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ABC News

White House Contradicts Russian Duma Official on Linkage Between Missile Defense and START

January 03, 2011

By Jake Tapper

An official of the lower house of the Duma says that as it ratifies the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, START, the Russian parliament will reaffirm that the treaty limits U.S. plans for missile defense, contrary to the stated position of U.S. officials.

Asked for comment, White House spokesman Tommy Vietor tells ABC News, "The President sent a letter to the Senate on December 18th that said: 'The New Start Treaty places no limitations on the development or deployment of our missile defense programs.' That remains the case."

The preamble to the treaty recognizes "the existence of the interrelationship between strategic offensive arms and strategic defensive arms, that this interrelationship will become more important as strategic nuclear arms are reduced, and that current strategic defensive arms do not undermine the viability and effectiveness of the strategic offensive arms of the Parties..."

Throughout the START debate in the Senate, Republican lawmakers voiced concern that that recognizing the "interrelationship" between offensive and defensive weapons could be seen as a way to limit US plans for a missile defense system in Europe.

And apparently Konstantin Kosachev, chairman of the Duma Committee on International Affairs, agrees.

Earlier today, the Voice of Russia quoted Kosachev saying that, "during the ratification of START in the U.S. Congress the American lawmakers noted that the link between strategic offensive armed forces and antimissile defense systems is not juridically binding for the parties. They referred to the fact that this link was fixed only in the preamble of the document. Such an approach can be regarded as the U.S.' attempt to find an option to build up its strategic potential and the Russian lawmakers cannot agree with this."

Kosachev said that "we will deal with these interpretations. The first thing is that our American colleagues do not recognize the legal force of the treaty's preamble. The preamble sets a link between strategic offensive arms and defensive arms. The second thing is an attempt to interpret certain provisions of the treaty unilaterally."

And he was hardly the first Russian official to make such a statement.

In April, Sergei Prikhodko -- Russia President Dmitri Medvedev's senior foreign policy adviser stated that Russian "negotiators had to insert the inextricable connection between strategic offensive and strategic defensive armaments (i.e. missile defense) into the treaty. This was successfully fulfilled and the importance of this connection when reducing strategic offensive armaments will be included in the treaty and be legally binding..." Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov had also stated that "linkage to missile defense is clearly spelled out in the accord and is legally binding."

Are they wrong? ABC News asked a senior Obama administration official at the time.

"Yes," was the reply.

In November, President Obama outlined new plans for missile defense in Europe.

As he wrote in his letter to GOP Senators, "(a)s long as I am President, and as long as the Congress provides the necessary funding, the United States will continue to develop and deploy effective missile defenses to protect the United States, our deployed forces, and our allies and partners. My Administration plans to deploy all four phases of the European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA). While advances of technology or future changes in the threat could modify the details or timing of the latter phase of the EPAA- one reason this approach is called 'adaptive' -- I will take every action available to me to support the deployment of all four phases."

<http://blogs.abcnnews.com/politicalpunch/2011/01/white-house-contradicts-russian-duma-official-on-linkage-between-missile-defense-and-start.html>

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Global Security Newswire

Arms Treaty Would Not Affect Nuke Plans, Russia Says

Tuesday, January 4, 2011

A new U.S.-Russian nuclear arms control treaty would not alter Moscow's plans for updating its nuclear deterrent, Interfax yesterday quoted a spokesman for Russia's strategic missile forces as saying (see *GSN*, Jan. 3).

"The New START does not ban the modernization or replacement of strategic offensive armaments, including the development of new types of arms for the strategic [missile] forces," Col. Vadim Koval said.

President Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev signed New START last April. The pact would require Russia and the United States to each cap their deployed strategic nuclear warheads at 1,550, down from a limit of 2,200 required by 2012 under an earlier treaty. It also would set a ceiling of 700 deployed warhead delivery systems, with another 100 allowed in reserve.

The U.S. Senate voted on December 22 to ratify the treaty, and the Russian Duma two days later completed the first of three votes required for the pact's endorsement by Moscow.

Russia would meet its nuclear modernization goals within the pact's limitations on warhead deployments, Koval said.

"The grouping of the forces is being reduced through the decommissioning of ICBMs with an expired service life and the reduction to the minimum of the existing missile systems. The grouping is being modernized through the adoption of missile regiments equipped with new missile systems," he said.

Russia's draft defense plan for the next decade "implies the rearmament of strategic nuclear forces," Koval quoted Russian Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov as saying.

"The plan is that the strategic nuclear forces would be 70 percent armed with modern types of weapons. In the strategic rocket forces -- the most combat capable component of the nuclear deterrence force -- their share will exceed 90 percent," the spokesman said.

Russia's nuclear forces would meet the standards of the new treaty within seven years of the pact entering into force, he said (Interfax, Jan. 3).

http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20110104_3238.php

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

Russian Parliament Drafts Five Amendments to New Arms Pact

6 January 2011

The lower house of the Russian parliament has prepared five amendments and two draft statements on a new strategic arms reduction treaty with the United States, a senior lawmaker said on Thursday.

Konstantin Kosachyov, head of the State Duma International Affairs Committee, said the amendments set conditions for the treaty's ratification, specify the prerogatives of Russia's executive and legislative branches of government and spell out conditions that could compel Russia to withdraw from the treaty.

He did not elaborate.

The amendments also provide for further negotiations on other types of weapons.

They will be submitted for the second reading of the bill, which could take place in mid-January, he said.

The United States Senate ratified the new arms deal with Russia on December 22. The agreement will come into force after ratification by both houses of the Russian parliament.

The Duma approved the agreement in its first reading on December 24.

The new treaty replacing the START 1 that expired in December 2009 was signed in Prague in April by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and U.S. President Barack Obama.

The document slashes the Russian and U.S. nuclear arsenals to a maximum of 1,550 nuclear warheads, down from the current ceiling of 2,200.

MOSCOW, January 6 (RIA Novosti)

<http://en.rian.ru/russia/20110106/162060794.html>

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

Senior Russian MP Says New Start Better for Russia than U.S.

7 January 2011

The New Start agreement with the United States on strategic nuclear arms cuts favors Russia more than the now-expired START 1 deal did, a top Russian lawmaker said on Friday.

Konstantin Kosachyov, the chairman of the State Duma's International Affairs Committee, called the fact of the agreement a breakthrough, and said the U.S. Senate's ratification of the treaty had not changed anything within the document.

"Russia is once again perceived as an equal partner with whom you can and should negotiate," he said on Ekho Moskvy radio. "This is, to emphasize once again, a breakthrough, not a compromise."

"Everything else laid out in the agreement in fact represents very substantial progress, I would say in ours and not in the Americans' favor compared with the 1991 START 1 treaty that just recently passed into history," he added.

He said that the Duma, parliament's lower house, would likely consider the ratification bill on second reading on January 14. The third and final reading, he added, would probably wait until after the upper house Federation Council returned to full session on January 26.

Kosachyov said the Duma bill would state where its interpretation of New Start differed from the U.S. Senate's, but he stressed that U.S. senators had done nothing to change the text of the treaty and neither would Russian lawmakers.

"In December, a number of amendments were voted on there [in the Senate] that went to the text of the treaty itself. Fortunately, they were voted down by the Senate, common sense prevailed, and the agreement we have is in the form in which it was signed by the presidents in April last year," he said.

Presidents Dmitry Medvedev and Barack Obama signed the treaty in Prague on April 8, 2010. The Senate ratified the treaty on December 22. The Duma approved the agreement in its first reading on December 24.

