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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

Russian Missiles Must Penetrate any Defenses — Parliament

22 January 2011

Russia must quickly modernize its nuclear deterrent focusing on the deployment of ballistic missiles capable of penetrating the most sophisticated missile defenses, a draft supplementary statement to the new START treaty ratification document says.

The lower house of the Russian parliament, the State Duma, posted on its official website on Friday the texts of two draft statements that would accompany the resolution on ratification of the treaty.

"The State Duma believes that maintaining Russia's nuclear deterrent in an adequate state of readiness is a key venue of the country's military doctrine, with the focus on the deployment of strategic offensive weapons that possess the most combat effectiveness and the highest potential to penetrate missile defenses," says the statement dedicated to the upkeep of Russia's nuclear deterrent and the development of new missile defenses.

"The combat effectiveness of Russia's nuclear deterrent must be maintained at the level that guarantees the protection of the country from attacks carried out by any foreign state or a group of states in any military-strategic situation," the 3.5-page document says.

The second supplementary statement outlines the State Duma's position on the reduction and limitations of strategic offensive armaments. It is addressed to the United States, but also calls on other nuclear powers "to join the process of the reduction and limitation of nuclear weapons through a ban on their further development."

The new arms reduction treaty, replacing START 1, which expired in December 2009, was signed in Prague last April by President 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.

The U.S. Senate ratified the new arms deal with Russia on December 22, 2010, but added several amendments to the resolution on ratification, including a demand to build up U.S. global missile defenses.

The new agreement will come into force after ratification by both houses of the Russian parliament, the State Duma and the Federation Council.

The State Duma is expected to adopt the draft law in the third and final reading on January 25. The upper house could hold its ratification vote in its first session on January 26.

MOSCOW, January 22 (RIA Novosti)

http://en.rian.ru/military_news/20110122/162246289.html

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Herald Sun – Australia

Russia to Sign US Nuclear Treaty

Agence France-Presse (AFP)

January 25, 2011

Russian lawmakers are due to take the final steps in approving a nuclear arms reduction treaty with the US.

The State Duma lower house of parliament is expected to back the new START treaty by a wide margin for the third and final time Tuesday before passing it on to the Federation Council upper house for a Wednesday vote.

The US Senate backed the first nuclear arms agreement since the Cold War era last month.

But Russia's procedure-laden approach has seen the final vote pushed back until US President Barack Obama's annual State of the Union message – a speech he could use to highlight his ability to engage Moscow.

Russia's vote also comes less than a week after Obama sent a high-profile delegation to Moscow to negotiate the two sides' potential cooperation on missile defence.

But this impressive flurry of negotiating activity comes only after the world's two nuclear superpowers essentially agreed to each interpret the new treaty in their own way.

The United States sees the new START – which reduces old warhead ceilings by 30 percent and limits each side to 700 deployed long-range missiles and heavy bombers – as a concession to Russia that opens up room for more talks.

It will allow Russia to take its aging weapons out of commission while keeping parity with the United States for the decade that the treaty remains in effect.

Yet Washington has made clear that the pact will not limit its own ability to deploy a missile defence shield over Europe or develop fast-strike weapons that could reduce US dependence on nuclear arms.

The Obama administration further wants to force Moscow into a new round of disarmament negotiations that focus on short-range nuclear missiles in which Russia has a distinct advantage.

The prospects of those talks dimmed after Russia's top diplomat said Moscow was not yet ready to push cuts further than what Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev had agreed in Prague on April 8, 2010.

Russia's parliament meanwhile has packaged the treaty in a series of strident declarations that directly contradict the United States' military goals.

"Our committee has prepared two draft statements that accompany this bill," the Duma's deputy speaker Oleg Morozov told reporters.

Lawmakers are also to vote on – and reject – a Communist Party statement calling on Medvedev not to engage in any cuts.

The Duma is due to adopt a non-binding statement that flatly rejects the United States' right to deploy a missile shield over Europe.

Moscow fears the system could one day be turned into an offensive weapon that might devastate Russia and demands an equal say in any continental shield.

Russia's statement will also say that any weapons developed under the Pentagon's Prompt Global Strike plan – which primarily involve lasers and particle beams – should also count against the limits set by START.

And it will insist that any short-range nuclear missile negotiations also include talks on potential US plans to "militarise space" and press ahead with Washington's advantage in non-nuclear forces.

Analysts suggest that this clash in interpretations enables both sides to proceed with limited long-range missile reductions while continuing talks over far more pressing concerns.

"There are still plenty of issues out there. But the first thing the sides have to do is agree that they are ready to discuss other areas," said Moscow's Centre for Disarmament Director Anatoly Dyakov.

"Ratification will end the first stage of negotiations and open the way for the next round of talks.

<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/ipad/russia-to-sign-us-nuclear-treaty/story-fn6s850w-1225993958661>

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

Russia May Withdraw from New Arms Cuts Pact Any Time - Senior Lawmaker

25 January 2011

Russia may withdraw from the strategic arms reductions treaty with the United States at any time if strategic weapons that appear in the future do not fall under the agreement, a senior Russian lawmaker said on Tuesday.

"As for new weapons systems, it is impossible to include all possible scenarios of their development in the treaty itself or in related documents. That is why an agreement was reached [to establish] a bilateral consultative commission that would discuss in a year, or five years, or ten years... if new weapons fall within the agreement or not," said Konstanin Kosachev, who heads the committee in charge of international affairs of the Russian parliament's lower house, the State Duma.

The statement was made during Tuesday's session of the State Duma, which saw lawmakers considering the arms cuts treaty with the United States in the third and final reading.

The vote on the treaty is scheduled to take place at 5 p.m. Moscow time (14:00 GMT).

The new agreement, replacing the I that expired in December 2009, was ratified by the U.S. Senate in late December and will come into force after it has been ratified by both houses of the Russian parliament.

The foreign relations and defense committees of Russia's upper house of parliament, the Federation Council, recommended the chamber approve the new arms cuts pact on Wednesday.

In line with Article 14 of the agreement, both Russia and the United States have the right to withdraw from the treaty if the bilateral commission fails to reach an agreement, Kosachev said.

"Thus, we are fully protected by the envisaged mechanisms from all possible surprises in this sphere," the lawmaker said.

The new arms reduction pact was signed in Prague last 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.

Kosachev also said the nuclear defense shield was not the only instrument to assure Russia's sovereignty, adding that "successful, powerful, graduate economic growth, the resolution of social issues and the development of political systems" were also important elements in assuring the country's security.

MOSCOW, January 25 (RIA Novosti)

<http://en.rian.ru/russia/20110125/162293496.html>

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Miami Herald

Russian Parliament Ratifies Arms Pact with US

By Vladimir Isachenkov, Associated Press

January 25, 2011

MOSCOW—Russia's lower house of parliament on Tuesday ratified a landmark nuclear arms pact with the United States, virtually assuring passage of an agreement President Barack Obama has described as the most significant arms control deal in nearly two decades.

The State Duma voted 350-96 with one abstention to pass a bill to ratify the New START treaty, which was approved by the U.S. Senate late last year. The treaty will now go to the upper house for final approval.

The New START would limit each country to 1,550 strategic warheads, down from the current ceiling of 2,200 and also re-establish a system for monitoring that ended in December 2009 with the expiration of the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty signed by Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev and President George H.W. Bush.

The treaty's passage has never been in doubt in the Kremlin-controlled parliament, but Russian lawmakers wanted to counter a U.S. Senate resolution raising some Republican concerns that accompanied the December ratification by adding on a similar motion.

