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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

U.S., Russia to Begin Data Exchange under New START in March – Official

17 February 2011

The United States and Russia will hold their first information exchange on nuclear stockpiles under the New START treaty on March 22, a U.S. assistant secretary of state said.

The previous such exchange between the world's largest nuclear powers was held in July 2009, when the START 1 agreement was still in force, said Rose Gottemoeller, Assistant Secretary of State for Arms Control, Verification and Compliance.

Under the new arms control deal, which replaces the expired START 1 agreement, the sides are to hold their first information exchange within 45 days after it came into force on February 5. Data exchanges are to be held every six months.

The treaty will provide the U.S. with a "comprehensive picture about lifecycle of Russian strategic forces," and the Russian side "will have the same," Gottemoeller said.

"Notifications of this treaty will be much more extensive in the number of ways and details. One particular feature of the notification is more details than in past," the U.S. official added.

"We will be using a unique identifying number to sign each missile, sea launcher, intercontinental missile, groundbase system or bomber," she went on. "They will have unique identifier that will be included in all notifications about their movement, deployment status."

She also said that the U.S. prepares for a visit by Russian inspectors to its nuclear objects, which is to be held in April.

The new treaty on strategic arms reduction, signed in April by the presidents of Russia and the United States, Dmitry Medvedev and Barack Obama, trims nuclear arsenals of both nations to a maximum of 1,550 nuclear warheads, down from the current ceiling of 2,200. The treaty was ratified by the parliaments of the two states late last year.

MOSCOW, February 17 (RIA Novosti)

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20110217/162641930.html>

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Reuters Africa.com

Syria Mulls First Nuclear Power Plant by 2020

Tuesday, February 15, 2011

** Syrian document makes no mention of atomic fuel production*

** Israel bombed suspected Syrian reactor site in 2007*

** Syria denies bomb aims, says focus should be on Israel*

By Fredrik Dahl

VIENNA, Feb 15 (Reuters) - Syria may build its first nuclear power plant by 2020 to meet growing energy demand, a document showed, despite international concern over Syrian stonewalling of a U.N. probe into allegations of covert atomic activity.

The paper from Syria's Atomic Energy Commission did not say whether the Arab state, under a three-year-old investigation by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), might also contemplate producing its own fuel for such a facility.

Any bid by Syria to launch uranium enrichment, like its ally Iran, would probably further alarm the United States and its Western allies about Syrian nuclear activities as such material can also be used to make bombs if refined much more.

Russia said in May last year, during a visit to Damascus by President Dmitry Medvedev that it was studying building an atomic power plant in Syria. Syrian officials have given no details since then and none was available to comment on Tuesday.

Mark Hibbs, a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, said Syria would need to import almost everything it needed for a nuclear reactor. But he doubted that any country would help it while it was under IAEA investigation.

"The biggest hurdle to Syria moving forward in its nuclear programme right now is simply the fact that it is not cooperating with the IAEA in investigating what appears to be serious allegations," he said.

"It is almost inconceivable that Syria would be able to import a nuclear power reactor ... unless that is resolved."

The IAEA, the U.N. nuclear body, has voiced growing frustration at what it sees as lack of Syrian cooperation with a probe into a desert site bombed to rubble by Israel in 2007.

U.S. intelligence reports have said the Dair Alzour facility was a nascent North Korean-designed nuclear reactor intended to produce weapons-grade plutonium.

MORE NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS?

Like Iran, Syria denies ever having an atom bomb programme and says Israel should be investigated instead. It says Dair Alzour was a non-nuclear, military facility, but has refused to allow the IAEA to follow up a 2008 visit.

The Syrian document, from a presentation made at a closed-door seminar on nuclear energy at the IAEA's Vienna headquarters last week and posted on the agency's website, made no mention of the dispute.

The country, which has limited fossil fuel supplies, has been plagued for years with electricity shortages.

Its paper predicted that national power demand would increase by more than a third between 2010 and 2015.

Because of this development, it said building Syria's first nuclear power plant (NPP) by 2020 as well as a number of hydro power plants within the next few years were being considered.

"Due to the increasing demand on energy in Syria, NPPs are being considered," the document said, suggesting it may decide to build more than one such facility.

Dozens of countries in the world, some in the conflict-prone Middle East, are looking into introducing possible nuclear energy programmes, to reduce their dependence on oil and gas.

To prevent this from also increasing the risk of atomic weapons proliferation, the United States, the European Union and Russia have backed plans to establish multilateral fuel banks so that nuclear power newcomers do not need to make it themselves.

"In principle, building a nuclear power plant, as long as you don't use it as a pretext to develop the whole fuel cycle ... shouldn't be a major concern," said Pierre Goldschmidt, a former head of global inspections at the IAEA.

Countries have the right to develop nuclear energy provided they comply with their commitments under the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the facilities are under IAEA oversight.

"Of course, Syria does not lead very much by example because they don't allow the agency to access some of the sites the agency wishes to visit," Goldschmidt added.

Editing by Jon Hemming

<http://af.reuters.com/article/energyOilNews/idAFLDE71E1Y520110215?sp=true>

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Press TV – Iran

Wednesday, February 16, 2011

Iran Neutralizes Nuclear Malware: Report

Iranian scientists have successfully neutralized the impact of a sophisticated malware designed to disrupt Tehran's nuclear program, says a recent report.

According to a draft report released by the Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS), Iranian scientists have shown vigilance in keeping the virus from disrupting their low-enriched uranium production.

"It did not stop ... or even delay the continued buildup of low-enriched uranium," the ISIS report reads.

In July 2010, Western and Israeli media claimed that the Stuxnet, a computer worm that is viewed as potentially the most destructive piece of computer malware discovered, has targeted industrial computers around the globe, with Iran identified as the main target of the attack.

The reports insisted that the country's Bushehr power plant was at the center of the cyber attack.

Iranian officials, however, dismissed such claims, saying that the Stuxnet was detected early by Iranian experts and thus caused no damage to the country's industrial sites.

The Stuxnet malware causes extensive physical damage to centrifuges used in nuclear fuel production.

The virus is so sophisticated that experts believe it is the work of a highly-funded state-sponsored project.

The New York Times reported in a detailed article in January that the Stuxnet was primarily an Israeli project specifically aimed at disrupting Iran's first nuclear power plant in Bushehr. However, the highly secretive and sophisticated effort also involved cooperation as well as technical and financial assistance by the US, Britain and Germany.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/165478.html>

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The Star – Malaysia
Friday, February 18, 2011

US Intelligence: Iran Leaders Reopened Nuke Debate

By Mark Hosenball

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. intelligence agencies believe Iranian leaders have resumed closed-door debates over the last four years about whether to build a nuclear bomb.

But a recent update to a controversial 2007 U.S. National Intelligence Estimate on Iran's nuclear ambitions also says its leaders have not decided about going ahead with an atomic weapon, according to U.S. officials familiar with the latest assessment.

Director of National Intelligence James Clapper described the new document on Wednesday as a "memorandum to holders" of the 2007 report.

Clapper, testifying to the Senate Intelligence Committee about threats to the United States, did not reveal many details of the new assessment of Iran, which officials said would not be published by the government in an unclassified form.

But the spy chief did offer a summary of U.S. concerns.

"Iran is keeping open the option to develop nuclear weapons in part by developing various nuclear capabilities that better position it to produce such weapons, should it choose to do so," he said.

Iran's progress in research and development, particularly its capability to enrich uranium, "strengthens our assessment that Iran has the scientific, technical and industrial capacity to eventually produce nuclear weapons," Clapper said.

