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MAXWELL AFB, ALABAMA

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New York Times
April 14, 2012

Seeking Nuclear Insight in Fog of the Ayatollah's Utterances

By JAMES RISEN
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WASHINGTON — C.I.A. analysts studying the geopolitical gamesmanship now at play over Iran's nuclear program have expensive and highly classified tools at their disposal, but one of their best sources is free and readily available: the public utterances of Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Like much of the information about Iran's secretive and enigmatic government, Ayatollah Khamenei's remarks are sometimes contradictory, and always subject to widely different interpretations. But as negotiations over the country's nuclear program begin on Saturday in Istanbul, efforts to divine where Ayatollah Khamenei really stands on the nuclear issue have taken on critical importance.

Underscoring Ayatollah Khamenei's direct involvement in the issue, Iran's chief negotiator, Saeed Jalili, arrived in Turkey with a new title: "personal representative of the supreme leader."

"Dismissing what he says out of hand is not useful for us," said Greg Thielmann, a former State Department analyst. "I think the U.S. can exploit what he says."

Ayatollah Khamenei, who is not only the leader of Iran's government but also the final authority on Islamic law, often uses religious language when he talks about the nuclear issue, which can jar Western analysts trying to gauge the meaning of such strong statements. With tensions over the nuclear program rising in February, he used that language to signal his opposition to nuclear weapons. "Iran is not seeking to have the atomic bomb, possession of which is pointless, dangerous and is a great sin from an intellectual and a religious point of view," he said.

Then last month Ayatollah Khamenei was reported to have said that "we do not possess a nuclear weapon, and we will not build one." Ayatollah Khamenei has also issued a fatwa, an Islamic edict, against the acquisition of a nuclear bomb by Iran.

But those comments are not only at odds with some of Iran's behavior but also with what Ayatollah Khamenei has said in the past. For evidence, analysts can point to remarks Ayatollah Khamenei made last year that it was a mistake for Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi of Libya to give up his nuclear weapons program.

Referring to Colonel Qaddafi, Ayatollah Khamenei said that "this gentleman wrapped up all his nuclear facilities, packed them on a ship and delivered them to the West and said, 'Take them!'"

"Look where we are, and in what position they are now," he added.

Complicating matters further, some analysts say that Ayatollah Khamenei's denial of Iranian nuclear ambitions has to be seen as part of a Shiite historical concept called taqiyya, or religious dissembling. For centuries an oppressed minority within Islam, Shiites learned to conceal their sectarian identity to survive, and so there is a precedent for lying to protect the Shiite community.

Inside the government, each new reported remark by Ayatollah Khamenei is scrutinized for nuanced changes in tone and emphasis. If anything, one senior former intelligence official said, analysts should be studying the remarks even more carefully, to remain open to possible alternative assessments of Iran's behavior. "I think, looking back, maybe we should have taken his statements more into account, particularly the religious statements," the former official said.

Dennis B. Ross, who stepped down last fall after coordinating Iran policy for the White House, said that ultimately Ayatollah Khamenei's comments revealed a leader who was stubborn and nationalistic, yet who still may be hedging his bets about whether to acquire a nuclear bomb.



“The value of looking at Khamenei’s statements is that he has written a lot and said a lot,” Mr. Ross said. “There is a certain consistency about what he has said.” His language, Mr. Ross added, shows that “he has always viewed the nuclear program as a sign of Iran’s technological advance, and that this is the way Iran will achieve independence.”

“He sees our opposition to the nuclear program as a function of our efforts to deny them their independence,” Mr. Ross said. “At the same time, in his recent statements he says that nuclear weapons are a sin, and he previously issued a fatwa. But he still presides over a nuclear program.

“And so if you are a C.I.A. analyst, you can see the context here,” Mr. Ross added. “This is someone who has consistently said if you make concessions, you only whet the appetite of the arrogant powers. He is committed to the nuclear program, but he is also someone who is obviously centered on preserving the system that he has created, and he has left himself an out, in that he says he isn’t interested in nuclear weapons. And that creates a context in which to evaluate the choices he may make.”

The history of Iran’s nuclear program offers evidence that can be used for several interpretations of Ayatollah Khamenei’s statements and behavior. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the leader of the Iranian revolution that overthrew the pro-Western Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi in 1979, originally believed that it was anti-Islamic to build nuclear weapons, and he ended the secret nuclear weapons program that the shah had begun.

But the brutal Iran-Iraq war that lasted from 1980 to 1988 changed the Iranian thinking about nuclear weapons. Iraqi forces under Saddam Hussein used chemical weapons against ill-prepared Iranian troops, and there was no outcry from the United States, which supported Iraq at the time. In 1984, Ayatollah Khomeini secretly decided to restart the nuclear weapons program. At the time, Ayatollah Khamenei was serving as president of Iran, and he became supreme leader in 1989, when Ayatollah Khomeini died.

In 2003, probably in response to the American invasion of Iraq, which was originally justified by the Bush administration on the grounds that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, Ayatollah Khamenei ordered a suspension of Iran’s nuclear weapons program, although he has allowed uranium enrichment efforts to continue.

At an emergency meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency in 2005, Iran’s nuclear negotiator described how Ayatollah Khamenei had issued a fatwa declaring that “the production, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons are all forbidden in Islam,” and noted that he had said that “Iran shall never acquire these weapons.”

In the negotiations in Istanbul, American officials seem willing to use Ayatollah Khamenei’s most recent public statements as leverage, insisting publicly, at least, that they are taking him at his word. This month, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton called on Iran to back up its assertion that acquiring nuclear weapons would be a sin.

“We are meeting with the Iranians to discuss how to translate what is a stated belief into a plan of action,” Mrs. Clinton said.

Artin Afkhami contributed research.

http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/14/world/middleeast/seeking-nuclear-insight-in-fog-of-the-ayatollahs-utterances.html?_r=1&pagewanted=all

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London Telegraph – U.K.

Iran Agrees to Concrete Proposals for Resolving Nuclear Crisis

A new effort to break the deadlock over Iran’s nuclear ambitions is set to begin after 10 hours of talks between Tehran and the world’s leading powers ended with rare words of mutual praise.

By David Blair, Istanbul

15 April 2012



The first formal negotiations between Iran and a six-nation contact group, including America and Britain, for over a year ended with agreement that diplomats will prepare concrete proposals for resolving the impasse.

Saeed Jalili, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, took the unusual step of commending his adversaries at the conclusion of the session in Istanbul.

"Today, we saw a positive approach and we consider it a step forward," he said. "For the Iranian people, the language of pressure doesn't work, but the language of co-operation could be fruitful. Today, we witnessed such an approach."

Mr Jalili, an often irascible hardliner, adopted a very different tone during his last encounter with the "P5 plus 1", consisting of the five permanent members of the Security Council – America, Britain, Russia, France and China – along with Germany.

On that occasion last January, he declined to even talk about Iran's nuclear programme unless all sanctions were lifted. "Outside the room, he's very charming and he enjoys all the photo opportunities. Inside the room, he's a completely different character. I wouldn't trust him with my children," said an ex-official who observed those talks.

"He goes off on long-winded, the West is evil, anti-Western rhetoric. He could do a whole intervention in 10 minutes of monotone."

This time, however, diplomats noted Mr Jalili's wholly different, "calm and constructive" approach. One said: "We had a whole day talking about the nuclear issue and only the nuclear issue."

Baroness Ashton, the European Union's high representative for foreign policy, who chairs the "P5 plus 1", had a three-hour dinner with Mr Jalili on Friday night. After the talks, Lady Ashton described them as "constructive and useful", adding: "We want now to move to a sustained process of serious dialogue, where we can take urgent practical steps to build confidence and lead on to compliance by Iran with all its international obligations."

The two sides will meet again in Baghdad on May 23. Before then, two senior negotiators will try to hammer out concrete proposals. Helga Schmid, who serves as Lady Ashton's deputy, will represent the "P5 plus 1", while Ali Baqeri, a senior Iranian diplomat, will speak for Tehran.

But Mr Jalili brought no specific proposals to Istanbul and the gap between the two sides remains as wide as ever. "Our delight is well within bounds: it's beer not champagne," said one diplomat.

Iran insists on its right to continue enriching uranium, a sensitive process that could be used to make the material for a nuclear weapon. America, Britain and the other "P5 plus 1" countries, meanwhile, want Iran to obey six United Nations resolutions and stop enrichment.

Moreover, neither side trusts the other. Mr Jalili's tone was conciliatory, but diplomats noted that he did not bring any concrete proposals to Istanbul. Nor did he accept the offer of a one-on-one meeting with his American counterpart, Wendy Sherman.

Instead, Mr Jalili repeated Iran's insistence on enriching uranium, saying this was a "right" under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, adding: "Any right which is included in the NPT should be respected. Enrichment of uranium is one of those rights that every member state should benefit from for peaceful purposes."

Mr Jalili spoke in front of a banner, hastily raised by his officials, reading: "Nuclear Energy for All, Nuclear Weapons for None." This showed a gallery of photographs of five Iranian scientists, all of them killed by bomb attacks in Tehran allegedly masterminded by Israeli intelligence.

Diplomats are alert to the danger that Iran might try to use this new diplomatic effort to buy time for its nuclear programme to progress. They are deeply worried that Israel could lose patience and launch a unilateral strike to destroy Iran's nuclear facilities.

These dangers must impose a time limit on the new effort to settle the issue. "We can't be messing around like this at the end of the year," said one diplomat.



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<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iran/9205403/Iran-agrees-to-concrete-proposals-for-resolving-nuclear-crisis.html>

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Malaysia Star – Malaysia
Monday, April 16, 2012

Iran, Big Powers Agree - to Keep Talking

By Justyna Pawlak and Fredrik Dahl

ISTANBUL (Reuters) - After a year of sanctions and sabre-rattling over Iran's nuclear programme, negotiators from Tehran and six world powers finally resumed talks and found at least enough common ground to agree to meet again next month.

With threats of war hanging over an already unsettled Middle East, U.S. and other Western diplomats welcomed their Iranian counterparts willingness in Istanbul on Saturday to discuss their nuclear activities - something they had refused since early last year.

But though they will meet again, in Baghdad on May 23, they remained poles apart. Iran called for a lifting of sanctions and recognition its uranium enrichment is for purely peaceful ends. The United States demanded urgent action to prove the Islamic Republic is not seeking the potential nuclear arsenal which Washington and ally Israel threaten to eliminate by force.

"While the atmosphere today was positive and good enough to merit a second round, we continue to stress ... that there is urgency for concrete progress and that the window for a diplomatic resolution is closing," said a senior U.S. official.

Over the past year, Israeli talk of "pre-emptive" strikes if Iran does not stop working on some aspects of nuclear technology have raised fears of war - and oil prices - especially since estimates of how much longer Tehran might need to build an atomic device, should it wish, have shortened to a year or two.

A resumption of dialogue may help dampen anxieties, although hawkish voices in Israel and Western states have long questioned Tehran's good faith and accuse it of using talks to buy time for its nuclear scientists - some of whom have been killed in what Iran says is a covert campaign by Israeli and Western agencies.

Publicly, negotiators on all sides emphasise the positive.