Obama pressed strongly for the pact's approval, and Democrats sought to appease some Republican senators by allowing them to raise their concerns about the treaty in the accompanying resolution.

Neither the Senate, nor the Duma resolution would affect the text of the treaty, which is a centerpiece of Obama's efforts to "reset" ties with Russia.

While the Senate resolution said the treaty shouldn't restrict U.S. plans to develop a missile defense system, the Duma ratification bill states that the treaty can only be fulfilled if emerging missile defenses don't erode the Russian nuclear deterrent.

The Russian draft bill also mimics the Senate resolution's concerns that the remaining nuclear arsenal is effective by emphasizing the need to modernize Russia's nuclear forces.

The Russian legislators said they felt obliged to present their view of the treaty's provisions, given the Senate interpretation.

"The State Duma proceeds from the assumption that the New START treaty can be functioning and viable only in conditions when there is no quantitative and qualitative buildup of the U.S. missile defense systems, developed independently or jointly with other countries," the Duma said in a statement accompanying the passage of the ratification bill.

NATO has approved a plan for a U.S.-led missile defense in Europe last fall and invited Russia to join. Russia's President Dmitry Medvedev was receptive of NATO's proposal but didn't make a definitive commitment.

Medvedev has warned that the failure to reach agreement on a joint European missile shield with Moscow may force Russia to deploy new offensive weapons and trigger a new arms race.

In its statement on Tuesday, the Duma also turned a cold shoulder to the U.S. push for a quick start of U.S.-Russian talks to cut short-range nuclear weapons.

Following similar statements from the Russian foreign minister, legislators said in their statement that such talks should also include missile defense, potential deployment of space-based weapons and conventional armaments. They also urged the United States to withdraw its tactical nuclear weapons in Europe.

<http://www.miamiherald.com/2011/01/25/2032877/russian-parliament-ratifies-arms.html>

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SpaceWar.com

Iran Has Boosted Atomic Bomb Ability: US Scientists

By Staff Writers, Washington

Agence France-Presse (AFP)

January 21, 2011

Leading American scientists Friday warned against Western complacency over Iran's nuclear drive, saying in a study that Tehran last year boosted its capacity to build an atomic bomb.

The study, published by a body set by scientists from the top-secret Manhattan Project which built the world's first atomic bomb, comes as the United States and five other powers hold nuclear talks with Iran in Istanbul.

And it follows claims by US and Israeli officials that international efforts have slowed Iran's nuclear drive.

The Washington-based Federation of American Scientists said on its website that the gas centrifuges at Iran's main enrichment plant in Natanz became more efficient in 2010.

Centrifuges are the machines that enrich uranium for fuel in either civilian nuclear power plants or for a bomb's destructive power. Uranium must be enriched to 90 percent for a bomb, compared to five percent for power plants.

"Despite a drop in centrifuge numbers during 2010, the total enrichment capacity of Iran's main facility has increased relative to previous years," said the study authored by Ivanka Barzashka.

"The growth in enrichment capacity from 2009 to 2010 is greater than from 2008 to 2009," it said, adding the calculations were made on data provided by the UN nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency.

"Contrary to statements by US officials and many experts, Iran clearly does not appear to be slowing down its nuclear drive. On the contrary, it has a greater enrichment capacity and seems to be more efficient at enrichment," it said.

Barzashka estimated "it would take Iran anywhere from five months to almost a year to produce enough HEU (highly enriched uranium) for a single crude bomb, which does not seem like a viable breakout option."

"Breakout" potential is the time it would take to build a bomb.

"We are still in a stage where the numbers of new centrifuges Iran installs and their effective performance have significant effect on its time to a bomb," the author said.

During a January 10 visit to Abu Dhabi, on the opposite side of the Gulf from Iran, Clinton said international sanctions have made it "much more difficult" for Iran to pursue its nuclear ambitions.

And Israel's strategic affairs minister, Moshe Yalon, said last month that a series of "technological challenges and difficulties" meant Tehran was still about three years away from being able to build nuclear weapons.

The New York Times reported January 16 that US and Israeli intelligence services collaborated to develop a destructive computer worm, known as Stuxnet, to sabotage Iran's atomic bomb-making efforts.

Iran insists its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes, denying Western charges it seeks to build bombs.

http://www.spacewar.com/reports/Iran_has_boosted_atomic_bomb_ability_US_scientists_999.html

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Tehran Times – Iran

Saturday, January 22, 2011

‘Nothing Can Stop Iran from Enriching Uranium’

Tehran Times Political Desk

TEHRAN – No sanction resolution, threat, virus, or even military strike can prevent Iran from enriching uranium, the country's permanent envoy to the International Atomic Energy Agency said on Friday.

Speaking at a press conference in Moscow on Thursday, Ali Asghar Soltanieh called on the West to abandon a confrontational approach toward Iran.

However, he said Iran will continue its transparent cooperation with the IAEA.

Elsewhere in his remarks, he said Iran itself is capable of manufacturing fuel bar for its medical reactor and if the first bars are placed in the core of the reactor, there is no reason for holding talks on fuel swap.

Asked on possible military strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities, he said Iran will again manufacture centrifuges and start enriching uranium, if its nuclear facilities are attacked.

On accusations that Iran is seeking to build nuclear weapons under the cover of its civilian nuclear program, he said, "Imagine Iran is moving toward nuclear weapons, how many weapons can it build? Or can it compete with over 27,000 nuclear warheads of the nuclear-armed states?"

The diplomat went on to say that Iran plans to build the third and fourth generations of centrifuges, saying this was also mentioned in a report by the secretary general of the IAEA.

http://www.tehrantimes.com/Index_view.asp?code=234527

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The Hindu – India
Dubai, January 22, 2011

Iran Nuclear Talks at a Dead End

Talks should respect nations' rights: Iran

By Atul Aneja

The two-day talks between Iran and the six global powers have reached a dead-end with both sides failing to fix another date to continue their dialogue.

There was not much clarity on Saturday on the specific issues which caused the talks to falter. However, the European Union foreign policy chief, Catharine Ashton, who led the delegation with representatives from the United States, Russia, China, United Kingdom, France and Germany, accused Iran of setting "preconditions" for advancing the dialogue.

"We had hoped to embark on a discussion of practical ways forward, and have made every effort to make that happen. I am disappointed to say that this has not been possible," Ms. Ashton said. "No new talks have been planned." She also said that the onus was now on Iran for resuming the dialogue. "The door remains open, the choice remains in Iran's hands," she observed. Iran, on its part, did not appear inclined to discuss specific issues related to its nuclear programme, but wanted the Istanbul talks to focus on broad principles.

Iran's delegation head, Saeed Jalili, dismissed the assertion that Iran had imposed preconditions. "Any kind of talks and co-operation, as I underlined during the talks with Ms. Ashton, should be based on respecting nations' rights, including Iran's right to nuclear technology." Iran has insisted that it would not halt nuclear enrichment, as is its right, underwritten by the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Mr. Jalili said that Iran during the Istanbul talks had been interested in discussing broad principles and not ready to go into details about possible nuclear confidence building measures. "Iran had discussed certain necessities that need to precede any meaningful talks, such as strengthening the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and nuclear disarmament," Iran's state-run Press TV quoted him as saying.

Iran's state-run news agency IRNA said Mr. Jalili had expressed Iran's readiness to continue talks on the basis of "common logic as well as respect for legitimate rights of world nations."

According to the BBC, Ms. Ashton had proposed an updated nuclear fuel swap plan during the talks. Under a 2009 proposal, Iran was to transfer the bulk of its lightly enriched uranium to Russia, which in turn would send it to France for conversion into moderately enriched nuclear fuel rods, for use in a Tehran medical reactor. In talks mediated by Turkey and Brazil in May 2010, Iran had agreed to send 1,200 kg of its low enriched stocks, not to Russia, but to Turkey instead.