The major areas where the Russian and U.S. views of the document differ include missile defense and the use of non-nuclear warheads on delivery systems covered by the agreement.

The treaty, which replaces the START 1 agreement that expired in December 2009, cuts the Russian and U.S. nuclear arsenals to a maximum of 1,550 nuclear warheads, down from the current ceiling of 2,200.

It also limits the number of deployed intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) and heavy bombers equipped for nuclear armaments to 700.

It will come into force after ratification by both houses of the Russian parliament.

MOSCOW, January 7 (RIA Novosti)

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20110107/162068548.html>

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London Guardian – U.K.

Iranian Nuclear Scientist 'Tortured on Suspicion of Revealing State Secrets'

Shahram Amiri, who claimed he was abducted by CIA, has not been seen since return from US last year

By Julian Borger and Saeed Kamali Dehghan

Tuesday, 4 January 2011

An Iranian nuclear scientist who claimed to have been abducted by the CIA and who returned to a hero's welcome in Tehran last July, has since been imprisoned and tortured on suspicion of giving away state secrets, according to an opposition website.

Iranbriefing.net - run by a US-based group which normally reports on political prisoners and the activities of Iran's revolutionary guard - said the scientist, Shahram Amiri, had been interrogated intensively for three months in Tehran and then spent two months in solitary confinement, where his treatment had left him hospitalised for a week.

The Tehran authorities would not confirm or deny the account.

Amiri has not been seen in public in the six months since his much-publicised homecoming from America, where he claimed to have been held against his will. State media portrayed him at the time as a daring patriot who had escaped from his alleged CIA captors with critical information about US covert operations against Iran.

US officials, surprised by Amiri's unexpected return to Iran, insisted he had gone to the US willingly. There was concern in US intelligence circles however that his original "defection" in Saudi Arabia in 2009 could have been a trap to embarrass the CIA and trick its officials into revealing how much the US knows about the Iranian nuclear programme.

The evidence is contradictory. During his time in the US, he appeared to have made three videos - one saying he had decided to continue his studies in the US, another saying he was being held captive and a third claiming to be on the run from the CIA. He then presented himself to the Iranian interest section at the Pakistani embassy in Washington, asking to go home.

Independent but unverified reports from inside Iran said Amiri's family had been stripped of their passports and placed under close scrutiny after the scientist went missing on his pilgrimage to Mecca.

Western observers said that his disappearance from public view since last summer strengthened their view that he had been forced to return by threats to his relatives. It is not yet clear whether a planned Iranian television drama based on the official version of his story will be aired as scheduled this year.

Amid the conflicting reports, it is clear that the struggle over Amiri is just one battle in an increasingly ferocious secret war over Iran's nuclear programme, in which two other Iranian scientists were assassinated and a third injured in bomb attacks last year.

Iran has blamed western and Israeli intelligence for the attacks, and for a computer worm, known as Stuxnet, which caused centrifuges malfunctions at its uranium enrichment plant in Natanz.

Tehran also claimed last week that General Ali Reza Asgari, a former revolutionary guard commander and deputy defence minister who disappeared in Istanbul just over four years ago, was being held in an Israeli prison. Mohammad Raouf Sheybani, a deputy foreign minister, called for an international inquiry into Asgari's fate.

Covert operations against Iran's nuclear programme appear to have had some success in slowing it down.

The main enrichment plant in Natanz stopped processing uranium altogether for a few days in November. But diplomatic efforts to persuade Tehran to suspend its programme in return for foreign technical and financial assistance have so far failed.

Talks in December between Iran and six major powers in Geneva led only to an agreement to meet again, in Turkey later this month. Tehran has invited selected foreign diplomats to tour some of its nuclear facilities ahead of the meeting. But the US, which is not invited, has dismissed the invitation as a propaganda ploy.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jan/04/iranian-nuclear-scientist-tortured-claim>

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Desert News – Salt Lake City

U.S. Memo: Iranian Hard-Liners Blocked Nuke Deal

Tuesday, January 4, 2011

By Brian Murphy, Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad sought some kind of nuclear fuel swap deal more than a year ago, but faced internal pressures from hard-liners who viewed it as a "virtual defeat," according to U.S. diplomatic cable released by WikiLeaks.

The report, available on the WikiLeaks website Tuesday, also suggested Iran trusted its arch-foe the United States more than ally Russia to follow through with the U.N.-backed proposal: providing reactor-ready fuel in exchange for Iran giving up control of its low-enriched uranium stockpile.

The assessment was given to a top U.S. envoy by Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, whose nation has a growing friendship with Tehran and is scheduled to host the next round of nuclear talks later this month between Iran and six world powers, including the United States.

The fuel swap proposal is a centerpiece of efforts for greater international controls on Iran's nuclear program, which the West and others fear could lead to development of atomic weapons. Iran insists it only seeks reactors for power and research.

The U.N. plan in 2009 called for Iran to ship its low-enriched uranium out of the country and receive nuclear fuel ready for use. Iran balked at the proposal and outlined alternative fuel swaps involving allies Brazil and Turkey. But the six nations — the five permanent U.N. Security Council members plus Germany — said the offers fell short of their demands.

In late 2009, Davutoglu told visiting Assistant Secretary of State Philip Gordon that Iran's government was willing to work out some kind of fuel swap arrangement, but Ahmadinejad was facing "huge pressures" at home, according to the secret memo.

Davutoglu was quoted as saying that the proposal deal was "interpreted by some circles in Iran as a virtual defeat" by Western pressures.

The cable said Turkish officials had asked Ahmadinejad "if the core of the issue is psychological rather than substance."

"Ahmadinejad had said 'yes,' that the Iranians agree to the proposal but need to manage the public perception," the message said, adding that Turkish officials consider Ahmadinejad as "more flexible than others who are inside the Iranian government."

It also noted that it appears the Iranians have "more trust" in the U.S. envoys than British negotiators and "the Iranians would also prefer to get fuel from the U.S. rather than the Russians."

The talks between Iran and the world powers resumed in Geneva last month after an impasse lasting more than a year.

Iran pressed hard to have the second round in Turkey, which has developed close economic and political ties with Iran.

The leaked cable said the U.S. diplomat Gordon noted that Washington believes Turkey can be "helpful as a mediator" with Iran, but he also pushed for a stronger Turkish stance on Iran's nuclear efforts.

It quoted the Turkish foreign minister as replying: "Only Turkey can speak bluntly and critically to the Iranians ... but only because Ankara is showing public messages of friendship."

<http://www.deseretnews.com/article/700097427/US-memo-Iranian-hard-liners-blocked-nuke-deal.html>

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Voice of America (VOA)

Iran Vows to Boost Missile Arsenal

4 January 2011

Iran's parliament speaker, Ali Larijani, says his country plans to further boost its missile program.

He said Tuesday that Iran does not hide its weapons intentions to defend itself against "possible aggressions" from Israel and the West. His comments confirm Western analysts' views that Iran has developed short- and mid-range missiles capable of striking Israel and possibly parts of Europe.

Larijani's comments come as Iran's Defense Ministry says it has armed its navy with new coastal cruise missile systems.

Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier General Ahmad Vahidi said at a ceremony Monday that the new missile systems will help safeguard the country's naval borders.

He said the systems include missile launch pads, target detection and radar to guide the missiles. The range of the new missiles was not mentioned, although Iran has been testing missiles with increasingly longer reaches.

World powers are locked in an eight-year dispute with Iran over its nuclear energy program. Some Western officials suspect Iran's development of more sophisticated missiles may be part of efforts to develop a nuclear weapon.

Iran says its nuclear aims are peaceful.

