



USAF COUNTERPROLIFERATION CENTER
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MAXWELL AFB, ALABAMA

Issue No. 996, 10 April 2012

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London Guardian – U.K.

Iran Can Make Nuclear Weapons - But Won't, Says Top Politician

Statement is first time an Iranian politician has admitted country has capability to produce nuclear arms

Damien Pearse and agencies

Saturday, 7 April 2012

Iran has the technological capability to produce nuclear weapons but will never do so, a prominent politician in the Islamic republic has said.

The statement by Gholamreza Mesbahi Moghadam is the first time an Iranian politician has publicly stated that the country has the knowledge and skills to produce a nuclear weapon.

Moghadam, whose views do not represent the government's policy, said Iran could easily create the highly enriched uranium that is used to build atomic bombs, but it was not Tehran's policy to go down that route.

Moghadam told the parliament's news website, icana.ir: "Iran has the scientific and technological capability to produce [a] nuclear weapon, but will never choose this path."

The US and its allies believe Iran is using its civilian nuclear programme as a cover to develop nuclear weapons; a charge it denies.

Israel said Mghadam's claim supported its view that Iran's nuclear programme had a military dimension. An Israeli official repeated demands that Iran must stop enriching uranium, remove all military-grade enriched material from the country, and dismantle its Fordo nuclear research site.

Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has repeatedly insisted that his country is not seeking nuclear weapons, saying that holding such arms is a sin and "useless, harmful and dangerous".

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has said that if Iran one day decides to build nuclear weapons, it will do so openly and without fear.

Iran says it is enriching uranium to about 3.5% to produce nuclear fuel for its future reactors, and to around 20% to fuel a research reactor that produces medical isotopes to treat cancer. Uranium has to be enriched to more than 90% to be used for a nuclear weapon.

The UN nuclear agency has confirmed that centrifuges at the Fordo site near Iran's holy city of Qom are producing uranium enriched to 20%. It says uranium enriched to that level can more quickly be turned into weapons-grade material.

"There is a possibility for Iran to easily achieve more than 90% enrichment," icana.ir quoted Moghadam as saying.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/apr/07/iran-can-produce-nuclear-weapons-politician?newsfeed=true>

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Al Bawaba – Jordan

Obama: Iran Can Have Nuclear Program

April 8, 2012

In a message to Iran's supreme leader, the president of the United States Barack Obama has said Tehran could have a civilian nuclear program provided they do not seek nuclear weapons, the Washington Post has reported.

"President Obama told Iran that the U.S. would accept an Iranian civilian nuclear program if the Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei can support his recent public statement that his country would never seek atomic weapons," says this report.

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The newspaper said that this message was sent to Mr. Khamenei through the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who paid a visit to Tehran last week.

"A few days before traveling to Iran, Erdogan had a two-hour meeting with Obama in Seoul, during which they discussed what would Mr. Erdogan tell to Ayatollah on the nuclear issue and Syria," says the report.

During this meeting, Obama told Erdogan that Iran should realize that the time to find a peaceful solution is limited and that Tehran should seize the current window of negotiations, according to this story.

However, Obama did not say whether Iran would be allowed to enrich uranium at the national level and this issue is obviously difficult to solve in the next discussions between Iran and six world powers, according the report.

The report added that Erdogan would have conveyed the message to Mr. Obama when they met Khamenei in Iran.

<http://www.albawaba.com/main-headlines/obama-iran-can-have-nuclear-program-420141>

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Kansas City Star
Sunday, April 8, 2012

Before Nuclear Talks, Iran Floats Compromise

By NASSER KARIMI, Associated Press

Iran's nuclear chief signaled Tehran's envoys may bring a compromise offer to the talks this week with world powers: Promising to eventually stop producing its most highly enriched uranium, while not totally abandoning its ability to make nuclear fuel.

The proposal outlined late Sunday seeks to directly address one of the potential main issues in the talks scheduled to begin Friday between Iran and the five permanent Security Council members plus Germany.

The U.S. and others have raised serious concerns about Iran's production and stockpile of uranium enriched to 20 percent, which could be turned into weapons-grade strength in a matter of months.

But the proposal described by Iran's nuclear chief, Fereidoun Abbasi, may not go far enough to satisfy the West because it would leave the higher enriched uranium still in Tehran's hands rather than transferred outside the country.

Abbasi said Tehran could stop its production of 20 percent enriched uranium needed for a research reactor, and continue enriching uranium to lower levels for power generation.

This could take place once Iran has stockpiled enough of the 20 percent enriched uranium, Abbasi told state TV. The 20 percent enriched material can be used for medical research and treatments.

The enrichment issue lies at the core of the dispute between Iran and the West, which fears Tehran is seeking an atomic weapon - a charge the country denies, insisting its uranium program is for peaceful purposes only.

Uranium has to be enriched to more than 90 percent to be used for a nuclear weapon, but with Iran enriching uranium to 20 percent levels, there are concerns it has come a step closer to nuclear weapons capability.

Abbasi said production of uranium enriched up to 20 percent is not part of the nation's long-term program - beyond amounts needed for its research reactor in Tehran - and insisted that Iran "doesn't need" to enrich beyond the 20 percent levels.

"The job is being carried out based on need," he said. "When the need is met, we will decrease production and it is even possible to completely reverse to only 3.5 percent" enrichment levels.

It was not immediately clear whether Abbasi's comments reflect what will be Tehran's official stance when the negotiations begin in Istanbul more than 14 months after the last round collapsed.



Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi was quoted on the Iranian parliament's website on Monday as saying he hopes for some progress in the upcoming talks but warned Iran would not accept any preconditions.

"We will honestly try to have the two sides conclude with a win-win situation in which Iran achieves its rights while removing concerns of five-plus-one group," he said. "But imposing any conditions before the talks would be meaningless."

Iran insists it has full rights under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation treaty to enrich uranium to create nuclear fuel and says it only seeks enrichment levels to power reactors, but the U.S. and others worry that the same process can be used to make weapons-grade material.

Ahead of Istanbul, there are signs Tehran is confident it may have beaten back the toughest Western demands for a complete halt to uranium enrichment and that some bargaining room has now been opened for new proposals.

Abbasi's remarks follow a bravado last week from Iranian lawmaker Gholam Reza Mesbahi Moghadam, who claimed Tehran has the know-how and the capability to produce a nuclear weapon but would never do so.

Moghadam also said that Iran has the means to produce 90-plus percent enrichment, though he did not elaborate

After a protracted flap over the venue for the talks, Iranian state TV reported Sunday that both sides had agreed on Istanbul. It said a second round would be held in Baghdad but that its timing would be decided during the meeting in Turkey.

<http://www.kansascity.com/2012/04/08/3542639/iranian-state-tv-istanbul-to-host.html>

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London Guardian – U.K.

Iran Nuclear Talks: West Demands Closure of Fordo Underground Facility

US and Europe also call on Iran to end uranium enrichment to 20% ahead of 'last chance' negotiations in Istanbul

By Chris McGreal in Washington

Sunday, 8 April 2012

The US and Europe are to demand that Iran dismantle its fortified underground nuclear facility and halt higher-grade uranium enrichment at a new round of talks this week as a condition for lifting sanctions and the threat of a military attack – demands that Tehran swiftly denounced as "irrational".

Barack Obama has reiterated that Washington is prepared to accept Tehran maintaining a peaceful nuclear power programme, but at the same time the White House is becoming more explicit in warning that the negotiations beginning in Istanbul on Friday are "perhaps a last chance" for diplomacy to work.

Diplomats say Iran will be pressed by the permanent UN security council members plus Germany, known as the P5+1, to shut its underground nuclear facility at Fordo, to stop enriching uranium to 20%, and to hand over the estimated 100kg of uranium already enriched to that level.

The demands match those made by Binyamin Netanyahu at a White House meeting last month at which Obama pressed the Israeli prime minister to hold off from a military attack on Iran and give sanctions and diplomacy an opportunity to work. Britain and France are also pushing for Iran to dismantle those parts of its nuclear programme that could be used for weapons.

Netanyahu repeated the three requirements in a meeting with the Italian prime minister, Mario Monti, on Sunday. He also warned against allowing Iran to use the talks "to delay and deceive".

The Israeli prime minister also said in an interview with Maariv newspaper at the weekend that the underground nuclear facility at Fordo must be shut down.



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"What do they need it for?" he asked. "I think we should make very explicit demands about ending all enrichment and the removal of enriched material and converting the nuclear programme back [to non-military use]. If we come with clear requirements along with the threat of more sanctions then it's possible there could be a result. But if there are sanctions without demands, then the sanctions will not help. Our goal is not the talks but the result. The result is an end to Iran's nuclear programme."

Iran has said it will not close the Fordo facility nor surrender enriched uranium. The head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation, Fereydoon Abbasi-Davani, told the Iranian state news agency both demands were irrational. He said the Fordo facility was built underground because of the threat of attack by Israel and the US.

"If they do not threaten us and guarantee that no aggression will occur, then there would be no need for countries to build facilities underground. They should change their behaviour and language," he said. "We do not see any rationale for such a request from the P5+1".

However, he repeated the Iranian leadership's assertion that Tehran has no intention of producing large amounts of 20% enriched uranium.

It is not clear that Washington can carry all of the P5+1 in pressing the demand for Fordo to be dismantled, particularly with Russia and China prepared to give Tehran room for manoeuvre. One diplomat suggested that Washington may be emphasising the issue in order to satisfy the Israelis but that the group may be prepared to settle for an agreement to freeze the number of centrifuges at Fordo, which are believed to be too few to produce weapons-grade uranium at a pace sufficient to develop a bomb in the foreseeable future.

Israel's defence minister, Ehud Barak, made little mention of the Fordo facility itself and instead dwelled on the uranium on Sunday. He warned that for the major powers to accept anything less than the demand for an end to enrichment would be a victory for Tehran.

Barak told CNN: "We told our American friends as well as the Europeans that we would have expected the pressure for successful negotiations to be clear – namely that the P5+1 will demand clearly, no more enrichment to 20% [and] all the already enriched 20% material out of the country."

"But if the P5+1 will settle for a much lower threshold, like just stop enriching to 20%, it means that basically the Iranians, at a very cheap cost, bought their way into continuing their military programme. Slightly slower but without sanctions. That will be a total change of direction for the worse."

The Israeli defence minister added that while oil and banking sanctions have clearly had an impact, causing inflation in Iran to nearly double to 21.5% in urban areas, he doubted they would be enough to force Tehran's hand.

"We hope for the better but I don't believe that this amount of sanctions and pressure will bring the Iranian leadership to the conclusion that they have to stop their nuclear military programme."

Barak repeated his view that while matters will not come to a head within weeks, it will not take years, either.

Israel is itself an undeclared nuclear power with an undetermined number of atom bombs.

Obama continues to throw his weight behind diplomacy and sanctions while warning he will use force as a last resort. Washington, however, does not believe there is the urgency that Israel claims, in part because the White House is sceptical that Iran is as close to being able to develop a nuclear weapon as Netanyahu says.

Last month in Washington, the Israeli prime minister publicly derided sanctions and claims that Tehran is not already engaged in developing a nuclear weapon.

The US president has sent several messages to Tehran in recent days warning that this is perhaps the last chance to negotiate an end to the crisis. The most recent was passed via the Turkish prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, at a meeting in South Korea on nuclear non-proliferation.

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The US secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, has also pressed the message that time is running out for negotiations. She said last week that the US was taking part in the talks in Turkey because they may be "a last chance to demonstrate a way forward that can satisfy the international community's concerns and have Iran come forward and accept limitations on what they are able to do".

