran's nuclear work could develop according to the worst-case scenario, he said.

"As you know, we have several scenarios on the table, among them the so-called military scenario of settling the Iranian problem," Pushkov noted. "Judging by statements made by some countries, this military scenario is becoming increasingly probable."

This arouses serious concerns for Russia, he added.

<http://rt.com/politics/iran-us-russia-missile-defense-war-431/>

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Voice of America

April 04, 2012

Future of US, Russian Short-Range Nuclear Weapons Could Be on Negotiating Table

By André de Nesnera

Washington: A far-reaching debate is under way among members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization over the future of tactical nuclear weapons, arms control experts say.

The United States and Russia maintain large numbers of such weapons and part of the NATO debate is about whether Washington and Moscow should open negotiations to reduce the stockpiles, which some experts consider more of a liability than an asset.

U.S. President Barack Obama has made reducing the number of nuclear weapons worldwide a priority issue of his foreign policy. Experts say that goal was furthered by the New START treaty the U.S. and Russia signed in 2010. The treaty calls for Washington and Moscow to reduce the number of long-range or strategic nuclear weapons, by half.

START

But the New START agreement does not address the issue of short-range or tactical nuclear weapons. Those are mounted on land- and air-based missiles with a range of less than 500 kilometers - so called "battlefield weapons" used alongside conventional forces.

Neither the U.S. nor Russia has provided detailed information about their stockpiles of tactical nuclear weapons.

But analysts estimate Russia has between 2,000 and 4,000 tactical nuclear weapons. Not all are available for operational use. Some are in deep storage bunkers and others are slated to be dismantled.

The United States is estimated to have about 200 short-range nuclear missiles, mainly located in five European countries: Germany, Italy, Turkey, Belgium and The Netherlands.

NATO debate

Joseph Cirincione, president of the Ploughshares Fund, a foundation focusing on nuclear weapons policy, says there is an internal debate within NATO on what to do with the tactical weapons.



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"The Germans and the Belgians in particular have pressed to get the weapons out of Europe," Cirincione said in an interview with VOA. "They say these are anachronistic, that maybe there was a purpose for these during the Cold War."

The Belgians and Germans, he said, find it inconceivable that they would face any military contingency that would require the use of tactical nuclear weapons.

But that attitude is not shared by most other NATO nations, according to David Holloway, an arms control expert at Stanford University. Others feel differently, he says, "most notably the countries of central and eastern Europe, who are more acutely aware of the kind of danger of Russian military power.

"Because given their history and more fearful of Russian intentions, they say: 'No, we should keep the tactical nuclear weapons in Europe, even though they are not based in central or eastern Europe. We should keep them in Europe as a kind of signal to Russia that it needs to be careful in how it conducts its policy toward Europe.'"

Asset or liability?

Complicating the issue is the question of security - making sure that the weapons are kept out of the hands of terrorists or others trying to acquire nuclear capabilities.

"You have a greater security risk for tactical weapons than you have for strategic weapons," Cirincione said. "And the reason is that the strategic weapons tend to be bolted onto large pieces of metal - missiles, or at bomber bases - things that are very secure, very hard to steal."

Tactical weapons, particularly with the Russian weapons, he said, tend to be in storage depots that are less secure.

"And there are lots of them," Cirincione said of the tactical warheads. "So you are talking about thousands of tactical weapons compared to hundreds of strategic weapons."

Seeking right mix

Daryl Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association, a private research firm, says NATO is currently revising its military doctrine, which will be discussed at its May summit in Chicago. Specifically, he says NATO members will be considering how to achieve the proper mix of nuclear, conventional forces and missile defenses needed to protect alliance countries.

"NATO can be expected to say at the Chicago summit that NATO's defense can be maintained with conventional forces primarily, and the supreme guarantee of the alliance's defense are the strategic nuclear weapons that the United States and France and the United Kingdom possess," Kimball told VOA. "They will likely say that they are interested in further steps with Russia to account for and reduce tactical nuclear weapons."

Kimball cautions, however, that he and other experts following the issue do not expect U.S.-Russia talks on the tactical weapons issue to begin anytime soon, given the presidential campaign now under way in the United States.

<http://www.voanews.com/english/news/europe/US-Russian-Short-Range-Nuclear-Weapons-Could-be-on-Negotiating-Table-146122895.html>

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Washington Post

Controversial Bird Flu Experiments Produced No Killer Virus, Scientists Say

By David Brown

April 3, 2012

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LONDON — Two controversial research projects with the H5N1 bird flu virus haven't produced a killer bug but have generated useful information, two researchers told scientists and bioethicists gathered here to talk about the benefits and pitfalls of manipulating deadly pathogens.

"We can use this information to understand what's happening in nature," Yoshihiro Kawaoka of the University of Wisconsin told the group, which is meeting to discuss experiments on the much-feared flu strain that has infected 600 people, killing more than half of them, since 2003. He said his work is already shedding light on outbreaks in Egypt, the country with the second-largest number of H5N1 cases over that period.

The meeting at the Royal Society was called after two science journals agreed in December to hold off publishing two papers on the bird flu experiments because they were thought to contain information too dangerous for public consumption. The journals were asked to do so by the National Science Advisory Board for Biosecurity, a committee of scientists that advises the U.S. government about federally funded research, such as these experiments.

That committee changed its mind last week after a closer examination of old and new data provided by Kawaoka and Ron Fouchier, who heads a research team at Erasmus Medical Center in Rotterdam. The journals, *Nature* and *Science*, say they plan to publish the papers soon.

A few details of Fouchier's experiment were released last month, allaying some fears about its hazards. Kawaoka revealed an even fuller version of his work here Tuesday, further defusing worries. Numerous listeners, however, said it is only a matter of time before the question of whether to publish the results of "dual-use research" — research that could be used for good or bad purposes — comes up again.

Normally, bird flu is hard for people to catch. It requires close contact with sick birds and almost never passes from person to person. The ease of transmission is mostly determined by the structure of one protein, hemagglutinin. Kawaoka wanted to find out what mutations in that protein's gene might make the virus more contagious in people.

He put a bird flu hemagglutinin gene into the 2009 pandemic "swine flu" virus and by various methods induced four mutations in it. The final bug was easily passed between ferrets, unlike viruses containing a "wild" bird flu hemagglutinin gene. But the engineered virus didn't kill the animals and didn't even make them as sick as the swine flu virus. The infections were also easily stopped with the drug Tamiflu.

In short, it wasn't a Doomsday virus, as rumors about Kawaoka's and Fouchier's work had suggested. It was, however, a useful one, Kawaoka argued to the Royal Society audience of about 250.