"We expect that subsequent meetings will lead to concrete steps towards a comprehensive negotiated solution which restores international confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of the Iranian nuclear programme," said Catherine Ashton, the EU foreign policy chief who leads negotiations for the six powers.

The group comprises the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council - Russia, the United States, China, France and Britain - along with Germany. It is known as the P5+1.

Calling Saturday's talks "constructive and useful", Ashton said: "We want now to move to a sustained process of dialogue."

BAGHDAD "TEST"

The meeting in Baghdad, a rare friendly venue for Iranians in the Arab world, would be part of a "step-by-step" approach. Junior officials would meet again before May 23, she said.

One senior diplomat present in Istanbul said agreeing to Iran's request for a meeting in troubled Iraq showed commitment by the negotiators - "Baghdad was a test. They are saying: If you really want to talk to us, then come and talk to us'."

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Sidestepping questions of how long talks could continue before impatient Western powers, or Israel, might cut them short by force, the envoy said: "I would much rather spend a long day in Istanbul than be picking up the pieces at the end of a war."

Chief Iranian negotiator Saeed Jalili made clear that Iran had no intention of accepting a key demand, that it halt plants which enrich uranium to 20 percent fissile material - far beyond the quality needed to generate the electricity which it says the oil-rich country requires to develop economic prosperity.

Nonetheless, however remote a final accord may be between the Islamic Republic and its adversaries, a return to the negotiating table may calm nerves after 15 angry months.

In that time, the West has imposed new crippling economic sanctions while Iran, watching its key regional ally Syria collapse into internal strife, has threatened to blockade oil tankers. Israel, fearful a nuclear Iran would jeopardise its very survival, has been planning possible "pre-emptive" strikes.

One diplomat from the six said Iran's willingness to at least discuss its nuclear programme marked a shift away from the stalemate which marked previous meetings early last year: "We spent the whole day discussing the nuclear issue."

Before, when Westerners raised allegations of a secret weapons programme, "they would have walked away", the envoy said, adding negotiators were not "overly optimistic" but saying there was a "seriousness to discuss the nuclear issue".

Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov, leading the Russian delegation, told Interfax news agency: "The atmosphere is constructive, the conversation is businesslike."

SANCTIONS ISSUE

Yet few expect a rapid change of heart in Tehran, even if the weight of new sanctions, notably financial measures by U.S. President Barack Obama and a European Union oil import ban, have made many Iranians keenly aware of the cost of that policy.

Its defiant defence of a right to nuclear energy has proven one of the more popular policies for Iran's clerical leaders at a time when dissatisfaction is growing among the population over economic hardships - aggravated by sanctions - and a lack of the political freedoms being claimed elsewhere in the region.

"We witnessed progress. There were differences of opinion," chief negotiator Jalili said. "But the points we agreed on were important."

Asking for negotiations to include the lifting of sanctions, he said: "The next talks should be based on confidence-building measures which would build the confidence of Iranians."

His defence of 20-percent enrichment did not impress the United States or others who question the justification and say that that level of enrichment makes a "break out" to weapons-grade material much easier and could give Iran the possibility, if it wanted, to build a nuclear bomb in a year or two.

Referring to Iran's rights under the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) on nuclear weapons, Jalili told a news conference:

"Enrichment of uranium is one of these rights that every individual member state should benefit from and enjoy for peaceful purposes." Western governments argue Iran has broken the NPT by conducting secret research on nuclear weapons.

Jalili spoke under a banner showing a map of the region and reading "Nuclear Energy for All. Nuclear Weapons for None", a reference to Iran's complaints that its Israeli foe is widely assumed to have the only nuclear arsenal in the Middle East.

It also bore five photographs, of nuclear scientists Iran says were killed by Israeli or Western agents.



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While there was little new heard in Istanbul on the substance of the disputes, the resumption of a process, which its adversaries hope might let Iran's leaders perform a face-saving climb-down and also may stay Israel's hand, was seen by observers as favouring the chances of a peaceful outcome.

"Today's round of P5+1 talks with Iran in Istanbul established a positive foundation for progress on the nuclear question. The talks exceeded initial expectations," said Daryl Kimball of the Arms Control Association, a Washington-based research and advocacy group.

"The further high-level and technical talks announced today are the logical next step to reach agreement on specific, concrete steps that can help prevent a nuclear-armed Iran."

Nonetheless, the U.S. official said Washington would maintain financial sanctions aimed at crippling Iran's oil trade and expected the EU oil embargo take effect on July 1.

"Dialogue is not sufficient for any sanctions relief," the official said.

"I don't want to raise anybody's expectations that all of a sudden large steps will get taken ... We haven't talked to the Iranians for 15 months ... We have not seen them address the concerns of the international community. We have seen instead them proceed forward with their nuclear programme in ways that increase the concern of the international community.

"There is no reason to believe yet that we will make all of the progress that we want to make."

Additional reporting by Jonathon Burch and Alexandra Hudson in Istanbul; Writing by Alastair Macdonald; Editing by Ralph Gowling.

http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2012/4/16/worldupdates/2012-04-16T135658Z_9_BRE83D03O_RTPTT_0_UK-NUCLEAR-IRAN&sec=Worldupdates

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Daily Star – Lebanon

Iran Does Not Rule Out Talks on Enriched Uranium

April 16, 2012

TEHRAN: Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi said on Monday that Iran will not give up its right to enrich uranium, but hinted the level of enrichment is open to discussion.

The international community is concerned, particularly Iran's nemesis Israel, about Tehran's growing capacity to enrich uranium, which can be used for peaceful purposes but, when purified further, for a nuclear weapon.

"(The world powers) have reached a conclusion that they cannot turn a blind eye to Iran's capability and that Iran will not give up this right," Salehi told Iranian state satellite channel Jam-e Jam.

"Enrichment covers a wide range, from natural uranium to 100 percent enrichment, so one can talk with in this spectrum... it is too soon to talk about this issue and it is up to Baghdad meeting and I will not get into details," he said, referring to the next round of scheduled talks.

"We hope... that it will get us our right and their concerns will be addressed," added Salehi, who used to head Iran's atomic energy organization.

Salehi's comments came after talks in Istanbul on Saturday between Iran and the six powers -- Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and the United States -- the first in 15 months.

Tehran and world powers agreed in Istanbul to hold a more in-depth meeting in Baghdad on May 23.

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Saturday's talks were aimed at generating the first steps towards building trust between the two sides and easing tensions built up over the West's suspicions Tehran wants a nuclear weapons capability.

The U.N. Security Council has imposed four rounds of sanctions on Iran due to suspicions that its avowed civilian nuclear program is a cover for a secret atomic weapons drive, a charge Iran vigorously denies.

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2012/Apr-16/170350-iran-does-not-rule-out-talks-on-enriched-uranium.ashx#axzz1sDcUaYeT>

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Wall Street Journal

April 16, 2012

Iran Nuclear Talks Spark Skepticism

By JAY SOLOMON and JOE PARKINSON

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ISTANBUL—Renewed negotiations between Iran and international powers over Tehran's nuclear program this weekend already are facing fire from Israel and American lawmakers, who fear the Islamic Republic is seeking to use the revived diplomatic track to forestall additional economic sanctions while continuing to advance its nuclear work.

This skepticism toward the talks, which will go into a second round on May 23 in Baghdad, illustrates the tight political space U.S. President Barack Obama and his diplomatic partners face as they seek to peacefully end the standoff over Iran's nuclear program, which has fueled higher global energy prices and sparked fears of war.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government has continued to threaten to take military action against Iran's nuclear sites if diplomacy appears futile.

And leading U.S. lawmakers on Sunday again pledged to enact new economic sanctions on Tehran if it doesn't immediately abide by United Nations resolutions calling for it to freeze its production of nuclear fuel.

"My initial impression is that Iran has been given a 'freebie' " Mr. Netanyahu said on Sunday. "It has got five weeks to continue enrichment without any limitation, any inhibition."

On Saturday, Iran met in Istanbul with the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, plus Germany, for the first direct talks on Tehran's nuclear program in 15 months.

American and European diplomats kept expectations low heading into the meetings, arguing that the most positive outcome likely would be an agreement to hold a second round. These officials said they were interested in testing Tehran's willingness to seriously engage on the nuclear issue amid mounting economic sanctions targeting Iran's oil exports and financial sector.

The international bloc, known as the P5+1, held more than 10 hours of talks with the Iranian delegation, headed by chief negotiator Saeed Jalili, on Saturday. U.S. and European diplomats said afterward that Tehran appeared committed to the talks, which both sides agreed to reconvene in Iraq next month.

"We want now to move to a sustained process of serious dialogue," said the European Union's foreign policy chief, Catherine Ashton, who led the P5+1 bloc. "We expect that subsequent meetings will lead to concrete steps toward a comprehensive negotiated solution."

Deputies to Ms. Ashton and Mr. Jalili will meet in coming weeks to lay out a clear negotiating framework for the Baghdad talks, said the two officials.

American and European officials acknowledged Saturday that they didn't press Iran to take any specific actions to curb its nuclear program during the Istanbul meetings.



Washington and Brussels have been clear in recent months that they are first seeking to curb or eliminate the most-threatening element of Iran's nuclear program—in particular, the production and stockpiling of the near weapons-grade uranium at underground bunkers.

They are also seeking to gain greater access for international inspectors into nuclear sites inside Iran that the U.N. believes may be involved in atomic weapons development.

U.S. officials also stressed that the Obama administration won't ease its economic pressure on Tehran until the Iranian government takes "concrete steps" to address concerns that it is developing atomic weapons, a charge it denies. These officials said they believe Iran showed a greater willingness to engage, precisely as a result of its growing economic malaise.

"There is no reason to believe yet that we will make all the progress we want to make," said a senior American diplomat who took part in the talks. "This is a very difficult process....It takes time to do these very complex things."

Indeed, Mr. Jalili offered few indications on Saturday that Iran was ready to comply with the international community's demands. He said Tehran would continue to enrich uranium to levels close to 20% purity, near weapons grade. And he said Tehran expected U.S., U.N. and EU sanctions to be lifted as the dialogue continued.

"We deeply believe that the removal of sanctions, which is demanded by the Iranian nation, is one of the issues which should receive attentions in the trend of talks on cooperation," Mr. Jalili told a news conference in Turkey on Saturday.

Leading American lawmakers on Sunday countered that Congress would intensify sanctions if Tehran didn't immediately freeze its production of nuclear fuel.

"We should not mistake positive diplomatic dialogue for compliance with U.N. Security Council resolutions," said a spokesman for Sen. Mark Kirk (R., Ill.), who has led congressional efforts to pressure Iran's finances. "The Senate should move forward with new bipartisan sanctions unless the Iranian government halts all uranium enrichment activities."

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304818404577345961318094978.html>

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Atlanta Journal-Constitution
Monday, April 16, 2012

Iran Says Nuclear Dispute Can Be Solved 'Quickly'

By NASSER KARIMI, Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran is ready to resolve all of its nuclear disputes "quickly and easily" in a second round of talks with world powers planned for next month in Baghdad, the country's foreign minister said Monday.

Ali Akbar Salehi was quoted by the semiofficial ISNA news agency as saying that Iran might be more flexible if it could be guaranteed an external supply of enriched uranium — an apparent endorsement of a U.S. compromise proposal.