Clinton warned that she did "not want the Iranians to go into it with the attitude of that we can just keep it open and never have to come to any outcome".

The talks will be the first in more than a year. The last round failed after Iran refused to abide by UN resolutions to stop enriching uranium to higher grades.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/apr/08/iran-nuclear-talks-west-demands?newsfeed=true>

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China Daily – China

Iran Denies Precondition to Nuclear Talks

April 9, 2012

(Xinhua)

TEHRAN - Iran's Foreign Minister Ali-Akbar Salehi said Monday that his country will not accept any precondition to the nuclear talks between Iran and the UN Security Council's five permanent members plus Germany (P5+1) slated for April 14 in Turkey's Istanbul, local satellite Press TV reported.

"Setting conditions before the meeting means drawing conclusions before negotiations, which is completely meaningless, and none of the parties will accept conditions set before the talks," Salehi was quoted as saying.

The New York Times reported Sunday that the United States and its Western allies would set demands for the upcoming negotiations on Iran's disputed nuclear program.

The demands include immediate closure of the Fordo nuclear facility in central Iran and a freeze on 20-percent uranium enrichment, according to the New York Times.

"These issues are merely media speculations and we cannot base our judgment on issues reflected in the media," Salehi added.

Both sides have their own views and stances and "we must reach common grounds" in the nuclear talks, he was quoted as saying.

Head of Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Fereidoon Abbasi said Sunday that Iran will not stop high-grade uranium enrichment, however, Iran will not enrich 20-percent uranium beyond its needs, because it is not cheap to produce and to keep it.

"We will produce (20-percent uranium) to the amount to meet the needs of Tehran research reactors and the reactors that we are planning to build in future," said Abbasi.

Abbasi also said that Iran will not close down the underground Fordo enrichment site near the central city of Qom under the West's pressure.

"The demands of P5+1 to suspend the (enrichment) activities in Fordo site is illogical," said the Iranian atomic chief, adding that building a nuclear site underground is a countermove to the strike threats by some countries.

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2012-04/09/content_15007984.htm

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Economic Times – India



9 April 2012

After Row, Iran Confirms Istanbul for Nuclear Talks

By Agence France-Presse (AFP)

TEHRAN: Iran today confirmed that nuclear talks this week with world powers would take place in Istanbul, dropping public reservations over that city as venue following a sharp-worded row with Turkey.

If the Istanbul negotiations with the P5+1 group -- the five permanent UN Security Council members and Germany -- on Saturday prove fruitful, another round of talks could be held in Baghdad, the office of Iran's chief nuclear negotiator, Saeed Jalili, said in a statement.

"The first round of talks between Iran and the P5+1 will be held on April 14 in Istanbul and a second round will be held in Baghdad" at a date to be mutually agreed, said the statement from the Supreme National Security Council headed by Jalili.

The confirmation appeared to put an end to Iran's see-sawing position on Istanbul that cast a cloud of doubt over the talks in recent days.

Tehran had at first enthusiastically embraced the Turkish city as the ideal venue for the talks. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton even went as far as to declare that city as the host of the talks.

But last week Iranian officials and politicians suddenly went cold on it, saying Turkey's support of the opposition in Syria -- Iran's chief ally -- excluded Istanbul as a venue. They proposed Baghdad instead, or possibly Damascus or Beijing.

That earned an unexpectedly virulent rebuke from Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who had visited Tehran just days earlier to discuss the talks with Iran's leaders.

"It is necessary to act honestly," Erdogan said last Thursday.

"They (the Iranians) continue to lose prestige in the world because of a lack of honesty," he stormed.

By Monday, Iran had once again come around to accepting Istanbul as the venue.

In Brussels, a spokesman for EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton, who is representing the P5+1, said "we have agreed to launch talks in Istanbul on April 14."

He gave no indication, though, of any discussion about further rounds of talks, or whether they would be held in Baghdad.

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics/nation/after-row-iran-confirms-istanbul-for-nuclear-talks/articleshow/12596547.cms>

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Journal of Turkish Weekly – Turkey

Iran Not Worried about Missile Defense Shield - IRGC Commander

Tuesday, April 10, 2012

By *Trend*, Azerbaijan

Iran is not worried about the missile defense shield, IRGC (Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps) air force commander Eli Hajizadeh said, Fars reported.

The U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on Saturday at the Persian Gulf-U.S. security forum in Riyadh announced the idea of a missile defense shield in the six Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Oman.



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"The establishment of such shield is for Israel's security," Hajizadeh added.

Several days ago, Iran's Defense Minister Ahmad Vahidi said that Islamic Republic strongly opposes a U.S.-backed plan to build a missile defense shield within the Gulf States.

"This system is a plan of the U.S. and Israel, and anyone who supports the plan, is implementing the U.S. and Israel's plot," Vahidi noted. The minister added that the U.S.-backed missile defense project is "against regional security".

IRGC commander on his part said that Iran "has already thought of this shield, and is not worried about it".

Washington is seeking to expand its missile defense shield within the Gulf States. U.S. Patriot missiles are already deployed in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

The West accuses Iran of pursuing a secret nuclear weapons program but Tehran insists it needs nuclear power solely to generate electricity.

<http://www.turkishweekly.net/news/133802/iran-not-worried-about-missile-defense-shield-irgc-commander-.html>

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London Guardian – U.K.

North Korea Moves Rocket into Position for Launch

Pyongyang vows to go ahead with launch of what it says is a satellite, but US fears is a disguised long-range missile test
Associated Press

Sunday, 08 April 2012

North Korea has moved three stages of a long-range rocket into position for a controversial launch in defiance of international warnings against violating a ban on missile activity.

Foreign news agencies were allowed a first-hand look at preparations under way at the coastal Sohae satellite station in north-western North Korea.

North Korea announced plans last month to launch an observation satellite during mid-April celebrations of the 100th anniversary of the birth of its founder Kim Il-sung. The US, Japan, Britain and other nations have urged North Korea to cancel the launch, warning that firing the long-range rocket would violate UN resolutions and Pyongyang's promise to refrain from engaging in nuclear and missile activity.

North Korea says that the launch is intended to improve the nation's faltering economy by providing detailed surveys of the countryside.

"Our country has the right and also the obligation to develop satellites and launching vehicles," Jang Myong Jin, general manager of the launch facility. "No matter what others say, we are doing this for peaceful purposes."

Experts say the Unha-3 rocket scheduled for liftoff between 12 and 16 April could also test long-range missile technology that might be used to strike the US and other targets.

North Korea has tested two atomic devices, but is not believed to have mastered the technology needed to mount a warhead on a long-range missile.

On Sunday, reporters were taken by train past desolate fields and farming hamlets to a new launch pad in Tongchang-ri in North Phyongan province, about 35 miles south of the border town of Sinuiju along North Korea's west coast.

All three stages of the 91-tonne rocket, emblazoned with the North Korean flag and "Unha-3", were visibly in position at the towering launch pad, and fuelling will begin soon, Jang said.

He said preparations were on track for liftoff and that international space, aviation and maritime authorities had been advised of the plan, but did not provide exact details on the timing of the fuelling or the mounting of the satellite.

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Engineers gave reporters a peek at the 100kg Kwangmyŏngsŏng-3 satellite due to be mounted on the rocket, as well as a tour of the command centre.

About two weeks before North Korea unveiled its rocket plan, Washington announced an agreement with Pyongyang to provide it with much-needed food aid in exchange for a freeze on nuclear activity, including a moratorium on long-range missile tests. The food aid plans, as well as a recently revived project to conduct joint searches for the remains of US military personnel killed during the Korean war, have now been suspended.

Jang denied the launch was a cover for a missile test, saying the relatively diminutive rocket and fixed Sohae station would be useless for sending a mobile intercontinental ballistic missile.

"During the recent senior-level North Korea-US talks, our side made clear there's only a moratorium on long-range missile launches, not on satellite launches," he said. "The US was well aware of this."

Japan and South Korea, meanwhile, said they are prepared to shoot down any parts of the rocket that threaten to fall in their territory – a move North Korea's foreign ministry warned would be considered a declaration of war.

The launch is scheduled to take place three years after North Korea's last announced attempt to send a satellite into space, a liftoff condemned by the UN security council. North Korea walked away from nuclear disarmament negotiations in protest, and conducted an atomic test weeks later that drew tightened UN sanctions.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/apr/08/north-korea-rocket-positioned-launch>

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London Telegraph – U.K.

What North Koreans Really Think of Kim Jong-un

Secret telephone calls to North Korea reveal what citizens of the world's most secretive and dictatorial regimes really think about their new leader Kim Jong-un.

By Andrew Salmon, Seoul

08 April 2012

His elevation to leadership of one of the world's most secretive and dangerous regimes was the subject of speculation and rumour around the globe.

But now it has emerged that Kim Jong-un, the podgy 28-year-old who took the helm of North Korea after his father died last year is also the subject of clandestine gossip within his own insulated state.

In secret telephone conversations with activist groups based in democratic South Korea, residents of the North have revealed their own doubts about the man anointed as the Great Successor and Supreme Commander, despite all the revolutionary rhetoric with which they are bombarded.

"He is a four-star general aged 28," observed a trader, Im Seong-taek. "When did he do his time in the army to get those stars? It's nonsense."

A farmer in the far north of the country said: "He doesn't seem to be much use. A young person with his belly sticking out looks lazy."

Such comments are the fruits of a growing effort by South Koreans - often aided by defectors from the North who have made their way to Seoul, the capital of the South, by circuitous routes - to use gradually spreading mobile telephone technology to find out what North Koreans really think.

North Korea's official mobile telephone network, built and run by an Egyptian firm, only has an estimated 600,000 users - mostly privileged members of the Communist Party elite who would not risk contacting someone abroad.

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But increasing numbers of people, especially in the north of the country near the border with China, now have mobile telephones that use the Chinese mobile network, enabling them - if they dare - to make and receive calls from some of the 30,000 defectors now living in South Korea.

In a dingy backstreet office close to the centre of Seoul Lee Sok-young took a call. "Hello? Hello?" The 41-year-old, who himself escaped five years ago, cursed. "Bad connection!"

He called back twice before finally getting through and beginning the conversation.

"Why haven't you been in touch? I see. Is all OK? How are rice prices? And the exchange rate? How's life generally - what's the feeling since the change? 12 o'clock next time, you say? OK."

The call finished, Mr Lee played back his mobile telephone's recording of the conversation, making careful notes. The woman's voice had a distinct accent and high-pitched lilt that marked her out to Korean ears as a native of the north.

"She's a relative," he said. "I won't comment on her job. She says it's been difficult to get through by mobile since Kim Jong-il died and Kim Jong-un took over, because of signal interference.

"She says the Chinese currency exchange rate is going up, but rice prices are stable. There's been no difference in her life since Kim died. Things are the same. We'll speak again at midnight."

Such communication through the bamboo curtain would have been impossible five years ago, but the illicit smuggling of Chinese mobile telephones across the northern border has led to a mushrooming of groups in the South organising regular contact with people in the North to find out what is really going on.

Detailed information of the kind now being gathered daily would previously have been beyond the reach even of national intelligence agencies - and its dissemination clearly annoys the North's rigid rulers.

Daily NK, the information website for which Mr Lee works, reported that people in the north-east who had not shown insufficient sorrow at Kim Jong-il's death were forced to undergo self-criticism sessions and then sent to labour camps in punishment.

Korea Central News Agency in Pyongyang, the North's capital, denounced The Daily NK as "reptile media", declaring in a report: "This evil deed could be done only by the despicable guys hell-bent on letting loose invectives and telling lies."

The organisation is one of around 20 such groups that gather information on North Korea, and is funded jointly by the Bank of Korea, which is keen to harvest economic data about the North, and by the US National Endowment for Democracy, set up to promote political freedom around the world.