<http://www.voanews.com/english/news/middle-east/Iran-Vows-to-Boost-Missile-Arsenal-112875389.html>

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Bellingham Herald

Friday, January 07, 2011

Mossad Chief: Iran Won't Go Nuclear Before 2015

By MATTI FRIEDMAN, Associated Press

JERUSALEM - Israel's newly retired spy chief thinks Iran will not be able to build a nuclear bomb before 2015, Israeli media reported Friday - further pushing back Israeli intelligence estimates of when Tehran might become a nuclear power.

Meir Dagan, who left his post as head of the Mossad intelligence service this week, said Thursday that Iran's nuclear program had been delayed by unspecified "measures" employed against it, according to the Israeli daily Yediot Ahronot.

Other Israeli media reported Dagan's prediction, citing "closed conversations" he held Thursday before leaving his post as head of Israel's covert intelligence arm.

An Israeli government spokesman would not comment Friday.

As recently as 2009, Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak said Iran would be able to build a nuclear bomb by 2011. But since then the projected deadline has been extended. The Israeli Cabinet minister in charge of strategic affairs, Moshe Yaalon, said last week it would take the Iranians at least three years to develop a nuclear weapon.

The assessment by Dagan adds another year to that estimate. Dagan also said Israel "should not hurry to attack" Iran, according to the Yediot Ahronot report.

Israel officially supports the diplomatic efforts in place to curb Iran's nuclear ambitions, but has not ruled out the possibility of a military strike.

Iran claims its nuclear program is aimed at producing electricity, but Israel, many of Iran's Arab neighbors, the U.S. and other Western countries are convinced the Iranian program is aimed at producing weapons.

Iran has blamed Israel for disruptions in its nuclear program. In November, assailants on motorcycles attached magnetized bombs to the cars of two Iranian nuclear scientists as they drove to work in Tehran, killing one and wounding another. At least two other Iranian nuclear scientists have been killed in recent years.

In addition, a computer worm known as Stuxnet is thought to have caused the Iranians serious technical problems in the centrifuges used for uranium enrichment - a process that can be used both to produce reactor fuel and material for nuclear warheads.

Tehran's nuclear program is of particular concern to Israel, which sees a nuclear weapon in Iranian hands as an existential threat. Iran funds Islamic militant groups on Israel's borders, such as the Palestinian Hamas and the Lebanese Hezbollah, and Iran's president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, has said Israel should be "wiped off the map."

The U.N. Security Council imposed four rounds of sanctions on Iran after Tehran refused to halt its program. The council's five permanent members, along with Germany, are set to hold a new round of talks with Iran in late January.

Iran recently invited Hungary, which currently holds the rotating European Union presidency, Russia, China and other countries to tour its nuclear sites before those talks. It pointedly did not invite the U.S. or other Western powers on the Security Council.

<http://www.bellinghamherald.com/2011/01/07/1804515/mossad-chief-iran-wont-go-nuclear.html>

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Deutsche Welle - German Federation

7 January 2011

EU to Turn Down Iran's Invitation to Nuclear Sites

The European Union is to decline Iran's invitation to tour its nuclear sites ahead of scheduled talks on its nuclear program, saying that the role and responsibility of nuclear inspection belongs to another body.

By Andrew Bowen (Reuters, AP)

European Union foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton said on Friday that the bloc would not accept Iran's invitation to tour two of its nuclear sites, but rather that the work should be done by representatives of the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Iran had invited Hungary, which recently overtook the rotating EU presidency, as well as Russia, China and several other countries to tour the Natanz uranium enrichment plant and the Arak heavy water facility.

Tehran suggested January 15-16 for the visit, less than a week before scheduled nuclear talks in Istanbul between Iran and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, plus Germany. Iran's acting foreign minister, Ali Akbar Salehi, said the invitations were to show "the lies propagated by some non-benevolent countries regarding Iran's nuclear activities."

'Not our job'

Ashton told Reuters news agency that "the role of the inspections of nuclear sites is for the IAEA, and I do hope Iran will ensure that the IAEA is able to go and continue and fulfill its work." She added that she did not view the invitation negatively, and that she was optimistic about the talks with Iran.

Tehran claims its uranium enrichment is for peaceful energy purposes only, while the West believes it is a cover for plans to build nuclear weapons.

Invitations were also sent to Egypt, Cuba, Venezuela, Brazil, Turkey, Algeria and the Arab League. The United States, Britain, France and Germany - all participants in the nuclear talks - were not invited.

Some western diplomats dismissed the suggested tours as a ploy to divide the six powers involved in the talks and urged Moscow and Beijing to also decline the invitations.

<http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,14756103,00.html>

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Breitbart.com

China Military Eyes Preemptive Nuclear Attack in Event of Crisis

January 5, 2011

Associated Press

TOKYO, Jan. 5 (Kyodo) - The Chinese military will consider launching a preemptive nuclear strike if the country finds itself faced with a critical situation in a war with another nuclear state, internal documents showed Wednesday.

The newly revealed policy, called "Lowering the threshold of nuclear threats," may contradict China's strategy of no first use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances, and is likely to fan concern in the United States, Japan and other regional powers about Beijing's nuclear capability.

The People's Liberation Army's strategic missile forces, the Second Artillery Corps, "will adjust the nuclear threat policy if a nuclear missile-possessing country carries out a series of air strikes against key strategic targets in our country with absolutely superior conventional weapons," according to the documents, copies of which were obtained by Kyodo News.

China will first warn an adversary about a nuclear strike, but if the enemy attacks Chinese territory with conventional forces the PLA "must carefully consider" a preemptive nuclear strike.

The documents suggest that the Second Artillery Corps educate its personnel in worst-case scenarios for conflicts with other nuclear states.

China's nuclear policy is not transparent and it is rare for a part of it to come to light.

Akio Takahara, a professor of contemporary Chinese politics at the University of Tokyo's Graduate School of Public Policy, said an adjustment of the PLA's nuclear threat policy as spelled out in the documents runs counter to President Hu Jintao's pledge that China will not launch a preemptive nuclear strike under any circumstances.

"It is uncertain whether such policy adjustment represents a policy shift or has been in existence from before," Takahara said. "But a preemptive strike as assumed (in the documents) would apply to an extreme situation such as war with the United States, and that is almost inconceivable today. I think President Hu is aware of that."

U.S. military experts have argued since around 2007 that Beijing may have shown signs of altering its pledge of no first use of nuclear weapons.

According to the documents, the PLA would strengthen nuclear threats against an adversary if the adversary threatened to attack China's nuclear and hydro power plants and major cities including Beijing.

The PLA would also tighten its nuclear threat policy in the event that extremely unfavorable war situations put the nation's existence at risk.

Under such circumstances, the PLA would first warn an enemy of a nuclear attack on specific targets through such media as television and the Internet.

While referring to careful consideration of a preemptive nuclear strike, the documents said the Second Artillery Corps "must strictly follow" instructions by the Chinese Communist Party's Central Military Commission.

The corps "must not adjust" the nuclear threat policy by itself, they said.

The PLA must win broad support from the international community and take the "strategic initiative" if it were to use nuclear weapons, they added.

Japanese journalist Satoshi Tomisaka, who is familiar with Chinese military affairs, said the documents signal a departure from China's declaration of a no-first-use policy, about which the international community has long been in doubt.

Tomisaka suspects the Communist Party leadership may not exercise sufficient civilian control over the PLA, saying military officers spoke aggressively before Hu about a plan to build Chinese-made air carriers.