Three of the four mutations were near a part of the hemagglutinin protein that attaches to cells of the nose, throat and lungs. H5N1 flu samples from Egypt are more likely to have changes in that part of the protein than samples found elsewhere. In the past three years, 71 percent of Egyptian samples from chickens, and all the samples from human cases, have mutations in that site.

This suggests that Egypt's bird flu has a particular propensity for human infection and may warrant especially close surveillance. "This information is important for risk assessment," Kawaoka said.

Fouchier's experiment started with a whole H5N1 bird flu virus that came from Indonesia, which has had more human cases than any other country. He then genetically doctored it in a way that he is not allowed to describe because the Dutch government has put an "export control" on the information. At a meeting in Washington in March, however, Fouchier revealed that the virus killed ferrets only if it was sprayed directly into their windpipes. When it passed cage to cage in the air as the animals coughed and sneezed, none died.

"We have heard in the press that if this escapes, it will kill half the world's population. I find that very doubtful," he said here Tuesday.

However, many people who read the manuscript Fouchier provided to the biosecurity panel said it was impossible to tell how lethal his virus was.



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"It was not clear. It was not clear," said Robert G. Webster, a flu researcher from St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis whom the committee called on for advice. He added, "There was a great misunderstanding on my own part, and on the part of the [committee], on the question of a transmissible lethal virus in ferrets."

Fouchier has now cleared that up.

Staff writer David Brown is one of the speakers at the Royal Society meeting.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/controversial-bird-flu-experiments-produced-no-killer-virus-scientists-say/2012/04/03/gIQAfBV7tS_story.html

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U.S. News & World Report
OPINION/DOTMIL

Source Says White House Never Floated Cut to Only 300 Warheads

April 3, 2012

The White House never asked for options about shrinking the U.S. nuclear arsenal to just 300 deployed warheads, a former senior official says.

"The Pentagon was never asked to look at options for going to 300," says Steven Pifer, a former U.S. ambassador to Ukraine, citing conversations with Defense Department officials.

Several media outlets reported earlier this year that the Obama White House had directed the Pentagon to draw up plans for three nuclear force sizes smaller than the current arsenal: one as low as 1,000; another around 700; and third as small as 300.

The Pentagon continues to play coy--perhaps giving the White House cover since congressional Republicans react violently to any talk of further trimming America's most lethal weapon fleet.

"The Pentagon explored the full range of options with the White House," says a senior U.S. defense official.

Ohio GOP Rep. Mike Turner, who chairs a House subcommittee that oversees nuclear weapons, hit Obama hard over the issue in a recent speech: "It has not yet been explained to me how fewer nuclear weapons in the U.S. deterrent is necessarily better for the country's security."

Turner went on to imply Obama is not taking the issue of nuclear weapons seriously enough.

"We have to be adults about these issues; the nuclear deterrent is too important to our national security," Turner said. "Every other president has asked one simple question" about arsenal size: "What level of nuclear forces do I need to ensure that a potential enemy or adversary knows that if he attacks the United State or our allies, we will have the ability to respond with nuclear forces that could result in nothing less than total devastation," the lawmaker added.

A White House National Security Council spokesman did not reply to a request for comment.

The U.S. has between 1,700 and 2,000 operational strategic nuclear warheads and bombs right now, according to the Brookings Institution. Under an arms-reduction treaty with Russia implemented last year, that figure is set to fall to around 1,500 deployed nuclear weapons.

The United States also has 4,900 "additional strategic and non-strategic warheads not limited by the treaty that the U.S. military wants to retain as a 'hedge' against unforeseen future threats," states a Brookings fact sheet.

Obama has talked of a "nuclear-free world," and has pushed hard for nuclear weapons reductions between the Cold War foes. Some more pragmatic Obama administration officials want to pare the arsenal because the weapons are very expensive to maintain and upgrade. These officials have said trimming the arsenal would save hundreds of millions annually, while leaving more than enough warheads to deter or respond to a nuclear strike on U.S. targets.

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But longtime national security expert Loren Thompson of the Lexington Institute tells DOTMIL political pressure likely will lead Obama away from more nuclear reductions.

"The Obama administration considered a series of nuclear force postures including some that were very low," Thompson says. "However, Obama is already running up against the limits of what Congress will approve. Sometimes, cutting weapons too much makes you less safe rather than more safe."

DOTMIL is brought to you by veteran national security correspondent John Bennett and the U.S. News & World Report staff.

<http://www.usnews.com/news/blogs/dotmil/2012/04/03/source-says-white-house-never-floated-cut-to-only-300-warheads>

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency
OPINION/Interview

No Limitations on U.S. Missile Defense: Envoy

3 April 2012

MOSCOW, April 3 (Anastasia Markitan, RIA Novosti)

The United States will accept no limits on its missile defense plans but will work with Russia in the coming years to assuage Moscow's concerns over the project, the U.S. envoy to Russia said.

"We are going to accept no limitations on that whatsoever because the security of our people, of our allies, is the number-one top priority," U.S. Ambassador Michael McFaul told RIA Novosti in an interview Monday.

McFaul downplayed an assurance from U.S. President Barack Obama to his Russian counterpart, Dmitry Medvedev, that Washington would be more "flexible" on the missile defense issue after U.S. presidential elections next November.

Asked about the meaning of that assurance, overheard by reporters in what Obama apparently thought were private remarks to Medvedev as the two leaders met last month in South Korea, McFaul said: "It means we are going to build whatever missile defense system we need."

He reiterated however the U.S. argument that its missile defense plans will not, and are not intended to alter the strategic balance between Russia and the United States in any way and said work with Russia "will be one of the most important issues for the second term of the Obama administration."

"The president believes that this is an issue where we can turn from confrontation to cooperation because we have no interest in building a missile defense system against Russia's nuclear arsenal," McFaul added.

The U.S.-led NATO alliance and Russia agreed in 2010 to cooperate on building missile defenses in Europe. Russia has however demanded legally-binding, written guarantees that the project would not undermine Russian security, something Washington has declined to provide.

Obama's predecessor, George W. Bush, unilaterally terminated U.S. adherence to the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty it signed with the former Soviet Union, a landmark pact of the Cold War that tightly regulated missile defense development by both Washington and Moscow.

Washington has since insisted that Moscow accept verbal assurances that future U.S. missile defense plans are not directed against Russia's strategic missile capability but only against missile threats from "rogue states." Iran and North Korea are often mentioned in that context.

Focus on Trade to Pursue 'Reset'

Issue No. 995, 06 April 2012

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McFaul, credited with spearheading the diplomatic “reset” that helped ease strained U.S.-Russian relations in recent years, said the two countries needed to focus on building business and trade cooperation in order to keep their slowly-improving ties on track.