Criticism from the North is water off a duck's back to Park In-ho, a South Korean and former left-winger who heads Daily NK. "It's an honour," he said.

Daily NK claims to have about 200 sources inside North Korea, though staff members do not share contacts, for security reasons. As Chinese mobile phone signals only reach about 10 miles into the country, most sources either live in the border area or travel to it for calls at pre-arranged times. Some are traders who mostly use their phones to do business in China.

None are at the highest party levels, but contacts include local government and lower-level military officials who can paint an authentic picture of daily life. They describe a people deeply disillusioned by their leadership.

"Even in trains and restaurants, people say, 'What is the government doing for us?'" said Shin Ju-hyun, Daily NK's editor. "They complain about officials.

"In public they can't complain about Kim Jong-un or about his father before him. But there is gossip about Kim Jong-un. The state says he is a computer or military expert, but people say, 'Can it be true? He's too young, he's just a prince.'"



Grief at Kim Jong-il's death was false, said Mr Lee, who has spoken to several contacts since the funeral. "People go out, bow to the statues, show the appropriate amount of emotion and go home. Their lives have not changed."

The broader picture that emerges is of poverty, misery and depression. Special rations of corn soup and rice were handed out to families in some parts of the country to enable them to celebrate the most recent Lunar New Year, but the allowances were small - enough for only three or five days - and extra measures of cooking oil were disappointingly even more meagre.

North Korea publishes no economic data, and there is a growing disparity in income levels nationwide, but Daily NK research suggests the average wage is around 4-5,000 won per month, only enough for a few days' rice at current rice prices.

"I ask my contacts various things, but even if I ask a specific question - like the market price of rice - they all tell me how hard life is," Mr Lee said.

Yet the conversations also betray a startling sense that in some respects the state's control of life beyond the capital is fraying.

The economy is increasingly capitalistic: markets bustle nationwide, replacing the failed state distribution system. A class of have-nots has been created, and many informants know people who have committed suicide.

"In Chosun [North Korea] today, people who live hungry are treated as fools," one trader told Daily NK. "Whether it be trading, theft, whatever the way, you must live somehow."

The "arduous march" - the famines that killed perhaps 2 million people in the late 1990s - bred a terrible callousness. "The simple and honest people all died," the trader said. "The rest know how to survive."

There is little remaining confidence in the North Korean won, and since a shock internal devaluation just over two years ago which destroyed the value of everybody's savings, most trading activity now takes place in foreign currency.

"My savings are all in US dollars," Kim Eun-hye, a market trader who lost most of her assets, told Daily NK. "Even if the government says foreign currencies are prohibited, we save only US dollars or Chinese yuan."

Meanwhile South Korean television dramas are so popular that pirated DVDs find their way into North Korea within 30 days of episodes first being aired. This trend, too, seems uncontrollable. "They can punish the distributors, but if they punished the consumers, half of North Korea would be in the camps" said Mr Shin.

South Korean music is equally popular. "In Pyongyang, they use cassette players to play South Korean songs a lot," a factory technician and Daily NK informant revealed. "It's a really trivial thing, but still [the government] try to regulate it. So we get rid of the lyrics and just dance to the music."

Yet the regime's network of prison camps, where three generations of a family may be punished for the political "crimes" of one member, is spoken of in hushed terms among North Koreans - and those making illicit telephone calls abroad may end up there too.

Choi Song-min, 56, who escaped to Seoul only last year, said that plain clothed security agents carried concealed mobile telephone detectors to catch people breaking the law.

A former soldier turned currency trader, he himself had just ended a call when three armed agents rapped on his door and forced their way into his flat. They had a recording of his phone conversation and quickly found his mobile telephone, hidden in a wardrobe.

He was offered the choice of a fine or prison, and requested the former - but was staggered at the price: 600,000 North Korean won, equivalent to 20 years' average wage. "Had I been caught talking to South Korea, things would have been far worse."



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Repression is still savage. "In North Korea, when you wear a military uniform, you wear the skin of a tiger," said Oh Gil-tae, a border guard who is another Daily NK informant. "You should make people scared."

Discussing interrogation techniques, Oh noted that women suspects often wet themselves before their beating begins. And when it does, it is brutal. "The butt of the 1958 automatic rifle does not break easily," Oh said. "But the '68 version does, the butt snaps off completely."

So for now, Mr Shin believes, the chance of any kind of uprising against Kim Jong-un is remote.

"Nine out of ten of my friends in North Korea say, 'We should change the government, but can't," he said. "The best way to bring down North Korea is pressure from outside. I want to add to that pressure by spreading information."

The names of all North Koreans in this report have been changed to protect their identities.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/northkorea/9191998/What-North-Koreans-really-think-of-Kim-Jong-un.html>

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Korea Herald – South Korea

China Troubled by N.K. Rocket Launch Plan

Third nuclear test possible after rocket launch: source

April 8, 2012

By Kim Yoon-mi

China's Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi said Sunday that Beijing is "troubled" by North Korea's planned rocket launch, after having a trilateral meeting with his South Korean and Japanese counterparts in the Chinese city of Ningbo.

"We considered and exchanged views about the situation on the Korean peninsula, including the announcement by the DPRK that they plan to launch a satellite," Yang told reporters at a press briefing in Ningbo. DPRK is the North's formal name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

"The Chinese side is troubled by the developments, and strongly encourages everyone involved on all sides, at high and low levels, to remain calm and reasonable."

North Korea's plans its satellite launch sometime between April 12 and 16. The U.S. and its allies say it is a pretext for testing a long-range ballistic missile which would violate U.N. Security Council resolutions and break the U.S.-North deal reached on Feb. 29.

South Korean Foreign Minister Kim Sung-hwan said the rocket launch would make it more difficult for the North to rejoin the international community, while Japanese Foreign Minister Koichiro Gamba said the three top diplomats discussed how to work together to stop the North's provocative move.

Both Japan and South Korea have warned that they will shoot down the North Korean rocket if it threatens their respective territory.

On Sunday, a source warned that the North is likely to conduct a third nuclear test after going ahead with its planned rocket launch, citing commercial satellite photos of a nuclear facility site in Punggye-ri in North Hamgyeong Province taken on April 1.

"The North is secretly preparing a third nuclear test in Punggye-ri where it previously conducted two nuclear tests," the source said on condition of anonymity.

The North conducted its first nuclear test in October 2006, three months after a launch of the Taepodong-2, and the second nuclear test in May 2009, one month after a long-range missile launch.

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Earlier on Saturday in a bilateral meeting with South Korean Foreign Minister Kim Sung-hwan, Yang said Beijing would continue to urge Pyongyang to withdraw its plan to launch a satellite using a powerful rocket, South Korea's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Cho Byung-jae told reporters.

"In response to a rocket launch, Yang also suggested close communication between Seoul, Beijing and the U.N.," Cho said.

Kim called for China to play a greater role in handling the North's rocket launch by delivering a strong and stern message to Pyongyang.

Kim said the North will be punished with sanctions if it goes ahead with the provocative move.

Kim also had a bilateral meeting with Japanese Foreign Minister Koichiro Gamba and agreed that the two countries will seek ways at the U.N. Security Council to deal with the North's rocket launch.

Regarding issues over South Korean sex slaves who served the Japanese military during the World War II and the sovereignty dispute over the Dokdo Islets, Kim called on Japan to admit historical facts and reflect on them.

In the trilateral meeting, the three also discussed a trilateral free trade agreement and preparations for the meeting of leaders of the three countries reportedly scheduled in May.

<http://www.koreaherald.com/national/Detail.jsp?newsMLId=20120408000354>

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Yonhap News – South Korea

N. Korea Prepping for Nuclear Test: Intelligence Official

April 8, 2012

SEOUL, April 8 (Yonhap) -- North Korea is believed to be gearing up for a nuclear test, an intelligence official said Sunday, a move certain to fuel the already high tensions over its planned long-range rocket launch.

Satellite images show the communist nation digging a new tunnel underground in the Punggye-ri nuclear test site in the country's northeast, where it conducted two previous nuclear tests, first in 2006 and then in 2009.

The construction is believed to be in its final stage, the official said.

"North Korea is making clandestine preparations for a third nuclear test at Punggye-ri in North Hamkyong Province, where it conducted two nuclear tests in the past," the official said on condition of anonymity.

Commercial satellite imagery showed piles of earth and sand at the entrance of a tunnel in the Punggye-ri site. The soil is believed to have been brought to the site to plug the tunnel, one of final steps before carrying out a nuclear test blast.

A nuclear test following a long-range missile test fits the pattern of North Korean behavior.

In 2006, the provocative regime carried out its first-ever nuclear test, three months after the test-firing of its long-range Taepodong-2 rocket. The second nuclear test in 2009 came just one month after a long-range rocket launch.

The North says it will fire off its Unha-3 long-range rocket between April 12-16 to put what it claims is a satellite into orbit. But regional powers believe the launch is a pretext to disguise a ballistic missile test banned under a U.N. Security Council resolution.

Sources said the North is believed to have put the rocket on a launch pad in the country's northwest on Friday.

The North's nuclear and missile programs have long been a regional security concern. The country 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.



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<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2012/04/08/43/0401000000AEN20120408001100315F.HTML>

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The Australian – Australia

Reporters Shown North Korean Rocket

From correspondents in North Korea, AFP
April 09, 2012

NORTH Korea has shown foreign reporters its long-range rocket on its launch platform, as the regime again insisted it will be used to deploy a peaceful satellite and not a missile.

The usually secretive North organised the unprecedented visit to Tongchang-ri space centre in an effort to show its Unha-3 rocket is not a disguised ballistic missile, as claimed by the US and its allies.

Communist North Korea says it will launch the satellite for peaceful scientific research between April 12 and 16 to mark the 100th anniversary of the birth of founding leader Kim Il-Sung. His birthday was on April 15.

It is the first time North Korea has allowed foreign journalists to go to the new space centre built on the Cholsan peninsula, in the northwest of North Korea, 50 kilometres from the Chinese border.

The journalists, who arrived by a special train, were able to observe the rocket from 50m. It was painted in white with sky blue lettering. There were no indications when it would blast off. The rocket is 30m high and with a diameter of 2.5m.

Reporters were also able to see close-up what officials said was the satellite: a 100kg box with five antennae, covered by solar panels to supply it with electricity. It will play two songs in space.

"To say this is a missile test is really nonsense," said Jang Myong-Jin, head of the space centre. "This launch was planned long ago, on the occasion of the 100th birthday of (late) president Kim Il-Sung. We are not doing it for provocative purposes.

"If it were a ballistic missile, it would have to be hidden in an underground chamber, or would need to be carried on board another vehicle for protection. If it were not, then it would be useless in a real war."

The rocket would propel the Kwangmyongsong-3 (Shining Star) satellite into orbit to observe the earth and collect data on forests and natural resources in impoverished but nuclear-armed North Korea, officials have said.

A successful mission would burnish the image of young Kim Jong-Un as he seeks to establish his credentials as a strong leader after taking over from his father and longtime ruler Kim Jong-Il, who died last December.

Washington, Japan and South Korea have all condemned the move, saying any missile would contravene United Nations sanctions aimed at curbing North Korea's missile program. China, the North's major ally, has urged restraint.

Nuclear fears

There are also heightened fears that the novice administration of the young Kim could be readying for a third nuclear weapons test.

Japan has deployed missile batteries in central Tokyo, and Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda has given the green light to shoot down the rocket if it threatens Japan's territory.

"We will not tolerate any violation of our national sovereignty. We did not shoot down satellite launches from Japan or South Korea. Why are they threatening us?" Mr Jang said.