Ping Kefu, a Hong Kong-based military analyst, expressed a similar view, saying Hu may not even be aware of Beijing's nuclear threat policy adjustment because it is strictly an internal affair of the PLA.

http://www.breitbart.com/article.php?id=D9KI4BM80&show_article=1

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People's Daily – China

China Will Not Strike First with Nuclear Weapons: FM

January 6, 2011

China will always honor its promise not to launch a nuclear first-strike, said Foreign Ministry Spokesman Hong Lei in Beijing Thursday.

"The Chinese government made a solemn promise since the very first day it possessed nuclear weapons not to be the first to use them at any time and under any circumstances," Hong said at a regular news briefing.

He made the remarks to refute media reports saying China is mulling a possible change of its non-first-strike policy.

These reports also said that China was considering the merits of a preemptive nuclear strike for self-defense against another nuclear-armed state if no other options were available.

Hong added that the reports were "totally groundless and have ulterior motives."

Source: Xinhua

<http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/7252779.html>

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Sydney Morning Herald – Australia

China Hiding Military Build-Up: Cable

January 7, 2011

Australian Associated Press (AAP)

Australia's intelligence agencies believe China is hiding the extent of a massive military build-up that goes beyond national defence and threatens regional stability, the latest WikiLeaks cables show.

A strategic assessment by the agencies found that China's military spending for 2006 was \$90 billion - double the \$45 billion budget publicly announced by Beijing, Fairfax newspapers report.

"China's longer-term agenda is to develop 'comprehensive national power', including a strong military, that is in keeping with its view of itself as a great power," a copy of the secret assessment provided by Foreign Affairs officials to the US embassy in Canberra said.

"We agree that the trend of China's military modernisation is beyond the scope of what would be required for a conflict over Taiwan.

"Arguably China already poses a credible threat to modern militaries operating in the region and will present an even more formidable challenge as its modernisation continues."

The 2006 Australian intelligence assessment was contained in a US embassy cable obtained by WikiLeaks and provided to Fairfax newspapers.

The assessment also warned that factors including China's rising nationalism and difficulties with Japan meant that "miscalculations and minor events could quickly escalate".

<http://news.smh.com.au/breaking-news-national/china-hiding-military-buildup-cable-20110107-19hq4.html>

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Deccan Herald – India

India to Test High-Altitude Missiles Soon

India may soon test a new ballistic missile capable of destroying an enemy missile amid stars.

By Kalyan Ray, Chennai

January 4, 2011

This new missile developed by scientists at the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) will kill an oncoming enemy vehicle at an altitude of 150-170 km – much outside the stratosphere.

“We plan the maiden trial this year. But this will only be the first step as the ultimate aim is to develop a missile that can destroy an enemy missile at an altitude of 300 km,” V K Saraswat, Director-General of DRDO, said on the sidelines of the ongoing 98th Indian Science Congress.

Indian ballistic missile defence programme consists of two components—Prithvi air defence (PAD) for high altitude interception (80 km) and Advanced air defence (AAD) for low altitude (30 km).

The shield aims to protect the country from missiles fired from deep inside China and Pakistan. PAD was successfully tested in 2006 followed by the AAD test in 2007.

Test

PAD was once again tested successfully in 2009 at an altitude of 80 km boosting the scientists’ confidence to launch a countering missile for killing the target in thermosphere – the atmospheric region between 85 km and 650 km above the earth where space shuttles and many satellites move around. “The challenges include development of the kill vehicle and precision guidance system for accurate homing in,” he said, adding that the first test is expected later in 2011.

Without naming the industry and faulty components, Saraswat said the industry needed to be much more careful while supplying components to aerospace and defence sector, which does not even allow one fault in 1,000 components supplied by an industry.

<http://www.deccanherald.com/content/126310/india-test-high-altitude-missiles.html>

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Pakistan Defence - Pakistan

India Wants to Extend Range of Nuke-Capable Missile

January 5, 2011

India is working to extend the range of its enhanced nuclear-capable Agni 2 ballistic missile despite the weapon's December test-launch failure.

Defense Research and Development Organization Director General V.K. Saraswat said an issue with one of the surface-to-surface missile's parts was to blame for the medium-range system deviating from course and falling into the Bay of Bengal shortly after being fired from Wheeler Island.

The workmanship of the missile's parts has been reviewed, Saraswat told journalists. "But we are working on increasing the missile range," he said.

The "Agni 2 plus" was designed for improved navigation abilities and can be tipped with a conventional or nuclear payload weighing as much as 1 metric ton. The missile has a current range of 1,550 to 1,865 miles

<http://www.defence.pk/forums/india-defence/87564-india-wants-extend-range-nuke-capable-missile.html>

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Washington Times

Inside the Ring

By Bill Gertz

January 5, 2011

Russian Missile Defense

Russia's military is working to deploy an "impenetrable" missile-defense shield by 2020, according to Gen. Nikolai Makarov, chief of the Russian armed forces staff.

Gen. Makarov was quoted in Russian news reports Monday as saying "the state will have an umbrella over it which will defend it against ballistic missile attacks, against medium-range missiles, air-based cruise missiles, sea-based

cruise missiles, and ground-based cruise missiles, including missiles flying at extremely low altitudes, at any time and in any situation."

"Of course, this is a long process that requires a significant financial investment. But the foundation for this system will be established as early as 2011," he said.

The general's statement raises questions about the testimony last year by Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates, who told Congress while lobbying for the ratification of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty that the Russians "hate" missile defenses, based on their constant opposition to U.S. defenses and efforts to limit U.S. defenses in the arms treaty.

Based on Gen. Makarov's comments, what the Russians really hate are U.S. missile defenses because they could be expanded to counter Moscow's missiles.

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2011/jan/5/inside-the-ring-442522451/?page=2>

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Newsweek

Flirting with Disaster

Every few years the defenses of the nation's nuclear plants are tested. What's scary is how often they fail.

By Daniel Stone

January 04, 2011

In early 2009 a team of terrorists managed to enter a nuclear-power plant in the American South armed with machine guns and grenade launchers. After breaking through chain-link and barbed-wire gates, they battled with the plant's guards. Those terrorists who weren't killed were able to disable a critical component of the plant's operating hardware. A meltdown of the reactor core looked imminent, as did the release of radioactive material from waste-storage pools located on-site. The surrounding area faced catastrophic fallout.

Everything up to that point actually happened—sort of. In reality, the attackers were a group of highly trained government operatives—including security consultants and military members on leave—posing as terrorists. Every three years, such teams “attack” each of the country's 104 nuclear-power plants to find weak spots in security. The raids are carefully choreographed: plant managers are given two months' notice to prepare the guards, and the intruders follow a prearranged script to evade them. Still, eight times out of roughly 100 attempts over the past five years, the mock terror teams have successfully broken through those defenses.

Government regulators insist that such failures are, in a way, intentional. The whole point is to find potential security holes and plug them. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), the federal agency that oversees the industry, insists that inspectors remain on-site until security systems are fixed, and that American nuclear plants are safer than ever. But industry watchdogs aren't so sure. A growing number of plants are nearing the end of their operating lifetimes, and details about the security of existing facilities are classified. “The industry is hiding behind the 9/11 tragedy to withhold information—like which plants have failed tests and repairs that have been made—that should be available,” says David Lochbaum, a nuclear analyst with the Union of Concerned Scientists.