“For our two countries to have more stable and normal relations, we need to have more trade, more investment, more connectivity – not just between arms controllers, but between people doing business,” the U.S. ambassador said.

In addition to supporting Russia’s accession to the World Trade Organization, the United States was taking steps, including easing some travel visa regulations, aimed at helping spur trade and investment between the two countries.

“Facilitating more economic cooperation is one of my highest priorities,” said McFaul. The U.S. envoy has regularly called on Congress to repeal the Cold War-era Jackson-Vanik amendment which penalizes U.S. companies that sell certain products to Russia.

The amendment links bilateral trades with human rights and some U.S. lawmakers have called for it to be replaced with a new law making similar linkage – something for which the Obama administration has shown little enthusiasm.

‘Security Relationship’ with Georgia

McFaul said the Obama administration has worked hard to ease tensions in the Caucasus region of the former Soviet Union, where Russia and Georgia fought a brief war in 2008, but added that Washington would not sacrifice its relations with either for the benefit of the other.

“We have a security relationship with Georgia, we have for years, and we’ll continue to have that,” McFaul said. “But we don’t think it has to come at the expense of our relationship with Russia.”

The envoy said he was not aware of any specific statement by the U.S. ambassador to Tbilisi announcing a resumption of arms supplies to Georgia – a story reported widely in Russian media, drawing a sharp rebuke from the Russian Foreign Ministry last week.

However, McFaul said that helping ensure stability in the Caucasus region and reducing international tensions there was among the top priorities for the Obama administration.

Regrets ‘Wild’ Russia Remark

McFaul, who became the subject of intense and critical coverage in Russian media shortly after he took up his post in January over a meeting with political figures including hardline anti-Kremlin activists, voiced regret over a recent remark describing Russia as a “wild” country.

“I most certainly regret that I did not speak properly,” McFaul said, referring to the remark he made in apparent exasperation as he was confronted by a group of journalists from the Kremlin-friendly NTV television network.

He attributed his comment to “rusty” Russian language skills. He again however voiced dismay that the meeting with opposition figures had generated such a negative reaction in Russia, saying that his Russian counterpart in Washington met Republican Party leaders despite Obama being of the Democratic Party.

“This is normal diplomacy... to meet with opposition leaders,” McFaul said. “Why it’s such a big deal here – that’s a mystery to me.”

<http://en.rian.ru/analysis/20120403/172574467.html>

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Wall Street Journal
OPINION/Opinion Asia
April 4, 2012

Shoot It Down

Issue No. 995, 06 April 2012

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Blowing up North Korea's missile would help achieve a durable peace.

By MICHAEL AUSLIN

Will this month's missile launch by North Korea be the straw that breaks the camel's back? Pyongyang's blatant abrogation of the spirit of its Feb. 29 agreement with the Obama administration and flouting of United Nations resolutions banning missile launches has enraged the White House and energized both Seoul and Tokyo. Disguising the test as a "satellite launch" convinced no one, and talk is now about how to punish new leader Kim Jong Eun.

This time, the U.S., along with its allies South Korea and Japan, should consider blowing the North's missile out of the sky. Doing so won't cause war, and it may be the surest way to preserve peace. It would send a message far more clearly than any future negotiations could, and might lead to a more durable political settlement in Northeast Asia.

Diplomatists will be horrified at this suggestion, but there are sound reasons for taking a stand now, starting with the geopolitics. The White House convinced itself that there was a chance for a new start with Kim Jong Eun, even if no one changed at the top of the North Korean regime except its public face. When Washington tried the carrot, it was rewarded with one of the more subtle North Korean bait-and-switches in recent memory.

There is little prospect for any future negotiations under the current administration, but high likelihood for more destabilizing action by the North. Taking military action against an illegal missile test would show Kim and his military leaders that there also is a stick that the West can wield. That alone might cause better behavior. Pyongyang's overriding concern is survival and the West's use of military force to defend interests and uphold international norms of behavior—instead of just talking about all this—may make the regime think hard about its long-term interests.

What's more, shooting down the missile is a proportionate, limited and clearly defensible action. It is neither aggressive nor provocative. It can be justified with reference to U.N. resolutions and long-standing self-defense pacts with Asian allies.

This is not like previous missile tests, where Washington and its allies did nothing. With the missile traversing Japanese islands and American bases and aiming for the waters of Southeast Asia, there is a much higher chance of something going wrong and the missile falling on the territory of other nations.

Shooting it down then also prevents further possible escalation, especially considering the dramatically heightened concern of both South Korea and Japan. For its part, the South remains prepared to respond with overwhelming military force to any North Korean provocation, a legacy of Pyongyang's sinking of a South Korean naval ship and the shelling of an island in 2010. If the missile aborts over South Korean territory, a war could break out. Seoul has indicated it may shoot down the missile, as has Tokyo—the missile passes over Okinawa and other Japanese territory.

Instead of South Korea and Japan going it alone, it would be far preferable for Washington to coordinate with its allies, lend technical assistance and take multilateral action. Such an approach would allay any fears both countries have about the U.S. commitment to their security and would open up opportunities for new security relations between Tokyo and Seoul. Not least, it also would show China that the allies have no more patience for its games of "will we or won't we" on pressuring Pyongyang to act peacefully.

Alternately, if Washington and Seoul do nothing right now, the North might be emboldened to further acts in coming days that would unleash a bigger military response by Seoul. In fact, failing to respond in any significant way means the North will become accustomed to launching missiles with unknown payloads over foreign countries, with more chances of accidents occurring. Eventually, there will be a larger public demand, in Asia and the U.S., to eliminate this threat. Asian democracies will be disappointed with Washington's unwillingness to take their fears seriously.

Despite the unprecedented threat, there is no indication that the White House is thinking about shooting down the missile. The Pentagon is doing the same things it did last time the North shot off ballistic missiles in 2009: It's moving some ships to the area, sending a radar platform into Asian waters and assuring our friends that we stand by them.

This time, it needs to do more. The White House is right that we face a new era with North Korea. But, to break the logjam with North Korea, convince America's friends of its steadfastness and make clear Washington's repeated



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assertions that it acts to uphold international public order, President Obama should avoid the false choice between doing nothing and risking war.

Mr. Auslin is a scholar at the American Enterprise Institute and a columnist for wsj.com.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303299604577323412088526458.html>

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Kansas City Star
OPINION/Editorial
Wednesday, April 4, 2012

North Korea Again Fools the West with Empty Promises

When the last dictator of North Korea died and his son took over, some wondered whether the new guy — Kim Jong-un — might be willing to try a different approach with the outside world.

