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All the articles are available from the mentioned sources in original format.

A. Iran

Nuclear optimism - or how I learned to stop worrying and love the bomb: *Evan DeFilippis*

Nuclear optimism refers to the acceptance of nuclear weapons as a positive force in perpetuation of peace and stability. It is my contention that, in the context of Iranian nuclear proliferation, there is a case to be had for nuclear optimism.

First, the term “proliferation” is a misnomer — the term was originally used to convey the idea of a cancer — an uncontrollable, unsustainable, self-propagating process, that would eventually collapse upon itself. The term could not be more misleading — we have had nuclear weapons for over 50 years, yet only nine states have acquired nuclear capabilities. Such spread is glacial compared to the diffusion of conventional weapons which pose a far more potent threat to world peace than nuclear arms.

The key question, then, is whether or not proliferation in the Middle East will be slow or rapid. Contrary to the hyperbolic rhetoric from neoconservatives who echoed similar reservations in the 1960’s concerning China’s nuclear program, I believe **Iranian proliferation will be slow, stabilizing and conducive to international peace.**

Of the Middle Eastern states with the resources to go nuclear, only Egypt, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Israel have the fiscal and technical capacity to follow Iran’s lead. Israel is already a nuclear power, and Iranian proliferation could stabilize Israel’s militaristic ambition and encourage nuclear opacity. Egypt may be tempted to follow in Iran’s stead, but is heavily incapacitated by its dependence on foreign assistance, particularly from the U.S., and has this huge economic disincentive to refrain from nuclearizing. Saudi Arabia, though having the monetary and technical potential to create a nuclear device, would require extensive cooperation with black market, which, being a heavily monitored enterprise, would leave the Saudis susceptible to international pressure.

Establishing the infrastructure, technical expertise, and financial resources necessary to produce a nuclear weapon would also take years, and the interim period would be held hostage to pressure by the U.S. and Europe who could use a portfolio of nuclear security assurances, economic sanctions and diplomatic measures to coerce compliance. Turkey, being a member of NATO, would not risk nuclearizing, for fear of losing membership. Turkey will not have forgotten the protection offered by NATO during the Cold War against the Soviet Union, and will thus retain a strong political incentive to adhere to international demands.

Furthermore, any program developed by Iran would be both small and opaque. Iran does not require a large nuclear force to deter regional aggressors and developing long-range systems hamper secrecy efforts. It is therefore likely Iran would develop a number of small-range systems, disperse them throughout the country and keep

a low-profile to inhibit foreign intervention. The permutation of all three of these factors makes it unlikely that Iranian proliferation, even in the worst case, could provide a threat to global stability.

Second, Iranian proliferation is utterly inevitable. Discussing the merits of proliferation must take into account the realistic understanding that Iran's ambition to acquire nuclear weapons is unparalleled and will invariably come to fruition. Iran borders Pakistan and Afghanistan to the east, two countries that are incredibly unstable and, with Sunni majorities, pose at least a small threat to Iran. To the west, Iran borders Iraq, which engaged in heavy conflict for eight years with Iran during the 1980s. The fact that Saddam Hussein has been replaced by an American-controlled puppet does not do much to encourage optimism. Turkey, a NATO member, has close security ties with the United States, and could serve as a proxy for a pre-emptive strike against Iran.

But by far the most imminent threat to Iran's security is Israel which has the ability to attack with ballistic and submarine-launched cruise missiles, and has also publically announced the willingness to do so. From a realist standpoint, Iran has every justification to acquire nuclear weapons for the sake of its own security, and will stop at nothing to do so.

From a historical perspective, Iran seeks to regain its historical primacy over the Arabian Gulf, a status begrudgingly ceded to the interests of nuclear states. Additionally, status quo efforts to inhibit Iranian nuclear development are woefully inadequate: Russia refuses to cooperate with sanctions, even going so far as to provide Iran with an S-300 missile defense system, and China insists on diplomatic negotiations with Iran, citing commercial interests in Iran's oil and gas sector. Geographical motive, historical ambition, and inter-state factionalism have thus set the stage for the emergence of Iran as a nuclear state.

There is, however, a silver lining to nuclear fatalism. Iran is actually motivated, rather than deterred, by aggressive U.S. interference with Iranian nuclear ambitions. For example, in 1975 when Iran began its nuclear power plant, its original intentions were innocuous. It wasn't until George W. Bush declared the country part of the "axis of evil" that Iran began to militarize its nascent nuclear program under the justifiable pretense of self-defense. Furthermore, U.S. intervention can only incense nationalistic backlash in Iran, giving Tehran the public support needed to expedite the nuclearization process. We can either continue to pursue hardheaded nonproliferation strategies and risk indefinitely fracturing our relationship with Iran just before it gets nuclear weapons, or we can provide Tehran with the technical capacity to ensure that its nuclear program is safe and sustainable, and potentially gain a valuable economic partner in the meantime.