Worries are particularly acute because the nuclear-energy industry is experiencing a new era of growth. In his State of the Union address in 2010, President Obama asked Congress to consider nuclear power central to America's pursuit of energy security. A month later he proposed \$8 billion in loan guarantees to begin building a handful of new plants. “To meet our growing energy needs and prevent the worst consequences of climate change, we'll need to increase our supply of nuclear power,” he told a warehouse full of hard hats in Lanham, Md., in mid-February. Leading Democrats, who have generally resisted an expansion of nuclear facilities on safety grounds, were slow to agree. Then, early last month, Energy Secretary Steven Chu agreed to classify nuclear as “clean energy” in hopes of wooing Republicans to pass an energy bill in 2011.

Advanced technology has virtually eliminated the risk of accidental meltdowns, like the one at Chernobyl in 1986, adding repetitive safeguards that allow the plant to shut itself down if operators can't. The bigger problem is the highly radioactive waste that is left over once most of the energy-producing juice has been sucked out of it.

Used nuclear fuel looks like a bunch of black ceramic pellets—each about the size of a Tootsie Roll. They're a mix of uranium, plutonium, and several minor chemicals, and give off about 750 degrees Fahrenheit of heat. The raw material can't be held, or easily stolen to make a dirty bomb. But America's current system for storing nuclear waste—in giant cool-water pools and dry casks of cement, at the individual nuclear plants—means that ready-made dirty bombs already exist. An intruder draining the water from the pools would cause it to self-ignite and spread radiation through the air.

In a broad sense, the waste problem isn't going away for a very, very long time. Spent fuel produced today will remain dangerously radioactive for about 10 millennia, until the year 12011, according to William Hurt, a spent-fuel engineer with the Idaho National Laboratory. Of the half a dozen nuclear scientists NEWSWEEK spoke with for this story, none were completely content with the current system of storage.

Plant operators boast that their industry is the most secure in the world, period. Andy Kadak, a former president of the American Nuclear Society, an industry group, likens modern nuclear plants to "prisons." Yet prison breaks still happen from time to time. And the security measures that are in place result in very little transparency. "We think in the end overall security is best achieved by keeping most of [our security information] protected," says Gregory Jaczko, chairman of the NRC. Yet as the Gulf Coast oil spill showed, an industry out of public view can get sloppy.

After news surfaced in 2005 that nuclear plants were failing about half of all security tests, Congress required the NRC to increase inspections, and to make the intruder simulations more realistic. When inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency, the global body that oversees all nuclear development, visited the U.S. in October, they gave a thumbs up to the way the NRC operates, but noted that the industry had room for "continuous improvement."

The improvement that many scientists favor is one that has been made elsewhere—including in China, France, Japan, Belgium, and the U.K. All have eliminated the need to store portions of used fuel. Instead, they reprocess the waste, a complex process that removes the remaining uranium from almost pure plutonium and other byproducts, and puts it back in the reactor to produce more power. "You're actually destroying some waste by recycling it," says Denis Beller, a nuclear engineer at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

Jimmy Carter nixed proposals for reprocessing in 1977 because he feared that isolating pure plutonium would lead to a proliferation of nuclear weapons globally. Now the rationale is economic: power from reprocessed fuel costs about 10 percent more than from new uranium (but it's still a fraction of wind and solar costs). Christine Todd Whitman, the administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency under the second President Bush, says the investment is worth it. "We can do it," she says, "and we should do it."

For spent fuel that already exists, government engineers had considered Yucca Mountain, the desert expanse north of Las Vegas—dry, desolate, and not prone to natural disasters—the perfect location for a repository. But Obama, with input from Senate leaders including Nevada's Harry Reid, canceled the plan last year in pursuit of something less risky than concentrating millions of pounds of waste in one place. A Department of Energy panel is currently researching other ideas, such as burying it in the oceans, shooting it into space, or finding a new repository somewhere else in the world. That site's defenses, however, would need to be foolproof.

<http://www.newsweek.com/2011/01/06/failing-the-nuclear-security-test.html>

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Global Security Newswire

Nuclear Detection Office Delivers Strategic Plan to Capitol Hill

Wednesday, January 5, 2011

By Martin Matishak

WASHINGTON -- A key U.S. Homeland Security Department agency recently submitted to lawmakers the blueprint for the federal government's effort to prevent nuclear-weapon materials from being smuggled into the country (see *GSN*, Oct. 1, 2010).

The Domestic Nuclear Detection Office delivered its long-awaited "strategic plan" for the global nuclear detection architecture to Capitol Hill on Dec. 20, according to DNDO chief Warren Stern. Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano signed off on the plan that same day.

The detection architecture usually refers to the worldwide network of sensors, telecommunications, personnel and measures used to detect, identify and report the potential movement of illicit nuclear and radioactive materials or weapons.

"There's an important distinction between the architecture itself and the plan," Stern told *Global Security Newswire* yesterday in a phone interview. "The plan guides the development of the architecture."

The blueprint, which has yet to be made available to the public, details the detection office's vision for the system over the next five years as well as the objectives and performance metrics for the architecture, Stern said.

"The plan begins where any plan should, which is to define what it is we're working on. What is the architecture? Where does it begin and where does it end?" he added.

The 31-page document defines the goals of the architecture, including detecting nuclear and radioactive materials; communicating information to relevant agencies and officials; and coordinating with those partners to "minimize gaps and also remove overlaps," according to Stern, who was appointed to his post by President Obama last August.

In addition, the interdepartmental road map outlines the roles of a number of federal branches in preventing terrorists from detonating a nuclear or radiological device inside the United States, he said. Participating entities include the Defense, Energy, Justice and State departments, the U.S. national intelligence director and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

The detection office was established by presidential directive in 2005 to coordinate federal efforts to protect the United States against nuclear terrorism. It was also designated to be the lead agency in domestic nuclear detection.

The office has received roughly \$4 billion in funding since its inception, according to a Government Accountability Office statement released last year. Some of that money went toward expanding existing programs at other DHS components, including deploying radiation portal monitors at U.S. points of entry.

The remaining funds supported various programs, including \$230 million over four years attempting to develop and field the Advanced Spectroscopic Portal detection system.

In October Stern testified before a Senate panel that Homeland Security had trained thousands of law enforcement officials in radiation detection as part of the architecture. It had also deployed about 1,500 radiation portal monitors and 3,000 hand-held detectors to the nation's borders to support Customs and Border Protection and provided the Coast Guard with 6,500 detectors.

The office has also worked to bolster other nations' detection capabilities through programs such as the Energy Department's Megaports Initiative.

The accountability office first suggested formulating a strategic plan in 2001. Demand on Capitol Hill rose sharply last year after federal auditors released a report that concluded the Homeland Security Department's focus on fielding the next-generation radiation detection monitors had stalled the plan's creation (see *GSN*, July 1, 2010).

In the wake of the report, Senate lawmakers began calling more forcefully for the detection office to submit its strategy document before the end of the last calendar year (see *GSN*, Sept. 16, 2010).

"The sense I've gotten was there was a feeling in the urgency of the moment after DNDO was created, [Homeland Security officials] were looking at actual gaps; the idea of taking a step back, of creating a higher level strategic plan, didn't seem to be the right path," Stern told *GSN* yesterday in explaining why the architecture blueprint had not come together sooner.

The DNDO chief said the document received a "generally good reception" on Capitol Hill.

Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee Chairman Joseph Lieberman (I-Conn.) "is pleased to receive DHS's first step towards developing a comprehensive global nuclear detection architecture and is studying it to determine how best to proceed," panel spokeswoman Leslie Phillips said yesterday in a statement to *GSN*.

The Connecticut lawmaker has been critical of the detection office in past, particularly regarding its lack of a strategic plan.

A spokeswoman for the House Homeland Security Committee said yesterday the panel is "generally satisfied" with the direction the detection office had taken in putting together the strategy. Committee lawmakers are set to visit Homeland Security headquarters tomorrow for a more in-depth briefing on the strategic plan, she told *GSN*.