It didn't take long for the answer: No, he won't.

Since 1994, the North Koreans have played the same game of extortion, over and over. They promise to back away from their nuclear weapons, ballistic missile development or other provocative acts in exchange for aid from the West, such as food. The West agrees, then Pyongyang reneges on the deal.

On Feb. 29, North Korea agreed to a moratorium "on nuclear tests, long-range missile launches and uranium enrichment activity." The United States declared it had no hostile intent toward the North and pledged to provide 240,000 metric tons of food aid.

Two weeks later, North Korea said, Oh by the way, we plan to launch a satellite in April.

Oops. Don't you need a long-range missile to launch a satellite? A similar 2009 launch — also ostensibly to lift a satellite into orbit — was seen by U.S. officials as merely another test of the North's Taepodon-2 intercontinental ballistic missile.

What makes this latest charade so unfortunate is that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton struck exactly the right note late last year. She said America did not "intend to reward the North just for returning to the table." Yet that's exactly what the administration has done, undermining U.S. credibility.

<http://www.kansascity.com/2012/04/04/3536486/the-stars-editorial-north-korea.html>

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Montgomery Advertiser — Montgomery, AL
OPINION/Letters
April 4, 2012

In Solving North Korea Problem, All Roads Lead to Beijing

Written by Xiaoxiong Yi

The 2012 Nuclear Security Summit, attended by leaders from 54 nations, including the United States and China, concluded March 27 in Seoul. South Korea is an important choice for the global nuclear summit because of its position as a non-nuclear-weapon state with a nuclear-armed North Korea on its border.

Pyongyang, however, had hijacked the world nuclear conference by announcing a plan to blast a satellite into space on the back of a long-range rocket in mid-April. The U.S. and its allies immediately condemned the North's satellite launching as a disguised way of testing military missiles in defiance of the U.N. Security Council resolutions 1718 and 1874, which banned "all missile activity" by North Korea, including "any launch using ballistic missile technology."

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Washington has called Pyongyang's announcement of the launch "highly provocative." Merely a month ago, U.S. chief negotiator on North Korea Glyn Davies and North Korean vice foreign minister Kim Kye-Gwan conducted "substantive and serious" bilateral nuclear talks in Beijing. Under the Feb. 29 Davis-Kim agreement, Pyongyang agreed to set a moratorium on its long-range missile launches, suspend its enrichment of nuclear fuel and permit the resumption of inspections at North Korea's nuclear facilities by IAEA representatives. For its part, Washington pledged to provide North Korea with 265,000 tons of food aid.

Some analysts and media pundits have hailed the Obama administration's "Food for Peace" plan as offering "plenty of reasons for hope." As an editorial in the Pittsburgh Post put it, "What's different now? First, North Korea's previous leader, Kim Jong-Il, died in December and was succeeded by his son, Kim Jong-Un. When an older hardliner is replaced by a younger ruler, there is some reason to look hopefully for positive change. The other difference is North Korea's 24 million people have suffered more hunger, penury and isolation since talks with Pyongyang were suspended in 2008. Everyone should be hopeful about the prospects for this agreement. A North Korea that does not wave its nuclear weapons around is a meritorious goal in Asia and in the world."

North Korea's decision to launch another satellite around the April 12-16 launch window has greatly frustrated these North Korea watchers. "This planned launch," Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asia and Pacific Security Affairs Peter Lavoy told the House Armed Services Committee, "manifests North Korea's desire to test and expand its long-range missile capability. We believe this reflects their lack of desire to follow through on their commitments, and so we've ... been forced to suspend providing nutritional assistance to North Korea."

So just when one thought it was safe to go back to the negotiation table with the North Koreans, Pyongyang pulled the rug out from under everyone. What is Pyongyang up to?

Perhaps no one should be surprised by Pyongyang's sudden change of course. As Ralph Cossa of Center for Strategic and International Studies points out, "The promised U.S. nutritional assistance was neither in the form nor quantity desired, came with monitoring strings attached -- recall the North had just turned down an offer for food aid from South Korea because it wasn't 'pure,' i.e., it included monitors. Why put up with such indignities when Beijing continues to provide for all your needs with no apparent strings attached and despite your bad behavior?"

Indeed, China is the key in solving the Korean quandary, and once again, it all comes down to China. Unless Beijing steps in and stops protecting Pyongyang unconditionally, everything will go according to Pyongyang's plan: Creating divisions between the United States and its allies by trying to fly a missile or two through Northeast Asia long has been a time-honored North Korean game.

As a result, some in the Obama administration now are beginning to openly criticize China for its knowing ignorance of North Korea's bad behavior. Most recently, Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, made it clear that he sees the "reckless behavior of the North Korean regime" as "enabled by their friends in China."

China and the United States have significant shared interests on the Korean Peninsula. However, for the sake of Sino-U.S. cooperation, as Gordon Flake of the Mansfield Foundation emphasized, "Chinese leaders need to realize that their current approach is counterproductive, threatening not only U.S.-China cooperation, but the very stability of the Korean Peninsula and the region. What's required is not for China to abandon its erstwhile ally, but simply to stop shielding North Korea from the consequences of its actions."

Xiaoxiong Yi is the director of Marietta College's China Program.

<http://www.montgomeryadvertiser.com/article/BA/20120405/OPINION02/204050307/In-solving-North-Korea-problem-all-roads-lead-Beijing?odyssey=nav%7Chead>

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National Post – Ontario, Canada
OPINION/Columnist

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Peter Goodspeed: Dueling Tests could Pit North Korean Rocket against U.S. Shield

By Peter Goodspeed
April 5, 2012

Don't be surprised if the United States suddenly decides to conduct a major, not-so-secret, test of its proposed anti-missile defence shield within the next few weeks.

How about on April 15 – the centennial anniversary of the birth of North Korean founder Kim Il Sung?

North Korea has already announced plans to provide a convenient target with the scheduled launch of a “satellite” on a long-range, multi-stage rocket that will be fired over Japan towards the United States in a belligerent display of Pyongyang's potential nuclear weapon capabilities.

North Korea's announcement of the test has infuriated Washington, because it was made just days after the North Koreans had made a breakthrough agreement on its nuclear program. Pyongyang announced in February it would temporarily suspend nuclear tests, long-range ballistic missile launches and nuclear activities in return for 240,000 metric tons of food from the United States.

While the sudden erratic show of North Korea's pugnaciousness runs true to form, it may offer Washington a priceless opportunity to re-assert itself internationally. Shooting down a North Korean intercontinental ballistic missile that is capable of carrying a nuclear warhead would provide the Americans with a real-time test of a new multi-billion dollar defence system that is central to U.S. foreign policy planning.