Third, proliferation is stabilizing. It was Professor Kenneth Waltz at U.C. Berkeley who reminded us "the world has enjoyed more years of peace since 1945 than had been known in modern history." Nuclear deterrence, assuring absolute destruction for either side, makes miscalculation a near impossibility, and induces caution and stability in all nuclear states. Such claims are not without wide substantiation. In the case of India and Pakistan, the Kargil Conflict of 1999 and the Twin Peaks Crisis of 2001 were both de-escalated due to the presence of nuclear weapons. The same could not be said in 1965, before either India or Pakistan had begun their nuclear weapons programs, when Pakistani support of

a military uprising in Kashmir lead to all out conventional war. In the case of Iraq, U.S. nuclear deterrence prevented the use of chemical and biological weapons (CBW) during the Gulf War. Gen . Waffic al Sammarai, the then-head of Iraqi military intelligence, stated that Sadaam Hussein was undeterred by U.S. conventional prowess, but that Bush's tacit threat of nuclear use against biological weapons deployment induced extreme caution in Sadaam's decision calculus. This historical example is particularly relevant in the Middle East, where the probability of CBW use is steadily increasing. Iran, Iraq, Syria, Libya, and Egypt all have extensive chemical weapons regimes they could deploy at a moment's notice, and Iranian nuclear proliferation would serve as a deterrent against such use. In fact, the reason cited for why no Middle Eastern country has carried out a CBW attack against Israel, despite many countries having the capacity to do so since the 1970s, is because of the threat of nuclear retaliation.

Due to the asymmetrical arms imbalance between Israel and other Middle Eastern countries, Israel is free to deploy CBW weapons wherever it pleases, as is the ostensible case in 2001, 2002, and 2003 against Palestinians. It should not need mentioning, but nuclear deterrence is the main reason why the Cold War did not escalate beyond brinkmanship, and why the Soviet-Chinese war, a subset of the Cold War, did not escalate beyond border disputes in the 60s. In fact, nuclear weapons probably prevented a number of conflicts from even materializing, so the true potential of deterrence can't be adequately quantified.

In the context of Iran, nuclear weapons would be especially conducive to peace. Iran acts frenetically due to the militaristic behavior of the United States. Having seen the United States supplant two bordering regimes, Iran can only assume it's next. As a result, Iran is pursuing the only rational course of action to ensure self-defense against a conventionally superior enemy.

It is my contention that a nuclear Iran would cement deterrence relationships that would provide the stability necessary for economic and diplomatic cooperation in the Middle East. Nuclear weapons in the Middle East would insure states only fight over minor interests, because conflicts over central interests would risk nuclear retaliation. Such a paradigm would be conducive to regional peace.

It is also my belief that Iranian nuclearization would encourage Israel to abandon regional military hegemony, providing the foundation for peace negotiations and stability. Trita Parsi argues that Tel Aviv's decision calculus is so dominated by fears of inferiority and threat perception that it misses opportunities to engage in peace negotiations with neighboring states. It is argued that Iran's offensive posture is self-fulfilling in that it creates the very enemies it seeks to deter, and, in turn, thwarts all hope for future peace agreements. Thus, the loss of nuclear primacy in the Middle East will exemplify the transition to a new paradigm characterized by a nuclear duopoly. Such a substantial geopolitical change would force Israel into tempering its aggressive ambitions and encourage Israel to consider peace agreements.

Fourth, proliferation is normalizing. It is a disingenuous reading of history to argue that the case for a nuclear Iran is substantively different from that of China or Soviet Russia. Certainly nobody thought that China or Soviet Russia was capable of nuclear moderation, yet both countries exhibited incredible restraint and responsibility. Stalin was a genocidal sociopath who had announced plans to end the entire world with nuclear weapons, and Mao Zedong heralded

the emergence of China as a nuclear power on the eve of the Cultural Revolution, a time of such extreme fanaticism that the Iranian situation can be adequately described as a banality in comparison. Indeed, the evidence suggests that Iran will exercise pragmatism and Westphalian decision calculus if it obtains the bomb.