But, Mr. Jalili clarified on Saturday that on its part, Tehran found it premature to discuss the nuclear swap deal during the Istanbul talks. "Fuel swap can be the basis for cooperation between nations... and it could be a subject for further negotiations," he observed.

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/article1111530.ece>

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FARS News Agency – Iran
January 22, 2011

Jalili Warns of Israel's Atomic Warheads

TEHRAN (FNA) - Iran's chief negotiator Saeed Jalili warned of the great danger posed to the regional countries and the world by the atomic stockpiles of the Zionist regime, and blasted the western countries' indifference to such a great hazard.

"Why should a number of 200 nuclear warheads be deployed in Europe? And the other question is who has supplied the Zionist regime with its nuclear weapons, shouldn't these issues be investigated," Jalili asked during a press conference after holding the third and the last session of multifaceted talks with the envoys of the Group 5+1 (the five permanent UN Security Council members plus Germany) in Istanbul on Saturday.

Israel is believed to be the sole possessor of nuclear arms in the Middle East with over 200 ready-to-launch warheads in its stockpile.

Regional countries have always called for the nuclear disarmament of Israel as the only impediment to the materialization of a Middle-East free from atomic weapons.

Elsewhere, Jalili reminded the 200-pound load of highly-enriched uranium which was lost in the US 40 years ago, and said it could have been used for producing atomic weapons, then "why has no one written any report in this regard for 40 years?"

He called on all countries and media to pay attention to the issue and ask in their negotiations and reports that why thousands of pages, news and reports are written and given out about a country's peaceful nuclear program, but nothing is said or written about the loss of 200 pounds of weapon-grade uranium in the US.

He made the remarks referring to the Apollo Affair in 1965 which was an incident in which a US company, Nuclear Materials and Equipment Corporation (NUMEC), in Apollo, Pennsylvania was investigated for losing 200-600 pounds of highly enriched uranium. NUMEC's startup capital was provided by David Lowenthal, who was closely associated with Israeli intelligence and David Ben-Gurion.

NUMEC was a small fuel rod fabrication plant, producing fuel for U.S. Navy vessels that was also involved in "secret weapons projects". NUMEC pioneered mass production of nuclear fuel paving the way to power commercial reactors for power plants. Between 1957 and 1967 NUMEC received over 22 tons of government-owned Uranium-235.

In 1965, the FBI investigated Dr. Zalman Shapiro, the company's president, over the loss 200 pounds of highly enriched uranium. Although investigated by the Atomic Energy Commission, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and other government agencies and inquiring reporters, no charges were ever filed.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8911021477>

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Xinhua News – China

Iran Blames West, U.S. for Failure of Istanbul Talks

January 23, 2011

TEHRAN, Jan. 23 (Xinhua) -- An influential Iranian lawmaker said Sunday that western countries, in particular the U.S., were responsible for the failure of the Istanbul talks, the semi-official ISNA news agency reported.

The Islamic Republic entered the talks with clear offers and transparent, logical and practical stance, but the West unfortunately failed to seize the opportunity, Kazem Jalali was quoted as saying.

Istanbul talks seemed to bring fruitful results, but some western countries and in particular the U.S. officials chose to make troubles in Istanbul talks as they used to do in the past, said Jalali according to the report.

"They (Westerners) should end threat, sanction, pressure ... so that joint concerns could be dealt with based on collective respect," Iranian lawmaker added.

"We have not left table of talks so far and we are ready for negotiations," but the talks should be meaningful and based on recognition of Iranian nation's nuclear rights, he said, according to ISNA.

The remarks of the EU Foreign Policy Chief Catherine Ashton concerning Iran's preconditions in the nuclear talks resulted from a "diplomatic mistake", said the Iranian lawmaker.

Ashton told a news conference at the end of the two-day talks in Istanbul on Saturday that Britain, China, France, Russia, the United States and Germany (G5+1) were "disappointed" with Iran's stance in the nuclear talks and its preconditions were unacceptable.

Ashton said no further meetings were planned but the door remained open for Iran if it chose to respond positively.

"Ashton's remarks resulted from a diplomatic mistake, since Iran has always declared its readiness; and today ball is in the western countries' court," Jalali was quoted as saying by ISNA.

Six world powers wrapped up crucial nuclear talks with Iran in Istanbul on Saturday but failed to reach any agreement on Iranian nuclear program.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/world/2011-01/23/c_13703767.htm

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Hurriyet Daily News – Turkey

Iran Open to More Nuclear Talks, Says President

Sunday, January 23, 2011

TEHRAN - Agence France-Presse

Western powers declared Saturday two-negotiations with Iran over its nuclear program to be 'disappointment,' but Iran's president has held out hopes for more talks in the future. 'We never expected that issues would be resolved during these few sessions,' Mahmoud Ahmadinejad says during a speech in Rasht, but adds the Iran will not back down.

Iran is open to holding further talks with the six world powers over its nuclear program, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said Sunday, a day after the failure of the latest round of dialogue.

Ahmadinejad's remarks came after the world powers expressed disappointment over the two days of talks held in Istanbul, even as the United States and Germany voiced hopes of holding new negotiations with the Islamic republic.

"They have talked for a few rounds, but we never expected that issues would be resolved during these few sessions because of the record and mentality of the other parties," Ahmadinejad said in a speech aired live on state television from the northern city of Rasht.

"But if the other side is determined and committed to justice, law and respect, one can hope that suitable results could be achieved in future sessions."

The talks in Istanbul on Friday and Saturday failed to yield results between Iran and the so-called P5+1 – U.N. Security Council permanent members Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States, plus Germany.

The dialogue was aimed at ascertaining whether Iran's contentious nuclear drive masks a weapons program, as suspected by the West but staunchly denied by the Islamic republic.

The world powers blamed Iran's conditions – the lifting of sanctions and its right to enrich uranium, which is the most controversial part of its nuclear program – for the failure of the Istanbul dialogue.

Ahmadinejad, under whose presidency the nuclear program has grown, said however that the talks created the conditions for "good agreements in future sessions" as both sides met and got acquainted to each other's views.

But he charged that "the uncultured Zionists [Israel] and some power-hungry people in Europe and the United States are not interested in a good resolution of the issues."

"I am telling the P5+1 officials that if you want the negotiations to bear results, you should free yourself from the pressure of short-sighted and uncultured people in order to pave the way for further engagement.

"The world should know that this nation stands up to bullying and will put the bullies in their place. You cannot make Iran back down an inch from its course as it is now a nuclear state," said Ahmadinejad.

Fierce wrangling

Iran had set the stage for fierce wrangling as soon as the Istanbul meeting began Friday, declaring its uranium enrichment work was not up for debate.

The West wants Tehran to abandon the sensitive work, as the refined material can be used to power nuclear reactors as well as to make the core of an atom bomb.

Speaking after the talks, Iran's chief negotiator Saeed Jalili insisted Tehran's right to enrich uranium "must be recognized."

But his counterpart in the negotiations, EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton, said the outcome of the latest dialogue had "disappointed" her given Tehran's "pre-conditions relating to enriching uranium and sanctions."

Germany also expressed regret on Sunday, while holding out the hope that there could be more talks. "Unfortunately Iran was not yet ready to take such substantial confidence-building step," German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle in a statement.

"We will now intensively consult with our partners to discuss the way forward. We are still prepared for talks. I hope that Iran is ready to take the outstretched hand of the international community."