"These advancements contribute to our judgment that Iran is technically capable of producing enough highly enriched uranium for a weapon in the next few years, if it chooses to do so."

But he said U.S. agencies believe a "central issue" remains whether Iranian leaders have the will to build a bomb.

Iran has been at loggerheads with the United States and other Western powers over its nuclear program, which Tehran insists is solely for the peaceful generation of electricity.

'RESUMED INTERNAL DISCUSSIONS'

The principal assessment at the heart of the National Intelligence Estimate update, one official told Reuters, is that Iranian leaders "resumed internal discussions" at some point between 2007 and 2011 about whether to move ahead and build a nuclear weapon.

The 2007 report -- key elements of which were published by the administration of President George W. Bush -- said that, until the autumn of 2003, Iranian military entities were working under government direction to develop nuclear weapons.

But U.S. agencies said in the 2007 report they had "high confidence" that "Tehran halted its nuclear weapons program" in late 2003 and "moderate confidence" it had not been restarted as of mid-2007.

Many conservative foreign policy experts criticized the 2007 report as inaccurate and for undermining efforts by some U.S. and Israeli officials to build support for harsher sanctions against Iran or for a military strike against Iranian nuclear facilities.

Several officials said the U.S. government has believed for some time that Iran has been conducting research and development -- including uranium enrichment efforts -- that could be used for civilian or military nuclear purposes.

Some U.S. officials and Israeli officials have said they believe that, over the last year, Iran's nuclear progress has been slowed by mysterious attacks on Iranian scientists and by the effects of a computer virus known as Stuxnet which targeted control systems at its nuclear installations.

But given its apparent ambiguities, the latest National Intelligence Estimate is unlikely to resolve heated debates among nuclear experts about how long it would take Iran to put together a bomb if its leaders gave the green light to do so.

Editing by John O'Callaghan and Mohammad Zargham

http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2011/2/18/worldupdates/2011-02-18T052731Z_01_NOOTR_RTRMDNC_0_-549816-1&sec=Worldupdates

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Wall Street Journal
February 18, 2011

Iran Upgrades Nuclear Technology

By DAVID CRAWFORD

Iran is redoubling its efforts to enrich uranium by upgrading the equipment at its nuclear facilities, after its enrichment program was severely disrupted by a computer virus, according to diplomats familiar with a new assessment by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The IAEA, the United Nations' nuclear watchdog, believes that Iran is seeking to replace thousands of centrifuges it has been using to enrich uranium with more modern, carbon-fiber centrifuges that can enrich nuclear fuel at about five times the speed of Iran's previous equipment, these diplomats say.

The diplomats say Iran is also replacing computers and other electronic equipment at its nuclear facilities, including its Natanz enrichment plant, after apparently failing to trace the source of a damaging computer virus known as Stuxnet. Replacing all of the electronics could take Iran up to two years, these people say.

The Stuxnet virus is widely believed to have been designed by a foreign intelligence service to slow down Iran's nuclear program, although nobody has claimed responsibility for the alleged cyber attack. Some observers believe Israel or the U.S. may be behind Stuxnet.

U.S. officials say Iran is developing technology that could be used to produce nuclear weapons in violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions. The IAEA says Iran's lack of cooperation prevents it from determining whether Iran's nuclear program is military in nature. Iran says its nuclear program is strictly for peaceful purposes.

The new IAEA assessment of Iran's militarily relevant nuclear activities was ordered by IAEA General Director Yukiya Amano, two people familiar with the matter say. Early drafts of the assessment, known as the "militarization report," have been seen by diplomats involved with the IAEA's work.

The carbon-fiber centrifuges are a concern, three of these diplomats say, because the new technology would allow Iran to reduce the time it would require to secretly produce enough fuel to ignite a nuclear weapon.

Currently Iran would need to operate about 6,000 of its original centrifuges for a year to produce enough highly enriched uranium for a bomb. Using carbon-fiber centrifuges with steel rotors that Iran has tested at its Pilot Fuel Enrichment Plant, Iran could cut the enrichment time to less than 12 weeks, according to an analysis by Germany's government.

Iran's enrichment program faltered in November, when the IAEA says 25 of Iran's 54 sets of centrifuges weren't functioning. Diplomats believe the Stuxnet virus was responsible for the disruption. Two of the diplomats say it is unclear how quickly Iranian engineers can install enough carbon-fiber centrifuges to revive the pace of its uranium enrichment.

The "militarization report" aims to provide an up-to-date review of Iran's nuclear activities with a military significance, based on evidence provided by both agency inspectors and member states. In the past, Iran has rejected as forged some documents presented by the IAEA as evidence. The IAEA said it received the documents from member states and considers the documents to be consistent with evidence it has found in its inspections. The new report will be used to test the veracity of Iran's disclosures to the agency, and could lead to new lines of inquiry in Iran, the diplomats say.

Since 2008, Iran has declined IAEA requests for access to locations in the country where military activities with possible nuclear dimensions may have occurred. The IAEA says it needs access to these sites in order to test the truthfulness of the allegations as part of its obligation to determine if Iran's nuclear activities are peaceful in nature.

Similarly, Iran has also declined IAEA requests to interview people who could assist in addressing open questions about alleged military aspects of its nuclear program.

IAEA inspectors pressed Iran to respond to these questions in a letter last October detailing outstanding issues the agency wants to resolve concerning Iran's nuclear program. Diplomats say the list of outstanding issues is expected to be annexed to a forthcoming IAEA report on Iran to the agency's board of governors.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704900004576152280613065362.html>

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Yonhap News – South Korea
February 16, 2011

N. Korea's Nuke Weapons, Ballistic Missiles Pose Serious Threat to U.S.: Clapper

By Hwang Doo-hyong

WASHINGTON, Feb. 16 (Yonhap) -- North Korea's nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles pose a serious threat to the United States, the chief U.S. intelligence official said Wednesday.

"North Korea's nuclear weapons and missile programs also pose a serious threat, both regionally and beyond," National Intelligence Director James Clapper told a Senate Select Committee on Intelligence hearing. "Pyongyang has signaled a willingness to re-engage in dialogue, but it also craves international recognition as a nuclear weapons power, and it has shown troubling willingness to sell nuclear technologies."

The chief spy's remarks are in line with U.S. military leaders. Defense Secretary Robert Gates said last month that North Korea's missiles and nuclear weapons will pose a threat to the U.S. within five years. The defense chief urged North Korea to impose a moratorium on nuclear and missile testing to help revive stalled six-party nuclear talks.

Adm. Michael Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, also said last month that "unless North Korea is deterred, that sometime in the next, I'm not sure but, five to 10 years, the provocations ... will continue at a much higher threat level, which could include a nuclear-capable ICBM (intercontinental ballistic missile)."

The multilateral nuclear talks have been deadlocked for more than two years over the North's nuclear and missile tests and other provocations.

North Korea also revealed in November a uranium enrichment plant that could serve as a second way of building nuclear bombs in addition to its existing plutonium program, despite Pyongyang's claims it is producing fuel for power generation.

Clapper said in a report presented to the hearing that the North apparently has more uranium enrichment facilities than the one in its nuclear complex in Yongbyon, north of its capital Pyongyang, that was revealed last year.