Since the Islamic Revolution in 1979, Iran's ideological and religious fervor has significantly waned. It has ceased the exportation of Islamic ideology, and is now concerned with more pragmatic concerns: territorial integrity, economic stability, and political status. A quick survey of historical developments prove my point: a) Iran exercised rationality during the Iran-Iraq war of 1981, when Iran's leadership abandoned the original objective of defeating Saddam Hussein and agreed to a peace negotiation that left Iran weaker with respect to Iraq. Khomeini released a statement to the Iranian people about how it would have been "more bearable to accept death and martyrdom" than surrender, but that in the end he was forced to accept the wisdom of military experts and resign his ideological ambition; b) Iran exhibited neorealist decision-making in the Khobar Towers incident of 1996, where the Iranian government was indicted for supporting a terrorist bombing on an apartment complex in Saudi Arabia that left 19 Americans dead. The United States responded by completely decapitating Iran's intelligence capacity. All terrorist activity was immediately halted. The event demonstrated Iran's ability to exercise sound, rational judgment when making strategic political decisions; c) Iran has consistently demonstrated an almost secular decision calculus in international affairs—despite the fiery anti-Israeli rhetoric espoused by Ahmadenijad, Iran has consistently turned a blind eye to Muslims transgressions, actively pursuing objectives counter to welfare of Muslims around the world for the sake of political and economic gain. For example, Iran cooperates extensively with Russia economically and militarily despite Russian abuse of Chechen Muslims. Iran has a vast market selling gas and oil to China, despite Chinese oppression of Uighar Muslims. Iran retains a close, cordial relationship with Christian Armenia despite its conflict with Muslim Azerbaijan. And Iran continues to cooperate with India despite acts of violence against its own Muslim populace. Clearly, the ideological fervor spewed by Ahmadenijad, who is more or less an impotent figurehead, is not indicative of Iran's grand strategy.

Fifth, Iranian proliferation would decrease the regularity of terrorism in the Middle East. The confidence in security that Iran would obtain as a result of its nuclear weapons arsenal would allow it to forgo the use of Hezbollah as a strategic deterrent against Israel. Hezbollah currently functions as a mere nuisance to Iran's strategic ambition, so Iran would have no incentive to bear the costs of funding terrorist incursions, especially considering the new risk of nuclear escalation.

To those who claim that Iran would give nuclear weapons to terrorists, I have five responses:

- a. the reason that no nuclear state has ever given an intact nuclear device to a terrorist group is because such weapons can be traced back to the donor state, along with the guarantee of a retaliatory strike.
- b. Iran has been extremely cautious with its chemical weapons supply, refusing to hand over weapons to Hezbollah or Hamas, despite supporting both groups politically. Chemical weapon restraint serves as an adequate test case to extrapolate nuclear weapons caution. If Iran's intent had been to unequivocally

destroy Israel, they would have already supplied terrorist groups with a heavy arsenal of deadly gas.

- c. Hezbollah and Hamas have become increasingly autonomous as of recent, and it would be incredibly uncharacteristic and irrational of Iran to give the deadliest weapon on Earth to a group of questionable loyalty.
- d. The cost of construction and prestige associated with owning nuclear weapons is so great that it would be nonsensical for Iran to clandestinely hand over any weapons without any expectation of return.
- e. Even if a terrorist group managed to acquire a nuclear weapon from Iran the hurdles associated with transportation, guardianship, activation, and deployment would make it impossible for terrorist groups to pose a consequential threat to anyone in the Middle East.

My opponent will argue that nuclear weapons are an immoral instrument in international affairs because of their existential capacity. My thesis is just the opposite—deterrence is the most moral system governing international affairs from both a utilitarian and deontological standpoint. First, moral claims without empirical support are no different than blind religious metaphysics, so all moral judgment concerning deterrence theory have to be supported in history. History shows a direct correlation between the nuclear age and the decline in conventional conflicts; whereas wartime fatalities accounted for 2 percent of the world's population in the 1600s and 1700s, it accounted for only one-tenth of 1 percent of the world's population during the Cold War. Furthermore, fatality data collected since 1910 show a distinct drop in battle deaths in the post-World War II period. Nobel economics laureate Thomas Schelling recalled that “no state that has developed nuclear weapons has ever been attacked by another state and that no state armed with nuclear weapons has ever attacked another state similarly armed.” From a deontological standpoint, deterrence is the most moral paradigm because it operates from a fundamentally benevolent principle—the prevention and de-escalation of conflict. Deterrence is evaluated negatively because it is examined in a vacuum, where it is demonized for its catastrophic potential. However, a sincere evaluation of deterrence must include an examination of its intent and real-world effects—and history has made the answer clear as to its effects.