But the head of the space centre sought to appease the worries of neighbouring countries.

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"We can press the button to destroy the rocket and there is also a device in the launching vehicle which can judge whether it is out of the range and destroy itself if it deviates," he said.

Responding to questions on how much the space program was costing North Korea while its population was suffering chronic malnutrition, Mr Jang stressed the importance of technological development for the country.

"No matter how much you are hungry, you have to continue to develop technology, as without it you will become the most under-developed country in the world," he said.

He also added that North Korea was planning to launch much more powerful rockets, with a total weight of 400 tonnes compared to the 91 tonnes for the Unha-3 rocket.

"What we saw today, it's civilian," said French expert Christian Lardier, a member of the International Academy of Astronautics. "But this technology can be used for military ends."

The North, which is believed to have enough plutonium for six to eight bombs, tested atomic weapons in October 2006 and May 2009. Both were held one to three months after missile tests.

Preparations are under way in the northeastern town of Punggye-ri, where the North carried out the two previous nuclear tests, a South Korean official in Seoul said on condition of anonymity.

"Recent satellite images led us to conclude the North has been secretly digging a new underground tunnel in the nuclear test site... besides two others where the previous tests were conducted," said the source.

Construction of the new tunnel appears to be nearly complete, he said.

Pyongyang's move to fire a rocket in the next week led the US to suspend a recent deal to offer food aid to the North in return for a freeze on some nuclear and missile activities, drawing an angry reaction from North Korea.

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/breaking-news/reporters-shown-north-korean-rocket/story-fn3dxity-1226321776212>

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Yonhap News – South Korea

April 9, 2012

N. Korea Likely to Complete Power Transfer to New Leader this Week

SEOUL, April 9 (Yonhap) -- North Korea is expected to complete the power transfer to its new leader Kim Jong-un through a series of key political events in coming days that will culminate in a rocket launch, experts said Monday.

Kim has become the supreme commander of the 1.2 million-strong military as he took over the communist country following the December death of his father Kim Jong-il.

The new leader appears likely to become the general secretary of the Workers' Party in a party conference on Wednesday, a key post held by his late father, said Cheong Seong-chang, a senior research fellow at the Sejong Institute, a private security think tank near Seoul.

Kim's ascension to the post will automatically make him chairman of the party's Central Military Commission under party regulations, Cheong said.

Currently, Kim is the commission's vice chairman, a title he received during the previous party conference in September 2010, the North's biggest political gathering in 44 years.

Cheong also said he expected the North Korean leader to become either the chairman of the National Defense Commission, once headed by his father, or the head of a newly created post during a separate parliamentary session on Friday.



Kim's possible promotions "mean that his power succession will be officially concluded this week," Cheong said.

Kim Kap-sik, an analyst of the National Assembly Research Service, also predicted that the North Korean leader could assume all key vacant posts following his father's demise.

Still, a South Korean official handling North Korean affairs called for caution, noting Kim Jong-il took over the post of the party's general secretary in 1997, three years after the death of his father Kim Il-sung, the country's founder. The South Korean official asked not to be identified, citing policy.

The political meetings come amid tensions over Pyongyang's planned long-range rocket launch.

The North has claimed that the launch set for sometime between Thursday and Monday is designed to put a satellite into orbit, a move widely seen as a pretext to disguise a banned test of its ballistic missile technology.

The rocket launch is timed to celebrate the April 15 centennial of the birth of North Korea's founder, grandfather of current leader Kim Jong-un.

The North Korean leader is expected to display the completion of another hereditary power succession to the world through the milestone anniversary and the rocket launch.

Kim Jong-un is expected to "further consolidate his power through various political events," said Chung Young-chul, a professor of Sogang University.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2012/04/09/29/0401000000AEN20120409003300315F.HTML>

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Bangkok Post – Thailand

N. Korea Set to Install Satellite on Rocket

10 April 2012

By Agence France-Presse (AFP)

North Korea is set to complete the assembly of its latest rocket by installing the satellite payload later Tuesday, a senior space official said.

"We are expecting to complete assembly by today," Ryu Kum-Chol, deputy director of the space development department at the communist state's Committee for Space Technology, told foreign journalists in Pyongyang.

Ryu also insisted that debris from the launch, which is scheduled between April 12 and 16 to mark the 100th anniversary of the birth of North Korea's founding leader, posed no danger to countries in the region.

"We've chosen a safe trajectory. The first stage will fall 100 miles (160 kilometres) from land (in the Philippines), and the second stage 120 miles from land," he said.

But in case of any problem with the trajectory, the official said that the rocket was "capable of self-destruction" from ground control.

Impoverished but nuclear-armed North Korea says the rocket will propel the 100-kilogram (220-pound) Kwangmyongsong-3 (Shining Star) satellite into orbit to collect data on forests and natural resources within its territory.

However, the United States and other nations say the rocket launch is a pretext for a ballistic missile test, in defiance of United Nations resolutions and a US-North Korean deal concluded just in February.

Russia joined the international condemnation on Tuesday, saying the rocket launch showed disregard for UN Security Council resolutions on North Korea's nuclear and weapons programmes.

<http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/world/288268/n-korea-rocket-launch-grows-imminent-despite-anger>



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Atlanta Journal-Constitution

NKorea Space Official: All Prep Done for Launch

By JEAN H. LEE, Associated Press

Tuesday, April 10, 2012

PYONGYANG, North Korea — North Korean space officials said Tuesday all assembly and preparations for this week's planned satellite launch have been completed and denied it is a cover for a missile test.

Space officials told reporters at a news conference in Pyongyang that the launch of the three-stage rocket is on target to take place between Thursday and Monday as part of centennial birthday commemorations for late President Kim Il Sung, the country's founder.

The Kwangmyongsong-3 satellite, equipped with a camera designed to capture images of North Korea's terrain and send back data about weather conditions, was being mounted on the rocket Tuesday, said Ryu Kum Chol, deputy director of the Space Development Department of the Korean Committee for Space Technology.

"All the assembly and preparations of the satellite launch are done," including fueling of the rocket, he said.

The United States, Britain, Japan and others have urged North Korea to cancel the launch, saying it would be considered a violation of U.N. resolutions prohibiting the country from nuclear and ballistic missile activity.

Experts say the Unha-3 carrier is the same type of rocket that would be used to launch a long-range missile aimed at the U.S. and other targets. North Korea has tested two atomic devices but is not believed to have mastered the technology needed to mount a nuclear warhead on a long-range missile.

Ryu acknowledged similarities between the rockets used for launching a satellite and a ballistic missile. However, he noted that solid fuel is used to launch ballistic missiles, while the Kwangmyongsong-3 satellite will be sent using liquid fuel.

Also, in order to be a success, a ballistic missile would require a large payload, he said.

"Our satellite weighs 100 kilograms. For a weapon, a 100-kilogram payload wouldn't be very effective," he said, dismissing assertions that the launch is a cover for developing missile technology as "nonsense."

Ryu also said a missile launch would require more sophisticated technology, and would not take place from a fixed, openly visible station.

"No country in the world would want to launch a ballistic missile from such an open site," he said.

Ryu said he could not provide any answers to questions about whether North Korea is planning a third nuclear test.

None of Ryu's points rule out the use of the launch, with or without a satellite on top, as a test for developing missiles. The United States and its allies suggest that even though the North may launch a satellite this time, the rocket technologies involved can easily be applied to missiles.

Effective long-range ballistic missiles do tend to use solid fuel, particularly when launched from mobile units, but that does not rule out using a liquid-fuel launch vehicle for a ballistic missile. The first ballistic missiles, Nazi Germany's V-2, were liquid fuel and several countries, including Iran, still use liquids.

This week's satellite launch from a new facility in the hamlet of Tongchang-ri on North Korea's west coast would be the country's third attempt since 1998. Two previous rockets, also named Unha, were mounted with experimental communications satellites and sent from the east coast.



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North Korean officials say the 2009 satellite reached orbit, citing Russian confirmation. But the U.S. North American Aerospace Defense Command said Kwangmyongsong-2 did not make it into space, and shortly after the launch, the Interfax news agency quoted an unnamed senior Russian military official saying the same thing.

The third rendition will be North Korea's first working satellite, and is designed to transmit data to the Agriculture and Transportation ministries, said Paek Chang Ho, head of the North's Central Satellite Control Center.

However, Brian Weeden, a technical adviser at Secure World Foundation and a former Air Force officer at the U.S. Space Command, said he doubted the launch would succeed in sending a satellite into orbit. He speculated that the end goal is to test and develop their ballistic missile program.

The planned launch is a highlight of two weeks of celebrations to mark the 100th anniversary of Kim Il Sung's April 15th birthday and the 80th anniversary of the founding of the Korean People's Army.

North Korea also is preparing to formally install his grandson Kim Jong Un as North Korea's leader with two major political gatherings: a Workers' Party conference on Wednesday and a Supreme People's Assembly session Friday.

"As preparations at the pad near completion, Pyongyang is stepping up a public relations campaign intended to project the image of a strong, powerful nation at home and abroad that will culminate in the launch itself," said Joel Wit, visiting fellow at the U.S.-Korea Institute at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.

On Sunday, The Associated Press was among some 20 news organizations taken to the launch site in North Phyongan province, northwest of Pyongyang, to see preparations. All three stages of the 30-meter-tall Unha-3 rocket were visibly in position at the launch pad, and the 3-foot-tall (1-meter-tall) satellite ready for installation.

Kwangmyongsong means "bright, shining star," while Unha means "galaxy."

The United States says the launch would jeopardize a U.S.-North Korean agreement that called for providing Pyongyang with much-needed food aid in exchange for a freeze on nuclear activity, including a moratorium on long-range missile tests.

The U.N. Security Council, including China, condemned the last launch in April 2009. In protest, North Korea walked away from nuclear disarmament negotiations and conducted an atomic test weeks later that drew tightened U.N. sanctions.

On Tuesday, Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Alexander Lukashevich was quoted by the state-owned RIA Novosti news agency as saying that Moscow views Pyongyang's plans as "an example of ignoring decisions of the U.N. Security Council."

North Korean officials said the U.N. space treaty guarantees every nation's right to develop its space program.

"We do not recognize any U.N. Security Council resolution that violates our national sovereignty," Ryu said. "I believe that the right to have a satellite is the universal right of every nation on this planet."

Associated Press writer Foster Klug contributed to this report from Seoul, South Korea.

<http://www.ajc.com/news/nation-world/nkorea-space-official-all-1412146.html>

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The Nation – Pakistan

AQ Rules Out Nuclear Programme Rollback

By Nawaz Raza

April 9, 2012

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ISLAMABAD - Renowned nuclear scientist and architect of Pakistan's nuclear programme Dr Abdul Qadeer Khan has said that former President Pervez Musharraf had caused enormous damage to the country and could have pledged the country's nuclear programme at the hands of his foreign masters had he stayed in power for some more time.

In an exclusive interview with Nawa-i-Waqt, Dr AQ Khan shared his views on host of issues including the charges of nuclear technology sell-off levelled on him during Musharraf era. He further said that Musharraf had pushed the country into deep crisis and the country had to pay for the wrong steps of Musharraf for almost a decade and still the country was paying off for his deeds in shape of unrest in Balochistan.

'Had Musharraf got more time in power he could have proved as Gorbachev of Pakistan', he added. To a question, he ruled out the possibility of rollback of country's nuclear programme and quickly added had Musharraf got some more time he could have done so.