"Based on the scale of the facility and the progress the DPRK has made in construction, it is likely that North Korea has been pursuing enrichment for an extended period of time," the chief spy said. "If so, there is clear prospect that DPRK has built other uranium enrichment-related facilities in its territory, including likely R&D and centrifuge fabrication facilities and other enrichment facilities." DPRK is North Korea's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Earlier in the day in Tokyo, South Korean Foreign Minister Kim Sung-hwan and his Japanese counterpart Seiji Maehara called on the U.N. Security Council to take up the uranium issue for possible additional sanctions on the North, which is already under international sanctions for its second nuclear test and a rocket launch in 2009.

China, North Korea's staunchest communist ally, opposes bringing the uranium issue to the council, citing an adverse impact on the revival of the six-party talks involving the two Koreas, the U.S., China, Japan and Russia.

Beijing wants the talks to reopen as soon as possible without any conditions attached, while Seoul and Washington demand Pyongyang first apologize for the shelling of a South Korean front-line island and the sinking of a South Korean warship that killed 50 people last year.

In an apparent bid to pave the way for the resumption of the six-party negotiations, North Korea recently proposed to revive high-level inter-Korean military dialogue, but walked out of preparatory talks last week citing South Korea's demand for an apology for the provocations.

Philip Crowley, assistant secretary of state for public affairs, urged the North to show sincerity in its denuclearization commitment and address South Korea's grievances before any resumption of the six-party talks.

"We have made clear there are things that North Korea has to do to create the right kind of environment where we think any kind of dialogue would be useful," Crowley told reporters. "North Korea has to demonstrate to the United States and others that it is serious about following through on its commitments. Should they demonstrate that seriousness of purpose, then we'll see what might be appropriate."

A deal signed by the six nations in 2005 calls for the North's nuclear dismantlement in return for massive economic aid and diplomatic and political benefits.

South Korea severed almost all economic ties with the North after the sinking of the Cheonan, which was blamed on North Korea. Pyongyang denies involvement in the Cheonan's sinking and insists the shelling of Yeonpyeong Island was prompted by the South's provocations on the western sea border.

The North's recent provocations are widely believed to be linked to the ailing North Korean leader Kim Jong-il's plans to transfer power to his third and youngest son, Jong-un, in an unprecedented third-generation hereditary power transition.

The 28-year-old heir apparent, who like his father lacks a proper military background, is believed to be trying to rally support from the military, the only power base in the impoverished but nuclear-armed communist state.

North Korea detonated nuclear devices in 2006 and 2009, and conducted long-range missile tests three times - in 1998, 2006 and 2009 - which were seen as a partial success.

"Despite the most recent launch's failure in its stated mission of orbiting a small communications satellite, it successfully tested many technologies associated with an ICBM," Clapper said. "Although both Taepodong-2 launches ended in failure, the 2009 flight demonstrated a more complete performance than the July 2006 launch."

Pyongyang is believed to have at least several nuclear weapons, with some experts saying it may have already developed nuclear warheads small enough to be mounted on ballistic missiles with the help of China or Pakistan.

Clapper, however, said that North Korea will not likely use its nuclear weapons against the U.S. unless the North is attacked.

"We judge that North Korea would consider using nuclear weapons only under certain narrow circumstances," he said. "Pyongyang probably would not attempt to use nuclear weapons against U.S. forces or territory unless it perceived its regime to be on the verge of military defeat and risked an irreversible loss of control."

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2011/02/17/78/0301000000AEN20110217000600315F.HTML>

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Chicago Tribune

North Korea Completes Second Missile Site

By Jeremy Laurence, Reuters

Thursday, February 17, 2011

SEOUL (Reuters) - Satellite images show North Korea has likely completed a second long range missile launchpad, an expert said on Thursday, amid U.S. concerns that Pyongyang's ballistic missile program is fast becoming a direct threat.

The launchpad is more sophisticated than the country's first facility and strikingly similar to a Chinese site, suggesting Beijing's involvement, Tim Brown, an image analyst from military analysis group globalsecurity.org, told Reuters in a telephone interview.

And he said the reclusive North, which says its missile program is peaceful and intended to put a satellite in orbit, was working on development together with Iran and Pakistan.

The facility at Tongchang-ri is equipped with a 100-ft (30-m) launch tower and is sited near North Korea's northwest border with China, making it more difficult for U.S. intelligence to observe compared to its Musudan-ri launchpad in the east.

The Tongchang-ri site has been under construction for a decade.

Brown, who identified the latest development, said the images were taken about a month ago, and that there were no signs of an imminent test launch. He said it would take weeks, possibly months, to put a rocket on the launchpad.

A South Korean government official also said there were no signs the North was preparing a missile test.

The North is developing the so-called Taepodong-2 missile, with an estimated range of 6,700 km (4,160 miles), but testing so far suggests production of the complete weapon is a long way off.

The North's arsenal already includes intermediate-range missiles that can hit targets up to 3,000 km (1,860 miles) away, officials say, putting all of Japan and U.S. military bases in Guam at risk.

"Basically this thing is done, and the question is how long it will be before they launch. Then it is matter of what kind of vehicle are they going to launch -- a missile or something for their space program. The answer to that is we just don't know," said Brown. A launch, he said, was likely in months.

He said the site was nowhere near the standard of advanced countries. "But it's as close as a third world country can come to having a first world facility," he said.

Brown said the facility was very similar in design to a Chinese site being monitored. "Either they adopted those design characteristics on their own, or the Chinese were technically advising them and providing assistance."

He said Iran, Pakistan and North Korea were working together on missile and nuclear programs. "We think they all work on different aspects and share and benefit from comparative advantages of each program," said Brown.

The North Korean site is seen as key to Pyongyang's quest to build a missile capable of delivering a nuclear weapon across the Pacific.

Experts say they do not believe the North can miniaturize an atomic weapon to place on a missile, but it is trying to develop such a warhead. It needs more nuclear testing to build one.

North Korea detonated nuclear devices in 2006 and 2009, and conducted long-range missile tests three times -- in 1998, 2006 and 2009. The missiles fizzled out shortly after takeoff.

While the North still has not shown it has a working nuclear bomb, proliferation experts say it has enough fissile material for up to 10 nuclear weapons.

"POLITICAL WEAPON"

Washington says the North's long-range ballistic missile program is moving ahead quickly and Defense Secretary Robert Gates said last month that the American mainland could come under threat within five years.

"North Korea has been five years away for the last 15 years," said Brown. "They have been on the cusp of having a real missile program for quite some time."

Brown said that if North Korea can achieve its stated aim of putting a satellite in orbit, it could also launch a missile that hits the U.S. West coast.

"At the same time they claim it is their right to launch a peaceful satellite, they also hold out this threat 'don't mess with us,'" he said.

Brown added that if the North did launch in a military way, the facility would be quickly be bombed and its long-range program would no longer exist.

"This is a political weapon, not a military weapon," he said. "By having this program they are able to negotiate from a stronger point than if they didn't have it all. It is essentially a bargaining chip."

Gates has urged North Korea to impose a moratorium on nuclear and missile testing to help revive six-party aid-for-disarmament talks involving the two Koreas, the United States, China, Japan and Russia.

The talks have been stalled for more than two years after the North declared the process dead in response to the U.N. Security Council's imposition of a new round of sanctions for its nuclear and missile tests in 2009.

Reporting by Jeremy Laurence; Editing by Jonathan Hopfner and Ron Popeski

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/sns-rt-international-us-kortre71g0cx-20110217,0,3739015.story>

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Yonhap News – South Korea
February 17, 2011

S. Korea Says No Signs of N. Korea Preparing to Launch Long-Range Missile

SEOUL, Feb. 17 (Yonhap) -- North Korea has shown no signs of preparations to launch a long-range missile, a South Korean official said Thursday following a news report that the communist nation has completed construction of a new missile launch facility.