It makes little sense to embark on a quixotic quest to stop the spread of nuclear weapons, when it is so obvious that such endeavors are fruitless. United States is failing to secure a replacement for the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty with Russia. We have been continually unsuccessful at ratifying the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), the credibility of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is in shambles, we have failed to stop North Korean and Iranian proliferation, and all the while we are forcing nascent nuclear states to drive their programs underground, fearing military reprisal from the United States. Rather than temper and moderate the dangerous excess of rapid nuclear proliferation, abolitionists have created a hostile environment that precludes any concessions to nuclear optimists. Such an “all-or-nothing” approach is, ironically, immensely counter-productive to world peace. Nuclear weapons cannot be uninvited, nor would it be desirable if they could. We have two choices: we can either accept the inevitability of nuclear weapons, recognizing the pivotal role they play in maintaining world peace, or we can continue fighting this futile, explicitly racist struggle against all those we deem “irrational”, and make

enemies, lose friends, and squander diplomatic capital in the meantime.

Nuclear abolitionists are not moral in their ambition, for they seek a return to a world rife with civil and interstate conflict, a world where violence and war are geopolitical mainstays, and where peace is defined as simply the interim period between conflicts.

Source: <http://www.oudaily.com/news/2010/mar/04/column-nuclear-optimism—or-how-i-learned-stop-wo/>

U.N. council ready to tackle Iran nuclear issue:

Louis Charbonneau



An Iranian operator monitors the nuclear power plant unit in Bushehr, about 1,215 km (755 miles) south of Tehran, November 30, 2009.

The president of the U.N. Security Council said on Tuesday it was ready to tackle proposals for new sanctions against Iran over its nuclear program, while U.S. diplomats worked to persuade China that action is needed. Gabon's U.N. Ambassador Emanuel Issoze-Ngondet, president of the Security Council for March, said the Iranian nuclear issue was not on the agenda of the 15-nation panel this month, but council members might still hold a meeting on it.

"We think the question could come to the table" in March, Issoze-Ngondet told reporters through an interpreter. "But right now we are waiting. We're following the process that's ongoing. We're waiting for the

right time to bring the Security Council to deal with it." Speaking on condition of anonymity, Western diplomats told Reuters the United States, Britain, France and Germany have prepared a draft proposal — which they hope China and Russia will support — for a fourth round of sanctions against Iran for defying U.N. demands that it stop enriching uranium.

If the four Western powers win the support of Russia and China on a draft proposal, negotiations on the first new U.N. sanctions resolution in two years could begin immediately. The four Western powers had hoped to secure an agreement among the six as early as this week, so they could begin discussing with the full Security Council. But it has been difficult getting China to negotiate, the diplomats said.

Originally U.S., British, French and German officials had hoped the council could vote on a new sanctions resolution by the end of March, but some diplomats say they worry negotiations will run into April, mostly because of China's refusal to negotiate or make its views known on the issue. As permanent council members, China and Russia hold veto power, as do the United States, Britain and France.

U.s. And Chinese Diplomats Meet

In Beijing, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg and another top U.S. official planned to meet with Chinese diplomats to discuss ways of dealing with Iran and North Korea in meetings Washington hopes will ease tensions with China. Steinberg is the most senior U.S. diplomat to visit Beijing since a flurry

of disputes in January and February over Internet censorship, trade, arms sales to Taiwan and Tibet unsettled ties with China.

China and Russia have close business ties to Tehran. Unlike Beijing, Moscow has indicated it is willing to support further punitive measures against the Islamic Republic, which rejects Western allegations that its nuclear program is a cover for developing the capability to build atomic weapons. Both Russia and China advocate further dialogue with Iran.

The Western powers' proposed sanctions would target Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and expand a U.N. blacklist to include more individuals, banks and other firms subject to asset freezes and travel bans, diplomats said. Among the blacklist targets is Iran's central bank. France proposed hitting Iran's oil and gas industries. Washington, diplomats say, has proposed less stringent steps, such as a ban on new investments in Iran's energy sector.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov made clear on Tuesday that Moscow had not abandoned diplomatic efforts without resorting to sanctions to persuade Tehran to comply with U.N. demands to freeze sensitive nuclear activities. Western diplomats say they hope to secure a yes vote from Beijing for a sanctions package, though it might have to be more symbolic than painful for Tehran. But they also said it was possible China would only agree to abstain, which would avoid a Chinese veto but would send the message to Tehran that Beijing is not on board.

Security Council diplomats say that non-permanent council members Brazil, Turkey and Lebanon were expected to either abstain or vote against steps that would punish Tehran. The first two Iran sanctions resolutions were adopted unanimously in 2006 and 2007. The third was approved in March 2008 with 14 votes in favor and an abstention by non-permanent council member Indonesia. Canada's Foreign Ministry said Ottawa would use its presidency of the Group of Eight leading industrial nations to press for new U.N. sanctions against Iran.

Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman urged Washington to impose sanctions unilaterally against Iran in the same way it acted alone by clamping an embargo on Cuba 50 years ago. Israel, which sees a mortal threat in the prospect of Iran getting a nuclear bomb, has lobbied for "crippling" U.N. sanctions against Iran's energy sector. But Washington and other world powers have balked at such measures for now. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whose country is widely believed to be the Middle East's only nuclear power, has said the United Nations should be sidestepped if it cannot agree to act.

"We are a little worried by the pace of developments in the international arena," Lieberman told reporters.

Source: <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE6215BX20100303>

PM Riyadh trip seen in light of Iran nuclear rise

In joining King Abdullah to ask that Tehran come clean on its nuclear weapons programme, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh may have positioned India to play a new role in stabilising the balance of power between Saudi Arabia and Iran. In the Riyadh Declaration issued on Sunday, King Abdullah and Dr Singh "encouraged Iran...to remove regional and international doubts about its nuclear weapons programme".

Although couched in the usual caveat about Iran's right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy, India's decision to lend its voice in support of the Arabs will not go unnoticed in Tehran. Iran will also note India's support for the demand of the Gulf Arabs for a nuclear weapon free zone in the Gulf and the Middle East. Although the proposal for such a zone had been directed against Israel, in recent years the Arab Gulf states have adopted it as a pressure point against Iran.

The nuclear crisis in Iran is framed in terms of an unending confrontation between Washington and Tehran and as a challenge to the global non-proliferation regime that defines the rules for international nuclear commerce and preventing the misuse of nuclear energy for military purposes.

Source: <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/PM-Riyadh-trip-seen-in-light-of-Iran-nuclear-rise/586421>

West renews assault on enrichment plans

Iran came under renewed fire Wednesday for its decision to make a higher grade of enriched uranium, a move that weapons experts say would dramatically shorten the country's path to nuclear weapons. The United States and several European allies took turns denouncing Iran's behavior at a board meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna, and a U.S. diplomat warned that new U.N. sanctions may be inevitable.

"Iran seems determined to defy, obfuscate and stymie," said Ambassador Glyn Davies, head of the U.S. delegation to the U.N. nuclear watchdog. Davies was blunt about Iran's plans to increase the enrichment level for some of its uranium from less than 5 percent, suitable for nuclear power reactors, to nearly 20 percent, calling it an "an escalatory move, in blatant and direct violation" of U.N. resolutions. Iran denies seeking nuclear weapons, saying the higher-grade uranium would be used to fuel a reactor that makes medical isotopes.

An analysis released Wednesday concludes that the higher enrichment level would give Iran's rulers a bigger head start if they choose to go for a bomb. A stockpile of 20 percent-enriched uranium could be converted to a bomb's worth of weapons-grade fuel in about a month, the nonprofit Institute for Science and International Security said. Despite the diplomatic assault, the prospects for securing international support for tough sanctions against Iran remain uncertain. An attempt by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton to win Brazil's backing appeared to fizzle Wednesday; after a meeting with Clinton in Brasilia, President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva told a news conference it was not wise "to push Iran into a corner."

Source: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/03/03/AR2010030303675.html>

'Iran to Continue Cooperation with IAEA'

The Iranian foreign minister says Iran is fully cooperating with the UN nuclear watchdog, stressing that there have been no diversions in the country's nuclear program. Manouchehr Mottaki made the comments as the new head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Yukiya Amano, accused Iran in a

meeting of the Board of Governors of not cooperating sufficiently with the UN body over its nuclear program. In a Monday news conference in Geneva, Mottaki said, "The new chief and the new managers of the agency should look at the record of Iran's cooperation."

"We have fully cooperated with the agency. This cooperation will continue," he said. "We have always welcomed and encouraged negotiations and talks." Earlier Monday, Amano said in his opening address to the meeting that the IAEA continues to verify the non-diversion of declared nuclear material in Iran but is unable to confirm that all nuclear material in the country is being used for peaceful activities as Iran has not provided the agency with the "necessary cooperation."

Mottaki insisted that Tehran was among countries "most committed" to the IAEA, when asked about his reaction to the watchdog's concerns. "We were and we are," he stressed. Amano said a UN proposal to supply Iran with fuel for the Tehran nuclear research reactor was still on the table. The proposal would require Iran to send most of its low-enriched uranium (LEU) to Russia and subsequently France for further enrichment and conversion into metal fuel rods.

While the Tehran research reactor, which produces medical radioisotopes for cancer treatment, is already running out of fuel, based on the draft Iran would receive a shipment of the nuclear fuel at a later time. Iran was still having negotiations with different parties on the issue of an exchange of nuclear fuel, Mottaki said. "The issue of swap, it is possible to be carried out. The agreement could be made now, but the realization, the fulfillment of the swap needs time," he said.