To a question about the allegations levelled against him for selling off the nuclear technology to Iran, Dr. Khan said that he even could not think of sharing an iota of information of country's nuclear programme with anyone what to speak of selling off the nuclear technology. When asked that they why he had taken the blame of selling off the nuclear technology to Iran, he replied that due to wrong policies of Musharraf the country's nuclear programme was imperiled and the US could have placed Pakistan under sanctions from Security Council and that was the reason he had taken all the blame on him just to secure the country's nuclear programme.

He stated that Pakistan had not given any nuclear technology to Iran and the only help they had extended to Iran was that they provided them with the information that from where they could get the relevant material from international market. To another question, he said that he has nothing personal against Musharraf but considered him as a criminal who had done wrong to the whole nation.

Terming Musharraf as the killer of Nawab Akbar Bugti and suggested that he (Musharraf) should be handed over to chieftain of Bugti tribe which would neutralise half the grievances of the Balochs. To a question, he said that country's nuclear programme was in safe hands and very powerful command and control authority was in place to take care of the nuclear assets of the country.

He was all praise for Gen Kidwai, who is heading the authority in most professional fashion. To another question, he said that by becoming nuclear power Pakistan had frustrated the designs of world powers who wanted to see Pakistan as subservient country like Bhutan and Sri Lanka before India and to pitch India against China.

Recalling his stay in Europe for 15 long years before coming back to Pakistan to launch the country's nuclear programme, he said that he went abroad with a mission and had acquired requisite knowledge of uranium enrichment and came back to materialise the dream of transforming Pakistan into a nuclear power. Dr. Khan also paid glowing tributes to late Gen. Ziaul Haq who had played a key role in the success of the country's nuclear programme and despite being close to the Americans in the war against Russia in Afghanistan he had kept the matter close to his heart.

To another question, he said that Pakistan was hands in gloves with America in those days but even then Ziaul Haq had not permitted the Americans to operate in Pakistan.

To another question, he said that no Western state including America want to see nuclear capability in the hands of any Muslim state and that was the reason they trying to coerce Iran and sanctions were slapped on it.

He said that as Iran is signatory to IAEA and NPT so the inspectors of IAEA frequently visit Iran to inspect its nuclear installations.

Dr. AQ Khan said that honest and capable leadership with the support of a team of technocrats of impeccable character could steer the country out of prevailing crisis and put the country on road to progress and prosperity.

He said that Pakistan is blessed with enormous mineral and other resources and the only thing the nation need is a good team to exploit these resources for the welfare of the people of Pakistan.



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To a question, he said that he was not interested to join any political party despite the fact that a number of political parties have invited him to join their fold but he preferred to live in the hearts of 80 to 85 per cent people of Pakistan and did not want to join the rest of 15 per cent who had affiliation with political parties.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/national/09-Apr-2012/aq-rules-out-nuclear-programme-rollback>

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ITAR-TASS News Agency

Russian Inspectors to Make Observation Flight over US April 8-16

7 April 2012

MOSCOW, April 7 (Itar-Tass) — Russian military inspectors will make an observation flight over the United States on April 8-16.

The flight will be made aboard a Tu-154M Lk-1 plane under the Treaty on Open Sky, the Defence Ministry said on Saturday, April 7.

“Russian and American specialists aboard the plane will monitor the use of equipment and surveillance systems in accordance with effective arrangements. This will be the eighth observation flight made by Russian officials in 2012 over the territories of the Treaty member states,” the ministry said.

Russia signed the Treaty on Open Skies on March 24, 1992. Thirty-four OSCE member states have joined the treaty. They are allowed to make observation flights over the each other’s territories to monitor military activities in order to strengthen interstate trust in the field of arms control.

The Treaty on Open Skies entered into force on January 1, 2002. It establishes a programme of unarmed aerial surveillance flights over the entire territory of its participants. The treaty is designed to enhance mutual understanding and confidence by giving all participants, regardless of size, a direct role in gathering information about military forces and activities of concern to them.

The Treaty on Open Skies is one of the most wide-ranging international efforts to date promoting openness and transparency of military forces and activities.

<http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c154/386274.html>

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

S-400 Missiles Deployed in Russia’s Baltic Fleet

9 April 2012

Russia has deployed a battalion of S-400 Triumph air defense missile systems at a Baltic Fleet base in the exclave of Kaliningrad, the Izvestia daily reported on Monday.

This is the third base to deploy an S-400 battalion. The other two are located in the Moscow region.

Air Force chief of staff Major General Viktor Bondarev said in mid-March that one S-400 battalion was currently being deployed at Nakhodka [Russia’s Far East].

By 2020, Russia is to have 28 S-400 regiments, each comprised of two battalions, mainly in maritime and border areas.

The S-400 Triumph long- to medium-range surface-to-air missile system can effectively engage any aerial target, including aircraft, unmanned aerial vehicles, and cruise and ballistic missiles at up to 400 kilometers and an altitude of up to 30 kilometers.

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The Russian Defense Ministry has said there are no plans so far to export the S-400, which will be produced only for the Russian Armed Forces.

MOSCOW, April 9 (RIA Novosti)

http://en.ria.ru/military_news/20120409/172702870.html

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Voice of Russia – Russia

Russia Waiting for S-500 Air Defense System

By Ilya Kramnik

April 9, 2012

The S-500, a new generation surface-to-air missile system, is to enter the Russian Air Defense arsenal in 2015. At present, the Russian Air Forces are outfitted with the S-400 and S-300V4 complexes, which see their production rates gradually increasing. Still, the older generation of these missile defense systems is here to stay.

The planned date of the S-500's introduction into service was announced last week by Major General Viktor Gumennoi, Head of the Russian Air Defense Forces. Under the 2011-2020 State Armament Program, the Russian Air Forces will be supplied with ten S-500 battalions over the first five years of the system's batch production. The S-500 surface-to-air complex can engage cruise, ballistic and medium-range missiles, as well as planes, drones and space targets.

The development of the unified S-500U system for the Russian Air Defense and army air defense units was launched in the 1960s by the Russian military and the First Design Bureau with the Soviet Ministry of Radio Industry, the main research unit of the Almaz-Antei company. The initial S-500U was supposed to engage predominantly enemy aircraft.

At the end of the 1960s, however, the military changed their heart in favour of a unified S-300 family, which included the S-300V, its army version, designed to engage ballistic missiles as well as the anti-cruise missile and anti-aircraft S-300P which was designed for the Soviet Air Forces. The latter served as the basis for the naval S-300F missile. Still, their unification failed. The radar stations of the S-300V and S-300P shared only 50% of common design, whereas other crucial systems were completely different.

The collapse of the Soviet Union stalled many prospective projects, while the surface-to-air system research lived on. Towed S-300PT launchers were scrapped by the end of the 1990s; self-propelled S-300PSs, deployed in the mid-1980s, were revamped and re-emerged as S-200PMs. Meanwhile, another version of the system, known as the S-300PMU, gained world recognition and became a clear favourite. The anti-missile S-300V remained in the background, while the versions that had already entered into the service were modernized.

Further research in the field of next generation anti-missile and anti-aircraft systems resulted in the new S-400 system, an invention that allowed to resume the development of the unified S-500 complex on a new conceptual level. The batch production of the S-400 was officially launched in 2006, with the first battalion entering the Russian service as early as next year. However, their production rate has turned out to be lower than expected.

Today, a lot of hopes are pinned on the new plants that are to be built in Kirov and in Nizhny Novgorod, where the first lines are set to be started in 2015. The Kirov factory will be building anti-aircraft missiles, while the Nizhny Novgorod facility will produce launchers, radar stations, and command posts.

At this rate, by 2016, the Russian defence industry will reach the production capacity of five to six battalions a year. This will lead to the Russian Air Forces falling short of sixteen to twenty S-400 battalions out of the expected fifty six. Considering that the S-500 program is still running behind schedule, it will probably be tested only in 2015, with its batch production kicking off after 2017.

As a result, the Russian military can actually fall short of some twenty five battalions out of the sixty six S-400/500 artillery batteries slated to enter its service by 2020. Although the S-300V4 deliveries will be running their course, they



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will replace the obsolete S-300V versions and therefore won't improve the situation around the outdated S-300P series.

Thus, it's becoming increasingly important to revamp the deployed S-300PM systems or even their earlier variants. The air force "workhorses" can even be given a second life by using the modern components and upgraded missiles, which will allow Russia to compensate for the shortage of new air defense systems while the S-400/500 production is gaining steam.

Today, the Russian military has eighty to hundred S-300PM and S-300 PS battalions at its disposal. To prevent its air defense field from shrinking, it will have to keep at least fifty S-300 batteries in its ranks by 2020.

http://english.ruvr.ru/2012_04_09/71180406/

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Scotland on Sunday – Scotland, U.K.

Scottish Independence: Alex Salmond's Nato and Nukes Dilemma

By TOM PETERKIN and EDDIE BARNES

Sunday, 8 April 2012

AN INDEPENDENT Scotland would not be able to clear nuclear weapons from its military bases and remain in Nato, one of Britain's leading defence experts has warned.

As the SNP debates a U-turn that could see Alex Salmond's party dropping its long-standing opposition to being a member of the international defence pact, Professor Malcolm Chalmers has claimed that signing up to the organisation would mean the Trident submarine fleet and its nuclear warheads being kept in Scotland for possibly decades to come.

In a paper commissioned by Scotland on Sunday, Chalmers, the defence policy director of the Royal United Services Institute, stated that the SNP's anti-nuclear stance would be "hard to square" with an independent Scotland accepting Nato's commitment to a nuclear alliance. A separate Scottish government might have to allow the UK's nuclear deterrent to remain based in Scotland if it wanted to remain within the military group.

Chalmers' analysis suggests the SNP government now has a difficult choice to make in the run-up to the independence referendum planned for 2014 as leaving Nato would be unpopular with many grassroots members.

A recently-published survey exposed deep fault lines in the party when it found that more than half of the membership opposed the long-held view that an independent Scotland should withdraw from Nato.

The policy's unpopularity with members and the public at large has now led to the SNP preparing to rethink its Nato position. The SNP defence spokesman Angus Robertson has said the party is "looking at the policy options" on the Nato treaty.

In his paper, Chalmers also warned that, after independence, Scotland would struggle to fly combat aircraft, could not afford new frigates and submarines and would see lucrative defence contracts move to England.

With a defence budget of around £2 billion, Chalmers cautioned that with just one new aircraft costing around £100 million, an independent Scotland could be forced to stop flying combat planes. He also questioned whether a separate UK would retain a "foreign" airbase in Scotland.

His analysis, which is published today on the Scotland on Sunday website, also said that an independent Scotland could not afford to maintain any of the seven Astute class nuclear-powered submarines that are supposed to come into service at Faslane over the next decade.

He argued that it would "not make sense" for Scotland to acquire any of the new Type 26 frigates due to enter service in the 2020s, most of which are scheduled to be built on the Clyde – resulting in job losses.

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On the central issue of Nato, Chalmers highlighted other political dangers should Scotland choose to leave the organisation. He said the existing SNP policy of withdrawal would be faced with “hostile” US opinion and would make it difficult for Scotland to maintain relations and technical co-operation with the UK armed forces.

In his paper, *Defence In An Independent Scotland*, he also claimed that withdrawal would result in neighbouring Nato countries becoming wary of Scottish attempts to “free-ride” on their security protection.

Chalmers believes that signing up to Nato would create its own problems for a party that has always opposed nuclear weapons. He wrote: “There would be a fundamental inconsistency in accepting the role of nuclear weapons in Nato’s security, but demanding their rapid removal from one’s own national territory.”

According to Chalmers, Scotland would be under pressure to delay the removal of Trident until agreement could be reached with the UK. Chalmers gave the examples of Ireland, which saw Royal Navy ships in Irish ports for 17 years after independence in the 1920s, and the Russian fleet which will be stationed in Sevastopol until 2042, even though the Ukraine gained independence in 1991.