Iran's homegrown enrichment program is one of its main points of contention with the West.

The minister also urged Western countries to move toward lifting sanctions on the Islamic Republic, calling this a "trust-building" measure that could speed up negotiations.

His statements appear to signal flexibility after Saturday talks in Istanbul with world powers over Iran's controversial nuclear activities. Both sides hailed the talks as positive and a new round was scheduled in the capital of Iran's ally, Iraq.

"We are ready to solve all issues very quick and easily, even in the Baghdad talks, if there is goodwill," Salehi said.



"It is possible to discuss in the talks percentages of uranium enrichment," said Salehi. "If they guarantee supplying us with fuel of various enriched levels, the case will be different."

Iran currently enriches uranium to 20 percent levels, which is of concern to the West because the fuel can then be more quickly upgraded to 90 percent weapons-grade levels. Iran says the enriched uranium, along with its entire nuclear program, is for peaceful purposes such as research and cancer treatment.

Iran also produces lower-enriched fuel for its lone power reactor.

Prior to the talks in Istanbul with the five permanent U.N. Security Council members plus Germany, Tehran offered to scale back uranium enrichment but not abandon the ability to make nuclear fuel.

At the same time, however, it ignored another Western concern — Iran's existing stockpile. The West wants Iran's current stores of 20 percent-enriched uranium to be transferred out of the country.

Salehi said that Iran would continue its uranium enrichment, which it says is compliant with the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, but did say that it was open to negotiation.

In the meantime, he urged the West to start taking steps to lift sanctions imposed by the U.S. and the EU over Iran's nuclear activities, which he said could speed up negotiations.

"The West should begin trust-building in the field of sanctions," said Salehi, but added that lifting them could take a long time.

<http://www.ajc.com/news/nation-world/iran-says-nuclear-dispute-1418632.html>

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Orlando Sentinel – Orlando, FL

Nuclear Talks Don't Exempt Iran from Attack: Barak

By Ori Lewis, Reuters

April 17, 2012

JERUSALEM (Reuters) - Israel's defense minister said on Tuesday that Israeli military action against Iran remains an option even while nuclear negotiations are under way, and voiced strong doubts whether the talks would succeed.

Asked whether the negotiations, which began in Turkey on Saturday, could persuade Iran to halt uranium enrichment, Ehud Barak told Army Radio: "It does not look to me as if it is going to happen - not now, in the wake of Istanbul, and not ... after the (Baghdad round of talks next month)."

Barak is due to meet U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta in Washington on Thursday amid speculation in the Israeli media that Israel has promised its main ally that it will refrain from attacking Iran while the talks continue.

"We are not committing to anything," Barak said, when asked whether any such pledge had been made. "There is not, there has not been, there should not be and there cannot be (such a promise)."

Barak has said that Iran could soon enter a "zone of immunity" against Israeli attack as it puts its nuclear installations deep underground, comments that raised international concern that a strike could be nearing.

In the interview, he reiterated Israeli fears that the negotiations between Iran and a group comprising the United States, Britain, France, China, Russia and Germany could drag on and waste what he described as "precious time".

On Sunday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu appeared to open a rift with Washington over the talks by saying that a five-week break between the Istanbul meeting and the next session in Baghdad on May 23 gave Iran a "freebie" to continue enriching uranium.



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U.S. President Barack Obama, responding to Netanyahu's accusations, said "so far at least we haven't given anything away" and that it had been made clear to Iran that "the clock is ticking" and there could be no "stalling process".

Israel and the West fear Iran's nuclear program is aimed at producing atomic weapons. Iran says it is enriching uranium for peaceful purposes.

In an interview on Monday, Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi said the Islamic Republic could make concessions on its higher-grade uranium enrichment in exchange for an easing of international sanctions.

Editing by Kevin Liffey

<http://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/nationworld/sns-rt-us-nuclear-iran-israelbre83g0f1-20120417,0,1625553.story>

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Trend News Agency – Azerbaijan

Foreign Missile Defense Systems in Gulf Are "Fantasies" - Iranian Army General

17 April 2012

By S.Isayev, T. Jafarov, Trend

Foreign missile defense systems in the Persian Gulf are "fantasies", Chief Commander of the Iranian army, General Ataollah Salehi told journalists during the national army day military parade in Tehran this morning, ISNA reported.

Iran hosted a massive military parade today, as part of celebrating country's National Army day. Many officials, including president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Defense Minister Ahmad Vahidi, Police Chief Esmail Ahmadi Moghaddam, along with IRGC's generals and foreign attaches were present at the parade.

"These are all empty promises, as all this plan is intended to do is spend money of the neighboring countries," Salehi said.

The U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton earlier 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.

Speaking about the Syrian issue, Salehi noted that Iran does not have any military connections with Syria, as Iran supports the country with countenance.

"The U.S. will not start another war in Syria as it does not have enough resources," Salehi noted. "This is just noise before the upcoming U.S. presidential elections".

<http://en.trend.az/regions/iran/2015443.html>

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Denver Post

April 17, 2012

Ahmadinejad Warns against Aggression on Iran

By NASSER KARIMI, Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran—Iran's armed forces will make its enemies regret any act of aggression against the Islamic Republic, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad warned on Tuesday as Iranians marked National Army Day with a military parade near the capital Tehran.

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Although Ahmadinejad did not specify any countries, such language used by Iranian officials is a common reference to the West, especially the United States and Israel.

The harsh tone was typical of speeches for military events but it contrasted sharply with a sense of cautious progress after the direct talks with world powers last week on Tehran's nuclear ambitions. The remarks could leave Western officials confused by the mixed signals.

"Our armed forces will make the enemy face a heavy and shameful regret if they commit any aggression and violate Iran's interests," Ahmadinejad said in a speech broadcast live on state TV.

Both the U.S. and Israel have not ruled out a military option against Iran's nuclear facilities, which the West suspects are geared toward making nuclear arms—a charge Tehran denies, insisting its program is for peaceful purposes only. Iran's refusal to halt the uranium enrichment program has been its main point of contention with the West.

"The foreign interference will bear nothing but destruction, rifts and insecurity" in the region, Ahmadinejad said.

The comments are typical of rhetoric that has been coming out of Tehran, belligerent one day, conciliatory the next.

Iran has hinted at more flexibility after Tehran and the world powers agreed to hold more talks on its controversial nuclear program following their Saturday discussions in Istanbul, which both sides praised as positive. A second round is planned for next month in Baghdad.

Prior to the talks in Istanbul with the five permanent U.N. Security Council members plus Germany, Tehran offered to scale back uranium enrichment but not abandon the ability to make nuclear fuel. At the same time, however, it ignored another Western concern—Iran's existing stockpile. The West wants Iran's current reserves of 20 percent-enriched uranium to be transferred out of the country.

After Istanbul, Iranian officials urged the West to start taking steps to lift sanctions imposed by the U.S. and the EU over Iran's nuclear activities.

During the parade on Tuesday, Iran displayed an array of its homemade short-range missiles, tanks, drones and air defense system as well as some of its jet fighters, warplanes and military helicopters. Iran has tried to build a self-sufficient military program since 1992.

On the sidelines of the parade, Iran's army chief Gen. Ataollah Salehi told the state IRNA news agency that U.S. warships in the Gulf are "sweet targets" for Iranian armed forces.

Salehi, who is known for anti-U.S. rhetoric and had threatened U.S. ships in the Gulf before, did not elaborate.

In January, he warned an American warship not to return to the Gulf shortly after the aircraft carrier USS John C. Stennis and another vessel left the region. Another carrier, the USS Abraham Lincoln, entered the Gulf without incident later in January.

Iran has also in the past threatened to shut the Strait of Hormuz, a strategic waterway in the Gulf through which a fifth of the world's oil passes, a move that could send oil prices soaring.

Among the weaponry on display Tuesday was "Qadr," or a Sacred Night mentioned in the Quran, a 2,000 pound guided bomb. Iran has earlier suggested it could counter the U.S. naval presence in the Gulf.

http://www.denverpost.com/topstories/ci_20413086/ahmadinejad-warns-against-aggression-iran

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China Daily – China

US Drops Food Aid Deal with DPRK

April 14, 2012

(Xinhua)

Issue No. 998, 17 April 2012

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WASHINGTON - The United States on Friday confirmed that it will not go forward with the food aid deal with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), following Pyongyang's failed satellite launch earlier the day.

The United States has "made clear that we could not go forward with that type of agreement if they could not keep their commitments, and their efforts to launch a missile clearly demonstrates that they could not be trusted to keep their commitments," White House deputy national security advisor Ben Rhodes said aboard Air Force One.

"Therefore, we're not going forward with an agreement to provide them with any assistance," he told reporters while traveling with US President Barack Obama.

The statement came after the DPRK confirmed that the earth observation satellite launched earlier on Friday morning failed to enter orbit.

In a deal announced on February 29, the DPRK agreed to impose a moratorium on nuclear tests and long-range missile launches and allow international nuclear inspectors to return to the country. In return, the United States agreed to provide the country with 240,000 tons of food aid.

Last month, the DPRK announced that it will launch in April an "earth observation" satellite, or the Kwangmyongsong-3, using a long-range rocket to mark the 100th birthday of its late leader Kim Il-Sung.

The UN Security Council on Friday deplored the satellite launch by the DPRK, which violates Security Council resolutions prohibiting the country from conducting launches that use ballistic technology, Susan Rice, the US ambassador to the United Nations who holds the rotating council presidency for April told reporters.

During the briefing, Rhodes also expressed the US concerns about the possible nuclear test by the DPRK.

"In the past, the North Koreans have tended to pursue patterns of provocative actions to include missile launches, nuclear tests as they undertook in 2006, 2009," Rhodes said.

He warned of tighter sanctions and more pressure on the DPRK if it continued to take "additional provocative actions."

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2012-04/14/content_15046622.htm

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New York Times

April 16, 2012

North Korean Leader Stresses Need for Strong Military

By CHOE SANG-HUN

Page – A4

SEOUL, South Korea — In his first speech in public since assuming the leadership of North Korea, Kim Jong-un said Sunday that his "first, second and third" priorities were to strengthen the military, and he declared that superiority in military technology was "no longer monopolized by imperialists."

Mr. Kim's speech was followed by what South Korean officials said was the North's biggest display of weapons in a military parade, including a missile the North appeared to be presenting for the first time. While it is not clear whether it was a new long-range missile or a mock-up, its display demonstrates the importance that the North Korean government places on weapons development despite an embarrassing failure of a rocket it launched last week.

South Korean officials would not comment on the North Korean missile, pending further examination.

Mr. Kim's claim to superior military technology could sound poignant, coming two days after the North Korean rocket carrying a satellite disintegrated in midair. The failure of the rocket indicated that North Korea might still have a long way to go before mastering the technology to deliver warheads atop an intercontinental ballistic missile.



Mr. Kim's speech on the 100th birthday of Kim Il-sung, his grandfather and the North's founding president, was his public political debut. In an unexpected 20-minute speech, broadcast live inside North Korea, Mr. Kim demonstrated a new leadership style but reaffirmed his adherence to the "military first" policy of his father, Kim Jong-il, which has left North Korea locked in a prolonged confrontation with the United States and its allies.