Tehran has cited the West's previous failures to meet its commitments and provide Iran with nuclear fuel as a cause for concern over the delivery of the fuel. After the powers ignored Tehran's concerns over the absence of necessary guarantees, Iran decided to domestically enrich uranium to a level of 20 percent. Iran, a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), rejects the allegations of having military objectives in its nuclear program as politically motivated and says its nuclear work is completely peaceful and within the framework of the NPT.

Source:<http://www.presstv.ir/detail.aspx?id=119776&ionid=351020104>

Clinton Appears to Extend Timeline for Iran Sanctions: *Lachlan Carmichael*

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said Monday it could take months for new UN sanctions against Iran, as she prepared for talks in Argentina and Brazil about the perceived Iranian nuclear threat. Speaking on the plane to Buenos Aires, the chief US diplomat appeared to back away from her contention before the US Senate last week that a new resolution could be obtained in the "next 30 to 60 days."

"We are moving expeditiously and thoroughly in the Security Council. I can't give you an exact date, but I would assume sometime in the next several months," she said before landing in the Argentine capital. Meanwhile, a senior US diplomat in Washington dismissed

Iranian reports that a Sunni militant, arrested in Iran, said his group Jundallah had received American help.

"I'm highly skeptical of those claims," the diplomatic source said, asking to remain anonymous, referring to the claims said to be made by Abdolmalek Rigi. "There was a report over the weekend that he was moving to meet Richard Holbrooke somewhere, that's utter nonsense," the source added. Clinton told reporters traveling with her that she expected to discuss Iran with for talks with Argentine President Cristina Kirchner, praising her stand on Iran.

"The Argentines have a very clear understanding of the dangers of the proliferation of nuclear weapons," Clinton said. "And they have been a very strong proponent in the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) against the proliferation, and have voted such even with respect to Iran. So I do expect it to come up," Clinton said. Clinton had initially intended to meet Kirchner on the sidelines of the inauguration in Montevideo of Uruguayan President Jose Mujica, but she added Buenos Aires to her six-country Latin America tour on Sunday.

With Saturday's mammoth quake in Chile throwing her schedule into flux, Clinton decided to drop plans to spend Monday night in the Chilean capital Santiago and instead make a brief solidarity visit Tuesday to Santiago airport. Clinton is due to travel late Tuesday to Brasilia for talks about Iran and other subjects Wednesday with President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and Foreign Minister Celso Amorim.

Brazil — a current voting member on the 15-strong council but not one of the five permanent veto-wielding members — has been reluctant to join the US push for sanctions.

She will discuss with Lula "the fact that the United States recognizes Iran has the right to peaceful civil nuclear power but does not under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty have the right to nuclear weapons.

"It is violating its international obligations, it has been found to be in violation of the International Atomic Energy Agency and the UN Security Council," she said. "These are not findings by the United States. These are findings by the international community," she said. "It is going to be the topic of the UN Security Council so I want to be sure he has the same understanding that we do as to how this matter is going to unfold," Clinton said. Clinton's visit to Brazil was preceded Friday by William Burns, the undersecretary of state for political affairs, who leads US consultations among the P5-plus-1 — the club dealing with efforts to halt Iran's contested nuclear program.

The group is made up of the five permanent veto-wielding members of the UN Security Council — the United States, Russia, China, Britain and France — plus Germany. Lula at a regional summit in Mexico last week warned that the global community, in its quest for peace, should avoid isolating Iran over its controversial nuclear program. "Peace in the world does not mean isolating someone," said Lula, whose country has its own nuclear energy program.

Brazil's Senate foreign relations committee on Thursday called Amorim to testify about the country's policy towards Iran. Clinton's tour follows one to the oil-rich Gulf less than two weeks ago when she asked Saudi Arabia, the biggest oil exporter to China, to use its influence to persuade Beijing to join the drive for sanctions against Iran.

Source: <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5hiQjABaVFkUQC1-FDU-YPTmjd5Jw>

Iran Moves Enriched Uranium Stock Back

Underground: *Mark Heinrich and Sylvia Westall*

Iran has moved a stock of enriched uranium back underground after drawing what it needed to refine the material up to 20 percent purity, Tehran's envoy to the U.N. nuclear watchdog said on Monday. He dismissed media speculation that Iran had placed a large amount of the material in a visible spot above ground to provoke an Israeli air strike that would give Iran a pretext to expel U.N. inspectors and develop atom bombs for security reasons.