Those comments came after a senior U.S. diplomat also raised the possibility of future talks.

"Clearly, according to public reports, there are signs that the Iranian nuclear program has slowed," he said on condition of anonymity. "So I think there is time and space for diplomacy."

On Sunday, the Iranian media rounded on the West for derailing the Istanbul talks.

"Fruitless talks as Iran refuses to be blackmailed," splashed the front-page banner in the Farsi-language hard-line newspaper Kayhan.

In an editorial, Kayhan directly blamed the West for the failure of the dialogue, saying, "Iran negotiated strongly in Istanbul, but heavy mistakes in calculations in the West's mind did not allow an agreement to be reached."

Kayhan's English version said Iran entered the dialogue on an "equal footing" with the West, adding that the "lifting of sanctions was the price the West has to pay" for Tehran's help in solving issues in Iraq and Afghanistan.

<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=iran-open-to-more-nuclear-talks-says-president-2011-01-23>

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London Daily Telegraph – U.K.

Iran Stalemate Prompts Renewed Calls for Air Strikes

The prospect of air strikes on Iran should be brought forward, Western diplomats warned over the weekend, after the latest round of talks about Tehran's uranium enrichment broke down.

By Praveen Swami, Istanbul

23 January 2011

Talks between Iran and the so-called P5+1 group – the UK, US, Russia, China, France and Germany – were at stalemate after Tehran's negotiators laid down several conditions for discussing a deal which would give Iran access to peaceful nuclear technology in return for halting enrichment.

"Each passing day," a senior US diplomat told *The Daily Telegraph*, "means one less before Iran has the means to assemble a nuclear weapon. We've held out the carrot; perhaps its time to hold out the stick."

Hardline comments from Tehran have emboldened the other side. Asghar Ali Soltanieh, Iran's nuclear envoy, struck a defiant note in Tehran, claiming that the United Nations sanctions imposed on his country were "illegal". He asserted Iran would "never halt its enrichment activity".

Bruno Tertrais, an influential French nuclear expert, said it "might be time for the P5+1 to say that the diplomatic process is over, and give a deadline for Iran to take their offer or leave it". Dr Tertrais argued that Barack Obama, the US President "should not hesitate say he will use force if Iran made nuclear weapons".

The P5+1 has quietly been bracing itself for military strikes. Last year, Russia reneged on a contract to sell Iran modern S-300 air-defence missiles to guard its nuclear facilities. But top Western officials have made it clear the military option will not be free of costs. "Iran building a nuclear weapon will be incredibly destabilising", said Admiral Mike Mullen, the head of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a recent talk. "Attacking them will have the same outcome."

The International Atomic Energy Agency, the UN's nuclear watchdog, has confirmed that Iran already has enough enriched uranium to make a single nuclear bomb. Iran is also constructing a heavy-water reactor at Arak, which will allow it to produce plutonium – the building-block for lighter, more lethal nuclear weapons.

Iran's military forces have developed the capability to hit oil infrastructure in the Straits of Hormuz, through which much of the world's fuel supplies travel. That could lead oil prices to spiral.

Some experts, though, have been arguing that Iran has often blinked in the face of credible threats. In 2003, following the destruction of regimes in its neighbours Iraq and Afghanistan by US forces, it offered a comprehensive nuclear deal.

Israel and the monarchies on Iran's southern border have also been urging attacks. Abdullah bin Abd al-Aziz, Saudi Arabia's king, is known to have privately urged US officials to bomb Iran as early as 2008.

But Turkey is torn. "We do not want Iran to have a nuclear bomb," says Mustafa Kibaroglu, a Turkish nuclear expert. "But we do not want a middle-eastern crisis that will undermine our economy and society, either."

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iran/8277162/Iran-stalemate-prompts-renewed-calls-for-air-strikes.html>

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Star Tribune – Minneapolis – St. Paul

Iran Accuses West of 'Nuclear Terrorism'

Tuesday, January 25, 2011

By GEORGE JAHN, Associated Press

VIENNA — A leading Iranian official has accused Western nations of "nuclear terrorism" and blamed them of being behind the recent assassination of an Iranian scientist, in an internal document obtained Tuesday by The Associated Press.

The document was drawn up by Egypt as the head of the Vienna chapter of nonaligned nations, and cites another senior Iranian official as pledging to stage further visits to the nation's key nuclear sites to outsiders in the wake of a recent tour by envoys from nonaligned, developing and Arab nations.

The six-page report summarized the Jan. 15-16 visit of the diplomats to two sites of international concern - a heavy water reactor and related facilities being built in Arak and Iran's uranium enrichment plant at the central city of Natanz.

Iran insists it needs to build Arak to replace aging research reactors and says enrichment is meant only to make reactor fuel. But because both can contribute to a weapons program - Arak by providing plutonium for missile warheads and Natanz by creating weapons grade uranium for the same purpose - Iran has been slapped with four sets of U.N. Security Council sanctions.

Iran's nuclear secrecy, refusal to accept fuel from abroad and resistance to IAEA efforts to follow up on suspicions of covert experiments with components of a nuclear weapons program have heightened concerns.

In a killing apparently linked to Iran's atomic strivings, nuclear scientist Majid Shahriariwas was assassinated late last year and fellow scientist Fereidoun Abbasi was wounded. Both were targeted by car bombs that Iranian officials have variously blamed Israel and the United States for, as part of a campaign against Tehran's nuclear programs that included a cyber attack by the Stuxnet malware on the Natanz enrichment facility.

The document cited Saeed Jalili, Iran's chief nuclear negotiator, as telling the visiting envoys that Western nations "exercise terrorism to liquidate Iran's nuclear scientists."

"Therefore it is important to define a new category of terrorism called 'nuclear terrorism' that aims to prevent developing countries from acquiring nuclear technology," Jalili was cited as saying.

Separately, acting Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi, Iran's nuclear chief, told the visitors that Iran planned further invitations to outsiders to tour its nuclear facilities.

"Iran shall continue to issue invitations to such visits, including to experts, even to those who declined them, in the hope that they shall be able to accept the invitation in the future," he was reported to have said.

The tour went ahead without key invitees Russia, China, the European Union or key allies Turkey and Brazil, blunting Tehran's attempts to gain support from major powers for its nuclear ambitions.

Along with the U.S., Britain, France and Germany, Russia and China tried - and failed - to persuade Iran to open its atomic program to more perusal by the International Atomic Energy Agency and engage on international concerns about its enrichment program, with talks collapsing Saturday. Neither the U.S. nor the three other Western nations that sat at the table opposite Iran at those talks in Istanbul, Turkey, were invited to the tour.

The U.S. has mocked the visit, calling it a "magical mystery tour" and saying it is no substitute for Iran fully cooperating with the IAEA - the U.N. nuclear watchdog - to prove that its nuclear program is strictly for peaceful purposes.

In an interview with The Associated Press in the wake of the abortive talks, IAEA chief Yukiya Amano warned Monday that his agency cannot be sure that all of Iran's nuclear activities are peaceful because its oversight is limited.

<http://www.startribune.com/world/114580399.html>

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Yonhap News – South Korea
January 21, 2011

Denuclearization Still Top Agenda between Koreans: Ministry

By Sam Kim

SEOUL, Jan. 21 (Yonhap) -- The denuclearization of North Korea remains an unexpendable issue for South Korea even as Seoul prepares for talks with Pyongyang over a pair of other security issues, an official said Friday.

The comments by Unification Ministry spokesman Chun Hae-sung mean that South Korea will continue to press North Korea to agree to separate talks on the nuclear programs the communist state operates.