His speech was a major departure from the practices of his reclusive father, who cloaked his brutal rule in mystery and who never gave a speech to the general public before his death in December. North Koreans did not even hear Kim Jong-il's voice until a broadcast in 1992, when he shouted one sentence into the microphone while inspecting a military parade: "Glory to the heroic soldiers of the People's Army."

On Sunday, facing tens of thousands gathered in a plaza in the capital, Pyongyang, Mr. Kim did not mention the rocket failure. Instead, he exhorted his people to appreciate the achievements of his father and grandfather, crediting them with developing nuclear weapons as a deterrent against American invasion.

"The days are gone forever when our enemies could blackmail us with nuclear bombs," he said.

Mr. Kim has been seen but not heard by the public since taking over after his father's death. A thunderous cheer erupted when he appeared on the podium, waving a hand at the crowd gathered beneath in neat rows for the meticulously choreographed festivities. Thousands of balloons were released.

An emotional North Korean television broadcaster marveled at how the young leader had "the look and voice" of his charismatic grandfather, who is much revered in the North. Reading a prepared text, Mr. Kim spoke in a calm, measured and somewhat husky voice, occasionally looking up from the text to squint at the crowd under the sun.

The only gesture he made was when he raised a finger to emphasize the last sentence of his speech: "Let's go on for our final victory."

Analysts said that Mr. Kim's physical resemblance to his grandfather, his gregariousness in the public eye — easily mixing with soldiers, workers and aging generals — and even his willingness to address the nation on state television were carefully cultivated assets for a leader in his late 20s hoping to give his government a more youthful appeal. (The portraits of Marx and Lenin that once adorned prominent buildings in Pyongyang were taken down ahead of the Sunday celebrations, The Associated Press reported from the North Korean capital.)

Cheong Seong-chang of the Sejong Institute, a private research institute in South Korea, said Mr. Kim's performance reminded North Koreans of Kim Il-sung, who as a young leader used to meet citizens and give public speeches. "Kim Jong-il inspired awe and dread among his people and was never a leader friendly with the public," Mr. Cheong said. "Like his grandfather, however, Kim Jong-un has so far tried to look more willing to communicate with his people. We may see him speak in public more often."

Sunday's speech and parade were the culmination of weeks of festivities intended to infuse the North Koreans with pride that their country, as its propagandists put it, has become a military power despite decades of economic hardship.

"Yesterday, we were a weak and small country trampled upon by big powers," Mr. Kim said. "Today, our geopolitical location remains the same, but we are transformed into a proud political and military power and an independent people that no one can dare provoke."

He said he was determined to make sure that his people "will never have to tighten their belt again." Yet he did not offer concrete economic programs, other than a vague reference to the need for an "industrial revolution." Neither did he mention that his rocket launching had led to the cancellation of badly needed American food aid.

The United States and its allies have called for censuring North Korea at the United Nations Security Council. But China appealed for all sides to "remain calm and exercise restraint" on Sunday after its foreign minister, Yang Jiechi, talked with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and the South Korean foreign minister, Kim Sung-hwan, in separate telephone conversations.



Some analysts say that the insecurity created by the rocket failure may push Kim Jong-un to rely more heavily on the military and attempt an even more provocative nuclear test in an effort to be taken seriously. The Korean People's Army, with about 1.1 million troops, has become the backbone of political power under Kim Jong-il's "military first" policy.

Kim Jong-un "is not secure enough" to endorse a possible demand from moderates in his government for policy shifts after the rocket debacle, said Chang Yong-seok, a senior researcher at Seoul National University's Institute for Peace and Unification Studies. "He still relies on his dead father's authority to justify his rule."

Hours after the failure of the rocket marred his ascension to North Korea's highest posts, Mr. Kim promoted 70 officers to the rank of general, the North's main ruling party newspaper, Rodong Sinmun, reported Saturday.

Mr. Kim ordered the promotions as one of his first actions after becoming chairman of the National Defense Commission. The post was the last of the top military, party and state titles he has inherited from his father.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/16/world/asia/kim-jong-un-north-korean-leader-talks-of-military-superiority-in-first-public-speech.html?pagewanted=all>

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Yonhap News – South Korea

April 16, 2012

Iranian Officials Observed N. Korea's Rocket Launch: Source

By Lee Chi-dong

WASHINGTON, April 15 (Yonhap) -- A dozen Iranian officials, responsible for the country's ballistic missile program, visited North Korea last week to observe its latest rocket launch, which ended in failure, a diplomatic source here said Sunday.

"On March 31, 12 Iranians of the Shahid Hemmat Industrial Group (SHIG) arrived in North Korea. The Iranians undoubtedly were there to observe the missile launch and receive test data from North Korea," the source told Yonhap News Agency, requesting anonymity.

South Korean government officials neither confirmed nor denied the allegations, citing a practice of not commenting on intelligence-related matter.

SHIG, connected to the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, is a target of U.N and U.S. sanctions.

It is known to have developed the Shahab-3, seen as a replica of North Korea's mid-range Nodong missile using Scud technology, and an upgraded version of Shahab-4 missiles.

North Korea and Iran have long been suspected of regularly exchanging ballistic missile technology.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2012/04/15/86/030100000AEN20120415002200315F.HTML>

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Korea Times – South Korea

April 16, 2012

N. Korea to Continue Space Program Despite Setback: Report

North Korea plans to begin the development of a geostationary satellite and a large space launch vehicle in five years despite a recent setback in its space program, a pro-North Korean newspaper in Japan said Monday.

The move came three days after the North failed to put an earth observation satellite into orbit when its three-stage Unha-3 rocket exploded soon after lift-off and crashed into the sea off South Korea's west coast.



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The failed rocket launch was the first part of the country's five-year space program that began this year for economic development, the Choson Sinbo said in a dispatch from Pyongyang.

North Korea will "embark on the development of a geostationary satellite in five years," the newspaper said, citing an unidentified North Korean space official.

The newspaper, widely seen as a propaganda mouthpiece for Pyongyang, also said the North will develop a space launch vehicle larger than the Unha-3 rocket.

North Korea will steadily push for a space program as satellite launches are needed to build a prosperous and powerful nation, on the instructions of its late leader Kim Jong-il, the newspaper said.

On Sunday, North Korean leader Kim Jong-un pledged to uphold the instructions of his father, Kim Jong-il, in his first public speech since he took over the country following the December death of his father. (Yonhap)

http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2012/04/120_109055.html

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Washington Times

Analysts: China Broke Sanctions if N. Korea Using Its Missile Launcher

By Shaun Waterman, *The Washington Times*

Monday, April 16, 2012

China likely provided the mobile long-range missile launcher that North Korea displayed in a military parade over the weekend, which would put Beijing in violation of U.N. sanctions, analysts say.

The 16-wheeled vehicle, known as a transporter-erector-launcher (TEL), is apparently based on a Chinese design, said Ted Parsons of IHS Jane's Defense Weekly.

The Chinese and North Korean versions of the TEL "have the same windscreen design, the same four windscreen wiper configuration, the same door and handle design, a very similar grill area, almost the same front bumper lighting configuration, and the same design for the cabin steps," Mr. Parsons noted.

North Korea's TEL was featured in a massive parade in Pyongyang over the weekend, one of a series of events held to commemorate the centenary of the communist regime's founder, Kim Il-sung.

"If confirmed, China's involvement in providing this erector-launcher to North Korea would put it in breach of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1874," said James Hardy, the Asia Pacific editor for Jane's Defense Weekly.

The resolution bans countries from supplying North Korea with "any arms or related materiel, or providing financial transactions, technical training, services, or assistance related to such arms."

The supply of such a vehicle to North Korea in defiance of international sanctions "would require approval from the highest levels of the Chinese government and the People's Liberation Army," said Mr. Parsons.

That has serious implications for the six-party talks on curbing North Korea's nuclear program - the only forum for discussions between Pyongyang and the international community.

China, which hosts the talks, has been consulting with the U.S., Russia, Japan and South Korea to persuade the North to give up its nuclear weapons program in exchange for concessions like food aid or a suspension of sanctions.

If China has been secretly aiding the North Korean ballistic missile program, that "could fatally undermine the six-party talks [because they are] built on the premise that there is a unanimous desire to prevent the North from developing a nuclear capability," Mr. Hardy said.

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2012/apr/16/experts-china-likely-gave-n-korea-illegal-missile/>

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Korea Times – South Korea
April 17, 2012

UNSC 'Strongly Condemns' N. Korean Rocket Launch

WASHINGTON/NEW YORK/SEOUL (Yonhap) -- The United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted a statement Monday "strongly condemning" North Korea for its long-range rocket launch last week amid growing worries that the defiant communist regime will carry out another nuclear test.

In a presidential statement, the 15-member council made it clear that the launch, albeit unsuccessful, was a "serious violation" of resolutions 1718 and 1874, which ban Pyongyang from any launch using ballistic missile technology.

"The Security Council deploras that such a launch has caused grave security concerns in the region," read the document, which is not legally binding.

The council also called for an annual update of lists of North Korean entities and items subject to U.N. sanctions. The statement "calls on all member states to strictly enforce sanctions on Pyongyang in accordance with the existing resolutions."

"The Security Council expresses its determination to take action accordingly in the event of a further DPRK launch or nuclear test," it added. DPRK stands for North Korea's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The U.N. produced such a relatively quick consensus in responding to the North's latest provocation, as the U.S. and its allies did not seek a fresh resolution, apparently to avoid a dispute with China and Russia.

When the North fired a multistage rocket in 2009, it took eight days for the council to issue a chairman's statement "condemning" the act. This time, a document with stronger wording was adopted in just three days.

But the international community has few other realistic ways to turn the screws on the North.

The effects of economic sanctions on Pyongyang will remain limited as long as Beijing continues to provide assistance to its neighboring ally despite its verbal criticism of the rocket launch.

"We've got very strong sanctions in place against North Korea, clearly," Mark Toner, deputy spokesman for the U.S. State Department, said at a press briefing. "We're looking at ways to strengthen our sanctions regime, whether it's bilateral or multilateral through the U.N., especially in light of North Korea's actions."

South Korean officials welcomed the U.N. Security Council's reaction.

"The statement by the president of the Security Council is more than just symbolic," an official told reporters, adding such a document can serve as a basis for stronger U.N. actions in the future. He asked not to be named. "Also true, however, is that there are few diplomatic ways to put pressure on already-isolated North Korea in comparison with Syria and Iran."

In Seoul, Foreign Ministry spokesman Cho Byung-jae said in a statement that South Korea took note of the Council's strong condemnation against the North's rocket launch.

"North Korea must clearly understand the firm and unified stance by the international community against the launch and cease acts of provocation that threaten the peace and security of the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia," Cho said.

The members of the council appear to have chosen the quick adoption of a statement, he added, with the likelihood of the North's nuclear test in mind.

Pyongyang's long-range rocket launches were followed by nuclear experiments both in 2006 and 2009.

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Should the North conduct a third nuclear test, it would herald a tougher process for the U.N. to hammer out a response.