The Washington Post reported that the latest satellite imagery indicates an expansive launch pad positioned next to a launch tower that stands more than 100 feet tall. The facility is located close to the North's border with China and is more modern than the existing one in the country's northeast, it said.

The communist nation, which test-fired its most advanced Taepodong-2 missile in 2006 and 2009, has been known for years to be building a new missile launch site in Dongchang-ri in the country's northwest. But it has not been confirmed whether the construction has been completed.

A South Korean official said that he could not confirm whether the new missile facility has been completed, but said that there have been no specific signs of the North making preparations to test-fire a long-range missile.

"If a missile is to be fired, there have to be specific moves. But there have been no such unusual signs," the official said on condition of anonymity. "I don't think that there are high chances of North Korea pushing ahead with a nuclear test or a missile launch at a time when it is asking for food aid."

North Korea's missile program has long been considered a top security concern in the region, along with its nuclear programs. The country test-fired the Taepodong-1 in 1998 and the more advanced Taepodong-2 in 2006 and 2009.

Experts say the Taepodong-2 could potentially reach Alaska and even the mainland U.S.

In the 2006 test, the missile fizzled out after 42 seconds in the air. But the second launch in 2009 was more successful as the missile flew more than 3,000 kilometers and landed in the Pacific Ocean. North Korea conducted the launches claiming they were aimed at putting a satellite into orbit.

The North is still not yet able to put a nuclear warhead on a long-range missile.

In Washington, the U.S. spy chief voiced concern over the North's nuclear and missile programs.

"North Korea's nuclear weapons and missile programs also pose a serious threat, both regionally and beyond," National Intelligence Director James Clapper told a Senate Select Committee on Intelligence hearing. "Pyongyang has signaled a willingness to re-engage in dialogue, but it also craves international recognition as a nuclear weapons power, and it has shown troubling willingness to sell nuclear technologies."

Clapper also said that the North "successfully tested many technologies associated with an ICBM" (intercontinental ballistic missile), and that its Taepodong-2 missile "demonstrated a more complete performance" in the 2009 test than the previous one in 2006.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2011/02/17/85/0301000000AEN20110217004500315F.HTML>

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Sydney Morning Herald – Australia

Heir More Apparent: Kim's Son Made No.2 in Defence

By Mark McDonald

February 18, 2011

SEOUL: At a time when dynastic rule is under attack in popular uprisings throughout the Middle East, the heir apparent to the North Korean dictator Kim Jong-il smoothly acceded to a senior spot on the National Defence Commission, the country's most powerful body, a leading newspaper in Seoul reported.

Chosun Ilbo, citing an unidentified source in North Korea, said Mr Kim's youngest son, Kim Jong-un, had cemented his spot as the second most powerful person in the country when he was named recently to the post of vice chairman of the defence commission, which is led by his father.

The move was announced at a mass gathering of military leaders and security officials on February 10, the newspaper's source said, but emerged only on Wednesday, as the 69th birthday festivities for the elder Kim were in full swing in the nation's capital, Pyongyang.

New satellite imagery shows North Korea has completed construction of a second - and more modern - missile launch facility, a vital step in its efforts to launch intercontinental ballistic missiles.

The images, first obtained by Voice of America News, show an expansive launch pad next to a launch tower that stands more than 30 metres tall. Though analysts have known about the facility's construction for at least two years, the site's apparent completion - despite scarce domestic resources and international sanctions - suggests that long-range missile development remains a top priority in Pyongyang.

South Korean government officials could not immediately confirm Kim Jong-un's promotion, and the North Korean news agency had made no mention of it by Wednesday afternoon.

"Kim Jong-un assuming such a position is quite natural and not surprising," said Paik Hak-soon, director of the centre for North Korean studies at the Sejong Institute near Seoul. "It's not too early for something like this. Sooner or later it was to be expected."

Kim Jong-un, who is believed to be 28 or 29, appeared publicly for the first time at a meeting of the ruling Workers' Party last year. He was given the rank of four-star general and received two significant political posts: membership on the party's Central Committee and a vice chairmanship of its Central Military Committee, which is also overseen by his father.

Although his emergence as a serious political figure has been undeniable, some political experts had remained unconvinced that Kim Jong-un was secure in his anointed position. But if the report of his promotion to the No. 2 post on the National Defence Commission is true, they said on Wednesday, there can be no further doubts.

"He is in a very special and unique category, and nobody else can be included as possibly assuming the supreme leadership," Mr Paik said.

The 15-member defence commission has several vice chairmen, including Jang Song-taek, the leader's brother-in-law. It is widely believed that Mr Jang, the husband of Kim Jong-il's sister, has day-to-day control of the country. But in terms of power and position, "Kim Jong-un is already ahead of Jang Song-taek," Mr Paik said.

<http://www.smh.com.au/world/heir-more-apparent-kims-son-made-no2-in-defence-20110217-1ay8f.html>

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Yonhap News – South Korea

February 18, 2011

S. Korea, U.S. to Hold First Talks on Nuclear Deterrence Next Month

SEOUL, Feb. 18 (Yonhap) -- South Korea and the United States plan to hold their first talks on measures to boost the nuclear deterrence Washington provides to protect Seoul amid high tensions with North Korea, a senior official here said Friday.

Seoul and Washington agreed last October to form a joint committee to make decisions about the alliance's nuclear policy, stepping up their commitment to deterring threats from North Korea's nuclear programs and other weapons of mass destruction.

The Extended Deterrence Policy Committee was officially set up in December at a regular meeting of defense officials between the allies.

"Both sides plan to hold two rounds of talks of the Extended Deterrence Policy Committee this year, and the first round is set for late next month," said the official at the South's Defense Ministry.

Working-level officials from the allies have been preparing since early this year to set details of the agenda for the first meeting, the official said on the condition of anonymity.

The U.S. has reaffirmed its pledge to provide a nuclear umbrella for South Korea at every annual meeting of their defense ministers since 1978, but this was the first time that the countries institutionalized the joint body to develop specific countermeasures against North Korea's nuclear programs, missiles and biological weapons.

The term "extended deterrence" is political jargon that refers to a pledge by a nuclear power to defend an ally armed with no atomic weapons.

Tensions on the Korean Peninsula remain high after the North's two deadly military attacks last year.

A South Korean warship sank last March from a North Korean torpedo attack, killing 46 sailors. In November, the North shelled a South Korean border island in the Yellow Sea, killing four people, including two civilians.

North Korea denies it sank the Cheonan warship and claims its artillery strike on Yeonpyeong Island was in self-defense because it was provoked by the South's live-fire drill near the island.

The North also publicly revealed the existence of a modern uranium enrichment facility last November. Pyongyang claims the uranium enrichment program is for peaceful energy development, but outside experts believe it could give the country a new source of fission material to make atomic bombs in addition to its known plutonium-based nuclear weapons program.

North Korea has so far detonated two plutonium-fueled nuclear tests, the first in 2006 and second in 2009.

The two Koreas are still technically at war after the 1950-53 Korean War ended in a truce, not a peace treaty. About 28,500 American troops are stationed in South Korea to deter threats from North Korea.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2011/02/18/12/0301000000AEN20110218002400315F.HTML>

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

U.S. Confirms \$50 Mln Aid for Ukraine's Nuclear Security Program

16 February 2011

The United States has officially confirmed that it will render Ukraine \$50 million to support the country's nuclear security program.