It could also provide the North Koreans with a stark demonstration of their own vulnerability. Instead of trying to terrorize its neighbours by brandishing weapons of mass destruction, North Korea would visibly be exposing itself to the possibility of massive retaliation.

It might be enough to force new leader Kim Jong Un to reconsider following exactly in his father's footsteps.

Shooting down the North Korean missile could also provide rogue nations like Iran with something to think about, while doing much to reassure Israel over U.S. promises of protection in the face of Iran's growing nuclear threat. A powerful demonstration of U.S. missile defence capabilities, may serve as a sobering reminder of Washington's power just as Iran plans to sit down to discuss its nuclear program with the United States, Britain, France, China, Russia and Germany in Istanbul on April 13.

Peter Goodspeed is an award winning reporter with the National Post. He specializes in foreign affairs writing and has worked as a foreign correspondent and foreign editor for 25 years.

<http://fullcomment.nationalpost.com/2012/04/05/peter-goodspeed-duelling-tests-could-pit-north-korean-rocket-against-u-s-shield/>

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Wall Street Journal
OPINION/Review & Outlook
Editorial
April 5, 2012

Intercepting Kim's Rocket

A successful North Korean test could put Alaska at risk.

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With little fanfare, a showdown may be looming over North Korea's latest missile launch next week. Japan is threatening to shoot down the missile if it flies over Japanese airspace—as a previous North Korean missile did in

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1998—and it has deployed Aegis destroyers and Patriot ABM batteries in a show of resolve. The U.S. should do everything it can to help Japan follow through.

North Korea's new leader Kim Jong Eun announced the test of the Taepodong 2 long-range missile only weeks after agreeing to curtail its nuclear weapons programs in return for American food aid. The launch is part of the usual Kim dynasty pattern of mixing military provocation with the appearance of diplomatic conciliation to extort Western concessions that have always arrived.

So it was after the first North Korean nuclear crisis of 1994 (rewarded by the Clinton Administration with the Yongbyon Agreed Framework deal), and after another in 2006 (rewarded by the Bush Administration with the lifting of money-laundering sanctions and the removal of Pyongyang from the list of terrorism sponsors). Now North Korea is looking for its bribe from the Obama Administration, which until the February 29 deal had shown an admirable unwillingness to negotiate with the regime.

The missile test is even more important to the North as a way to extend the reach of its nuclear threat. The destitute kingdom is believed to have a handful of bombs but no way to deliver them other than by smuggling. A nuclear-armed missile would immediately give Pyongyang more international leverage. The Taepodong 2 has a range of 6,000 kilometers, so a successful test could put Alaska at risk. Previous tests may have been duds, but nobody should treat them as jokes. Iran, which uses North Korean missile technology, will be especially interested in the result.

The U.S. has suspended its food aid, but otherwise its response to the North's provocation has been mostly words. North Korea has promised not to violate Japan's or anyone else's airspace in launching the missile, but that still puts it in violation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1874, which passed the last time the North fired a Taepodong 2 in 2009. If the Obama Administration is intent on referring all security issues to the U.N., it should at least enforce the U.N.'s writ when it is so blatantly violated.

The U.S. could help by declaring that it is working closely with Japan and South Korea on a coordinated effort to shoot down the missile no matter where it flies. That might deter a launch in the first place. But in any case it would signal that the U.S. will not allow the North to perfect the means to deliver a nuclear warhead.

It would also be a real-world test of missile-defense technology, and if it succeeds would be a useful demonstration to the world's rogues that the U.S. and its allies aren't helpless against their missile attacks. A show of support for South Korea and Japan would also help American credibility in an era when U.S. security commitments have become increasingly questioned.

It's possible that North Korea will act out militarily if its missile is intercepted, and the allies need to be prepared. But if the allies don't show resolve in stopping Kim III now, the North will continue to develop the means to be able to hit Japan and the U.S. with a nuclear missile. Having failed to stop the North from developing a bomb, the U.S. can't afford to let the world's second most dangerous country become a global missile threat.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303816504577321094138843950.html>

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The Atlantic
OPINION/Commentary
By Zachary Keck

The New Domino Theory: We're Wrong About an Iranian Nuclear Arms Race

Many in the U.S. warn that an Iranian bomb will compel its neighbors to go nuclear as well, but much like the Cold War "Domino Theory" about the spread of communism, they're wrong.

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Even as other issues surrounding Iran's nuclear program are debated, there is a wide-ranging consensus in the West that an Iranian bomb would precipitate a regional nuclear-arms race, if not a global one. Senators Lindsay Graham (R-SC), Robert Casey (D-PA) and Joseph Lieberman (I-CT) said as much in the pages of the *Wall Street Journal* in March. Similarly, British foreign secretary William Hague worries that if Iran acquires a nuclear weapon, "the most serious round of nuclear proliferation" to date would commence. And recently in the *New York Times*, Ari Shavit of *Haaretz* stated matter-of-factly that "an Iranian bomb will bring about universal nuclear proliferation."

Fortunately for mankind's sake, there is no evidence to support these apocalyptic prophecies. Although some precautionary actions might be prudent, neither history nor contemporary circumstances indicate that an Iranian atomic weapon would be a nuclear catalyst.

Historical Precedents

To begin with, fears of an impending nuclear tipping point have been a regular feature of the nuclear age. The CIA is a case in point. Whereas in 1957 the agency predicted ten countries could go nuclear within a decade, by 1975 it concluded that "logically" nuclear proliferation would only subside when "all political actors, state and non-state, are equipped with nuclear armaments." A quarter century and one nuclear power later (both South Africa and Pakistan acquired a nuclear-weapons capability during this time, but South Africa dismantled all its nuclear weapons by 1991), CIA director George Tenet announced in 2003 that we had entered "a new world of proliferation" and warned "the 'domino theory' of the twenty-first century may well be nuclear."

The 1960s were equally remarkable. As a presidential candidate in 1960, for example, John F. Kennedy foresaw "ten, fifteen, or twenty nations" acquiring a nuclear capability by the 1964 election. The following year, the Kennedy administration was so certain a Chinese nuclear test would trigger a global wave of nuclear proliferation that it considered simply giving Beijing's neighbors "defensive nuclear weapons." Although not a single additional nuclear power emerged by 1963, President Kennedy remained "haunted by the feeling" that there would be fifteen or twenty of them by 1975 and possibly twenty-five by the end of that decade.

And yet nearly half a century after the Cuban missile crisis there are only nine nuclear-weapon states, five more than when Kennedy was elected and two of which already had advanced nuclear weapon programs during his presidency. During the same time interval, four states have voluntarily given up their nuclear arsenals and an estimated forty nations have not built them despite possessing the technical capability to do so.