On Thursday, North Korea proposed holding "high-level" military talks with South Korea on the Nov. 23 artillery exchange between the sides and the sinking of a South Korean warship in March last year.

South Korea accepted the proposal within hours, after having refused for weeks to hold talks with the North until Pyongyang was ready to discuss the sinking of the Cheonan, its artillery attack on Yeonpyeong Island and its nuclear arms ambitions.

"High-level governmental talks are also needed to confirm (North Korea's) commitment to denuclearization, which is the most important pending security issue," Chun said in a briefing.

North Korea argues its nuclear programs must be negotiated mainly with the United States because its atomic weapons are aimed at deterring an American invasion. Since a conservative government took power in 2008, South Korea, however, has demanded the issue be discussed also with Seoul in bilateral dialogue because atomic bombs pose the greatest threat to its national security.

The proposal on Thursday, signed by North Korea's defense minister and addressed to his South Korean counterpart, came on the heels of a joint statement by U.S. President Barack Obama and Chinese President Hu Jintao in Washington, which called for sincere and constructive dialogue between the Koreans as an "essential step."

In a related development, South Korea's defense ministry said Friday that it plans to propose holding a preparatory meeting with North Korea next week ahead of the high-level inter-Korean talks.

The defense talks, if held, will be the first between the divided Koreans since North Korea's artillery attack on the western South Korean island killed two marines and two civilians and raised regional tensions to the highest level in years, if not decades.

North Korea argues it attacked because the South first fired at its side. Concerning the March sinking of the Cheonan warship, North Korea denies any role, demanding that Seoul accept an inspection team from Pyongyang to jointly verify its cause.

In May, a multinational investigation team led by Seoul concluded that a North Korean torpedo sank the ship, killing 46 sailors in the Yellow Sea.

Unveiling its proposal through the official Korean Central News Agency, North Korea said Friday it is "firmly willing to resolve all pending military issues" during its high-level talks with the South.

The proposal went on to say that the agenda would be "about defusing the state of military tension on the Korean Peninsula and the expression of opinions on the Cheonan incident and the Yeonpyeong artillery exchange," the KCNA said.

South and North Korea remain technically at war after the 1950-53 Korean War ended in a truce rather than a peace treaty.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2011/01/21/33/0401000000AEN20110121004100315F.HTML>

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Xinhua News – China

Double Standards must be Discarded to Prevent Arms Proliferation: Chinese Official

21 January 2011

BEIJING, Jan. 21 (Xinhua) -- A Chinese arms-control official said Friday that double standards and utilitarianism must be discarded to prevent arms proliferation.

Cheng Jingye, director-general of the Department of Arms Control and Disarmament under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, made the remarks at a two-day arms control workshop in Beijing that focused on disarmament in East and Southeast Asia.

To prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons, an integrated approach must be adopted, to address both the symptoms and the root causes, Cheng said at the workshop that ended Friday.

Cheng said arms control concerns world peace and the interests of the people of all countries.

China is a country that meets its international arms control and non-proliferation obligations, he said.

"China has never been involved in any form of nuclear arms race and nor will it do so in the future," he added.

China is the only nuclear-armed state that has committed itself to a no-first-use of nuclear weapons policy, Cheng said.

China has also unconditionally committed itself to not using nuclear weapons to threaten non-nuclear-armed states, Cheng added.

"It is essential all countries strictly fulfill their international non-proliferation obligations and strengthen export controls," he said.

He added that the rights of countries to use nuclear power peacefully should be fully respected.

On peace and security in outer space, Cheng said the negotiation and conclusion of a new international legal instrument to prevent an arms race in outer space is the best way to ensure outer space's peace and security.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2011-01/21/c_13701856.htm

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Korea Herald – South Korea

U.S. Expresses Satisfaction with Chinese Concern over N.K. Uranium Program

January 22, 2011

WASHINGTON -- The United States Friday expressed satisfaction that China had joined in voicing concerns over North Korea's uranium enrichment program, which could provide an alternative to plutonium for making nuclear bombs.

"We were pleased ... that the Chinese acknowledging for the first time in the statements that we put out the enrichment program that the North Koreans had and the steps that needed to be taken to deal with it," White House spokesman Robert Gibbs said.

Gibbs was asked to confirm reports that U.S. President Barack Obama told Chinese President Hu Jintao this week that Washington will have to beef up its military presence in Northeast Asia unless Beijing steps up pressure on Pyongyang for its nuclear and missile programs and other provocations.

In a joint statement after a summit here Wednesday, Obama and Hu "expressed concern" over North Korea's "claimed uranium enrichment program."

China, North Korea's staunchest communist ally, had been reluctant to acknowledge the existence of a uranium program in North Korea, citing a lack of first-hand information, although North Korea showed a U.S. nuclear scientist an enrichment plant in November.

The plant could serve as a second way of building nuclear bombs in addition to its existing plutonium program, but Pyongyang insists the facility is producing fuel for power generation.

Gibbs said that the Obama administration has been working closely with China to rein in North Korea's weapons of mass destruction programs and other provocations.

"We have, through the president, through the secretary of defense, through the secretary of state, have worked to express our concern about the aggressive activities of North Korea and to work to bring the Chinese effectively into helping us deal with some of those problems," he said.

Obama and Hu Wednesday also urged North Korea to "avoid further provocations," saying that "the paramount goal must be complete denuclearization of the peninsula."

The leaders also "emphasized the importance of an improvement in North-South relations and agreed that sincere and constructive inter-Korean dialogue is an essential step."

North Korea Thursday proposed that the two Koreas hold a meeting of working-level officials to prepare for a meeting of defense ministers to discuss the artillery attack on South Korea's Yeonpyeong Island and the sinking of the South Korean warship Cheonan, which killed 50 people, including two civilians, last year.

The attacks are issues Seoul wants Pyongyang to address before a resumption of an inter-Korean dialogue or the reopening of six-party talks on the North's denuclearization.

South Korean officials have said they are willing to meet with North Korean officials in mid-February, adding they will also propose a separate meeting to gauge North Korea's sincerity regarding denuclearization ahead of the restart of the six-party talks, which last met in December 2008.

Gibbs welcomed the recent developments, saying, "We're pleased that the South Koreans and the North Koreans are beginning talks."

The euphoria after the summit, however, may be short-lived, critics say.

Bruce Klingner, senior fellow at the Heritage Foundation, said that the joint statement is vaguely worded, calling only for "the necessary steps that would allow for early resumption of the six-party talks."

"Beijing will claim that Washington agreed to return to the nuclear negotiations in the near term, most likely by abandoning its preconditions," the scholar said. "Washington, on the other hand, will underscore that the necessary steps refer to Pyongyang fulfilling Washington's preconditions before six-party talks can be reconvened."

China wants an early resumption of six-party talks without any conditions attached. (Yonhap News)

<http://www.koreaherald.com/national/Detail.jsp?newsMLId=20110122000017>

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Yonhap News – South Korea
January 24, 2011

U.S. Surprised at High Level of Sophistication in N. Korea's Uranium Plant: Hecker

SAN FRANCISCO, Jan. 23 (Yonhap) -- U.S. officials were surprised at the high level of sophistication in North Korea's uranium enrichment facility, an American nuclear scientist said, when he gave them the first-hand account of what he saw in the communist nation.

Siegfried Hecker, a Stanford University professor, visited North Korea's main nuclear complex in Yongbyon during a trip to the isolated nation in November. North Korean officials showed the U.S. scientist a uranium enrichment facility that could be used to make atomic bombs.

North Korea has long been suspected of seeking a uranium-based nuclear weapons program, but it was the first time that the regime had publicly acknowledged the existence of the program and a facility for it, a move seen as an attempt to raise the stakes in its international nuclear standoff.