“Recent historical precedent suggests that they [nuclear weapons] could remain for some considerable period of time, likely to be measured in decades rather than years,” Chalmers wrote.

He warned it will be “much more difficult or perhaps politically impossible” to find another place to store the nuclear warheads currently stationed at Coulport.

Last night, the SNP said its long-standing policy was for Scotland to be a member of the Partnership for Peace – like Sweden, Austria, Finland and Ireland – which provides for defence co-operation between Nato and non-Nato countries.

Robertson said: “An independent Scotland will not have unwanted, unneeded and hugely expensive Trident nuclear weapons based in Scottish waters. We will be able to decide Scotland’s own defence priorities.”

Last night, Labour’s shadow defence secretary, Jim Murphy MP, said: “This is a devastating critique of the SNP’s position on defence. Scots deserve to know how big our armed forces would be, how would the shipyards stay open, how many navy ships Scotland would have, what happens to the RAF, our membership of Nato and our role on the UN Security Council – before the referendum, not after.”

<http://www.scotsman.com/scotland-on-sunday/scotland/scottish-independence-alex-salmond-s-nato-and-nukes-dilemma-1-2222810>

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The Scotsman – Scotland, U.K.

Scottish Independence: Faslane Warning Puts Squeeze on SNP

By SCOTT MACNAB

Monday, 9 April 2012

Alex Salmond is under growing pressure to set out his plans for Scotland’s defence forces under independence after a leading defence expert raised questions over the the SNP’s flagship policy to quit Nato.

Professor Malcolm Chalmers, the defence policy director of the Royal United Services Institute, also warned there would be significant one-off costs in building new infrastructure, training and exercising facilities.

In a paper entitled *Defence In An Independent Scotland*, he questions what the impact would be on Faslane, home to the UK’s nuclear deterrent, if Scotland left Nato.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said: “This report shows that in a separate Scotland, Alex Salmond would prepared to rip this partnership apart, leaving us with a depleted and poorly-equipped military presence.

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"The First Minister can't have his cake and eat it. Either he chooses to uphold his long-standing aim to get rid of nuclear weapons at Faslane – a base that is home to 6,500 workers – and rip us out of the most successful military alliance in the globe or he backtracks on leaving Nato, which he has hinted he will do, and keeps the nuclear fleet.

"Senior military figures agree Alex Salmond has no clue when it comes to matters of defence."

SNP defence spokesman Angus Robertson says the paper concludes an independent Scotland could maintain "capable" armed forces.

He said: "An independent Scotland will not have unneeded and hugely expensive Trident nuclear weapons based in Scottish waters, which will be removed in the soonest possible timescale – just as the vast majority of countries which co-operate on defence are also free of nuclear weapons, including Partnership for Peace members such as Norway, which is in Nato."

<http://www.scotsman.com/the-scotsman/scotland/scottish-independence-faslane-warning-puts-squeeze-on-snp-1-2224022>

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Britain Can Extradite Radical Cleric Abu Hamza to US

By Cyril Julien, Agence France-Presse (AFP)

April 10, 2012

STRASBOURG — Britain can extradite jailed radical Muslim preacher Abu Hamza and four other alleged terrorists to the United States, the European Court of Human Rights ruled Tuesday.

The court found "there would be no violation of Article 3 (prohibition of inhuman and degrading treatment) of the European Convention on Human Rights" if the five were extradited, but allowed a three-month stay for an appeal.

The defendants had complained that conditions at the ADX supermax prison in Florence, Colorado -- used for people convicted of terrorism -- and possible multiple life sentences they face would be grossly disproportionate and amount to inhuman or degrading treatment.

The Strasbourg-based court said in its ruling that Mustafa Kamal Mustafa, as Abu Hamza is also known, and the four others -- Babar Ahmad, Syed Tahla Ahsan, Adel Abdul Bary and Khaled Al-Fawwaz -- could be extradited.

It held that "conditions at ADX would not amount to ill-treatment".

The panel decided to adjourn the case of a sixth man in the case, Haroon Rashid Aswat, and invited parties to submit information on his mental health and how this would affect US judicial proceedings.

Abu Hamza, the former imam of the Finsbury Park mosque in north London, is wanted in the United States on charges including setting up an Al-Qaeda-style training camp for militants in the northwestern US state of Oregon.

He is also accused of having sent money and recruits to assist Afghanistan's hardline Taliban militia and Al-Qaeda and helping a gang of kidnapers in Yemen who abducted a 16-strong party of Western tourists in 1998.

Hamza, who has one eye and a hook for one hand, was jailed in Britain for seven years in 2007 for inciting followers to murder non-believers.

The court had previously halted the extradition of Egyptian-born Hamza and three of the other men to the United States, saying the case needed further examination.

It later found that, given US assurances, there was no real risk the men would either be designated as enemy combatants and be subject to the death penalty or subjected to extraordinary rendition.

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"If the applicants were convicted as charged, the US authorities would be justified in considering them a significant security risk and in imposing strict limitations on their ability to communicate with the outside world," the court said.

"Besides, ADX inmates -- although confined to their cells for the vast majority of the time -- were provided with services and activities (such as) television, radio, newspapers, books, hobby and craft items, telephone calls, social visits, correspondence with families, group prayer which went beyond what was provided in most prisons in Europe."

Between 1999 and 2006 all six applicants were indicted on various terrorism charges in the United States.

Ahmad and Ahsan are accused of various felonies including providing support to terrorists and conspiracy to kill, kidnap, maim or injure persons or damage property in a foreign country.

Ahmad, 37, has been detained pending extradition since 2004, reportedly the longest a Briton has been detained without trial in modern times.

His father Ashfaq Ahmad said the family was disappointed with the ruling and called for his son to be allowed to go on trial in Britain immediately.

"Babar is a British citizen accused of a crime said to have been committed in the UK, and all the evidence against him was gathered in this country," he told reporters in London.

"Nevertheless, British justice appears to have been subcontracted to the US. This should be immediately rectified by putting Babar on trial in the UK and ordering a full public inquiry."

Abu Hamza has been charged with 11 different counts of criminal conduct related to the Yemen kidnappings, advocating violent jihad in Afghanistan in 2001 and conspiring to establish a jihad training camp in Oregon between June 2000 and December 2001.

Aswat was indicted as Abu Hamza's co-conspirator over the latter charges.

Bary and Fawwaz were indicted, along with slain former Al-Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden and 20 others, for their alleged involvement in, or support for, the 1998 bombing of US embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam.

Fawwaz has been charged with more than 269 counts of murder.

<http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5joOuiH1mEQun8Wx5DPsqCpgPPcMA?docId=CNG.d2bb9a7e8bf688e17518dc342eb755a6.391>

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S.Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) – Singapore

OPINION/Analysis

RSIS Commentary No. 60

China's New Defence Budget: What Does It Tell Us?

China's new defence budget – particularly given the sizable and growing funding it dedicates to military R&D and procurement – demonstrates Beijing's continuing resolve to gain military power commensurate with its growing soft power.

April 9, 2012

By Richard A. Bitzinger

IN EARLY March, China released its defence budget for 2012, which broke the symbolic US\$100 billion barrier for the first time. In fact, Chinese military expenditures will total US\$106.4 billion (S\$134 billion), an increase of 11.2 percent over 2011 – and this does not include possible hidden spending, which could add billions of dollars per year to the Chinese defence budget. No other country, save the United States, is in triple-digits (in billions of US dollars, that is) when it comes to defence spending.

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Not only is China now the world's second largest in terms of military expenditures, it greatly outspends every other country except the US. China overtook Japan in 2007 as the largest defence spender in Asia, and then the world's number two-ranked United Kingdom in 2008. China's new defence budget is more than twice as large as the third-highest spenders (a rough tie between the UK, France, and Russia, according to data provided by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute). It outspends all of Southeast Asia's militaries combined by a factor of better than three to one, and China's defence expenditures are nearly three times that of its rising Asian rival, India.

China is the only major country to experience double-digit real (i.e., after taking inflation into account) increases in military expenditures nearly every year since the end of the Cold War. China's defence budget has risen, on average, 13 percent annually for the past fifteen years, resulting in a 500 percent or greater real increase in military expenditures since 1997.

Where Does the Money Go?

Clearly, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has been on a spending spree for the past 15 years, but where does all this increased defence spending go? The Chinese insist that these increases in defence spending mostly go to addressing PLA quality-of-life issues: soldiers' pay and benefits, building new barracks, etc., but this is patently false. For more than a decade, Chinese defence white papers have consistently stated that approximately one-third of all military expenditures goes to personnel, one-third to operations, and one-third to "equipment," i.e., defence research and development (R&D) and procurement. Since these ratios have remained more or less constant since the late 1990s, this means that any increases in spending must be shared out equally among the three segments of the military budget.

Such a division of the spoils has clearly benefited defence R&D and procurement. In 1997, for example, spending on equipment totaled some 25.6 billion yuan (approximately US\$3 billion at the time), or roughly 32 percent of the overall Chinese defence budget. In 2009, the equipment budget was still around 32 percent of a total military budget of 400 billion yuan (US\$58.8 billion) – and keep in mind that most Western militaries spend on average less than 20 percent of their budgets on equipment. If this roughly one-third percentage rate remains constant for the 2012 budget, then PLA expenditures for defence R&D and procurement this year are probably somewhere in the neighbourhood of US\$35 billion.

In other words, Chinese spending on military equipment has grown more than ten-fold over the past 15 years – although with inflation the real increase is probably closer to six-fold. This growth in the equipment budget has permitted the PLA to significantly expand its acquisition of modern military equipment, including fourth-generation combat aircraft (such as the J-10 and locally built Su-27 fighters), new frigates and destroyers, and several types of nuclear – and conventionally powered submarines.

More importantly, perhaps, military R&D spending has likely increased just as dramatically. Assuming a low average of 5 percent of overall defence spending being dedicated to defence R&D (similar to what the leading West European powers spend in this category), the Chinese could be allocating approximately US\$6 billion a year to developing new weapons systems and researching new technologies – and this amount could easily be higher. In fact, the PLA already appears to be reaping the benefits of higher R&D spending, given the unveiling of its J-20 "fifth-generation" fighter, an antiship ballistic missile, and the stealthy, catamaran-hulled Houbai-class fast missile boat.

A Sign of Resolve

In its continuing adherence to annual double-digit increases in military spending, as well as its allocating a large portion of its defence budget to R&D and procurement, it is clear that Beijing is seeking to gain "hard" power – that is, military strength – commensurate with its growing economic, diplomatic, and cultural "soft" power.

Beyond this basic effort to acquire military strength for the sake of great-power status, it is obvious that China intends to use this new-found military power to advance its national interests. Key among these are its territorial claims in the South China Sea or protecting local sea lanes of communication vital to its energy supplies and trade; increasing pressure on Taiwan not to declare independence and to eventually accept some kind of reunification with the



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mainland; and to counter the rising American military presence in the Asia-Pacific – if not to establish itself as a credible rival to the US in this region.

Consequently, the phenomenon of large increases in Chinese defence spending, especially since they have been constant and consistent for more than a decade and a half, is a genuine cause for concern; China may be increasingly prone to using its growing military power to achieve, or underpin its efforts to achieve, its expressed national goals.

Richard A. Bitzinger is a Senior Fellow with the Military Transformations Programme at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University. Formerly with the RAND Corp. and the Asia-Pacific Centre for Security Studies, he has been writing on military and defence economic issues for more than 20 years.

<http://www.rsis.edu.sg/publications/Perspective/RSIS0602012.pdf>

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New York Times

OPINION/Op-Ed Contributor - *International Herald Tribune*

April 10, 2012

On Iran, Reality Bites

By JOHN VINO CUR

PARIS — Bad news: the Obama administration and the West hold a lousy hand as they go into talks with Iran.