The Future of Proliferation

Still, just because nuclear forbearance has been the norm thus far doesn't necessarily mean this will continue into the future. In fact, according to Shavit, an Iranian bomb would "force Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Egypt to acquire their own." Similarly, President Barack Obama is "almost certain" that if Iran gets nuclear weapons, its neighbors will be "compelled" to do the same.

Once again, there's not much evidence to support these assertions. Although a few countries have built nuclear weapons because a rival acquired them, these are the exceptions to the general rule. Of the quantitative studies done on reactive proliferation, none have found a nuclear-armed rival makes a state more likely to even initiate a nuclear-weapons program, much less succeed. Furthermore, as the political scientist Jacques Hymans documents in a forthcoming book, despite the diffusion of technology, nuclear aspirants have become increasingly inefficient and unsuccessful over time.

It's therefore not surprising that in-depth case studies of Turkey's, Egypt's and Saudi Arabia's nuclear prospects have found no cause for concern. Turkey is the most capable of building nuclear weapons but already has a nuclear deterrent in the form of an estimated ninety nuclear warheads hosted on its territory for the United States. This is far more than what it is capable of producing indigenously. Additionally, it's hard to square Turkey's supposed nuclear ambitions with the recent removal of its entire stockpile of highly enriched uranium.



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Egypt is far less capable of building a bomb than Turkey. Indeed, it already had a dysfunctional nuclear program during the 1960s that was abandoned despite Israel, its archenemy at the time, acquiring a nuclear capability. Even before the onset of the Arab Spring, proliferation analyst Jim Walsh argued it was "not likely that Egypt will seek, let alone acquire, nuclear weapons." In the aftermath of Mubarak's overthrow, any government in Cairo will be preoccupied with improving the lot of its people, lest it too wind up on trial. Achieving economic growth will require sustained access to foreign capital, markets and financial assistance, none of which would be forthcoming if Cairo initiated a nuclear-weapons program.

Given its long-standing rivalry with Tehran, Saudi Arabia is certainly the most alarmed by the prospect of a nuclear-armed Iran. Moreover, Saudi Prince Turki al-Faisal, former head of intelligence and ambassador to the United States and the United Kingdom, has repeatedly warned that if Iran is allowed to get nuclear weapons, the kingdom may well do the same. Of course, this might be what a nation would say if it wanted Washington to "cut off the head of the snake" in Tehran.

In fact, as *Nuclear Threat Initiative* concludes, "no convincing evidence exists . . . that Saudi Arabia is attempting to develop, or has the motivation to develop, a nuclear weapons program." Similarly, in his comprehensive study that included fieldwork inside the kingdom, Ibrahim Al-Marashi found "little evidence . . . that Saudi Arabia would seek to engage directly in a regional nuclear arms race."

If Saudi Arabia did pursue nuclear weapons, however, it would be almost certain to fail. Even those most concerned about a Saudi bomb don't claim it can build one itself. Rather, they contend Riyadh will buy a ready-made nuclear deterrent from Pakistan. Pakistan's willingness to take this unprecedented action is based on pure speculation, past Saudi aid to Pakistan and a host of unsubstantiated claims, most notably those made by Mohammed al-Khilewi, a Saudi diplomat at the UN who defected in 1994. In seeking to gain asylum into the United States, al-Khilewi told U.S. authorities that in exchange for financial aid, Pakistan had agreed to provide Riyadh with a nuclear deterrent should the need ever arise.

Besides al-Khilewi's obvious motives for fabricating this story, it's doubtful Islamabad would uphold its end of the alleged bargain. After all, in the wake of 9/11 Washington gave Islamabad \$22 billion to fight terrorism and later found Osama bin Laden living amongst Pakistan's military cadets. Furthermore, Pakistani leaders are exceedingly paranoid their nuclear arsenal would not withstand an Indian or U.S. first strike. It's therefore difficult to imagine them willingly parting with any nuclear warheads.

Even if Islamabad did have some to spare, Riyadh would be an unlikely recipient. Given the world's dependence on Saudi crude, Pakistan would be the target of exceptionally harsh and unrelenting international condemnation, including from its "all-weather friend" China, which has recently been getting 20 percent of its oil supplies from Riyadh. Iran would also be outraged and almost certain to respond by aligning itself squarely with India. Pakistani leaders have gone to great lengths to avoid this outcome, and they wouldn't suddenly invite it just to keep a promise their predecessors might have made.

If Iran does acquire nuclear weapons, there's no reason to think a regional nuclear-arms race would follow. Washington and its allies have avoided this outcome in the past, and nothing suggests this time would be different.

Zachary Keck is deputy editor of e-International Relations and an editorial assistant at The Diplomat. His commentary has appeared at Foreign Affairs, Foreign Policy, World Politics Review, and Small Wars Journal.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/04/the-new-domino-theory-were-wrong-about-an-iranian-nuclear-arms-race/255489/>

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The National Interest
OPINION/Analysis

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Syria's WMD Threat

By James P. Farwell
April 5, 2012

Buoyed by the loyalty of his Alawite community, Bashar al-Assad has acted ruthlessly to crush dissent in Syria. His brutality has outraged the international community, but that has not deterred Assad. And the worst may lie ahead. Will Assad employ his weapons of mass destruction to quell dissent? And what will happen to his WMD arsenal should—President Obama now says “when”—Assad’s regime collapses?

Although fears of Iraq’s chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRNE) capability were also questioned, the Syria situation is different. No one doubts that Syria possesses a modern chemical-weapons capability and thousands of rockets capable of downing passenger aircraft. In contrast, Desert Storm crippled Iraq’s chemical-warfare capability; it never reconstituted that capacity, although the Iraqi Intelligence Service maintained a set of undeclared covert laboratories to research and test chemicals and poisons. Iraq was planning to produce chemical-weapons agents, but coalition forces discovered no stockpiles in the aftermath of Operation Iraqi Freedom. In the case of Syria, credible assessments suggest that capabilities already exist.

Syria’s past behavior is disturbing. It is a non-nuclear-weapon state, party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and it has a comprehensive nuclear-safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Yet after Israel destroyed what was probably a plutonium-production reactor at al-Kibar in 2007, an IAEA investigation found Syria had breached its obligations under the NPT.

More recently, Lt. Abdulsalam Abdulrezzak, who once worked in Syria’s chemical-weapons department, made (unverified) claims that chemical weapons were employed in Bab Amr against protesters.