The strategy document does not address costs, Stern noted. Instead, those figures are to be included in an upcoming status report of individual programs to combat nuclear smuggling, including how much has been spent to date on each effort. That report is due to Congress on March 31.

Separately, all of the federal departments involved in the effort will develop their own implementation documents that delve into greater detail about procedures, acquisitions, training techniques and other elements necessary to put the plan into effect, according to the DNDO head.

He added that while the detection office intends to have its implementation plan developed by the third quarter of this calendar year, there is no deadline for the other departments to complete their documents, nor are officials required to submit those plans to Congress.

Stern rejected the idea that his organization should mandate when other departments wrap up their plans, speculating that the interagency process might be inhibited by such a move.

"Going after other people's organizations' current responsibilities would be perceived that way and cause more push back than benefit," he said.

One nuclear security expert welcomed the development of the strategic plan.

"It's refreshing that they got the plan done and out," according to Charles Ferguson, president of the Federation of American Scientists, who has seen the strategy document. "From what I've seen it looks like a very sound plan in terms of that they involved all the relevant agencies and they clearly define the roles of all the agencies."

He declined to offer details of the plan.

Defining each agency's role was as important as outlining what equipment will be used in the envisioned architecture, Ferguson said, because "even if you have the best detection equipment in the world, if you didn't have the right training, you didn't have the right communications, you didn't have the right wiring diagram in terms of who is supposed to talk to whom during a crisis, it's not going to work properly."

Ferguson predicted the true test of the plan would come if there is an effort to smuggle nuclear-weapon material into the country.

"One, can they detect it? And two, what you do once you detect it? How you respond? Can you then coordinate with other agencies that then have to trace that material to its source?" Ferguson asked yesterday in a phone interview.

For his part, Stern said the detection architecture is "not just detectors. It's those things that, in my mind, are either detectors or one step removed from detectors and equally important. It involves the analysis and communication that makes the system work."

"We've made an implicit assumption that either we'll have no intelligence information and so we have detectors there just to find things that may pass by them or that we'll have lots of intelligence information" and a small group of experts can find the suspected material, Stern said.

"But in reality the more likely case is that there will be some intelligence information, not precise and not zero, so we need to develop an architecture that deals with that possibility," he added.

Some of that surge capacity would originate from the federal government, including the Coast Guard and the Transportation Security Administration, but some would also come from the roughly 15,000 state and local law enforcement officials across the country trained in radiation detection operations, according to Stern.

"That's where I look in the future," he said.

http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20110105_2909.php

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Atlanta Journal-Constitution

OPINION

Why China's Missiles Matter to Us

By Mark Stokes and Dan Blumenthal

Tuesday, January 4, 2011

With the New START treaty ratified, the Obama administration can turn its attention to the real source of nuclear instability among the great powers: China's buildup of conventional ballistic missiles. The latest destabilizing system is China's anti-ship ballistic missile, the "carrier killer" that the head of the U.S. Pacific Command, Adm. Robert Willard, deemed operational last week.

During the many upcoming Sino-American summits, including a state visit by President Hu Jintao, the Obama administration should begin pressing China to join the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty and stop its missile buildup.

Why are China's missiles the greatest source of unease? Because there are no defensive answers that do not risk an immediate escalation of tensions — and Beijing's missile force is soon likely to have the ability to ground Pacific-based U.S. air forces and sink surface ships in Asian waters.

China has the world's most ambitious missile modernization program.

The anti-ship ballistic missile program that Willard identified is one of many Chinese advances; others include mobile multiple independently targetable intercontinental ballistic missiles, hypersonic post-boost vehicles that remain in the atmosphere and preclude intercept in flight, and a new generation of extended-range, ground-launched land attack cruise missiles.

No missile defense program on the horizon is capable of intercepting these systems.

Over the past decade China has claimed that it needed to expand its missile force because of ongoing tensions with Taiwan. Relations with Taiwan have warmed, yet Beijing's missile buildup continues.

Defending against sophisticated ballistic and ground-launched cruise missiles is extremely difficult, and, unlike the U.S. and Russia, China is not a signatory to the 1987 INF treaty, which precludes only Washington and Moscow from deploying short and intermediate range land-based ballistic and cruise missiles.

By building a missile force second to none, China is increasing its capability to coerce its neighbors into resolving political disputes on its terms. But the expansion of China's missile force both undermines regional security and exacerbates a classic regional arms race. The only real defense against these weapons is offense, so countries threatened by China's missiles will seek to target the infrastructure supporting missile launches within nuclear-armed China. India and Taiwan are investing in precision strike systems heavily reliant on missiles. Over time, Japan may feel compelled to deploy its own ballistic and cruise missiles.

More ominous still is that China's missile buildup could result in the INF's demise. Moscow has already threatened to pull out if China does not sign the treaty. And, with its tactical fighter bases and surface ships increasingly vulnerable, the United States also may have no choice but to abrogate the treaty and deploy mobile land-based missiles — a capability much more difficult for China to attack — to places such as Japan; this could become the only way to deter Chinese aggression. The end of the INF would mean a missile arms race involving four great nuclear powers — India, China, Russia and the U.S. Without sustained attention to China's missile force, this frightening scenario is becoming more plausible.

Even absent a ballistic missile competition among the great powers, strategic stability in Asia is increasingly uncertain. If Washington remains bound by the INF, its response options in a conflict with China are highly escalatory. If U.S. tactical fighter bases and surface ships were hit by Chinese missiles, Washington would have to consider responding by targeting missile assets inside China with intercontinental ballistic missiles. To do so, Washington will need to further develop its Prompt Global Strike system, a means of accurately launching long-range missiles from the continental U.S. Because such missiles could also be used to carry nuclear weapons, Chinese defenders would have no way of knowing if the munitions flying toward them were carrying nuclear or conventional warheads. This uncertainty raises the risk of a Chinese nuclear response.

China's unrelenting deployment of missiles will soon force Washington to choose between pulling out of the INF or developing longer-range, strategically unstable military responses that are consistent with the agreement. If Washington is serious about reducing the risk of nuclear conflict, it should pursue a third option — pressing China to join the treaty. Failure to do so will quickly make New START irrelevant to nuclear stability.

Mark Stokes, executive director of Project 2049 Institute, served in the U.S. Air Force for 20 years.

Dan Blumenthal directs Asian studies at the American Enterprise Institute.

<http://www.ajc.com/opinion/why-chinas-missiles-matter-795249.html>

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Jerusalem Post
OPINION

Washington Watch: Does Ahmadinejad Have a Saddam Complex?

By D. BLOOMFIELD

January 5, 2011

The Iranian president risks repeating the late Iraqi leader's mistake: convincing his enemies that he's too dangerous to ignore and must be removed.

Remember how neighborhood bully Saddam Hussein hinted about his WMD arsenal, shut out UN inspectors and raised suspicions that he was building nukes to go with his chemical and biological weapons? Even his generals believed him. Worse, so did George W. Bush and Dick Cheney.

Shoot first and ask questions later, they said; don't wait for the mushroom cloud. They weren't taking any chances that he might be bluffing – which he was.

It is looking like déjà vu all over again. Some of the Bush hawks and others, notably in the pro-Israel community, are saying this time we're sure and can't take any chances with Iran. One of the loudest voices is Bush's former UN ambassador John Bolton, who despite Cheney's support failed to convince Bush to bomb Iran, so now he's going after Barack Obama. Look for Bolton, (who has visions of running for president next year) to be a frequent witness at House hearings on Iran as the GOP leadership tries to paint Obama as soft on Teheran.