"These are P-2 centrifuges whereas in Iran, because of international inspectors, they only have been able to make (less sophisticated) P-1 centrifuges," Hecker said in an interview with Yonhap News Agency. "My analysis is, if what they (North Koreans) told me is correct, they have a very sophisticated second generation centrifuge at Yongbyon."

The existence of such a facility appeared to be not surprising to U.S. officials because they have long held such suspicions, but the "surprise was that what I saw was so modern and sophisticated," Hecker said during the one-hour interview held Sunday.

"There also is concern that if that's what they have, then they must have been doing this for a very long time," he said.

Hecker also said that the North must have additional centrifuges elsewhere in the country.

The enrichment plant of about 2,000 centrifuges could produce one nuclear bomb worth of weapons-grade uranium a year, but the timeline is not important because the North already has nuclear weapons, Hecker said.

North Korea claims that the plant is to produce fuel for a light water nuclear reactor under construction for power generation. Few believe the claim by a regime that has pursued nuclear ambitions for decades and conducted two atomic test explosions in 2006 and 2009.

Last week, U.S. President Barack Obama and Chinese President Hu Jintao held a summit in Washington and expressed "concern" about the North's uranium enrichment program.

It was the first time that China, the North's last-remaining major ally, has taken a negative stance on the program. Up until then, Beijing had taken a vague stance, claiming the program should first be verified and that Pyongyang has the right to peaceful use of nuclear energy.

The apparent change in China's position could be helpful for South Korea's push to take the issue to the U.N. Security Council. Officials in Seoul said that the issue should first be dealt with at the Council before the six-party nuclear disarmament talks reopen.

Hecker said the North's next step is expected to show the enrichment plant is working well.

"I think from what they showed me and what they've proceeded, they may be ready to demonstrate that facility will be used for civilian nuclear fuel production," he said. "That will be the next step to show that it's working and it's making LEU (low enriched uranium) for their LWR" (light water reactor).

Hecker also raised safety concerns about the light water reactor.

"North Korea is most likely doing this in isolation. What we've found over many decades is that it is important to do that through cooperation with countries that have nuclear safety expertise," he said.

"One has to be concerned about accidents after the reactor begins operating. No nuclear explosion can happen from a reactor, but there could (be) radioactive contamination if there is accident."

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2011/01/24/51/0301000000AEN20110124002700315F.HTML>

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France24.com

January 24, 2011

Russia Warns NATO of Nuclear Deployment

By Agence France-Presse (AFP)

Russia wants an unambiguous answer from NATO over Moscow's role in a European missile defence shield and will deploy nuclear weapons if no agreement is reached, President Dmitry Medvedev warned Monday.

"Our partners have to understand that we do not want this simply to have some common toys that NATO and us can play with, but because we want adequate protection for Russia," Medvedev said in televised remarks.

"So this is not a joking matter. We expect from our NATO partners a direct and unambiguous answer," he said, during a meeting with Russia's NATO envoy Dmitry Rogozin.

Medvedev said Russia would be forced to deploy its own missile defence shield if it was not given an equal role in the one being deployed by Washington and its allies over Europe.

"In either case, we are either together with NATO, or we separately find an adequate response to the existing problem," Medvedev said.

"Either we agree to certain principles with NATO, or we fail to agree, and then in the future we are forced to adopt an entire series of unpleasant decisions concerning the deployment of an offensive nuclear missile group."

<http://www.france24.com/en/20110124-russia-warns-nato-nuclear-deployment>

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Newsmax.com

New Russian Missile Penetrates Missile Defense

Monday, January 24, 2011

By William Chedsey

The chief of a secretive Russian military industrial corporation boasted to a Russian news agency that a new intercontinental nuclear missile it is helping to build cannot be stopped by proposed U.S. or European missile defenses.

Artur Usenkov, head of the firm Rosobshemash (Russian General Engineering), last week told ITAR-TASS that its unnamed replacement rocket for the aging SS-18 intercontinental ballistic missile, a project begun in 2009 and to be completed possibly as early as 2017, will get past any nuclear missile shield, the London Telegraph reported.

"This applies in the fullest sense to the USA's anti-missile defense system and to NATO's European missile defense system," Usenkov said. The SS-18 is the only heavy ICBM the original START treaty allowed Russia to deploy; its range encompasses the entire continental United States.

Equipped with 10 warheads, there are between 59 and 88 SS-18 silo launchers spread across Russian territory, the Telegraph's Moscow correspondent Andrew Osborn reported.

"They are capable of withstanding anything except a direct hit from a nuclear weapon," Osborn noted.

The development of the new ICBM comes in spite of the New START treaty between the U.S. and Russia, which calls for deep cuts in the nuclear arsenals of both powers. Osborn said Usenkov's boast regarding the new Russian ICBM's capabilities went "largely unnoticed."

Moscow-based defense analyst Pavel Felgenhauer last week wrote that the Russian military claims it will keep SS-18s in use until 2026 "to keep a sufficient number of deployed warheads." Felgenhauer also noted that Yuri Solomonov, chief builder of many of Russia's nuclear missiles, "confirmed Russia's new ten year (2011-2020) armament program contains a clause about developing a new heavy liquid-fuel ICBM." Solomonov said that in 2012 or 2013 Moscow must make a "collective decision" on whether to go beyond "design research" regarding such a missile.

Seeking a missile that thwarts missile defense is nothing new for Russia's military. In December, 2009, Russia's then-Strategic Missile Forces chief, Lt. Gen. Andrei Shvaichenko, said Moscow planned by 2016 to replace the SS-18 by developing a new liquid-propellant ICBM that could carry 10 warheads. And as long ago as May, 2007, Moscow boasted that a test of its ten-warhead RS-24 "strengthens the capability of the attack groups of the Strategic Missile Forces by surmounting anti-missile defense systems."

Russia's legislature wants to amend the New START treaty with provisions allowing Russian "development, testing, production and deployment of new strategic offensive weapons, capable of penetrating" ballistic missile defenses. It also threatens a Russian unilateral withdrawal from the treaty if a missile defense against Russian nuclear missiles is successfully deployed.

The money for an effort as ambitious as an unstoppable ICBM is available; Vladimir Putin, Russia's powerful prime minister and former president, has promised over \$670 billion in new spending on Russia's military in the course of the next decade.

Last month, Putin told CNN's Larry King that Russia would deploy nuclear weapons and "put in place new strike forces" if Western missile defense installations created "additional threats" near Russia's borders.

<http://www.newsmax.com/Newsfront/Russian-Missile-Penetrates-Missile/2011/01/24/id/383673>

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Knoxville News Sentinel

Nuclear Bomb Dismantling Project at Y-12 Furthers Commitment to Arms Reduction

By Frank Munger
January 24, 2011

OAK RIDGE - Workers at the Y-12 National Security Complex are dismantling components from two of the most powerful nuclear bombs ever built - the B83 and the B53 - and have completed the first unit on each weapon system.

Officials would not discuss how many of the bombs are awaiting dismantlement.

Y-12 is responsible for taking apart the same components that it built originally during the Cold War, which typically include so-called secondaries - or the second stage of thermonuclear weapons.

"These are big, complex weapons components, but we have decades of expertise in doing these kinds of disassemblies," Darrel Kohlhorst, Y-12's general manager, said in a statement. "Different weapons systems bring different challenges, and a lot of effort went into determining the best way to do this work safely and securely. We're

pleased with the path we're on, and proud that we're helping to reduce the presence of nuclear weapons in the world."