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton met with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Kostyantyn Hryshchenko in Washington on Tuesday as part of the third session of the U.S.-Ukraine Strategic Partnership Commission.

"Secretary Clinton and Foreign Minister Gryshchenko underlined both parties' commitment to securing all vulnerable nuclear materials and to increasing cooperation in nuclear security and non-proliferation," the U.S. Department of State said in a statement.

Ukraine, which was briefly left with the world's third largest nuclear arsenal after the breakup of the Soviet Union, agreed to give up the remaining stockpiles of highly enriched material by the next nuclear summit in 2012.

"The Ukrainian party reconfirmed its commitment to get rid of its remaining highly-enriched uranium by the 2012 Nuclear Security Summit," the statement said. "The U.S. party reconfirmed its commitment to provide necessary technical and financial assistance valued at approximately \$50 million by the time of the 2012 Nuclear Security Summit as part of this effort, including financial and other resources necessary for the construction of a state of the art neutron source facility that will enhance civil nuclear cooperation."

The Nuclear Energy Institute puts Ukraine in its top five countries accounting for the largest percentage of generated nuclear energy. Almost half of the country's energy output comes from nuclear power.

WASHINGTON, February 16 (RIA Novosti)

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20110216/162626490.html>

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

Russia's Second S-400 Missile Unit Enters Service

16 February 2011

KAPUSTIN YAR, February 16 (RIA Novosti) - The strategic command of Russia's space defense forces took delivery of its second unit of S-400 Triumf missile systems on Wednesday, which will be based in the Moscow Region, Defense Ministry spokesman Col. Vladimir Drik said.

Until now, the Russian forces have had only one unit of S-400s, based at Electrostal, near Moscow.

"The handover ceremony for the second S-400 will take place at the state firing range in Kapustin Yar from February 16-19," Drik said.

The unit will consist of two regiments, each consisting of eight launch points, each with four missiles.

The S-400 has a maximum range of up to 400 km at an altitude of 40,000-50,000 meters. The system uses a range of missiles, optimized for engaging ballistic and cruise missiles and hypersonic vehicles, Drik said.

http://en.rian.ru/mlitary_news/20110216/162635663.html

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People's Daily – China

February 17, 2011

Russia to Build National Aerospace Defense System by December

Russia will build its national aerospace defense system by the end of 2011, a senior official with the Russian Defense Ministry said on Thursday.

Lt. Gen. Valery Ivanov, chief of Russian Aerospace Defense Strategic Command, said the new system would integrate air defense, missile warning, and space control.

"The president's order to form the national aerospace defense system by the end of 2011 will be fulfilled," he said, adding the new system will be put into operation by December.

"Its main tasks are to detect assaults, warn the national administration, trace and destroy targets and protect the sites," he said.

Meanwhile, the official revealed Russia will start serial production of its next-generation S-500 missile system in 2014.

The S-500 air defense system will be able to track and destroy ballistic missiles with ranges of up to 3,500 kilometers, Ivanov said.

"The S-500 is currently under construction. By 2014, it should enter into serial production," he said.

"This system will be able to defend territories at heights of up to 50 kilometers," he added.

Currently, Russian aerospace defense troops have deployed S-300 and S-400 systems and have received its second unit of S-400 Triumph missile systems on Wednesday.

Source: Xinhua

<http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90777/90853/7291536.html>

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Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Déjà Vu: Russia, US at Odds over Missile Defense

By DOUGLAS BIRCH, The Associated Press

Friday, February 18, 2011

WASHINGTON — Talks between the U.S. and Russia over a new anti-ballistic missile system for Europe are stuck on a key point, with Moscow demanding to jointly run the system and the U.S. refusing to yield.

Russia is insisting on shared control of the missile defense program with the U.S. and NATO, which President Barack Obama has flatly opposed because it would essentially give Russia responsibility for protecting NATO from nuclear missile threats. The U.S. is offering Moscow a more limited role.

After years of opposition, Russia agreed last fall at least to talk about cooperating on the anti-ballistic missile plan for Europe, which the U.S. says may one day be needed if Iran develops nuclear weapons. Experts from both sides are scheduled to report on details of the proposal to defense ministers in July.

But Moscow has refused so far to budge from its demand for joint control, and has been keeping up the rhetorical pressure. In late November, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said if the U.S. and NATO can't reach an agreement on missile defense Russia may deploy new offensive weapons, triggering a new arms race.

Early this month, a Russian deputy foreign minister warned anything less than a "joint system" could lead Russia to withdraw from the recently-ratified New START treaty and to "take other measures, including military-technical measures."

Russia's U.S. Ambassador, Sergey Kislyak, told an industry-sponsored conference here this week that the two sides still haven't come up with a good understanding of how a joint program would work, warning that his country wasn't interested in "cloning" decisions already made by the U.S.

Referring to Russian fears that the missile defense system could target Russian warheads, Kislyak said Moscow is determined to maintain a strategic nuclear balance with the West.

"We want to be reassured that whatever you do there doesn't undermine the stability of deterrence, because deterrence is still with us," Kislyak said Wednesday at the Nuclear Weapons Monitor Nuclear Deterrence Summit in Washington. "We haven't reached a state ... between our two countries that would allow us to abolish it. We would like to see it happen. But that's going to be a long way (off)."

The U.S. and NATO have proposed sharing radar and other early warning data, but Assistant U.S. Secretary of State Rose Gortemoeller, the top U.S. arms control negotiator, told the industry summit that Obama has decided that "NATO will protect NATO, and that's the bottom line as far as we're concerned."

The issue could make or break the deal.

"The hardest question on missile defense in the end is who pulls the trigger," said Steven Pifer of the Brookings Institution, a veteran of U.S. arms control negotiations and former U.S. ambassador to Ukraine. He nevertheless thinks that an agreement can be reached.

The White House had hoped that the New START treaty limiting U.S. and Russian strategic weapons, which took effect Feb. 5, would be a springboard to further arms deals, including deeper cuts in strategic forces as well as reductions in short-range nuclear weapons and non-deployed warheads.

U.S. officials say that new limits on the strategic arsenals of the U.S. and Russia, which between them control 90 percent of the world's deployed nuclear arms, are crucial to efforts to halt the spread of those weapons and promote disarmament worldwide.

Both U.S. and Russian officials have been vague about the details of Russia's proposal for a joint missile defense system, which Medvedev has called a "sectoral" defense.

But independent Russian military expert Alexander Golts said the plan would give Russia responsibility for intercepting missiles headed across its territory toward Europe, while NATO would be responsible for missiles headed across its territory toward Russia.

The apparent aim is to ensure that NATO's interceptors aren't aimed at Russian ICBMs, where they might cripple Russia's ability to respond to a first strike from the West.

Golts said the Kremlin may recognize that the U.S. could never agree to such a scheme but has adopted this position as a bargaining tactic. Russia's bottom line, he said, may be an agreement by the U.S. not to deploy ship-based missile interceptors in the Arctic region, where in theory at least they could shoot down Russian strategic ICBMs headed for U.S. targets.

"If Americans are honest when they say that this missile defense is not aimed at Russian nuclear potential, why not?" Golts said.

Experts say U.S. missile defense systems aren't capable of posing a serious threat to Russia's nuclear missiles, and are intended to protect against future any missile threats from Iran and North Korea. But Russia has said that it is concerned the current systems will develop into a full-scale missile shield.

Russia isn't the only country skeptical of U.S. missile defense goals.