In a world of dreams and miracles, the conversations, starting Saturday, would end with the mullahs renouncing their drive toward nuclear weapons, and the disappearance of a thunderhead of foreboding and grief.

Reality says otherwise, three ways.

It demonstrates that the Iranians are emboldened by the West's backing off in Syria. It acknowledges that some of the allies have serious concerns about Barack Obama's willingness to make concessions and stretch out the talks, playing for time, Iranian-style, until after the U.S. presidential election. And it imposes the conclusion that there is no visible way these so-called confidence building exchanges (don't call them negotiations) can produce confidence solid enough for the United States, Britain, France and Germany to believe that Iran is willing to cast aside the nuclear military program they accuse it of running.

Backed by Russia and China, Tehran has little reason to offer more than a reformulation of its standard maze of denials and ambiguities in response to the West's weak diplomatic cards.

As little as a month ago, the Obama administration was talking about the imminent departure of Bashar al-Assad, Syria's leader. His ouster would have been a vast blow to Iran, which regards Assad as its closest ally and buffer.

But the West buckled in the face of Russian and Chinese resistance, withdrawing its U.N. Security Council draft resolution that demanded that Assad leave and that Russia halt its supply of arms to Syria. No substantive Western action followed. Assad remains. This is a terrible precedent.

Last week, I asked Gérard Longuet, the French defense minister, how he now would describe the circumstances in Syria. His frankness was startling: "Iran has won the round and Russia was its accomplice."

Result: an emboldened Iran. Indeed, a Tehran parliamentarian said over the weekend that Iran can now produce 90-plus enriched uranium and thus, in theory, a nuclear weapon.

That's both a test and a taunt. It's also a way of saying (and provoking dissension among the allies) that the West is already tolerating a nuclear-capable Iran — that is, one that hasn't assembled a weapon but holds the necessary technology and components in hand, just like Japan.

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At the same time, the Obama administration has left its European counterparts with a virtual certainty: that it wants the talks to extend until Election Day, Nov. 4. This is based on the flimsy premise that Israel will be reluctant to strike Iran as long as the talks continue.

Yet the administration's approach to the conversations does not include a clear exit strategy, which intensifies the likelihood of their dawdling futility.

The French, in this context, are describing themselves as "guardians of the temple," meaning that they have suspicions of U.S. concessions that would bend or skirt the Security Council's requirements for the mullahs to prove their total disengagement from pursuing nukes. (Think, in the worst case, of a triangular deal with Russia and Iran reflecting Mr. Obama's on-mike appeal to Vladimir Putin for "space" in exchange for "flexibility" on missile defense.)

Indeed, France is opposed to an Israeli strike. But when it comes to exerting pressure, Mr. Longuet, seemingly addressing the administration, said, "The real problem in the Middle East is Iran not Israel."

Did he fear a major international conflict — as administration officials warn — in the event of a strike? "International, no," he answered.

Nowhere — really nowhere — is there optimism the talks will succeed.

So what to do?

Mr. Obama should make clear that further sanctions on Iran, with the addition of prohibitions involving Europe's oil trade beginning July 1, will intensify short of conclusive, verifiable steps by Iran to halt its drive for nukes.

He could well try buying himself more "space" — and get past the election in the process — by trying to bring together American and Israeli timelines on when Iran's drive becomes irreversible. In an article, often referred to as authoritative, in late January, the Israeli journalist Ronen Bergman said that Israel believed that it had nine months in which to act before Iranian targets entered an "immunity zone," while it considered that the United States, with its wider capabilities, had 15.

There are no guarantees Israel would lengthen its notational time frame to 15 months, but Washington could try by providing it with additional refueling aircraft and 200 GBU-31 bunker busters.

Doing so with time left on the clock for some unmistakable compliance from Tehran would at the same time draw a red line defining for the mullahs what the president meant when he said the U.S. would always "have Israel's back."

His default position if, as is likely, the clock runs out?

Mr. Obama, as well as Iran, is stuck with his having said in an election year that he finds it "entirely appropriate" that "Israel's leaders will make determinations based on what they believe is best for the security of Israel."

John Vinocur is senior correspondent at The International Herald Tribune, reporting on matters ranging from politics and economics to sports and culture in Europe, Asia and occasionally the United States.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/10/opinion/on-iran-reality-bites.html>

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Foreign Policy
OPINION/ Blog

Are We Serious about Talking with Tehran?

By Stephen M. Walt
Monday, April 9, 2012

For the life of me, I can't figure out what the Obama administration is thinking about Iran. And I can't tell if the administration is more confused than I am. Let me explain.

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The first part of the puzzle was a column by the *Washington Post's* David Ignatius last week, which reported that "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 claims that his nation 'will never pursue nuclear weapons.'" Ignatius' story was obviously based on testimony from administration insiders, and the leaks were probably intended to send the message that diplomacy was working and that military force wasn't needed. In a similar vein, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton told *ABC News* on April 3 that "it's our very strong belief, as President Obama conveyed to the Israelis, that it is not in anyone's interest for them to take unilateral action. *It is in everyone's interest for us to seriously pursue at this time the diplomatic path*" (my emphasis).

So far, so good. But then came Sunday's *New York Times* story supposedly laying out the P5+1 negotiating position. Like the Ignatius story, it was based on leaks (that is, on conversations with unnamed "senior U.S. officials"). It reported that the U.S. and its allies will insist that Iran shut down and eventually dismantle its underground enrichment facility at Fordow, as part of supposed deal intended to keep Iran as far away from a bomb as possible. The story quotes an unnamed official saying that the "urgent priority" is to get Iran to give up its supply of 20 percent enriched uranium, because it could be further enriched to weapons grade (>90 percent) relatively quickly. But they also quote NSC spokesman Tommy Vietor saying "Our position is clear: Iran must live up to its international obligations, including full suspension of uranium enrichment as required by multiple U.N. Security Council resolutions."

But here's why I'm confused. I can see why the P5 +1 would *like* Iran to agree to these demands, just as I'd like Bill Gates and Warren Buffett to each write me billion dollar checks. But I don't *expect* either of them to do this, yet the U.S and its allies seem to think this deal-breaking demand is a reasonable opening bid. In fact, their position sounds like a complete non-starter to me, and seems more likely to derail negotiations than advance them.

Remember: Iran has invested millions to build a protected underground enrichment facility, which is what any sensible government might do if it were constantly being threatened with a preventive strike. It would be an extraordinarily humiliating climb-down for them to agree to shut the facility down at this point and then dismantle it. Have you seen much evidence that the highly nationalistic Iranians would accept this sort of humiliation? Moreover, if Iran's main goal is not to have a nuclear weapon, but rather to have the capacity to get one quickly if it ever needed it, then it is unlikely to accede to our demands about its stockpile of 20 percent enriched uranium in the absence of some very big inducements.

The *Times'* story quotes a U.S. official saying "We have no idea how the Iranians will react... We probably won't know after the first meeting." In fact, the initial response from Tehran was both prompt and predictable. Guess what? They rejected it.

So here's why I'm puzzled. If you're the Obama administration, the last thing you want is a war. Certainly not before November, and maybe not ever. (It's bad enough that sanctions on Iran are adding about 25 cents to the price of gallon of gas.) But if that's the case, then the obvious course of action is to get the diplomatic track rolling and make a genuine effort to see if an acceptable deal can be had. So why start with an opening demand that Iran was virtually certain to reject? All that does is confirm Iranian suspicions that the United States and its allies aren't really interested in a negotiated settlement and give war hawks another reason to demand the use of force. If the U.S. and its allies soften their position on Fordow, however, the GOP will accuse Obama of appeasement and the war hawks at home and abroad will clamor that time is running out and that force is the only option.

It is possible, I suppose, that there's something more subtle going on here. Maybe the real P5+1 position will be a bit more reasonable, and these news stories will be forgotten. Maybe Iran's leaders are feeling the heat, and will be more forthcoming than I suspect. Maybe there's a tacit U.S.-Israeli deal reflected here, where they've agreed not to launch a war and we've agreed to put forward a very tough line that leaves options open for the future. Maybe the demand to close Fordow is just a bargaining chip, and we will in fact get a deal on the 20 percent enriched uranium.

A lot of maybes. But from where I sit today, our approach looks like a good way to sabotage the negotiations before they start. What good does that do anyone?



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[http://walt.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/04/08/are we serious about talking with tehran](http://walt.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/04/08/are_we_serious_about_talking_with_tehran)

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Washington Post
OPINION/Fine Print

Fine Print: A Disconnect in Evaluating the Nuclear Weapons Labs

By Walter Pincus
April 9, 2012

The distance between Washington and reality is always hard to measure.

But the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) for the first time has released performance evaluations of the nation's eight nuclear weapons laboratories and production facilities. Until now, the reviews were held internally. The fiscal 2011 reviews let us measure what went on in the nuclear weapons programs against what's said about them in the nation's capital.

The 2011 review evaluated each facility in the nuclear weapons complex.

Let's examine the one that looked at how Los Alamos National Security LLC (LANS), the company established to run the Los Alamos National Laboratory, carried out NNSA objectives for 2011.

"NNSA specifies 'what' it wants rather than dictating to the contractor 'how' to get it done," according to the report.

The reviews are important for many reasons, but one critical one is money. Built into the contract are incentive fees awarded based on results of these performance reviews.

How much? LANS, the Los Alamos management group — made up of the regents of the University of California, Bechtel, Babcock & Wilcox, and URS Energy and Construction — got a fixed-fee award of \$26 million for running the lab. There was a pool of \$60.7 million more in what are termed "at-risk fees" to be earned by LANS based on performance ratings. Also, a very good performance can add an additional year to the contract.

Because LANS was found to have had "another strong performance year," it received an additional \$50.1 million, or 83 percent, of the at-risk fees, plus the additional contract year.

The one area in which LANS was awarded 100 percent of its incentive fee, some \$6.1 million, was in major weapons programs carried on with other facilities in the national complex. Two of these were programs to extend the lifespan of warheads of deployed weapons — the W-76 warhead for the Trident sub-launched intercontinental ballistic missile and the B-61, the tactical nuclear bomb deployed with NATO forces in Europe.

The W-76 award, \$1.1 million, was for ensuring that the production program remained on the contract schedule. The W-76 is the most numerous warhead in the U.S. stockpile. Modernization of 800 W-76 warheads began in 2000 under the Bill Clinton administration; in 2005, the George W. Bush White House increased the number to 2,000.

The W-76 update stirred debate in Washington when the Obama administration's budget for the NNSA called for slowing that work so more money could be devoted to B-61 modernization. At a March 14 Senate Armed Services Committee hearing, Jeff Sessions (R-Ala.) asked NNSA Administrator Thomas D'Agostino: Was it true that the Obama budget "would delay the completion of the W-76 life extension program by four years and that the Navy in response has publicly expressed concern over that?"

D'Agostino replied that the production change still met "the Navy's operational requirements."

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Sessions also said the Obama budget would “result in a two-year delay in the B-61 life extension program, moving the first production unit from 2017 to 2019.” Again, D’Agostino replied that the Defense Department supported the change. LANS also received a \$1 million award for completing the life extension study for the B-61.

LANS also received an award, for just \$117,639, for completing the first phase of the life extension program for the W-78, the warhead on land-based Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missiles.

LANS was less successful with the controversial facilities associated with carrying out its multi-year plan to replace its old Chemistry Metallurgy Research (CMR) facility with a newer two-building complex to handle work with plutonium as well as produce “pits” into the next decade. “Pits” are carefully manufactured metallic, plutonium spheres that when surrounded by high explosives become the trigger for thermonuclear weapons.