The official cited a "game change" in dealing with the North, as South Korea and the U.S. are talking up the need to address such fundamental issues as the livelihood and human rights of the North Korean people.

http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2012/04/120_109114.html

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Yonhap News – South Korea

April 17, 2012

N. Korea Purged Senior Intelligence Official: Source

SEOUL, April 17 (Yonhap) -- North Korean leader Kim Jong-un appears to have removed a senior intelligence official as he takes full control of the communist country, a source said Tuesday.

U Tong-chuk, first deputy head of the State Security Ministry, has been absent from state media coverage since late last month when he accompanied Kim to a mausoleum in Pyongyang to pay respects to Kim's late father, long-time leader Kim Jong-il who died in December.

U was one of the seven top officials who walked with Kim Jong-un beside the hearse carrying the body of Kim Jong-il during the funeral procession in Pyongyang on Dec. 28.

The senior intelligence official and the seven others were believed to be confidants and advisers as Kim Jong-un took the reins of the country after his father's demise.

The young leader seems to have purged U as he assumes his father's key posts in the ruling Workers' Party, military and the government in a series of political events aimed at consolidating his power.

The North's official Korean Central News Agency reported last week that Kim Won-hong was appointed as State Security Minister in April, taking up U's position.

It is not clear whether U has been dismissed from his post or executed.

A South Korean official, who closely monitors North Korean affairs, said the reported purge has yet to be confirmed. He asked not to be identified, citing policy.

The North has a track record of purging or executing senior officials.

Last year, North Korea apparently removed Ryu Kyong, another senior intelligence official, according to South Korean officials and local media.

In 2010, the North reportedly executed Pak Nam-gi, former chief of the planning and finance department of the Workers' Party, over Pyongyang's botched currency reform in 2009 that caused massive inflation and worsened food shortages.

In the 1990s, North Korea executed a top agricultural official after a famine that was estimated to have killed 2 million people.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2012/04/17/86/0401000000AEN20120417002200315F.HTML>

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Korea Times – South Korea

April 17, 2012

China Fears Possible N. Korean Nuclear Test



By Chung Min-uck

The swift and unanimous adoption of a presidential statement by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) against North Korea Monday is not a sign of a policy shift by China, according to experts.

Rather, the agreement to such a move came over fears that Pyongyang may carry out a nuclear weapons test following a failed rocket launch last week, they say.

Getting China onboard for the latest UNSC statement was easier than expected. Beijing is a permanent veto-wielding council member which had sided with Pyongyang rather than the West over the North's past provocations. In 2009, it took eight days for the council to issue a chairman's statement condemning a North Korean rocket launch. This time, a document with stronger wording passed in just three.

A China expert in a South Korean governmental institute said, on condition of anonymity, "Beijing's approval of the statement is mainly due to concerns over a possible nuclear test, not to condemn the rocket launch itself."

North Korea carried out nuclear tests in 2006 and 2009. Both were staged within one to three months after satellite-carrying rocket launches, which other countries including the United States and South Korea saw as a disguised long-range ballistic missile test that violated U.N. resolutions.

In the legally-nonbinding statement adopted Monday, the 15-member council "strongly condemned" the launch of the rocket, calling it a "serious violation" of Security Council Resolutions 1718 and 1874, which ban Pyongyang from any launch using ballistic missile technology.

The council also called for an update of lists of North Korean entities and items subject to U.N. sanctions within 15 days.

It also determined to take action accordingly in case of a further launch or nuclear test by the Stalinist regime.

Seoul welcomed the UNSC's swift move.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Cho Byung-jae said in a statement that the government supports the council for coming to a consensus in a swift manner to strongly condemn the launch.

"North Korea must clearly understand the firm and unified stance against the launch of the international community, and I urge it to cease any provocative acts that can threaten peace and safety on the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia and to abide by UNSC resolutions," Cho said.

Pyongyang has not issued an official response to the newly approved statement yet.

Cho said in a press briefing that Seoul is looking forward to trilateral cooperation between South Korea, Japan and the United States, and is also expecting China's active involvement as the host of the long-stalled six party denuclearization talks.

However, Zhang Xiaolan, vice president of the United Nations Association of China, was quoted as saying by Sina, one of China's biggest on-line media outlets, that the statement adopted by the UNSC this time is almost the same as the previous ones indicating China's participation in adopting it does not mean a change in policy toward its long-time ally.

"What's written in the presidential statement adopted by the UNSC is quite balanced. It reflects the common thoughts of the members of the Security Council. There are no additional sanctions against the North. The statement also failed to determine the nature of the North's rocket launch carried out last Friday. The North, I guess, grasped the inner meaning of the statement," said Zhang, Monday.

Experts say Beijing prioritizes North Korea's stability more than anything as it fears a flood of refugees entering China if the regime collapses.

http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2012/04/116_109156.html

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Daily Yomiuri – Japan

N. Korea Says It Will Not Allow IAEA Inspectors / Bilateral Accord with U.S. Likely to be Called Off

April 17, 2012

The Yomiuri Shimbun

North Korea has defiantly said it will not allow International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors to monitor its uranium enrichment activities in response to the United States' statement that it will call off food aid to the country, diplomatic sources said Monday.

Following the North Korean announcement, it is likely that the bilateral agreement reached between Pyongyang and Washington in February will be scrapped. The agreement had called for IAEA officials to monitor the suspension of uranium enrichment activities at the Yongbyon nuclear facility, and the cancellation of nuclear tests and missile launches in exchange for U.S. food aid, according to the sources.

The United States on Friday called off plans to send food aid to North Korea after the reclusive country launched a long-range ballistic missile earlier that day. Pyongyang soon responded that it would reject inspections by IAEA officials, the sources said.

North Korean media had emphasized the country would observe the bilateral accord even after it launched what it claimed was a rocket carrying a satellite. Pyongyang is therefore expected to claim Washington was the first to abandon the agreement, citing the United States' intention to withhold food aid.

Even if North Korea went ahead with the planned rocket launch, the United States had intended to give credit to the country if it allowed IAEA inspectors to monitor the suspension of its uranium enrichment activities. As a result, Washington asked the IAEA not to respond to Pyongyang's invitation until the rocket had been launched.

North Korea's rejection of IAEA inspectors will likely make it more difficult for the country to suspend its uranium enrichment activities—an issue the United States has focused on, the sources said.

Abandoning the bilateral agreement also means that North Korea will no longer be bound to its promises, making it more likely the country will pursue a third nuclear test, according to the sources.

The U.N. Security Council is expected to adopt a statement condemning North Korea's missile launch as early as Monday. It is believed Pyongyang will use this as an excuse to justify a nuclear test by claiming it needs to protect itself from international pressure.

The United States has stressed that North Korea was the first to abandon the agreement by launching the rocket. It will suspend talks with Pyongyang for the time being and discuss with its allies how to strengthen sanctions against the country in the event of a nuclear test, according to the sources.

<http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/world/T120416004900.htm>

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Reuters U.S.

North Korea Says No Longer Bound by Nuclear Test Moratorium

Tuesday, April 17, 2012

SEOUL (Reuters) - North Korea on Tuesday dismissed a rebuke by the U.N. Security Council of its failed long-range rocket launch and said it was no longer bound by an agreement with the United States for a moratorium on missile and nuclear tests and arms inspection.

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The Security Council on Monday condemned the North for Friday's rocket launch and warned of further action if Pyongyang carried out a nuclear test, reflecting concern that it may follow a pattern it set in 2009 with its second nuclear test.

"We resolutely and totally reject the unreasonable behavior of the UNSC to violate (our) legitimate right to launch satellites," the North said in a statement carried by the official KCNA news agency.

The U.N. action was masterminded by the United States with a hostile intent denying the North of its right to conduct peaceful space research, the statement said.

"As the U.S. violated the February 29 DPRK-U.S. agreement through its undisguised hostile acts, we will no longer be bound to it," the statement said, referring to a deal for a nuclear and missile test moratorium in return for food aid.

"We have thus become able to take necessary retaliatory measures, free from the agreement," the North said, without specifying what actions it will take.

The fate of a planned visit by international inspectors to the North's nuclear site under the February agreement is also in doubt since Pyongyang raised tensions by going ahead with the rocket launch against international warning.

Powers including the United States, Japan and South Korea said the launch was a long-range missile test disguised as a satellite launch in violation of existing Security Council resolutions that put Pyongyang under tough sanctions.

A senior U.S. military officer said on Tuesday that Washington was looking at "all options" as it sought to discourage the North from conducting a third nuclear test, in response to a question whether it would consider a surgical strike on the North's atomic test site.

North Korea has revealed work on a uranium enrichment program, which arms experts said could give it a second path to building nuclear weapons after its plutonium-based program at its Yongbyon complex was suspended under a now-defunct 2005 international disarmament deal.

U.S. and South Korean officials have said former U.S. President Bill Clinton considered the possibility of a surgical strike on Yongbyon at the height of a nuclear crisis in 1994 before Pyongyang struck an energy deal with Washington to suspend nuclear activities.

Reporting by Ju-min Park, Choonsik Yoo and Jack Kim; Editing by Angus MacSwan.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/04/17/us-korea-north-us-idUSBRE83G12H20120417>

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National Post – Ontario, Canada

India Flexing Its Military Muscle with Nuclear-Capable Missile Test Later this Week

By Pratap Chakravarty, Agence France-Presse (AFP)

April 16, 2012

NEW DELHI — India hopes this week to join a select group of countries with intercontinental missiles by holding the first test flight of a new long-range nuclear-capable rocket, officials said Monday.

The Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO) said it plans the maiden launch of the Agni-V missile, which has a range of more than 5,000 kilometres between Wednesday and Friday.

The exact launch date has not yet been set "because this is our longest-range missile and there are many logistics issues and hence we don't plan for one (particular) day," DRDO spokesman Ravi Gupta told AFP.

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In the latest display of India's growing military might, the test of the indigenously developed Agni-V will be carried out from a coastal range in the eastern state of Orissa.

"Agni-V is a 5,000-plus kilometre range missile and it is to meet our present-day threat perceptions, which are determined by our defense forces and other agencies," Gupta said from the test site.

The Agni-V would in theory be able to strike targets across Asia and some parts of Europe. Only China, Russia, France, the United States, Great Britain and Israel are thought to have such long-distance missiles.

The weapons system was not developed to threaten any particular country, said DRDO spokesman Gupta.

"This is a deterrent to avoid wars and it is not country-specific," he said. "Besides, India has a no-first-use policy," he said, calling the country's missile development program "purely defensive."

The planned test flight comes after India launched last November the Agni-IV missile that can travel 3,500 kilometres and is capable of carrying a one-tonne nuclear warhead deep inside China.

India is among the world's top 10 military spenders, with Jane's Defense Weekly forecasting its total purchases between 2011 and 2015 will top \$100 billion.

India has fought three wars with arch-rival Pakistan since independence in 1947, but China is now viewed as the main focus of India's military concerns.

The border between India and China has been the subject of inconclusive diplomatic talks since the 1980s after the two nations fought a brief, bloody war in 1962.

Indian military analyst Afsir Karim said since the country already has potential to strike China with the Agni-IV, the utility of the latest missile was unclear.

"I do not see any strategic value in developing this system except for upgrading India's military prestige," Karim, a retired army lieutenant-general, told AFP.