Iran has said its move to feed low-enriched uranium (LEU) into centrifuges for higher-scale refinement is to make fuel for a medical isotope reactor. Western officials and U.N. inspectors doubt Iran's explanation since it lacks the technical capacity to convert higher-enriched uranium into fuel rods for the reactor, whose Argentine-provided fuel stock is running out. They fear Iran wants to advance along the road to producing high-enriched — 90 percent purity — uranium suitable for the fissile core of an atomic bomb, if it chose later to do so.

Diplomats also questioned why Iran had moved 94 percent — 1.95 tonnes of its LEU reserve out of its main, subterranean enrichment plant at Natanz, a much larger amount than would be needed to produce fuel for the reactor in the medium term. "This was merely for producing material for the Iran research reactor. That is why that container is now back to its original location," Ali Asghar Soltanieh, Iran's ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency, told reporters. A senior diplomat close to the IAEA confirmed the container had been returned underground but could not immediately say how much LEU had been used for higher-scale enrichment.

U.S. media have speculated that, in moving above ground an LEU stockpile Iranian officials have called a strategic asset, Iran thought of goading adversaries such as Israel, which views the Iranian nuclear programme as an existential threat. "For your information, we just moved the capsule because technically they needed it and they have put it back. We used the material which we needed for the Tehran Research Reactor," Soltanieh said during a break in an IAEA governors meeting.

Diplomats there discounted the notion of political reasons for Iran having moved much of its LEU stockpile above ground. "A more likely reason was that Iran needed a large container to provide a steady feed with sufficient pressure for 20 percent enrichment," said one senior diplomat close to the IAEA. "In any case, this container can be moved back and forth between the pilot and main Natanz facilities in a half hour." U.N. nuclear agency chief Yukiya Amano said a reactor fuel supply offer brokered by his predecessor Mohamed ElBaradei with Russia, France and the United States, was still open to Iran. Tehran has rejected a key clause requiring it to ship 70 percent of its LEU abroad.

"(It) is the balanced and realistic proposal. That's why I support it and keep it on the table," said Amano."

Source:<http://uk.reuters.com/article/idUKLDE6202AD20100301>

Israel Shows China Evidence of Iran Bomb Program: *Barak Ravid*

An Israeli delegation that traveled to Beijing last week presented detailed intelligence on Iran's nuclear program in an attempt to persuade China that Tehran seeks atomic weapons, a senior diplomatic source told Haaretz.

The group, led by Strategic Affairs Minister Moshe Ya'alon and central bank chief Stanley Fischer, tried to persuade China to support sanctions on Iran by offering "the full intelligence picture available to Israel," the diplomat said. The Israeli officials also told the Chinese that a nuclear Iran would push up oil prices - China depends on Iran for a significant proportion of its imported oil.

Israel is trying to recruit China's support for a fourth round of sanctions on Iran, and the UN Security Council is due to vote on the issue in the coming months. At the very least, Israel wants to ensure that China does not oppose the sanctions when they come to vote. Israel also wants to make sure that China supports the report on Iran published by the new head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Yukiya Amano. Unlike his predecessor Mohamed ElBaradei, Amano discussed in his report the possibility that Iran might secretly be developing nuclear weapons. The IAEA's annual conference is set to open in Vienna today.

The diplomat told Haaretz that the delegation's main aim was to present the Chinese with evidence that Iran is developing nuclear arms. China's official position is that Iran has a right to develop nuclear technology for peaceful, civilian purposes and that there is no proof Iran has a military nuclear program. Most detailed overview in years

"The Chinese were given the full intelligence picture Israel has about the Iranian nuclear program, which clearly shows Iran is developing nuclear weapons," the source said. "The delegation also stressed how concerned Israel was, and that all options must remain on the table," the source added. The delegation that set out for Beijing in coordination with the U.S. administration also included senior officials in the Foreign Ministry, the National Security Council and the defense establishment.

It met with a number of Chinese officials, the most senior being State Councilor Dai Bingguo. According to the source, the Israelis spent two hours presenting the Chinese with an overview of the intelligence information Israel has on Iran's nuclear program. This was the most detailed overview given by Israel to China in more than three years, since prime minister Ehud Olmert's visit in January 2007.

The Israeli delegation left with a positive feeling, the source said, with the Chinese saying they would seriously consider the information they received. Talks were conducted in a friendly atmosphere, with Beijing stressing the importance of Chinese-Israeli relations and its desire to develop ties further, the source said. Fischer detailed the implications a nuclear Iran would have for the world economy, stressing a dramatic rise in oil prices. Alternatives to importing oil from Iran were also discussed.

Earlier this year, Saudi Arabia and the United States proposed to China that it buy oil from Arab states at much lower prices than oil imported from Iran. China is also concerned about possible sanctions because of its deals with Iran on

developing railroads, tunnels and oil fields. These contracts are expected to be highly profitable, so the Chinese fear that sanctions would put them at risk.