The National Nuclear Security Administration last week announced that Y-12 had finished taking apart the first secondary from a retired B83 warhead - an important milestone. The B83 is one of the biggest bombs ever built, and Y-12 had been preparing for that dismantlement work for a couple of years, with a major investment in equipment upgrades as well as specialized training for project workers.

The B83 remains in the active U.S. arsenal, but some of its components have been replaced, and some retired warheads have been removed from the stockpile and designated for dismantlement, the agency said.

In a statement issued at NNSA headquarters, Deputy Administrator Don Cook said: "Dismantlement of the first B83 secondary is an important demonstration of our nation's commitment to reducing the size of the nation's nuclear stockpile in support of our arms reduction treaty commitments and our nuclear nonproliferation objectives. I applaud the men and women at Y-12 and across the enterprise who have worked so hard to ensure the highest standards of safety as we continue to find ways to implement our program."

The B83 dismantlements are taking place at the same time as Y-12's work on components of the B53, another giant bomb - the size of a minivan - that once was a mainstay in the U.S. nuclear arsenal.

According to a Dec. 3 staff report of the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board, some early work on the B53 dismantlement required a lot of troubleshooting, in particular because of worker difficulties with the way some of the procedures for the project were written.

Y-12 officials, however, said any difficulties with the B53 were not caused by handling two very complicated missions at the same time. It's normal for multiple systems to be in the works at any one time, they insisted.

The safety board memo noted that the Y-12 procedure writer's manual "highly discourages" directing operators to perform a step from a second procedure while carrying out an initial procedure or prior to resuming the original procedure "because of the increased potential for personnel error." But that apparently was the case with the B53 work.

"The primary dismantlement procedure for B53 dismantlement operations directs operators to perform steps from several other procedures," the memo said. Because of that, production personnel temporarily suspended operations while things were straightened out.

Also, the site reps noted a lack of "formality" that's typically associated with nuclear operations at Y-12. They suggested that a high-fidelity mock-up unit for training operators before the start of operations would have been a significant helper and might not have necessitated as much oversight and troubleshooting of the operations themselves.

Asked if Y-12 was struggling with the B53 work, Kohlhorst said: "No, I think it is a much larger weapon and it takes some special processes and some special equipment that we had to bring online. And so I think it's just getting those new processes online, getting all the details worked out. I don't think it's any different than any other weapon system we've either taken apart or that we've built, in that there's always a manufacturing learning curve that you've got to get up on and work out any kinks."

Kohlhorst said the two systems are being dismantled in the same area, but there are different machines being used for each one.

Steven Wyatt, a federal spokesman, said Y-12 was fully staffed to handle both the B53 and the B83 dismantlement work at the same time. He said all operator training, tooling and equipment were "successfully demonstrated" prior to beginning dismantlement of actual units.

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2011/jan/24/bombs-dismantled-y-12-oak-ridge-national-security/>

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Air Force Materiel Command

Nuclear Weapons Center Attains Full Operational Capability

January 25, 2011

377th Air Base Wing Public Affairs Report

KIRTLAND AIR FORCE BASE, N.M. -- The commander of Air Force Materiel Command declared full operational capability for the Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center during the change of command ceremony Jan. 20, 2011.

During his comments, AFMC Commander Gen. Donald Hoffman spoke to the center's growth and noted that the center was the single focal point for the Air Force "in the sustainment and assurance that our nuclear weapons are safe, secure and effective."

The criteria to reach FOC, established in Air Force Program Action Directive 08-05 , is the capability to standardize and oversee nuclear sustainment activities in support of the warfighter.

According to Brig. Gen. Garrett Harencak, the new AFNWC commander, "I know this designation was based on the hard work of the past two years under Brig. Gen. (Everett) Thomas to grow expertise, document processes, and conduct training."

The Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center staff accomplished several major milestones prior to declaration of FOC, including:

- Increasing and stabilizing weapon storage area production;
- Completing several rounds of nuclear surety inspections;
- Creating roadmaps and developing strong partnerships with nuclear stakeholders; and,
- Integrating the staff and unit into one focused team, fully embracing a culture of continuous improvement.

During the change of command ceremony, General Harencak lauded the center's great progress, while also vowing to continue on a path of success.

"As your commander, I pledge to you 100 percent of my energy, 100 percent of my support, and every resource that I can legally obtain," said General Harencak. "Together, we will continue the tremendous work you have done and build on your success. We will accomplish even more -- not for us, our jobs or our careers -- but for America. It's my distinct honor and pleasure to serve as your commander."

<http://www.afmc.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123239671>

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The Citizen – Tanzania
OPINION

Denuclearizing the World Requires United States of America's Leadership

Saturday, January 22, 2011

US President Barack Obama came to office in January 2008, with a lofty promise of a new dawn in US foreign policy that would reject militarism as a way of resolving global political problems.

He also had a clearly defined vision of a world free of nuclear weapons. He outlined his "denuclearization dream" at a European Union summit in the Czech capital, Prague, in April 2009, amid applause from all peace lovers.

Although he acknowledged that his vision may not be realised in his lifetime, he promised to set in motion a process whereby all nuclear weapons states would work towards the goal of total denuclearization.

To begin with, he said, he would submit the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) to the Senate for ratification, something his predecessor George W. Bush had refused to do.

He also pledged to reactivate the long-stalled negotiations on a verifiable treaty to put to an end to the production of fissile material for military purposes.

But there are no signs of these good intentions translating into attainable goals! This may underscore the fact that the president on his own cannot succeed in his future nuclear plans unless two critical conditions are fulfilled: first, there must be support of the entire leadership at Capitol Hill; and, secondly, the other nuclear powers – Russia, Britain, France and China – must work with the US to eliminate nuclear weapons in the world.

The gist of the argument here is that unless there is total willingness and cooperation of all nuclear powers, President Obama's vision of a nuclear-free world would remain a pipe dream.

But most importantly these powers, led by the US, need to set an example for other nations with regard to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Without that it would be naïve to expect countries like India and Pakistan, for instance, to sign the NPT and the CTBT.

Moreover, if the nuclear powers won't show commitment to disarmament, they would have great difficulty persuading countries like North Korea and, for the sake of argument, Iran to abandon their nuclear ambitions.

The nuclear-haves would also find it difficult keeping non-nuclear NPT members from seeking an atom bomb. It would appear Obama realises the critical importance of America's leadership in denuclearizing the world.

That is why, in April last year, he took the initiative to sign a new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) with his Russian counterpart Dmitry Medvedev, which seeks to cut US and Russian nuclear arsenals and establish a verification and inspection system to ensure they abide by the accord.

For Obama this, certainly, is a big political feat because the treaty enables him to rally global action on his nuclear agenda.

The problem with the new START, however, is that it is overshadowed by mutual distrust and suspicion between the two former super-power rivals.

Neither side was sure whether the other would keep their part of the bargain. It is this mistrust that made the US to dilly-dally on the ratification of the pact.

While the Russian Duma (Parliament) ratified the accord, partisanship and strong distrust (among the hard-line Republicans in the Senate) towards Russia, had threatened to derail the treaty.

Besides, the attitudes developed and fostered during the Cold War (when arms race defined the paradigm of East-West power balance) have, over the years, transformed themselves into some kind of legacy that continues to inhibit efforts towards disarmament.

There was also the problem of the START agreement being used by President Obama as a (diplomatic) ploy to register Russia's "full cooperation" in dealing with Iran's controversial nuclear issue and in the US-led war in Afghanistan.

These problems notwithstanding, Obama's goal of total elimination of nuclear weapons must be pursued.