India staged a string of atomic detonations in 1998 and declared itself a nuclear-weapons state but it refuses to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The country's test plan has not attracted the international criticism aimed at reclusive North Korea, which last week carried out a rocket test that ended in failure.

<http://news.nationalpost.com/2012/04/16/india-flexing-its-military-muscle-with-nuclear-capable-missile-test-later-this-week/>

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The Scotsman – Scotland, U.K.

Scottish Independence: SNP Ready to Vote on Ditching Nato Policy

By ANDREW WHITAKER

Monday, 16 April 2012

THE SNP is preparing to vote on whether to ditch its long-standing opposition to Nato membership, in the latest move by the party's leadership to soften its position ahead of the independence referendum.

The party's policy-making national council will decide whether to abandon its opposition to membership of the western defence pact in June.

The move has already sparked a rift within the SNP ranks, with a senior MSP warning that backing for Nato's commitment to a nuclear alliance would be at odds with the party's anti-nuclear stance and opposition to the Trident submarine fleet at Faslane.

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The move comes after a series of policy retreats by the SNP, including the claim by finance secretary John Swinney that an independent Scotland would continue to use the pound for at least a decade following a split with the UK.

Nationalists also now want to have the devo-plus option, which would see Holyrood take control of most taxes, included on the referendum ballot as an alternative to full independence – another policy shift by the SNP.

Senior party sources were reported yesterday to have revealed the policy shift, with the national council due to vote on the issue in Perth on 16 June. Party sources later confirmed the position to The Scotsman.

However, senior MSP John Wilson, the deputy head of Holyrood's economy committee, said he would oppose the reversal of the party's opposition to Nato, which he claimed would be "incompatible" with its anti-nuclear stance.

Mr Wilson warned that ditching the policy, which the party has held for 30 years, would weaken the international standing of an independent Scotland.

"There are no meaningful benefits to the people of Scotland from this," he said. "An independent Scotland would meet its peace-keeping obligations through its membership of the United Nations.

"The current policy of the SNP is to oppose not only the sitting of nuclear weapons in Scotland, but also the Nato commitment to the use of nuclear weapons as a first strike option.

Membership of Nato would be incompatible with the current party policy on nuclear weapons."

Another MSP Jamie Hepburn had previously lodged a Holyrood motion to mark the 60th anniversary of Nato, saying that the alliance was a destabilising factor in the West's relationship with Russia, that it relied on the continued use of nuclear weapons, and that it served no useful purpose in the modern world.

However, Nationalist Euro MP Alyn Smith, a member of the national council, yesterday hinted that he would back a change in the anti-Nato stance and said most SNP members did not see opposition to the defence pact as a "priority" in the run-up to the 2014 referendum.

Mr Smith said: "It's up to the members of the party, but all things need to be on the table. I sit in the European Parliament, and there are a lot of sensible countries that are in Nato, which I'm sure the SNP will be pragmatic enough to look at.

"There are an awful lot of Danes and Norwegians who look at Nato as being a sensible thing to be part of.

"This is an evolution of Scottish politics, and it's not a softening of the position at all.

"My view is that most members are not greatly fussed about the issue of Nato membership and opposition to it. They don't see it as a priority."

Angus Robertson, the SNP's defence spokesman, has also previously hinted at an independent Scotland being part of Nato, and has written about other nations with an anti-nuclear stance, such as Norway and Denmark, being part of the alliance.

He wrote: "Despite different relations to treaty organisations, such as the European Union and Nato, the Nordic and Baltic nations are pushing ahead together as never before.

"This includes shared basing, training and procurement arrangements. For nations like Norway and Denmark, in particular, deployability and reach within the High North and Arctic is a key consideration."

Former SNP leader Gordon Wilson, who failed to get the SNP to abandon its opposition to Nato in the 1980s, said a policy change would boost support for independence.

He said: "There's nothing harmful in being a member of Nato, and from a strategic point of view it will help in the arguments against those opposing independence.



“By seeming to be in the swim, it will possibly reassure people that we’d be safe and secure in an independent Scotland.”

A comprehensive survey of the SNP’s membership by James Mitchell, professor of politics at Strathclyde University, earlier this year revealed that more than half of grassroots members disagreed with the SNP’s plan to withdraw from Nato.

Last night, Prof Mitchell said his research suggested any proposal to remain part of Nato would get a fair hearing from the representatives of the SNP membership at the meeting of the national council, which meets twice a year.

He said: “The majority of members would support Scottish membership of Nato, but it has to be said that it is a bare majority and the strength of feeling on this is not great.

“In other words, very few of the SNP’s members feel that this is a matter of great urgency and great importance.”

One of Britain’s leading defence experts, Professor Malcolm Chalmers, has claimed that signing up to Nato would mean the Trident submarine fleet and its nuclear warheads being kept in Scotland possibly for decades.

Prof Chalmers, the defence policy director of the Royal United Services Institute, said the SNP’s anti-nuclear stance would be “hard to square” with an independent Scotland accepting Nato’s commitment to a nuclear alliance.

Opposition parties yesterday attacked the SNP’s review of its Nato stance as a “cynical attempt to win votes” and reassure voters ahead of the independence referendum.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said: “First, the SNP changed their mind about keeping the Queen, then they changed their mind on the pound, now they are changing their mind on Nato.

“Alex Salmond simply does not get defence – a view shared by numerous military experts.

“After all, this is the man who derided Nato’s humanitarian mission in Europe to prevent acts of ethnic cleansing as one of ‘unpardonable folly’.

“Alex Salmond has no love for the armed forces, and this is nothing more than a cynical attempt to win votes.”

Labour’s shadow defence secretary, Jim Murphy, said: “The SNP just don’t get defence. They want to take Scotland out of the British Army, Royal Navy and RAF and end Royal Navy shipbuilding on the Clyde.

“As defence experts said only last week, none of our allies would understand what message Scotland was trying to send by opting out of an alliance that has been the central player in security for the last six decades. Being in Nato is important not just for our defences, but for Scotland’s manufacturing industries and all the high-skilled jobs they support.

“In a globalised world, Scotland needs to have alliances. Being in the UK and part of Nato are two important partnerships, and separating from either would be strategically unwise.”

An official SNP spokesman dismissed as “mere speculation” reports that its leadership was considering proposing a change to the party’s policy on Nato.

The spokesman said: “Our long-standing policy is to be a member of Partnership for Peace, like Sweden, Austria, Finland and Ireland, which provides for bilateral co-operation between Nato and non-Nato countries.

“Anything that may happen in the future is mere speculation. If a motion is submitted it will be considered by the party’s standing orders and agenda committee, who will decide if it goes forward for debate. This reflects the democratic processes at the heart of the SNP.”

<http://www.scotsman.com/the-scotsman/politics/scottish-independence-snp-ready-to-vote-on-ditching-nato-policy-1-2236387>

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Daily Telegraph – U.K.

Alex Salmond's Trident Warning over Nato Membership

Alex Salmond will have to keep Britain's nuclear submarine fleet in an independent Scotland if he presses ahead with plans to reverse the SNP's opposition to Nato, defence experts have warned.

By Simon Johnson, Scottish Political Editor

16 April 2012

Lord Robertson of Port Ellen, Nato's former secretary general, told the Daily Telegraph all members must sign up to its new "Strategic Concept" that confirms they "will remain a nuclear alliance".

Sir Menzies Campbell, the former Liberal Democrat leader, said the First Minister could not benefit from the protection of the organisation's "nuclear umbrella" without agreeing that Scotland would remain part of it.

They intervened after senior sources confirmed that the SNP's ruling national council will meet shortly to discuss whether to abandon the party's long-standing policy of withdrawing from Nato.

The party's hierarchy is understood to be optimistic they can push through the change, which they view as hugely significant in their efforts to convince the Scottish public of their defence credentials before the independence referendum.

However, they will appease the SNP's rank-and-file by arguing that Nato membership does not compromise their anti-nuclear stance or their demand that the UK's Trident submarines be removed from Scottish waters after separation.

But Lord Robertson, who was Nato Secretary General between 1999 and 2004, highlighted the new Strategic Concept, which was agreed by the heads of state of Nato's 28 members during a November 2010 summit.

The document, which outlines the organisation's strategy for the next decade, states that the "supreme guarantee" of its security is the nuclear deterrents of the US, France and the UK.

The Ministry of Defence believes the Royal Naval Armaments Depot at Coulport, which stores the UK's missiles and warheads, is unique and could not be replicated in England.

"If you are going to be in Nato, you have to accept all the obligations of membership and the Strategic Concept behind it," said Lord Robertson, the former Labour Defence Secretary.

"Nato membership is important, not just for Scotland and the UK's defences, but also for our significant manufacturing industries too."

Sir Menzies was travelling to Washington today as part of a delegation of senior politicians speaking to US Government officials and congressmen on their plans for nuclear disarmament.

"For years the SNP have maintained their irrational opposition to Nato membership but now they want to have their cake and eat it," he said.

"They want to join the alliance, which has a nuclear dimension, but not to endorse Nato's doctrine. They want to benefit from the protection of the nuclear umbrella but not have any responsibility for it."

The Strategic Concept "commits Nato to the goal of creating the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons – but reconfirms that, as long as there are nuclear weapons in the world, Nato will remain a nuclear alliance."

After referring to the "supreme guarantee" of the three leading nations' nuclear deterrents, it states the "broadest possible" number of members will have nuclear bases in their countries.

Prof Malcolm Chambers, of the Royal United Services Institute, published a report last week concluding it would be hard to join the alliance then demand nuclear weapons are shipped to England, he said.

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However, Mr Salmond has been adamant they would have to be removed after separation, albeit not immediately.

Hundreds of SNP members are expected to attend June's national council meeting in Perth where it is expected they will debate then vote on whether to change party policy on Nato.

Although the party's hierarchy does not always attend the discussions, it is expected they will play a leading role in convincing the rank-and-file their anti-nuclear credentials will not be compromised.

They are expected to argue that other Nato members like Belgium are not forced to have nuclear weapons on their soil and only do so if they strike a bilateral agreement with, for example, the US.

But Sir Menzies said Scotland is different as it has an existing nuclear capability as part of the UK, and not warheads belonging to a foreign country.

They will also point to efforts by Germany for Nato to agree to water down its nuclear doctrine at the alliance's May summit in Chicago. The change is expected to be vigorously opposed the Baltic states, which view it as a key deterrent against Russian aggression.

The SNP leadership's main argument, however, is that a separate Scotland needs Nato membership to be a good neighbour to countries like Norway to share maritime security.

A recent survey showed more than half SNP members back joining the alliance. However, they remain virulently opposed to nuclear weapons.

A party spokesman said any motion on Nato will be considered for debate at the national council but dismissed anything else as speculation.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/9206552/Alex-Salmonds-Trident-warning-over-Nato-membership.html>

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Defense News.com

Nuke Expert Pool Shrinking

April 14, 2012

By KATE BRANNEN

In about five years, every scientist with experience designing and testing nuclear weapons will have retired from the U.S. government.

Thomas D'Agostino, the undersecretary for nuclear security and the administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), said the number of nuclear scientists with weapons testing experience is somewhere in the mid- to low teens.