The first CMR construction, approved in 2005, was for a \$164 million Radiological Laboratory/Utility/Office Building, which was to open this year. LANS could have gotten \$700,000 for meeting a goal of completing the building ahead of schedule in 2011 and having it ready for occupancy early this year. Instead, it got \$176,000 because, the report said, there are still concerns about “settlement costs” and “deficiencies” in sensitive equipment.

It was a similar story with further developing plans for the second building, a multibillion-dollar Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement Nuclear Facility (CMRR), which many viewed as necessary for producing plutonium pit triggers. The Bush administration saw the need for some 125 pits a year as the older pits decayed and became less reliable. Others, including many arms control experts, argued that the nation already had about 5,000 pits in strategic reserve, with an additional 10,000 in surplus. Also, the number of deployed warheads is to drop to 1,550 by 2018 under the 2010 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) with Russia.

Some key Republicans in 2010 made guaranteed funding for the CMRR by the Obama administration a condition of their support of the START pact. In Obama’s fiscal 2013 budget, however, some \$1.8 billion for CMRR was pushed to 2017.

At a hearing last month, Sessions called that move “troubling,” remarking on the NNSA’s “decision to abandon this cornerstone effort.” He also said reusing pits may seem attractive but noted that there have been no studies of its long-term feasibility.

Meanwhile, LANS got only \$389,000 of the \$703,000 it could have received for its CMRR design work in 2011. But the consortium was praised for exceeding its goal to produce plutonium oxide for use in fuel for nuclear power reactors. LANS got the plutonium from disassembled pits — an NNSA program to safely dispose of surplus weapons-grade plutonium.

Reality vs. Washington: The NNSA is focused on function, while some members of Congress appear more worried about the timing and politics of funding.

Walter Pincus reports on intelligence, defense and foreign policy for The Washington Post. He first came to the paper in 1966 and has covered numerous subjects, including nuclear weapons and arms control, politics and congressional investigations.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/fine-print-a-disconnect-in-evaluating-the-nuclear-weapons-labs/2012/04/09/gIQA7JR36S_story.html

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AOL Defense.com
OPINION/Strategy & Policy

Iranians Could Have Tested Nuke Trigger, Study Finds: Exclusive

By Michael Adler
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A study by a Washington think tank that closely follows the Iranian nuclear program, the Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS), concludes that Iran could have tested a nuclear trigger in a device at the disputed Iranian site of Parchin. AOL Defense obtained a copy of the draft report.

The Iranian military testing ground of Parchin has emerged as the front line in the continuing struggles between the UN's nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, and Iran. Iran has refused to let inspectors from the IAEA visit the site, some 30 kilometers southeast of Tehran, where they suspect experiments related to developing nuclear weapons may have been carried out. These tests were allegedly done in a 19-meter-long metal cylinder, 4.4 meters in diameter but reinforced in the middle with concrete, almost doubling the diameter to 7.6 meters. Questions have been raised about whether the experiments, which are explosions, could have been done in this cylinder and why the Iranians would use an enclosed device, when such testing is often done in the open air.

ISIS has determined that the metal cylinder could have been used for an explosive experiment with non-fissile material into the trigger for an atomic bomb. The purpose of doing this in an enclosed metal container would have been, of course, to avoid detection that would have otherwise been possible if the explosion were done in the open-air.

The reason this is so sensitive is that nuclear material, namely natural uranium, may have been used in what would have been a dry run for the trigger, rather than a chain reaction. Proof that Iran has employed uranium in military research would destroy the Islamic republic's central claim that its program has made only peaceful use of nuclear material. Iran says it seeks atomic power for energy and other civilian ends but the United States and a host of other countries fear it is hiding a drive to build, or to be able to build, nuclear weapons.

The IAEA investigation is part of an international effort to win guarantees that Iran does not seek nuclear weapons. The standoff over Parchin comes at an especially sensitive time as diplomacy is being renewed with a Saturday meeting in Istanbul between six major powers, including the United States and Iran. The United States wants Iran to stop higher-level enrichment of uranium and to close a heavily protected enrichment facility near the holy city of Qom. The IAEA, the watchdog agency for the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, has inspectors monitoring uranium enrichment at both the Fordow site near Qom and at Iran's other, and larger, enrichment plant in Natanz.

Parchin is not actively monitored by the IAEA since no nuclear material has been reported there. But the cylinder has aroused suspicions. ISIS has photographs of the site. A satellite photograph from March 14, 2000 shows, ISIS says, "the foundation where Iran would place a high explosive test chamber later (later) in the year 2000." This foundation looks like just a hole in the ground. The ISIS report then shows a satellite photograph from August 13, 2004 which it says "shows the building containing a high explosive test chamber." Neither image shows the alleged metal cylinder, which would have been inside the building and may no longer be there.

At stake is testing the initiation system for a nuclear warhead that would fit inside, as ISIS says, "the payload chamber of the Shahab 3 missile tri-conic nose cone." The IAEA had reported in November 2011 that the explosive chamber at Parchin could be used to test an implosion trigger for an atomic bomb. This is precisely the sort of trigger needed for a nuclear warhead for a missile.

The test would involve, ISIS said, "hundreds of fiber optic cables ... placed in proximity of the inner surface of the high explosive. The other end of the fiber cables go to a fixture for a rotating mirror that is part of a high speed streak camera." What is key here, according to ISIS, is that "an experiment of the initiation of the R265 system (the implosion trigger) . . . would contain less than 70 kilograms of high explosives and would have been possible to conduct in the chamber at Parchin... Iran's goal of using this chamber would likely have been to hide its activities from overhead observation."

The IAEA says satellites have reported activity at Parchin recently. This has raised concern that Iran may be trying to clean up the site ahead of any inspection. Iran has rejected such charges. Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast told reporters last month in Tehran that uranium traces cannot be cleaned up, as tiny particles would remain after any effort to sanitize an area, and insisted that only "conventional military" activities are carried out at Parchin.

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But an IAEA report in November described two types of experiments that could have taken place at Parchin. The first is hydrodynamic tests, which are simultaneous explosions of an implosion trigger to compact a spherical nuclear core. The second would be explosions to test a neutron initiator, a tiny capsule in the center of the bomb core which bathes the nuclear material with neutrons, thus accelerating a chain reaction. Both these tests could use natural uranium as a surrogate for fissile material. Other surrogates, such as tungsten, could also be used. The IAEA inspectors would test both the cylinder and the area for traces of any of these, if they get access to the cylinder.

ISIS warned that it was not clear "if an IAEA visit would be able to detect whether such an experiment happened." But it said a visit would still "help establish more transparency of Iran's alleged nuclear weaponization activities and should be supported both publicly and by governments."

Michael Adler is a scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, writing a book on diplomacy in the Iranian nuclear crisis. Michael covered this extensively for five years while in Vienna, where he reported on the International Atomic Energy Agency.

<http://defense.aol.com/2012/04/09/iranians-could-have-tested-nuke-trigger-at-parchin-study-finds/>

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency
OPINION/Analysis

New START Won't Stop the Arms Race

9 April 2012

By RIA Novosti military commentator Konstantin Bogdanov

Dmitry Medvedev and Barack Obama signed the new strategic arms reduction treaty, New START, in Prague on April 8, 2010. In the two years since, the sides appear to have exhausted all of its benefits. They have quarreled on a whole series of military issues, and now stand on the brink of a new arms race.

Passing necessity off as virtue

In Prague the sides committed themselves to reducing strategic offensive arms to 800 strategic carriers (including no more than 700 deployed) with 1,500 nuclear warheads.

Russia also managed to end the stifling control of American observers over the Votkins Machine Building Plant, a producer of strategic missiles. The exchange of telemetric information from current launches has also become much more liberal.

However, considering the structure of the missiles that Russia inherited from the Soviet Union (primarily their obsolescence rates), a thousand and a half warheads is not the limit of natural reduction, to put it mildly. Withdrawal of obsolete MIRVed missiles may reduce the overall number of warheads on combat duty.

If Russia does not drastically speed up the commissioning of new MIRVed missile systems, its nuclear potential will drop below the Prague level.

Published expert estimates show that if the current trends persist, the floor will be reached at 1,100-1,200 warheads (including strategic aviation, which plays an auxiliary role in the Russian nuclear triad). Therefore, to abide by the ceilings of the Prague treaty, Russia would have to rapidly commission new nuclear missiles.

A realistic analysis clearly shows that Moscow was in no position to have a considerably larger number of nuclear warheads on strategic carriers. In this sense, the Prague treaty is a pragmatic victory of Russian diplomacy.

In other words, Moscow legally compelled Washington to adapt itself to the natural drawdown of Russian nuclear weapons that is taking place regardless of world disarmament efforts. Necessity was passed off as virtue.

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This was not a spectacular achievement for a former superpower, but what was the alternative? To lose these warheads without any U.S. commitment to cut their own numbers, while having to abide by numerous restrictions and requirements, lifted in Prague, that held back the domestic industry and the military.

Strategic risk management

However, this was arguably the only positive result of the Prague treaty. The modest achievements in strategic arms cuts are dwarfed by the growing rearmament of American strategic forces, which will eventually upgrade their combat control and capabilities to a new level.

The issue of American global missile defense in Europe has been discussed ad nauseum. In recent months this issue has become a disaster not only during negotiations but even in consultations between Washington and Moscow.

The United States is going to build its missile defense as a mobile and flexible system with highly integrated information and target acquisition equipment. It will develop the combat capabilities of this system. Russia views this infrastructure as a potential source of risks that is capable of influencing the Russian strategic forces' potential for retaliation.

Moscow has staked out a tough stance on this issue. It demands technical and legal guarantees, but these demands are met with platitudes about how the system does not target Russia. The U.S. has made clear its unwavering commitment to deploy the system and has demanded that control of tactical nuclear weapons should be discussed first (the Russian General Headquarters has not reacted well to this). The sides reached an impasse by the end of the past summer.

The Prompt Global Strike (PGS) concept is discussed less. The concept, recently adopted by the American armed forces, envisions a system that can deliver a precision conventional weapon strike anywhere in the world within one hour.

So far three types of weapons are being suggested for this purpose – precision warheads for conventional submarine-launched Trident ballistic missiles, super sonic cruise missiles (their prototype X-51 Waverider is now being tested), and possible space-based platforms.

The latter would most likely involve military orbital drones, one of which, the X-37, has been tested in near-earth orbit for more than a year.

Vague prospects

The United States will be deploying a flexible, easily upgradable missile defense system that can potentially use any available package of mobile firepower and will rely on completely transparent information. As such, Russia naturally views these attack weapons as capable of delivering a disarming strike at its strategic forces infrastructure. These weapons enhance risks for Russia and lower the threshold of use for irresponsible politicians on the other side.

In response Moscow may make a so-called “military-technical response,” that is, deployment of new missile systems with improved capabilities of breaking through missile defense. Preparations for this have been ongoing for the last few years.

Thus, the choice has been made in favor of a rather straightforward, albeit no less effective, strategy of mounting a massive nuclear missile strike against the missile defense of the potential enemy. The military are practical people. They think in terms of numbers: how many launchers will survive retaliation and how many warheads are expected to hit enemy territory. If there are obstacles to the absolute minimum, the strategic forces must be upgraded.

Nobody can say how the hypothetical START IV, scheduled for 2020, will look in this light, or rather in this darkness. The atmosphere for further negotiations on nuclear disarmament could not be worse than it is now. An arms race, albeit not on the scale of the Cold War, looks much more likely.

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

<http://en.rian.ru/analysis/20120409/172713070.html>

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