But this goal can be reached only if, first, all nuclear powers (including India, Pakistan and Israel) sign the NPT and CTBT and commit themselves to a treaty that bans the production of all fissile material for military purposes; and, secondly, if these powers embark on a mandatory time-bound phased elimination of their arsenals until they reach zero point. The UN should set this agenda now.

Mr Kagaruki is a political analyst based in Dar es Salaam

<http://thecitizen.co.tz/sunday-citizen/-/7528-denuclearizing-the-world-requires-united-states-of-americas-leadership>

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Bangkok Post - Thailand

OPINION/Editorial

What to Do About Iran

24 January 2011

They have tried talks, UN sanctions and cyber war. And now the full weight of the United Nations, the top nuclear powers, espionage and public opinion has failed to dissuade or waylay Iran from its obsession with bringing nuclear weapons to the Gulf region. Iran seems to view its nuclear programme as a great policy defeat for large powers which oppose its project. In fact, Iran is on course to making its own region and the world at large a far more dangerous place.

The latest diplomatic effort to convince the Teheran regime to stop and think failed in a day. Six world powers went to talk to Iran in Istanbul last Friday. They simply listened as the Iranian delegation essentially said there was nothing to discuss. Iran is enriching uranium and gathering all the necessary paraphernalia needed for weapons of mass destruction, and it will not consider any change.

The fast and obstinate attitude at the Istanbul talks did not serve Iran well. From the time its nuclear programme was discovered, Teheran has taken its own direction. Faced with demands by the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for required information, Iran chose to obfuscate, deny and then simply refuse. Every other civilised country has proved an open door for the IAEA. A country with nothing to hide will profit greatly from cooperation with the UN. From small nuclear reactors such as Thailand's to huge nuclear programmes such as those in France and Japan, the IAEA is a major help in coordination and safety. Iran's constant badgering, dodging and refusals to cooperate directly contradict its now unbelievable claims that it is pursuing electrification of Iran. From the gentlest diplomacy to credible threats of acts of war, nothing has moved Iran from its secretive, frightening gallop towards achieving nuclear weapons. The refusal to cooperate with neighbours in the always tense Gulf region is particularly troubling. A nuclear arms race appears more likely each time that Iran refuses cooperation with the UN and the six

world powers it chose to talk with. As the WikiLeaks documents showed, Saudi Arabia for one is highly concerned about living next to a frequently abrasive nation with nuclear weapons. Other Gulf countries share the sentiment.

The worry of the Arabs simply increases the concern of the rest of the world. Iran has recently become even more secretive than North Korea, previously known as the world's most detested rogue nation. This is a poor face to show the world by Iran, a large and civilised country with a great history. The leaders in Teheran are seemingly obsessed with achieving nuclear weapons no matter the cost. They continue to lead the country away from diplomacy, cooperation and good neighbourliness.

The failure of the Istanbul talks leaves diplomacy at a dead end. European foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton declared there would be no more talks. A secrecy shrouded attack by cyber warfare, employing the Stuxnet worm, dealt a setback to the Iranian programme, but it has persevered. Israeli threats to bomb Iranian nuclear development sites may be credible but likely would both fail to stop nuclear projects and risk a huge war.

Diplomats believe that UN sanctions may hurt the Teheran regime enough to bring leaders to their senses. That is a hope, not a policy. Friends and neighbours of Iran must redouble efforts to convince the Iranian leadership to come clean about their nuclear ambitions, and adopt an open policy. That is the only realistic way to start to affect Iran's rush to possess terrible weapons.

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OPINION & ANALYSIS

New Policy Needed to Stop Iran from Going Nuclear

By RIA Novosti political commentator Dmitry Kosyrev
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The talks in Istanbul between Iran and the UN Security Council plus Germany may have failed, but at least they weren't boring.

Judging by the initial reports by Iran's Islamic Republic News Agency, Tehran does not think the ball is in its court. Iran's top nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili said on Saturday that Iran is ready to continue talks with the P5+1 provided they are based on shared logic as well as respect for the legal rights of all nations.

Iran agreed to hold the talks in Istanbul during the previous round in Geneva. In Turkey, Iran rejected the "improved" UN scheme for monitoring its nuclear programs and a separate meeting with a U.S. representative, and also refused to resume talks on shipping its uranium to other countries for enrichment.

In Istanbul, Tehran demanded that the P5+1 countries lift the UN sanctions imposed on Iran on June 9, 2010, and that Iran be allowed to continue enriching uranium. Iran said it is ready to discuss all other issues, including the security situation in the Middle East.

With that, Jalili left the room.

Many countries, in particular the United States, which initiated the UN sanctions, believed that that they were punishing Iran to extract concessions in Geneva and Istanbul. Instead, Iran has punished the six powers, and not only them.

The Iranians prepared diligently for the talks. High-ranking diplomats and officials visited Moscow, Seoul (on the issue of nuclear ties with North Korea), Brazil and other countries last week. On top of that, Turkey, which hosted the meeting, is pursuing a live and let live policy with its neighbors. Iran is its neighbor and economic partner.

Even though many countries refused to say anything specific to the Iranian envoys, Iran achieved the desired effect: it no longer looks like an isolated country suffering from international sanctions. This has undermined U.S. attempts to convince the UN that talks with Iran are impossible without harsh sanctions.

The United States even convinced Russia and China to sign on to the sanctions. While they share Washington's desire not to see Iran as a nuclear power, they have always doubted the efficacy of sanctions. Washington and the EU imposed an additional set of sanctions on Iran.

The Washington Post writes that "while there is no talk for now of UN Security Council new sanctions past a fourth set in June, there have been significant Western efforts to enforce present penalties."

This is logical, as the sanctions that have already been approved are more than sufficient. Moreover, it is doubtful whether sanctions work at all. They failed in Iraq, impoverishing the people while failing to change Saddam's behavior. After 12 years of fruitless sanctions, the U.S. and Britain invaded Iraq in 2003 to overthrow the regime.

Unilateral sanctions are even less effective. Few people now remember that the U.S. imposed sanctions on India to punish it for nuclear testing in 1998. But they did not stop India from becoming a nuclear power, and it is still on course to become the world's third largest economy. By the way, India's program was similar to Iran's.

Iran is working to discredit the UN Security Council. Its official stance is that the sanctions are illegal because they violate the right of Iran to enrich uranium for peaceful purposes. Moreover, Tehran has been acting within the bounds of international law established by international non-proliferation documents, some of which Iran has signed, and some of which it has not.

The real issue is not whether the Iranian arguments are correct, which they very well could be, given all the loopholes in the non-proliferation regime.

The issue lies elsewhere. A commander in a good army knows that you must never give an order if you doubt that it will be carried out. An impotent UN Security Council is a very, very big problem - a bigger problem than Iran's nuclear program.

A military operation against Iran, similar to UN-approved Desert Storm in 1991, is unlikely, in part because there are no pretexts for launching one: Iraq invaded Kuwait, whereas Iran has not attacked anyone.

In addition, there is not a country in the world willing to send troops to Iran. The United States has not yet withdrawn its troops from Afghanistan and Iraq, which it eagerly wants to do. These wars have bled the U.S. dry, and its allies are already pulling out their troops.

Even if the current Iranian regime were overthrown in a military operation, the result would be chaos like in Iraq and Afghanistan. Iran was careful to point out during its recent diplomatic offensive that missile strikes would be as ineffective as those launched against Iraq in 1998.

After the previous round of the talks in Geneva, a high-ranking Iranian official said that Istanbul would be the West's last chance. But there is still a chance. The question is how the West will use it.

The talks in Istanbul have made it clear that the world needs to devise a new plan to stop Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. The old one has failed.

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

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