The compulsively blustery Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, like Saddam a decade ago, may go overboard in boasting about his military prowess.

“Saddam had no WMD but he had to have people believe he did, to the point where he lost his country. His first priority was to deter Iran, and then to deter the United States,” said Keith Weissman, an Iran analyst. “But there are differences. For Ahmadinejad, command is not from the top straight down, as it was in Saddam’s Iraq. He can’t fool his generals the way Saddam did.”

Military policy is in the hands of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei; he sets broad strategic policy and has his own advisers in addition to Ahmadinejad, some of whom are the president’s rivals.

The parallels may not be precise, but Ahmadinejad risks repeating Saddam’s mistake: convincing his enemies that he’s too dangerous to ignore and must be removed. The Iranians consider Israel unpredictable and dangerous, but feel Obama, like Bush, doesn’t want war and will keep the Israelis – who they taunt as “too weak” and afraid to attack – on a short leash.

THAT CAN be a risky game. Hans Blix, the Swedish former head of UN inspectors in Iraq, said Saddam was “an utterly ruthless, brutal man” who thought he could outwit the West and “misjudged things.” Ahmadinejad & Co. have been boasting about weapon “advancements,” and saying mass graves are already being dug for American invaders.

Iran has been developing its own military-industrial sector (with a lot of help from North Korea and China, among others). One analyst told me he wouldn’t be surprised if some of the technology Israel has sold to China has been repackaged and sold to Iran.

Iran claims to have developed a drone bomber Ahmadinejad dubbed the “ambassador of death,” its own air defense system “just as good” as Russia’s advanced S-300, and ballistic missiles that can strike Tel Aviv as well as all US bases in the region. The Iranian navy boasts the “world’s fastest” missile boats and 11 stealthy home-built submarines with homemade missiles and torpedoes.

Whether it is firing up the Bushehr nuclear plant or announcing new weapons systems, Iran’s goal is to show that sanctions are meaningless and it can be self-sufficient in producing modern, advanced weapons, even if it is not true.

For now, Iran’s greatest threat may be its terror network – Hamas, Hizbullah, Syria and others – that can wreak much damage on Israel, American interests and neighboring states. To some extent they are independent players, but they cannot afford to ignore the wishes of Iran, which has provided them with tens of thousands of missiles and other weapons along with training and financing. Iran could also give some terror group radioactive materials for a ‘dirty’ bomb that could not be traced to Teheran clearly enough to bring significant retaliation.

Iran’s nuclear program apparently suffered a serious – though probably temporary – setback with the Stuxnet computer virus attack on its centrifuges, adding to the uncertainty about the immediacy of the nuclear threat.

The boasting is also intended to frighten weaker neighbors and exploit anti- Israel and anti-American feelings. Just as important, Ahmadinejad wants to convince the Iranian people their government is too strong to be overthrown – from the inside as well as the outside.

WikiLeaked cables showed Arab leaders would like the US or Israel to take out the Iranian regime, but only if it is completely destroyed; not by merely having its nuclear facilities crippled. The Iranian opposition, however, wants to be the ones to change the government, not outsiders who would leave them looking like collaborators instead of patriots.

How much is bluff and how much is real? Is the much-hyped Iranian military prowess a Potemkin arsenal? Maybe – and if so, Ahmadinejad could end up like his late neighbor, Saddam, whose braggadocio cost him his regime and his life.

The bottom line is best summed up by Jon B. Alterman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies: “The real issue is how willing are you to be wrong, and what are the consequences of being so? Everything else is commentary.”

<http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Columnists/Article.aspx?id=202382>

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Deccan Herald – India

OPINION

Thursday, January 6, 2011

Raging Conflicts

By Gurmeet Kanwal

The regional security in South Asia is marred by Afghanistan's endless civil war, despite the induction of additional Nato troops.

From the point of view of international peace and stability, 2010 ended on a positive note with the ratification by the US Senate of the new Start treaty that will further reduce deployed strategic nuclear weapons of Russia and the US to 1,550 in seven years.

Though the year gone by has been relatively peaceful in South Asia — with the exception of the conflict in Afghanistan, the unstable regional security environment, India's unresolved territorial and boundary disputes with China and Pakistan and continuing internal security challenges are a cause for concern. After West Asia, this region is perhaps the most trouble prone in the world.

With a history of four conflicts in 60 years and three nuclear-armed adversaries continuing to face off, South Asia has been described as a nuclear flashpoint. Hence, in view of the ongoing conflicts and the possibility of new conflagrations, 2011 is likely to be a turbulent year.

The regional security environment in South Asia continues to be marred by Afghanistan's endless civil war despite the induction of additional troops in 2010 by the US-led Nato-Isaf coalition forces. The situation can be characterised as a strategic stalemate.

This will continue with the Taliban and the Nato forces alternately gaining local ascendancy for short durations in the core provinces of Helmand, Marja and Kandahar.

The Afghan National Army is still many years away from achieving the professional standards necessary to manage security on its own. It will, therefore, be difficult for the US to begin its planned drawdown of troops in July 2011.

Pakistan's halfhearted struggle against the remnants of the al-Qaeda and the Taliban, fissiparous tendencies in Baluchistan and the Pushtun heartland, continuing radical extremism and creeping Talibanisation, the unstable civilian government, the floundering economy and, consequently, the nation's gradual slide towards becoming a 'failed state,' pose a major security challenge for the region.

Unless the Pakistan army gives up its idiosyncratic notions of seeking strategic depth in Afghanistan and fuelling terrorism in India and concentrates instead on fighting all varieties of Taliban that are threatening the cohesion of the state, the instability in Pakistan will continue.

The military stand-off along the 38th Parallel in Korea has further exacerbated the already unstable situation in East Asia caused by increasing Chinese assertiveness that is completely out of character with its stated objective of a peaceful rise. Though the international community may be able to ensure that a major conflict does not erupt again between the two Koreas, the sub-region will remain volatile unless the Chinese use their influence with North Korea to persuade it to back off from the path of confrontation.

Turmoil in West Asia will continue through 2011 as Israel stubbornly refuses to halt the construction of new settlements in the West Bank and the Palestinian militias are getting increasingly restive. The collusive nuclear weapons-cum-missile development programme of China, North Korea and Pakistan and Iran's quest for nuclear weapons are issues of concern.

Instability

Iran's nuclear ambitions and the vaguely stated threats of several of its neighbours to follow suit are a major cause of potential instability in the region. Saudi Arabia, in particular, may fund Pakistan's nuclear expansion programme as a hedging strategy against the acquisition of nuclear weapons by Iran. Such a course of action would be a disastrous blow to international non-proliferation efforts.

Sri Lanka's inability to find a lasting solution to its ethnic problems despite the comprehensive defeat of the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) has serious repercussions for stability in the island nation. Bangladesh is emerging as the new hub of Islamist fundamentalist terrorism even as it struggles for economic upliftment of its people.

It can be deduced from recent arrests in the UK and elsewhere that international fundamentalist terrorists may succeed in launching another spectacular strike in the West. A successful strike would resurrect the al-Qaeda and enable it to rally its wavering cadres.

Simmering discontentment in Tibet and Xinjiang against China's repressive regime is gathering momentum and could result in an open revolt. The peoples' nascent movement for democracy in Myanmar and several long festering insurgencies may destabilise the military Junta despite its post-election confidence. The movement for democracy could turn violent if the ruling Junta continues to deny its citizens basic human rights.