The definition he uses for test experience is "someone who's had a key hand in the design of a warhead that's in the existing stockpile and who was responsible for that particular design when it was tested back in the early 1990s."

"Last year, it was in the 17 to 18 range, but I've got to believe it's five fewer than that now," he said at a March 8 breakfast with reporters.

"Five years from now, they will no longer be active employees of our laboratories."

For some, this is cause for hand-wringing. For others, it's just the inevitable outcome of a longstanding U.S. policy of not conducting nuclear weapons testing. The U.S. last conducted an explosive nuclear weapons test in 1992.

"As long as it is the policy of the United States — and it has been now for four successive administrations, two from each party — not to test, that is inevitable. So the question becomes: What do you do about it?" said Linton Brooks, a former ambassador and administrator of the NNSA at the Energy Department.

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For some, the answer is the resumption of nuclear weapons tests or designing and building a new nuclear weapon.

However, the Defense Department's new strategic guidance, released in January, made clear that nuclear weapons are playing a shrinking role in U.S. national security strategy.

"In the wake of the end of the Cold War, nuclear weapons have occupied a less and less prominent part of our defense and national security strategy, rightly so," Michèle Flournoy, former undersecretary of defense for policy, said March 6 at the Stimson Center in Washington.

The Obama administration has said it would like to pursue new disarmament talks with Russia. It is also pushing for Senate ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty, which was signed by President Bill Clinton in 1996 and then defeated in the Senate in 1999.

Some see this move toward a smaller nuclear force, plus President Barack Obama's stated desire for a nuclear weapons-free world, as being in competition with the administration's other policy goal of maintaining a safe, secure and effective nuclear weapons stockpile in the near term.

Sometimes these policies are in conflict, John Foster, former director of the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory, said April 10 at the Heritage Foundation in Washington.

The challenge these policies create can be seen at the laboratory level, where the government continues to try to attract and retain the best new talent in a field that it hopes will one day disappear.

Meanwhile, the effort to keep young scientists engaged at the national laboratories is made more difficult by recent funding cuts tied to deficit-reduction efforts.

Last month, the Los Alamos National Laboratory announced that 557 of its employees had volunteered to take buyouts to help deal with budget cuts.

The lab has a permanent workforce of 7,600.

The Testing Question

"If the administration has said they want to abandon testing, then certainly they have no interest in nurturing the knowledge base that would support it," Rep. Mike Turner, R-Ohio, said in a March 21 interview. He serves as the chairman of the House Armed Services strategic forces subcommittee.

Some believe the U.S. should reserve the right to test its nuclear weapons not only to keep unique scientific and engineering skills alive, but also because the weapons may require it.

By not testing, "we may be running serious risks and not know it," Foster said.

However, a new report from the National Academy of Sciences says the U.S. is able to maintain a safe and effective nuclear weapons stockpile without testing.

Brooks served on the committee that wrote the report.

"The report focuses on how you maintain that knowledge and capability given that the actuarial tables make it certain that there will be no one left who actually did a test," he said in an April 10 phone call with reporters.

Sustaining a high quality workforce remains one of the most important aspects of maintaining a safe, effective nuclear deterrent, the report says.

"At the laboratories, that means continuing to recruit the best people, but it also means giving them real projects that will develop their skills," Brooks said. "Things like the attempt to design a reliable replacement warhead — whatever the merits of that as a policy decision — it got new designers working with old designers on the process of how you design."



Much of the scientific work being done on the weapons is called “surveillance,” performing routine checkups on the weapons to make sure the components are still safe and functioning.

“If it were a car, it would be the equivalent of checking to see if the batteries are good, the fan belt works,” D’Agostino said.

Advocates of testing say surveillance is not reassurance enough that the warheads, which experience natural degradation over time, are still working.

D’Agostino disagrees. “I would say, based on the information that I review and the information that the laboratory directors review, that we have a much better understanding of what’s going on inside our stockpile now than we ever did during the days of underground testing. We can now explain phenomena that we never could back then.”

However, things are constantly changing, he said, which is why it’s important to continue to develop scientific expertise.

“There are always going to be people who say, ‘We have to test,’” D’Agostino said. “In my tenure in this job and however long it’s going to be out into the future, I’m supremely confident that we do not need to test a warhead.”

Keeping Interest

Over the past several years, the government has taken steps to expand the work of the laboratories to include projects beyond the not very glamorous, but immensely important, surveillance work.

The report from the National Academy of Sciences cited a 2008 Defense Science Board study that found morale was low at the laboratories due to declines in funding and the lack of a clear, high-level government affirmation of the importance of their mission.

Maintaining a safe and effective nuclear weapons stockpile is mostly an issue of resources, Brooks said. This means continued funding to recruit and maintain a high-quality workforce, repairing aging infrastructure, and investing in needed technologies, especially satellites for international monitoring.

To boost morale and to attract the best talent, the laboratories need to get scientists involved in work on nonproliferation, nuclear threat reduction, nuclear forensics and intelligence, especially of foreign nuclear programs, the National Academy of Sciences committee said.

The recommendation echoes a similar one made by the Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States, which released its findings in a May 2009 report.

The commission, which was chaired by former Defense Secretary William Perry and vice chaired by former Defense Secretary James Schlesinger, concluded that the intellectual infrastructure was in “serious trouble” and that steps were required to address the situation.

“The laboratories must be able to provide challenging research on national problems,” the report said. In the weapons area, this should include projects that include design skills.

Turner, an advocate of increased spending on nuclear weapons, agreed. “There needs to be a pursuit of knowledge that’s actually not tied to any particular weapons systems.”

For him, it’s important to sustain the knowledge base that could support “new items and new policy directives” if there is a change in political leadership.

However, for some, the problem is an existential one that requires more than just resources to solve.

“The best way to manage it is to ensure that as the inevitable reduction in the role and number of nuclear weapons in U.S. national security strategy continues, we should maintain a safe, secure and effective arsenal, but also begin transitioning the work of the labs to more pressing 21st-century national security applications,” said Kingston Reif, director of nuclear nonproliferation at the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation.



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<http://www.defensenews.com/article/20120414/DEFREG02/304140002/Nuke-Expert-Pool-Shrinking?odyssey=tab|topnews|text|FRONTPAGE>

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Global Security Newswire

Y-12 to House Uranium for Nuclear Forensics

April 17, 2012

The Y-12 National Security Complex in Tennessee will house uranium samples that could help in determining the origin of material used in a nuclear strike or seized from would-be traffickers, the *Knoxville News Sentinel* reported on Tuesday (see *GSN*, March 9).

Roughly 15 to 20 samples have been collected to date for the National Uranium Materials Archives. The characteristics of those materials and other samples to be stored at Y-12 could be compared against features of uranium that is seized or left over following an atomic explosion. Such nuclear forensics efforts could help investigators to determine where the material came from and possibly how it ended up in the hands of bad actors.

"We're just going to analyze samples supplied to us by the" National Nuclear Security Administration, said physical chemist and archives effort chief Greg Schaaff.

The nuclear agency, a semiautonomous arm of the Energy Department, did not provide further details about the program.

Police organizations would have access to the uranium archive and the DOE Nuclear Materials Information Program for investigations of an atomic event.

The Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico holds a corresponding bank of samples of plutonium and additional atomic substances, the newspaper reported (Frank Munger, *Knoxville News Sentinel*, April 17).

<http://www.nti.org/gsn/article/y-12-house-uranium-nuclear-forensics/>

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FoxNews.com

US Officials Scrambling to Confirm Reports of American Terror Leader's Death in Somalia

By Catherine Herridge

April 16, 2012

U.S. intelligence officials are scrambling to confirm reports that Omar Hammami, the American-born leader of an Al Qaeda-aligned terror group in Somalia, has been executed.

Unconfirmed reports surfaced in Somali media claiming the al-Shabaab jihadist was hunted down and beheaded on orders from a rival leader in the network.

A U.S. intelligence official told Fox News that, if true, Hammami's death could be a turning point in the recruitment of Americans and western Europeans by al-Shabaab -- as Hammami was thought to play a prominent role in that western outreach.

"Our folks have been looking for anything on this," the intelligence official told Fox News, adding: "We have not been able to confirm this report."

Significantly, web postings on jihadist forums have surfaced that speak of the American's death.

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Somali media reports claim Shabaab leader Ahmed Abdi Godane is accused of ordering the execution. Hammami reportedly said last month in a statement that other Shabaab leaders had him fearing for his life.

Hammami, born in 1984, grew up outside Mobile, Ala., in the city of Daphne.

But the American has been in war-torn Somalia for several years. In that time, he has emerged as one of the most recognizable and outspoken voices of terrorist propaganda. He was going by the name of Abu Mansour al-Amriki, or "The American."

Al-Amriki first surfaced in the terror group in October 2007, when Al-Jazeera TV aired a report about the "common goal" of Al Qaeda and hard-line militants in Somalia. The report described al-Amriki as "a fighter" and "military instructor," but he concealed his face with a cloth wrap throughout the report.

In April, he showed his face for the first time, during a highly-polished, 30-minute recruitment video posted online. It featured anti-American hip-hop music and sporadic images of Usama bin Laden.

Hammami's death could be a blow to the Al Qaeda affiliate, at least for its western recruiting efforts.

Al-Shabaab was responsible for the recruitment of some two dozen young men of Somali descent from the Minneapolis area.

<http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2012/04/16/us-officials-scrambling-to-confirm-reports-american-terror-leader-death-in/>

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Taipei Times – Taiwan

OPINION

Sunday, April 15, 2012

Cyberwar and Peace

Cyberspace has become a major source of insecurity, because, at this stage of technological development, offense prevails over defense and software attacks can have very real physical effects

By Joseph Nye

Two years ago, a piece of faulty computer code infected Iran's nuclear program and destroyed many of the centrifuges used to enrich uranium. Some observers declared this apparent sabotage to be the harbinger of a new form of warfare, and US Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta has warned Americans of the danger of a "cyber-Pearl Harbor" attack on the US — but what do we really know about cyberconflict?

The cyberdomain of computers and related electronic activities is a complex man-made environment, and human adversaries are purposeful and intelligent. Mountains and oceans are hard to move, but portions of cyberspace can be turned on and off by throwing a switch. It is far cheaper and quicker to move electrons across the globe than to move large ships long distances.

The costs of developing those vessels — multiple carrier task forces and submarine fleets — create enormous barriers to entry, enabling US naval dominance. However, the barriers to entry in the cyberdomain are so low that non-state actors and small states can play a significant role at low cost.

In my book *The Future of Power*, I argue that the diffusion of power away from governments is one of this century's great political shifts. Cyberspace is a perfect example. Large countries like the US, Russia, Britain, France and China have greater capacity than other states and non-state actors to control the sea, air, or space, but it makes little sense to speak of dominance in cyberspace. If anything, dependence on complex cybersystems for support of military and economic activities creates new vulnerabilities in large states that can be exploited by non-state actors.

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Four decades ago, the US Department of Defense created the Internet; today, by most accounts, the US remains the leading country in terms of its military and societal use. However, greater dependence on networked computers and communication leaves the US more vulnerable to attack than many other countries, and cyberspace has become a major source of insecurity, because, at this stage of technological development, offense prevails over defense there.