All this points to a shared international interest in containing Assad’s CBRNE arsenal. Using these weapons against his own citizens would constitute a war crime. And the weapons falling into the hands of terrorist groups would enlarge the threat.

A Lethal Arsenal

The nonpartisan Nuclear Threat Initiative assesses that Syria has one of the most sophisticated chemical-warfare capabilities in the world. It has mustard gas and sarin, possibly the VX nerve agent and Scud-B and Scud-D ballistic missiles capable of being fitted with chemical warheads. Some estimate it holds between one hundred and two hundred Scud missiles already loaded with a sarin agent and has several hundred tons of sarin agent and mustard gas stockpiled that could be used for aircraft bombs or artillery shells. It is one of only eight nations that is not a member of the Chemical Weapons Convention outlawing the production, possession and use of chemical weapons. Its agents are weaponized and can be delivered. Although most believe that the arsenal is in working order, we should not presume that is true. It could possibly be in a significant state of deterioration, which would intensify the hazard and suggest it must be dealt with sooner rather than later.

Reports differ as to Syria’s biological-warfare capability. German and Israeli sources believe it possesses bacillus anthracis (which causes anthrax), botulinum toxin and ricin. American sources believe the capability is “probable.” In 1972, Syria signed the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, but it has never ratified it.

The international community seems prepared to act. Russia, which values Syria as an arms customer and worries Assad’s fall would reduce its influence in the Middle East, has taken pains to separate itself from Assad’s possible use of WMDs, strongly denying that it has helped Syrian forces use chemical weapons against the opposition. Even while aiding Syrian efforts to crush the protests, Iran denies transferring chemical weapons to any third party.

The U.S. State Department has sent a diplomatic demarche to Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia warning against the possibilities that WMDs may cross their borders. In August, the *Wall Street Journal* revealed that the United States and its Mideast allies were intensifying surveillance of Syrian chemical and biological depots through satellites and



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other equipment. The United States has offered to help any post-Assad government secure Syria's stockpiles of chemical weapons and anti-aircraft missiles.

The Fallout

Potential loss of control over WMDs may pose a threat, considering the terror groups that would like to get their hands on them. Col. Riad al-As'ad, head of the opposition Free Syrian Army, says al-Qaeda is not operating in Syria. But al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri has reportedly ordered followers to infiltrate the Syrian opposition. Sunni radicals associated with the Islamic State of Iraq, an umbrella group that includes al-Qaeda, have urged fighters to go to Syria. And one should not doubt al-Qaeda's determination to acquire WMDs—Osama bin Laden once professed that acquiring chemical or nuclear weapons is "a religious duty."

WMDs could be smuggled into Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, the West Bank or elsewhere. In the past, Hamas, Hezbollah and Palestinian Islamic Jihad have all attempted to acquire chemical or biological weapons. In a sign of precisely how destabilizing some view this threat, Israeli officials have warned that Syria transferring chemical weapons to Hezbollah would constitute a declaration of war.

An Agenda

The Friends of Syria, a coalition of over fifty nations that has met in Tunis to discuss forming an international peacekeeping force backed by U.S., EU and Gulf-nation airpower, should ratchet up pressure on Assad to step down. Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait and other Islamic nations have clamored for ousting Assad. That's a promising sign. Arab nations, not the West, should take the lead in dealing with Assad's brutality.

Securing Syria's CBRNE arsenal poses a uniquely serious challenge. NATO, Russia and China should join these Arab nations in demanding that Assad immediately secure his stockpile, then show he has done so.

President Obama has said the United States won't commit troops to a military intervention. But there are other options. Allied partners could mount coordinated special operations to secure or destroy Assad's arsenal. That may not be easy, but it can be done. And should the Syrian regime collapse, it will be essential.

Whether it is better to mount such an operation before or after Assad falls is a decision for military and political experts. But international leaders must think through the options and be prepared to act. All nations—but particularly those in the neighborhood—have a vital stake in containing these instruments of death and destruction. Now is the time for them to exert the leadership to ensure that happens.

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Washington Post
OPINION/Opinion Writer

Obama's Signal to Iran

By David Ignatius
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President Obama has signaled Iran that the United States would accept an Iranian civilian nuclear program if Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei can back up his recent public claim that his nation "will never pursue nuclear weapons."

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This verbal message was sent through Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who visited Khamenei last week. A few days before traveling to Iran, Erdogan had held a two-hour meeting with Obama in Seoul, in which they discussed what Erdogan would tell the ayatollah about the nuclear issue and Syria.

Obama advised Erdogan that the Iranians should realize that time is running out for a peaceful settlement and that Tehran should take advantage of the current window for negotiations. Obama didn't specify whether Iran would be allowed to enrich uranium domestically as part of the civilian program the United States would endorse. That delicate issue evidently would be left for the negotiations that are supposed to start April 13, at a venue yet to be decided.

Erdogan is said to have replied that he would convey Obama's views to Khamenei, and it's believed he did so when he met the Iranian leader on Thursday. Erdogan also met President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and other senior Iranian officials during his visit.

The statement highlighted by Obama as a potential starting point was made on state television in February. Khamenei said: "The Iranian nation has never pursued and will never pursue nuclear weapons. . . . Iran is not after nuclear weapons because the Islamic Republic, logically, religiously and theoretically, considers the possession of nuclear weapons a grave sin and believes the proliferation of such weapons is senseless, destructive and dangerous."

The challenge for negotiators is whether it's possible to turn Khamenei's public rhetoric into a serious and verifiable commitment not to build a bomb. When Obama cited this statement to Erdogan as something to build on, the Turkish leader is said to have nodded in agreement.

But the diplomatic path still seems blocked, judging by recent haggling over the meeting place for negotiations. Istanbul was expected to be the venue, but the Iranians last weekend balked and suggested instead that negotiators meet in Iraq or China. U.S. officials see this foot-dragging as a sign that the Iranian leadership is still struggling to frame its negotiating position.

The Erdogan back channel to Iran is the most dramatic evidence yet of the close relationship Obama has forged with the Turkish leader. Erdogan, who heads an Islamist party that is often cited as a model by Muslim democrats, has been a key U.S. partner in handling Syria and other crises flowing from the Arab Spring uprisings.

A sign of Erdogan's role as intermediary is that he was accompanied, both in the meeting with Obama and on the trip to Iran, by Hakan Fidan, the chief of Turkey's intelligence service. Fidan is said to have close relations with Qassem Suleimani, who heads Iran's Quds Force and is probably Khamenei's closest adviser on security issues. Also joining Erdogan was Ahmet Davutoglu, the Turkish foreign minister.