"The Chinese are very, very concerned about missile defenses," said Sharon Squassoni of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington think tank. "A moderately effective missile defense, which we don't have yet, could really neutralize their nuclear capability and they know that. We have to do this with the Russians because we're going to have to do this with the Chinese later on."

Despite the impasse, several current and former U.S. officials expressed confidence the U.S. and Russia eventually will find a compromise and strike a deal.

"We believe that we both have systems that can augment each other," Undersecretary of State for Arms Control Ellen Tauscher said this week. She added that the New START treaty had created an environment "where we can work to make sure that NATO is protecting NATO, Russia is protecting Russia."

<http://www.ajc.com/news/nation-world/deja-vu-russia-us-844146.html>

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The Hill – Washington, D.C.

Republican Tells Fiscal Hawks: Hands Off Nuclear Arms Funding

By John T. Bennett

February 15, 2011

Rep. Michael Turner (R-Ohio) is warning members of his party to keep their budget axes away from nuclear arms.

Rep. Michael Turner (R-Ohio) is warning members of his party to keep their budget-cutting axes away from America's nuclear arms.

The Obama administration's 2012 spending plan, unveiled on Monday, requests \$11.8 billion for the U.S. National Nuclear Security Agency (NNSA), about a \$2 billion increase over the funding level enacted in 2010.

But with conservative GOP members pushing for even more funding cuts, Turner said, "we have to make sure NNSA is not lost in the shuffle."

"The only debate [should be] whether there is adequate funding," Turner told reporters Tuesday morning.

Turner is the new chairman of the House Armed Services strategic forces subcommittee.

It remains unclear whether the agency's budget will grow as large as the administration desires in the next few years. The continuing resolution being considered by the House this week contains about \$300 million less than the agency received in 2010, Turner said.

NNSA is part of the Department of Energy. It supplies components, like propulsion systems, to the military, and is in charge of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile.

The administration's budget plan includes billions to support its pledge of devoting over \$80 billion to nuclear weapons research and modernization work over the next decade. White House officials made that vow late last year as they rounded up support from GOP senators for a new nuclear arms-reduction treaty with Russia.

Meantime, Turner was mostly upbeat during the session with reporters about the Obama administration's plans for nuclear weapons modernization programs, a new Air Force bomber and even missile defense.

All fall under his subcommittee's jurisdiction, and the third issue, missile defense, typically divides Democrats and Republicans. He sees a new tone on missile defense, saying debates now are about "what kind, not if."

Turner did not criticize the strategic weapons sections of the administration's budget plan, saying the White House is seeking "many funding increases that are positive."

He did, however, raise concerns about the administration's missile defense plans, telling reporters the system envisioned by the White House would create "a gap in defending the homeland" from enemy launches.

<http://thehill.com/news-by-subject/defense-homeland-security/144283-republican-tells-budget-cutters-hands-off-nuclear-arms>

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

U.S. Ready to Discuss Further Arms Reduction with Russia - Official

17 February 2011

The United States is ready to discuss further arms reduction efforts with Russia, including tactical nuclear weapons, a high-ranking State Department official said.

President Barack Obama said in a message to the Senate earlier this month his country expects to hold talks with Russia on tactical nuclear weapons (TNW) within a year after the New START arms reduction treaty comes into force.

"We can seek deeper nuclear reductions and we are committed to seeking deeper nuclear reductions with Russia, including in strategic, non-strategic, and non-deployed weapons," Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Affairs Ellen Tauscher said.

Tauscher also said the creation of a European missile defense system and the ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) also remained priorities for the United States.

"Ratifying the CTBT would bolster our credibility as we work to stop others from developing nuclear weapons and testing them," she said.

Russia's ambassador to the United States, Sergei Kislyak, said nuclear non-proliferation remained one of the vital tasks on the Russian-U.S. agenda.

"By signing and ratifying the strategic arms reduction treaty we proved our ability to cooperate on non-proliferation issues," he said.

"We have an extensive international and bilateral agenda. And the arms reduction treaty is a good start," the Russian ambassador added.

When ratifying the New START deal with Moscow in December, the U.S. Senate adopted a resolution obligating the government to start bilateral talks on cutting the TNW stockpiles - landmines, artillery shells and short-range missiles. Washington says Moscow has a larger number of these systems.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said on January 29 that it is too early to discuss limiting TNW with the United States because Russia needs to see the way the U.S. fulfills the undertaken commitments.

WASHINGTON, February 16 (RIA Novosti)

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20110217/162642437.html>

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency

Russian, U.S. Generals to Discuss Nuclear Terrorism in Lisbon

16 February 2011

Russian and U.S. generals will meet in Lisbon in June to discuss cooperation between the two countries in fighting nuclear terrorism, the head of the Russian Military Commanders Club said on Wednesday.

The discussion will take place as part of a meeting of the Elba international military commanders club, Gen. Anatoly Kulikov said.

The talks will continue the three-day discussion held in October last year in Istanbul, which involved five Russian and five U.S. generals, he said.

The Russian Military Commanders Club, involving more than 2,000 members, was created in January 2005 with support of then-Russian President Vladimir Putin and security services heads.

MOSCOW, February 16 (RIA Novosti)

<http://en.rian.ru/russia/20110216/162632250.html>

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Deccan Chronicle – India

OPINION

Nuclear Mind Games

February 17th, 2011

By Bharat Karnad, *Deccan Chronicle*

When contemplating Pakistan's nuclear build-up, Major General Ausaf Ali comes to mind. An engineer officer, also director general (operations and plans), Ali is arguably the most important man in the strategic plans division, Chaklala, the secretariat for that country's Nuclear Command Authority. The occasion was his briefing on the Pakistan nuclear weapons programme at an "international seminar" in March 2007 held in Bahawalpur. As the lone Indian invitee, I was apparently the offline channel to convey nuclear signals to interested audiences in India.

Among other things, Maj. Gen. Ali indicated that Pakistan planned to beef up its nuclear forces sufficient to enable a "counterforce third strike" — a scheme too ambitious not to prompt scepticism. A counterforce third strike essentially means having enough surviving nuclear weapons/warheads and delivery systems to take out Indian nuclear force assets after absorbing an Indian retaliatory hit in response to Pakistan's first use of nuclear weapons. His impressive confidence notwithstanding, this strategy is unsustainable for the reason Maj. Gen. Ali also mentioned, namely, that the location of 70 per cent of Pakistani nuclear weapons is known to American, Indian and Israeli intelligence agencies and, in a nuclear crisis or conflict, will face pre-emption. The remaining 30 per cent, he asserted, "will never be found". It is reasonable to deduce that the underway augmentation of the nuclear arsenal — with reports of Pakistani nuclear weapons strength now exceeding India's estimated arsenal and the 100 figure mark — is meant to increase both this force-fraction considered immune to pre-emptive destruction and Pakistan's margin of safety.

The more noteworthy aspect is Pakistan's resolve not to be overwhelmed in a nuclear confrontation with India. It is reflected in the reported construction of a fourth plutonium reactor at Khushab. This is a speedy follow-up to the first and second reactors that went on stream in 1996 and 2009 respectively and the third which is at the half-way stage of construction. Deterrence is a mind-game — how I wish I had patented this phrase first used by me in a 1998 book — and Pakistan seems to be psychologically fortifying itself for it.