The spillover of religious extremism and terrorism from Afghanistan is undermining development and governance. Other vitiating factors impacting regional stability in South Asia include the unchecked proliferation of small arms, being nurtured and encouraged by large-scale narcotics trafficking and its nexus with radical extremism.

India's standing as a regional power that has global power ambitions and aspires to a permanent seat on the UN Security Council has been seriously compromised by its inability to successfully manage ongoing conflicts in its neighbourhood, singly or in concert with its strategic partners.

These conflicts are undermining South Asia's efforts towards socio-economic development and poverty alleviation by hampering governance and vitiating the investment climate. It appears inevitable that in 2011 the South Asian region and its extended neighbourhood will see a continuation of ongoing conflicts without major let up. In fact, the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan could deteriorate beyond the ability of the international community to control.

The writer is director, Centre for Land Warfare Studies, New Delhi

<http://www.deccanherald.com/content/126583/raging-conflicts.html>

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Pakistan Observer – Pakistan

OPINION

Thursday, January 6, 2011

US Has Always Treated Pakistan Unfairly

By Asif Haroon Raja

The US has always remained inclined towards India and treated Pakistan unfairly. In the early 1950s, when the US built a defensive arc to contain communist southward expansionism, Pakistan was made part of SEATO and CENTO only when India turned down the offer. Pakistan agreed because of its acute security concerns from hostile India and unfriendly Afghanistan. During and after Indo-Sino border conflict in 1962, the US and the west filled up India's arsenal with weapons and equipment. By so doing, it tilted the regional military balance towards India which was aligned with USSR.

During the 1965 Indo-Pak war, the US blocked supply of armaments to Pakistan and India, despite knowing that Moscow was continuing to supply India its defence needs uninterrupted. Pakistan's military reserves got so critically depleted that it had to agree to ceasefire at a stage when its strategic reserves were well poised to mount a counter offensive in Ravi-Chenab corridor. The US sanctions seriously jeopardized Ayub Khan's second five-year development plan which had all the potential to address east-west economic imbalance.

The US once again stopped the flow of military supplies to Pakistan after March 1971 while India kept receiving its defence needs from Moscow. It placed Pakistan at a serious disadvantage when war broke out in November 1971. The US, western world as well as the UN remained drawn towards India and none came to Pakistan's rescue when it was dismembered. India was let off by USA and the west for its nuclear explosion at Pokhran in 1974. But when ZA Bhutto expressed his intentions to make Pakistan nuclear, he was threatened of dire consequences. India's progress in nuclear program was ignored, but Pakistan's nuclear program was subjected to unrelenting propaganda campaign in the 1980s and bogey of Islamic bomb was raised to frighten the world. Harsh sanctions were imposed on Pakistan by USA in 1965, 1971, 1979, 1990 and 1998 and thus became the most sanctioned country in the world despite being the most allied ally of USA. India on the other hand was never punished either by USSR or USA despite its poor track record in state terrorism, cross border terrorism and human rights violations. Despite series of sanctions, Pakistan's economy till 1990 was much healthier than India.

The visible discriminatory incline was again seen on the occasion of nuclear tests by India followed by Pakistan in May 1998. While India was given a polite slap on the wrist, all hell broke loose on Pakistan. Its sin has not been forgiven to this day since nuclear capability with a Muslim state is unacceptable to USA, Europe, Russia and India. China and North Korea are the only two non-Muslim countries that have no ill-designs against Pakistan's nuclear program. Rather, the two have contributed towards it. Deliberate efforts are underway to disable Pakistan's nuclear program.

The US has awarded civilian nuclear deal to India in violation of NPT to allow India further upgrade its nuclear capability. It has however, denied the same to Pakistan and also wants to roll back its modest program. While it has no objection to India inking nuclear agreements with Russia, Japan, France and Israel, it expresses its deepest concerns over China installing another reactor at Chashma. The US has also been trying to smuggle out enriched uranium from Pakistan. In the conventional field also, while India has been given full leverage to shop sophisticated weapons from anywhere in the world, Pakistan could get its F-16s after a delay of 23 years. Even counter terrorism equipment is given with undue hesitancy so as not to displease India.

During the Kargil conflict, G-20 countries led by USA came down heavily upon Pakistan. Intense pressure was put on Pakistan to withdraw its forces from occupied territories. Ultimately it was forced to give up its gains without getting anything in return. India has never been accused of its massive human rights abuses in occupied Kashmir. Ignoring UN resolutions, which clearly lay down the need for a fair plebiscite, and also turning a blind eye to freedom struggle raging since 1989, the US and the west never question India. They agree with India's harebrained stance that liberation movement is Pakistan aided and fall within category of terrorism. Now when the armed resistance has got converted to unarmed movement led by teenagers demanding freedom from India, the champions of human rights are still tightlipped and the western media silent.

Despite knowing that Kashmir is a flashpoint, the US has distanced itself from playing any part towards its resolution. It has however been applying pressure on Pakistan to settle the dispute on Indian terms by accepting Line of Control (LoC) as permanent border. India has not committed a single soldier in Afghanistan or Iraq to fight the militants. Pakistan is fighting US dictated war on terror since 2001 and has committed nearly 150,000 troops. Its casualty rate is many times more than combined fatalities suffered by 48 countries involved in counter insurgency. Yet the wrath of USA falls on Pakistan and affections and benefits are reserved for India.

During ten-month Indo-Pak military standoff in 2002 when the entire military might of India had got deployed on Pakistan's eastern border on a fabricated charge that Pakistan was behind the terrorist attack on Indian Parliament, the US sympathized with India. It made no effort to make it pull back its forces from the border. In that timeframe, Pakistan was extending all out support to US military to consolidate its gains in Afghanistan. Four air bases in Balochistan were leased to US military and 70,000 troops had been deployed along its western border to prevent the fleeing Taliban and Al-Qaeda fighters to enter Pakistan. Since India was on the wrong, it had to withdraw with egg on its face. The US pressured Pakistan to disable six Jihadi groups including Lashkar-e-Taiba engaged in supporting liberation movement in occupied Kashmir, control cross LoC movement and to let India fence the LoC in Kashmir. These steps took the life out of freedom movement.

Indian military leaders started crowing that its forces had succeeded in snuffing out terrorism in Kashmir. Pretending to be a strategic ally, the US allowed CIA, FBI, Mossad, RAW, MI6 and RAAM to carryout intensive covert operations against selected regions in Pakistan from Afghan soil with a view to weaken Pakistan's hold over nuclear arsenal. ISI trying to foil foreign inspired conspiracies displeased USA. It strove to cut ISI to size so that it was not in a position to put up a frontline defence for Pakistan.

When Mumbai attacks took place in November 2008, Pakistan was blamed and the entire western world and USA began to sympathize with India and are still doing so. USA and UK exerted extensive pressure on Pakistan to let Indian air force carry out surgical strikes against suspected terrorist camps in Azad Kashmir and Muredke so as to avoid a full-fledged war. All the strike formations of Indian military remained in battle locations for many months in 2009 and Gen Kapoor hurled threats of limited war under a nuclear overhang. The US took no notice of these jingoistic statements. Several RAW sponsored terrorist group attacks were launched in Lahore on sensitive targets. Ignoring Pakistan's protests, the US harped that India posed no threat to Pakistan's security and that it should shift all its forces from eastern to northwestern border.

With this background and ongoing history of discriminations, how can the US claim that it doesn't harbor ill intentions against Pakistan and has not been treated unfairly? The US will have to do a lot more to alleviate the misgivings and fears of people of Pakistan and win their hearts and minds. Attitude and evenhandedness and not aid will bring the change.

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