The term “cyberattack” covers a wide variety of actions, ranging from simple probes to defacing Web sites, denial of service, espionage and destruction. Similarly, the term “cyberwar” is used loosely to cover a wide range of behaviors, reflecting dictionary definitions of war that range from armed conflict to any hostile contest (for example, “war between the sexes” or “war on drugs”).

At the other extreme, some experts use a narrow definition of cyberwar: a “bloodless war” among states that consists solely of electronic conflict in cyberspace. However, this avoids the important interconnections between the physical and virtual layers of cyberspace. As the Stuxnet virus that infected Iran’s nuclear program showed, software attacks can have very real physical effects.

A more useful definition of cyberwar is hostile action in cyberspace whose effects amplify or are equivalent to major physical violence. In the physical world, governments have a near-monopoly on large-scale use of force, the defender has an intimate knowledge of the terrain, and attacks end because of attrition or exhaustion. Both resources and mobility are costly.

In the cyberworld, by contrast, actors are diverse (and sometimes anonymous), physical distance is immaterial and some forms of offense are cheap. Because the Internet was designed for ease of use rather than security, attackers currently have the advantage over defenders. Technological evolution, including efforts to “re-engineer” some systems for greater security, might eventually change that, but, for now, it remains the case. The larger party has limited ability to disarm or destroy the enemy, occupy territory, or use counterforce strategies effectively.

Cyberwar, though only incipient at this stage, is the most dramatic of the potential threats. Major states with elaborate technical and human resources could, in principle, create massive disruption and physical destruction through cyberattacks on military and civilian targets. Responses to cyberwar include a form of interstate deterrence through denial and entanglement, offensive capabilities, and designs for rapid network and infrastructure recovery if deterrence fails. At some point, it might be possible to reinforce these steps with certain rudimentary norms and arms control, but the world is at an early stage in this process.

If one treats so-called “hacktivism” by ideological groups as mostly a disruptive nuisance at this stage, there remain four major categories of cyberthreats to national security, each with a different time horizon: cyberwar and economic espionage are largely associated with states, and cybercrime and cyberterrorism are mostly associated with non-state actors. For the US, the highest costs currently stem from espionage and crime, but over the next decade or so, war and terrorism could become greater threats than they are today.

Moreover, as alliances and tactics evolve, the categories may increasingly overlap. In the view of former US director of national intelligence Admiral Mike McConnell: “Sooner or later, terror groups will achieve cybersophistication. It’s like nuclear proliferation, only far easier.”

The world is only just beginning to see glimpses of cyberwar — in the denial-of-service attacks that accompanied the conventional war in Georgia in 2008, or the recent sabotage of Iranian centrifuges.

States have the greatest capabilities, but non-state actors are more likely to initiate a catastrophic attack. A “cyber-9/11” may be more likely than the often-mentioned “cyber-Pearl Harbor.” It is time for states to sit down and discuss how to limit this threat to world peace.

Joseph Nye, a former assistant US secretary of defense, is a professor at Harvard University and author.

<http://www.taipetimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2012/04/15/2003530361>

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*United States Air Force Counterproliferation Research & Education | Maxwell AFB, Montgomery AL
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China Daily – China
OPINION/Editorial

Iran Talks Positive

April 16, 2012
(China Daily)
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The latest negotiations between six- world powers and Iran on its nuclear program mark a positive development in international efforts to ease tension over the long-standing issue.

The talks between Iran and the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council plus Germany were held on April 14 in the Turkish city of Istanbul amid worldwide attention and expectation.

After the talks, the European Union's foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton, who headed the delegation of the six world powers, described the dialogue as "constructive and useful". The parties have agreed to meet again in Baghdad, Iraq, on May 23.

It is good to see the six parties concerned are spearheading diplomatic efforts to defuse the growing tensions over Iran's nuclear program, which Tehran says is purely peaceful, but which the Western leaders suspect is a program aimed at developing nuclear weapons.

The resumption of talks, the first in 15 months, is the result of joint efforts by all parties involved and hasn't come easily. During the talks China pushed all sides to show flexibility and sincerity, and take each other's concerns seriously, so as to make the dialogue a success.

And the talks do seem to have been fruitful as Assistant Foreign Minister Ma Zhaoxu, who led the Chinese delegation, said that all sides are willing to conduct dialogue to find a "comprehensive, just and proper settlement of the Iranian nuclear issue".

However, the international community should be fully aware of the complexity and difficulty of the Iranian nuclear issue. It will take time for the two sides to dispel their mutual mistrust and bridge their differences. Prior to the talks, politicians in the United States and Israel had openly talked about military strikes against Tehran and the US had sent aircraft carriers and warships to the region.

To pave the way for sustained results leading up to the peaceful settlement of the Iranian nuclear issue, the parties concerned should take the Istanbul talks as a new beginning of engagement, show the utmost patience and commit to building on this momentum.

The situation concerning Iran cannot be allowed to deteriorate further as that will have disastrous consequences and serve no one's interests.

Continued dialogue is the only way to arrive at a solution acceptable to all and maintain regional stability.

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2012-04/16/content_15054023.htm

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Gulf News – U.A.E
OPINION/Editorial

Iran Has to Allow Total Transparency

Istanbul talks with Tehran were encouraging but rhetoric on its own is not enough

Gulf News
April 16, 2012



USAF COUNTERPROLIFERATION CENTER
CPC OUTREACH JOURNAL
MAXWELL AFB, ALABAMA

Saturday's formal talks between Iran and the international community went surprisingly well, if only in the sense that they did not end in a walkout and mutual recrimination. Instead they all agreed to meet for another round of talks on May 23. But if these talks are to go anywhere, Iran must open up and become transparent about its nuclear programme so as to regain international trust, and prove that it is not breaking any international treaties.

The Istanbul meeting was the first time in 15 months that the P5+1 group (the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany) and Iran had met, and the hardening of attitudes caused by heated rhetoric from extremists in the United States and Israel had led some to believe that these talks would fail. Of course, it is perfectly possible that skilled negotiators on the Iranian side told the P5+1 what they wanted to hear.

While Iran's critics accuse it of developing a nuclear weapons programme, Iran insists that its programme is peaceful. To convince the international community that it is telling the truth, Iran will have to allow International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors into all its facilities, visiting any site they want, without prior notice.

Iran insists that it should be able to exercise its right to enrich uranium up to 20 per cent under the terms of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and that it must be allowed to use this uranium in its nuclear power reactors. But its deliberate refusal to be transparent has encouraged suspicions that it is enriching uranium well beyond this point, which can only be used in nuclear weapons. One key test of Iran's truth would be for it to allow access to the Parchin military base near Tehran, where the IAEA says Iran may have tested explosives for warhead research.

<http://gulfnews.com/opinions/editorials/iran-has-to-allow-total-transparency-1.1008856>

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Washington Post
OPINION/Editorial

Iran Strikes a New Tone on Nuclear Talks

By Editorial Board
April 16, 2012

THE MOST positive aspect of the negotiations with Iran that opened Saturday was the contrast with the previous, disastrous encounter of the United States and its five partners with Tehran's negotiators 15 months ago. Then, Iranian representative Saeed Jalili refused even to discuss the country's nuclear program, insisting that all sanctions be lifted as a precondition to further dialogue. On Saturday in Istanbul, Mr. Jalili made no such demand. Instead he made clear that his government accepts the connection between an accord on its nuclear activities and sanctions relief.

Arguably Mr. Jalili was shifting only from an outrageous and illogical position to one in keeping with Iran's decision to participate in negotiations. But it was nevertheless enough for the international coalition to agree to hold another round of talks May 23 in Iraq, with preparatory discussions beforehand. Not until then, it seems, will Tehran be pressed on whether it is prepared to take the "confidence-building" steps set out by the Obama administration, including the freezing of its medium-level uranium enrichment, the export of part of its fuel stockpile and the suspension of operations at a new underground plant.

That delay drew a sharp response from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who said Iran "has been given a freebie" because "it has got five weeks to continue enrichment without any limitation." Still, the lapse won't determine whether Iran obtains a nuclear weapon, and it probably won't make its program invulnerable to Israeli military action. It will bring the parties closer to July 1, when major new sanctions, including an embargo on oil purchases by the European Union, take effect. If the regime of Ali Khamenei genuinely wishes to strike a bargain, that should be clear by then.

For now Tehran is hinting at flexibility: Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi suggested Monday that a deal was possible on the 20-percent-enriched uranium targeted by the international coalition. Yet by any reasonable assessment, it remains unlikely that the regime will agree to the administration's terms, or settle for something less than major sanctions

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relief in exchange. A deal that falls short on Iranian deliverables would probably not eliminate Israel's strong incentive for early military action; one that significantly eases sanctions could be counterproductive in the longer run, as it would remove Iran's incentive to strike a more lasting bargain. Given the odds against success, and the dangers of further delay, the administration should insist that Iran spell out its intentions by next month.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/awaiting-irans-answer-on-nuclear-concessions/2012/04/16/gIQRtwTMT_story.html

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New York Times
OPINION/Editorial
April 17, 2012

Talking With Iran

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Iran's agreement over the weekend to hold a new round of nuclear talks next month with the United States and five other powers is a constructive development. On Monday, Iran's foreign minister, Ali Akbar Salehi, said Tehran is ready to resolve its nuclear disputes "quickly and easily" and suggested flexibility on uranium enrichment.

But nothing is ever quick and easy with the Iranians. They are masters at diplomatic sleight of hand and have provided ample reason for mistrust. Resolving concerns about the country's nuclear activities — a source of international alarm since the once-covert program was first exposed in 2002 — remains a long shot. But tough international sanctions on Iran, including an oil embargo that is set to take effect in July, and Israel's threats of possible military action may be forcing Iran's leaders to reconsider their posture.

The actual results of the weekend talks in Istanbul were very modest. Still, the Iranians seemed ready to talk seriously about their nuclear program and even put some ideas on the table. No details were disclosed, but the two sides were encouraged enough to schedule another session for May 23 in Baghdad. The pressure is now on for that next session to produce some concrete agreement. The most immediate needs are to get Iran to stop enriching uranium to 20 percent purity, just a few steps from bomb grade; to move its stockpile of uranium enriched to 20 percent out of the country; to close the underground production facility at Fordo; and to cooperate more fully with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Iran's unsurprising push for an immediate lifting of sanctions must be resisted. Catherine Ashton, the European Union foreign policy chief, was right to stress a "step-by-step approach and reciprocity" if Iran complies with its obligations under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, including a promise to forgo nuclear weapons.

The major powers also need to confront Iran's divided leadership by spelling out explicitly a vision for the kinds of diplomatic and economic incentives — including access to peaceful nuclear energy — that Tehran would gain if it gives up its weapons-related nuclear activities.

Iran's nuclear ambitions are real and dangerous, though there is no proof yet that it has made the decision to move from producing fuel to building a bomb. It's not clear that any mix of sanctions and diplomacy can persuade the mullahs to abandon their course. But we do know the only possible way of achieving a negotiated deal is for the international community to stay united and keep on the economic pressure.

http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/17/opinion/talking-with-iran.html?_r=2

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