Syria was another big topic in Erdogan's discussions with Obama and his subsequent visit to Iran. The Turkish leader told Obama he would press Iran to reduce its support for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, whom Erdogan once championed but is now determined to oust. Erdogan said he planned to tell Khamenei that Syrian attacks on Muslim opposition forces must stop. The Turks have been trying, meanwhile, to bolster the opposition so that it can provide a credible alternative to Assad's rule.

Some Arab analysts see a weakening of support for Assad in recent days from Iran and its Lebanese proxy, Hezbollah, whose leader Hasan Nasrallah last week called for a "political solution" with the opposition. The key player in any such managed transition would be Russia's president-elect, Vladimir Putin. U.S. officials hope he can broker a Syria deal before he meets Obama at the G-8 summit next month.

As Iran's leadership debates its negotiating stance, the squeeze of Western sanctions is becoming tighter. Nat Kern, the editor of Foreign Reports, a leading oil newsletter, forecasts that Iran will lose about a third of its oil exports by mid-summer. It may get even worse for Iran after July 1 if China and the European Union follow through on recent warnings that they might stop insuring tankers carrying Iranian crude.

U.S. officials believe that if Iran refuses to negotiate, it will be easier to tighten sanctions even more.

David Ignatius writes a twice-a-week foreign affairs column and contributes to the PostPartisan blog.



http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/obamas-signal-to-iran/2012/04/05/gIQApVLDyS_story.html

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Pakistan Observer – Pakistan

OPINION/Analysis

Friday, April 06, 2012

Chakra on the Prowl

By Sultan M Hali

India this week inducted the Russian-origin nuclear-powered submarine 'Nerpa' into its Navy; joining the elite league of nations having such sophisticated warships. Indian Defence Minister A K Antony formally commissioned the Akula II class Nerpa, rechristened 'INS Chakra', into the Indian Navy at the Ship Building Complex in Visakhapatnam. "INS Chakra will ensure security and sovereignty of the country," Antony said after commissioning the vessel.

India had earlier leased and operated a Charlie Class Russian nuclear submarine from 1988 for training its personnel on such warships. With the induction of INS Chakra, India has joined the elite group of nations with nuclear-power submarines after a gap of two decades. With INS Chakra and the indigenous INS Arihant expected to start operational patrols soon, India will soon have two nuclear submarines guarding its vast maritime boundaries. The Nerpa has been taken on lease from Russia for ten years and would provide the Navy the opportunity to train and operate such nuclear-powered vessels.

It was expected to be inducted a couple of years earlier, but after an accident in 2008, in which scores of Russian sailors died during trials, the delivery schedule was changed. Indian Navy crews have already been imparted training for operating the submarine in Russia. A crew of over 70 people, including around 30 officers, is required to operate INS Chakra. The heart of the submarine is its nuclear reactor which has been made by Russia. Its displacement is around 8,140 tonnes. With a maximum speed of 30 knots, the vessel can go to a depth of 600 metres and has an endurance of 100 days with a crew of 73. The vessel is armed with four 533mm and four 650mm torpedo tubes. INS Chakra does not carry nuclear weapons. In this sense, it does nothing for India's sea-based nuclear deterrent. This third leg of the nuclear triad calls for a submarine prowling at sea with nuclear-tipped ballistic missiles. That capability will come only with the induction of the indigenous 6000-tonne Arihant class nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines (SSBN) that began trials this year and is still two years away from induction.

Chakra is one of the quietest, most lethal undersea vessels in the world. Military analysts compare it to early models of the US Navy's Los Angeles class attack submarines. It will also give Indian designers a look at a larger nuclear-powered submarine for larger 12,000-tonne variants of the Arihant, capable of carrying 5,000-km range ballistic missiles. India has already carried out more than 10 test launches of the K-15 missile (also known as Sagarika) in the Bay of Bengal. The nuclear-capable ballistic missile is said to have a range of over 700 kms and the premier research agency plans to increase its strike range in the near future. The submarine was laid down in the shipyard of Komsomolsk-on-Amur in the Russian Far East as the 'Nerpa' in the early 1990s. Its construction was halted after the break-up of the Soviet navy. A secret deal was signed in 2004 and India transferred an estimated \$650 million for the completion of the unfinished hull. The crew for the submarine underwent 18-month training at a shore-based facility near St Petersburg in 2005. They had to wait nearly six years before they could see the actual submarine. The submarine was to have been inducted in early 2008 but the project was dogged by delays. As mentioned earlier, the worst of these was during its sea trials in the Sea of Japan, when a November 2008 accidental gas discharge killed 20 Russian crew members. The delays have resulted in an anomaly: The Chakra's commanding officer Captain P. Asokan has to contend with four other captains on board, officers promoted to their next rank during the seven-year wait.

At present, India has 14 active submarines in the fleet whereas Indian Navy (IN) has contracted France for 6 Scorpene submarines. These subs are being constructed in Indian shipyard and are likely to be inducted in Indian fleet by 2018. The Defence Committee of India has also approved procurement of 6 more conventional Submarines in addition to the six already being built with the help of France. The PWR of India's first indigenously developed ATV, INS/M Arihant



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went active last year, while its sea trials are completing soon and Arihant's induction is expected by end 2012. Simultaneously, fabrication work on the three follow-on nuclear-powered submarines is in full swing whereas, the reactor for the 2nd S/M is being constructed with the help of Russia. The 2nd INS/M Aridhaman is expected to be ready for sea trials by 2015. The IN nuclear subs are to be armed initially with the 750 km Sagarika (K-15) Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBM) and at a later stage with the under-development 3,500 km K-4 SLBMs. INS/M Arihant has four silos to carry twelve 750 km range, Sagarika SLBM or four K-4s. Meanwhile, IN has acquired two Russian Akula-II class nuclear submarines on lease from Russia because it wants to have three SSBNs and six SSNs (Nuclear-powered Attack Submarines) in the long term. It is envisaged that by 2025 India will have around 30 conventional Submarines in her flotilla.

The induction of the nuclear submarines in the Indian Ocean will have serious implications for the region. It is going to elevate the international status of India amongst regional and extra regional nations/navies, while the existing security calculus in Arabian Sea vis-à-vis PN will significantly shift in the favour of IN. The threat to Chinese, Australian, Indonesian and other regional navies will increase multifold. Nuclear submarines provide the reach to attack the adversary in far-flung waters across the globe as well as remain undetected under water at great depths for prolonged periods, without needing to come up to the surface for recharging its batteries or refueling. Operationally, they will act as a force multiplier armed with nuclear tipped missiles, their induction will further enhance IN's capabilities to strike inside Pakistan while staying well away from Pakistani coast line. Pakistani defence planners will have to think deep to meet the threat.

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