None of this will matter very much in an actual nuclear exchange though because however large the Pakistani weapons inventory, especially its protected force fraction, the certainty of Pakistan's extinction versus the obliteration of a couple of Indian cities will compel Islamabad, I have argued, to avoid nuclear first use no matter what the Indian provocation, including limited ingress into Pakistani territory by Indian conventional forces ("Cold Start"). Then again, Pakistan has discovered that India scares easy and simply having its leaders indulge in nuclear bombast at the first sign of trouble deters Delhi from approving even punitive strikes. This happened after the December 13, 2001, attack on Parliament and the 26/11 terror attacks in Mumbai.

A nuclear Pakistan, in any case, poses a greater danger to itself than to India — with the possibility of fanatics accessing nuclear materials, if not whole weapons, in unsettled domestic situations. These jihadis, geared to blowing themselves up, may decide that the use of nuclear weapons or radiation diffusion devices as means of national suicide either by turning them against the Pakistan establishment or India, advances their cause. But, Pakistan's nuclear preparations nevertheless highlight the Indian government's relaxed attitude and extraordinary complacency. The stock answers by senior officials to any sensitive questions regarding national security are usually unilluminating counter-questions: "How do you know we are not taking appropriate actions? And, if we are, would we be announcing them?" Alas, excessive opacity hurts nuclear deterrence when there's little evidence of meaningful measures on the ground.

For instance, dedicated military-use plutonium reactors cannot be conjured out of thin air nor erected in a trice. Indeed, with the decommissioning of the CIRUS reactor at the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, Trombay, courtesy the nuclear deal with the United States, a third of the weapon-grade plutonium production capacity was lopped off.

The upcoming breeder reactor having been ruled out of the military ambit by former National Security Adviser M.K. Narayanan, there's only the 100 MW Dhruva reactor, if the eight power plants are discounted as source owing to the huge economic costs of diverting these from electricity generation to running them on low burn-up mode for plutonium production. A second Dhruva was approved in the mid-1990s and Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao sanctioned `600 crores for it. But 15 years on, the project is in the doldrums. Moreover, instead of constructing a straight-through graphite-moderated reactor exclusively to output weapon-grade fissile material such as the ones Pakistan has obtained from China, another multi-purpose Dhruva-type reactor (tasked to also produce isotopes, etc) is on the cards.

This last is the result mainly of professional laziness on the part of the Indian nuclear engineers who would rather duplicate something old than design and build an altogether new, efficient and militarily more useful plutonium reactor.

There are two great nuclear deficit areas: In the light of the failed hydrogen bomb test in 1998, the absence of proven high-yield thermonuclear armaments — a condition only further explosive testing can remedy, and curtailed weapon-grade plutonium production capacity.

These shortfalls are particularly onerous when considering it is China with ramped up strategic wherewithal India has most to worry about. With the gaps in Indian weapons performance and fissile material production capacity widening into chasms, achieving credible deterrence vis a vis China, already problematic, will soon become unthinkable. Lulled by the comforting illusions of "minimal" deterrence based on the 20/20 hindsight of the Cold War rather than the verities of the harsh and unforgiving world of international relations, the Indian government seems to be paddling around in the strategic shallows, unmindful of the rapids ahead.

Bharat Karnad is professor at the Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi

<http://www.deccanchronicle.com/dc-comment/nuclear-mind-games-528>

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The Moscow Times – Russia

OPINION

When Fewer Nuclear Arms Means More Security

17 February 2011

By Yevgeny Bazhanov

The Russian parliament and U.S. Senate both ratified the New START treaty, which reduces and sets limits to the number of strategic nuclear warheads and delivery vehicles, but there are plenty of people from both sides who are not happy about the treaty.

In Washington, the main naysayers are President Barack Obama's opponents whose main goal is to kick him out of the White House in 2012. The treaty also infuriated lobbyists for the U.S. military-industrial complex who had financial interests in prolonging the arms race.

Russia also has its critics of the treaty. Of course, they are not the opponents of President Dmitry Medvedev and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, nor lobbyists of the country's military-industrial complex. They are the so-called super-

patriots who are always ready to defend the motherland against the intrigues of the enemy and thumb their noses at those damn Yankees.

For example, Liberal Democratic Party leader Vladimir Zhirinovskiy claims that New START substantially weakens Russia's military power. Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov said any reduction of nuclear potential will undermine Russia's security. Retired General Leonid Ivashov warns that New START is disastrous for Russia because it does not address U.S. superiority in conventional arms — above all, its high-precision weapons — that undermine Russia's security.

Mimicking U.S. Republicans, State Duma deputies have appealed to the country's leaders to speed up modernization of Russia's nuclear forces and for the Kremlin to monitor Washington's plans to build a missile defense system in Europe and the removal of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons located on U.S. bases in several NATO-member countries.

Of course, it is possible to nitpick endlessly and find shortcomings in New START, but it is clear that the treaty will benefit both countries. The treaty will lead to a significant improvement in U.S.-Russian relations and to greater opportunities for cooperation in various spheres. It also opens the way for further talks between Moscow and Washington on military issues, particularly the thorny question of a joint missile defense system for Europe. If an agreement can ultimately be reached on joint missile defense, Russia, the United States and NATO will become true partners. What's more, New START enables Russia to save huge amounts of money, allowing it to proceed with plans to modernize its conventional arms.

Another positive result of the agreement is that it helps ease tensions on a global scale. It sends a signal to the other nuclear powers, as well as to countries like Iran that understand the geopolitical benefits of joining the nuclear club, that the two largest nuclear powers are serious about reducing their nuclear arsenals.

The message from New START is also important to a whole generation of people who have little understanding or memory of the bilateral arms reductions treaties of the past. I recently gave a talk to young Indonesian diplomats, and they asked why a small country like England has nuclear weapons but Indonesia is prohibited from having them. I referred to the results of World War II and the whole basis for the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty of 1968 — mainly, that the treaty recognized five nuclear powers (the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France and China). But given the inherent inequality that five countries are nuclear while all the other 184 signatories are bound to remain non-nuclear, Article 6 of the treaty commits the nuclear powers to reducing their nuclear arsenals and to eventually achieving "complete disarmament." The young Indonesian diplomats were unaware of World War II, let alone the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

Now that a positive precedent has been set with New START, it will be easier to persuade other governments to join the disarmament process. In fact, it is time that such talks became not just bilateral, but multilateral, and that the participants base their negotiations on common sense.

Some critics point to the fact that New START doesn't account for nuclear warheads held in reserve that could be deployed on missiles in the future. So what?

According to the treaty, both Russia and the United States can have 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads and 700 delivery vehicles. The first question is: Where are they going to mount these warheads if the number of strategic missiles is limited? The second question is: Even if a certain number of U.S. delivery vehicles can accept multiple warheads, does this mean Washington would be more tempted to launch a pre-emptive nuclear first strike against Russia?

In my opinion, it is clear that even if Washington somehow ends up with 100 more nuclear warheads than Russia and builds a missile defense system, neither the United States nor Russia will ever launch a nuclear attack against the other. There is no reason to do so. Why should Russia incinerate New York or Miami, or the United States obliterate Moscow or Sochi? What's more, no matter how supposedly impenetrable a missile defense system either side might build, the risk of receiving at least one retaliatory strike is close to 100 percent. Who would ever take this clearly unacceptable risk?

China offers a vivid example of the myth that only strict nuclear parity can provide deterrence. For decades, China had only a negligible nuclear deterrent — a dozen or so nuclear warheads, primitive delivery vehicles and no missile defense system to speak of — and no country every thought seriously about launching a nuclear first strike against China. Moreover, during this time of nuclear nonparity with the Soviet Union and the United States, China was able to invest the money it saved on nuclear armaments into its own economic development so that in less than 30 years it became a superpower that everybody respects, fears and listens to more than Russia.

Unfortunately, over the past decade China has shown that it wants to increase its nuclear arsenal and capabilities. It would be much better if China slowed down those plans and joined disarmament talks instead.

In the end, why should Russian conservatives get so worked up over what they see as imperfections in New START? It would make more sense to focus on the country's pressing domestic problems. After all, it was those

problems that broke a once-great superpower into pieces in 1991. The nuclear parity with the United States that the Soviet Union spent so much energy and money achieving — at such great cost to the welfare of the people — did nothing to stave off the Soviet collapse. On the contrary, the Kremlin's obsession with nuclear parity was one of the main reasons that caused the country to collapse.

Yevgeny Bazhanov is vice chancellor of research and international relations at the Foreign Ministry's Diplomatic Academy in Moscow.

<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/opinion/article/when-fewer-nuclear-arms-means-more-security/431169.html>

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Voice of America
OPINION/Analysis

Analysts Say Egypt Must Remain Free of Nuclear Weapons

February 17, 2011

In this report from Washington, Senior Correspondent André de Nesnera looks at Egypt's nuclear program and its stance on chemical weapons. With Egypt's political future still in limbo, analysts question whether Cairo's policy of not seeking nuclear weapons will remain in place.

Egypt's Nuclear Legacy

Egypt has two nuclear research reactors located at Inshas, near Cairo. They are used for peaceful purposes, such as medical research and nuclear engineering experiments.

But analysts agree that Egypt sought to acquire a nuclear weapons capability back in the 1960s. Former Defense Department official James Russell, who is now with the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California says interest in building a nuclear capability or developing an indigenous peaceful nuclear program ended during the presidency of Gamal Abdel Nasser.

"Nasser realized the deep financial costs that are going to be required and he also realized the political costs that would accrue from an Egypt developing a nuclear program," said Russell. "And so all these projects were canceled after the [Six Day] 1967 war. And then in 1968, Egypt signs the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty [NPT]. And since then the Sadat government ratifies the NPT in February 1981. And in 1982, they have a safeguards agreement, a comprehensive safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency [IAEA]."

Analyst Mark Fitzpatrick, from London's International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), says Egypt does not have the most modern technologies that could be used to produce fissile material for nuclear weapons.

"The issue is, though, that Egypt conducted some experiments in plutonium separation that they did not notify the IAEA in accordance with their safeguards agreement and it later came out and the IAEA did an investigation," noted Fitzpatrick. "And most of that was cleared up, but there are some remaining questions. And most recently, some highly-enriched uranium particles were discovered by the IAEA and I think they are still investigating the source of that. That all has not yet come out in IAEA reporting, so there is some small cloud hanging over Egypt's nuclear program. I am not saying they are going for nuclear weapons, but they did some things that were not fully in accordance with the rules."

Fitzpatrick says the plutonium experiments were conducted during the past couple of decades and came to light about six or seven years ago. And the evidence concerning the highly-enriched uranium particles was disclosed in the media within the last two years.

Egypt, Iraq and WMDs

On another issue, some analysts, including James Russell, say there have been reports of Egyptians in the 1980s helping Iraq with its chemical weapons research.

"There were also rumors of the Egyptians being involved in building a chemical plant that could possibly have made items that were used for chemical munitions," added Russell. "But again, I don't think that there is any assessment out there today that suggests that the Egyptians are engaged in research or really have any interest in developing chemical weapons."

And Russell says Egypt does not have the necessary industrial base in the chemical sector to build chemical weapons.

"The truth of the matter is that almost all countries around the world - the United States and Russia included - everyone has come to the conclusion that these are not just terribly militarily useful weapons, or that it is a technology which really has limited use in the military arena," Russell explained.

Post Mubarak Concerns

Some experts have questioned whether a government replacing President Hosni Mubarak might reconsider some of Cairo's policies on weapons of mass destruction.

"In the chemical and nuclear arenas, the costs to the Egyptians of attempting such programs are significant," added Russell. "And it just seems to me that any political leadership in Egypt, whatever its character, is going to have to look at these costs. And they are a strong discouragement to them moving down this path to sort of reconsidering the decisions which have been looked at by previous political leadership. I just do not see it."

Analysts say given Cairo's leadership in the Middle East, it is essential that Egypt remains free of weapons of mass destruction to guarantee stability in that part of the world.

<http://www.voanews.com/english/news/middle-east/Analysts-Say-Egypt-Must-Remain-Free-of-Nuclear-Weapons-116419354.html>

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Sify News – India

Book Review

"Jihadist Nuclear-Armed Pak Worst Nightmare for India, US, World": Riedel

February 17, 2011

By Asian News International (ANI)

A jihadist takeover in Pakistan- which is a "real possibility today"- would have devastating consequences not only for the country but the entire world, and particularly for India, says Bruce Riedel in his new book.

"A jihadist Pakistan would emerge through some combination of violence and intimidation. The simplest way would be another military coup led by a general who shares the worldview of Zia ul-Haq, the Pakistan dictator who ruled the country in the 1980s and defeated the Soviets with our help in Afghanistan, thus initiating the global jihad we face today," The Daily Beast quoted an excerpt from "Deadly Embrace: Pakistan, America and the Future of the Global Jihad," as saying.

The new regime would also take control of the nuclear arsenal, and make NATO's current mission in Afghanistan "virtually untenable. A jihadist Pakistan would be even more of a safe haven for the Afghan Taliban than now," Riedel said in his book.

He noted that in such a scenario, Pakistan's relations with Iran would probably deteriorate, with Shia jihadist Iran and Sunni jihadist Pakistan becoming enemies and competing for their influence on Afghanistan's battlefields.

"China, historically Pakistan's main arms supplier, would be threatened as well by jihadists meddling in its far west," he added.

Riedel, who chaired Obama's review of Afghanistan and Pakistan policy at the start of the administration two years ago, said that an Islamic takeover in Pakistan would be "particularly bad news for India, which would have little choice but to build up both its nuclear and conventional forces."

"Any chance for a peace agreement in Kashmir would be dead, and the new militant regime in Pakistan would increase support for the insurgency. A major mass-casualty attack like the one on Mumbai in November 2008 could spark a war," he added.

The former CIA officer also pointed out that a militant Islamic state in Pakistan would have a massive ripple effect across the Muslim world.

"Extremists would be strengthened. A jihadist Pakistan would be the most serious threat the United States has faced since the end of the Cold War. Aligned with al Qaeda and armed with nuclear weapons, such a state would be a nightmare, and all U.S. options for dealing with it would be bad," he said.

Riedel, who is a senior fellow in the Saban Center at the Brookings Institution, underlined that a jihadist, nuclear-armed Pakistan is a scenario that must be avoided at all costs.

"That means working with the Pakistan of today to try to improve its very spotty record on terrorism and proliferation. While many (on both sides of the U.S.-Pakistan dialogue) are pessimistic that cooperation/engagement between America and Pakistan will succeed, there is every reason to try, given the alternatives," he said.

The all-too-possible nightmare scenarios, which he mentioned in his book, should "impel the United States to focus on the current state of Pakistan. It needs to do better in Pakistan. For Obama, 2011 may be the year of Pakistan," Reidel concluded.

<http://www.sify.com/news/jihadist-nuclear-armed-pak-worst-nightmare-for-india-us-world-riedel-news-international-lcrp4djghbj.html>

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