Source:<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1153047.html>

U.N. Report on Possible Iran Bomb Work “Factual” – Amano: *Mark Heinrich*

The new U.N. nuclear agency chief said on Monday his report Iran could be trying to develop a nuclear-armed missile was factual and impartial, rejecting Iranian suggestions he was biased towards Western powers. Yukiya Amano spelled out a “clear” approach to Iran’s nuclear activity after what diplomats said was the reluctance of his predecessor Mohamed ElBaradei to confront Iran due to his scepticism about the veracity of Western intelligence on Tehran.

Amano’s blunter line on Iran could be significant if it increases momentum towards harsher United Nations sanctions on Iran. Six world powers have begun deliberations on more sanctions at U.N. Security Council level in New York. In an address to the U.N. agency’s board of governors and a news conference, Amano did not repeat a politically sensitive reference in a Feb. 18 report on Iran about “the possible existence in Iran of past or current undisclosed activities related to the development of a nuclear payload for a missile”.

Diplomats said Amano’s reticence on Monday may have been a gesture to dampen tensions within the IAEA’s governing body after a developing nation bloc, to which Iran belongs, suggested his report was not sufficiently balanced. “In my view, this report is factual and absolutely impartial. That is the essence ... it took stock of the whole picture. I wanted the report to be clear, straightforward, easy to read and understand,” Amano told reporters.

He said intelligence information that hardened the IAEA’s disquiet about possible nuclear weapons-relevant activity in Iran was collected from multiple sources and was consistent in detail, timeline, and Iranian officials and agencies cited. “We have an integrated team of experts, we have experience. And the information is extensive. We cross-check it. After this process, we are saying that altogether it raises concern.”

“Chose Our Words Carefully”

Asked to address Iranian accusations of bias, he said: “My report does not say that Iran (indisputably) has or had a nuclear weapons programme. I want to make that clear. We have chosen our words carefully,” Amano said. He said it was urgent for Iran to dispel suspicions by suspending nuclear fuel production, allowing unfettered U.N. inspections and opening up to IAEA investigators. Iranian officials have portrayed Amano as lacking experience, competence and independence from Western powers, something IAEA officials and Western diplomats strongly deny.

Iran denies ever seeking nuclear bomb capability, saying its uranium enrichment drive is only for peaceful energy purposes. Iran increased disquiet in the IAEA about its behaviour last month by, according to Amano’s report, starting enriching uranium to higher, 20 percent purity before inspectors could get to the scene and enhance surveillance methods. Iran’s move heightened suspicions that its end game is a stockpile of bomb-grade uranium enriched to 90 percent.

A senior diplomat close to the IAEA said safeguards against illicit escalation of enrichment beyond civilian uses remained weak and the agency was pressing Iran to allow snap inspections, “within minutes of notice”, at the 20 percent production site.

Source:<http://in.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idINIndia-46561620100301?rpc=401&feedType=RSS&feedName=worldNews&rpc=401>

Iran Says Can Cut Energy to Europe, Hit Enemies

Iran could make European countries suffer by cutting off energy supplies and can target any adversary with its missiles, a senior Iranian military official said on Sunday. Iran is locked in dispute with the United States and its allies over its nuclear energy programme which Western countries fear is aimed at allowing Iran the chance to develop nuclear weapons. Tehran says it is only interested in electricity.

The International Atomic Energy Agency’s (IAEA) governing board meets in Vienna next week to discuss Iran while world powers are deliberating new sanctions on Iran at the level of the U.N. Security Council. Iran is one of the world’s biggest oil and gas exporters but its economy is suffering amid the global financial crisis and international ostracism over the nuclear dispute. “Iran is standing on 50 percent of the world’s energy and should it so decide Europe will have to spend the winter in cold,” Hossein Salami, deputy commander of the elite Revolutionary Guards, said in a meeting with war veterans and volunteers in Kerman, according to Fars news agency.

“Our missiles are now able to target any spot in which the conspirators are in, and the country is making advances in all fields,” he said. Iran has tested a number of missiles in recent years that could be used in any war with its arch enemy Israel. Analysts say Israel could try a military strike on Iran’s nuclear facilities. Some European countries have faced difficulties from reliance on gas supplies from Russia, but Iran has struggled to find the cash and technology to develop its energy sector as sanctions and political pressure have kept foreign firms away. Israel lobbied Washington last week for sanctions against Iran, which imports 40 percent of its gasoline from foreign refineries.

Source:<http://uk.reuters.com/article/idUKKAL85419220100228>

Iran Urges UN Nuclear Agency to Retain Independence

The Leader of the Islamic Revolution warned Sunday that the UN nuclear watchdog would lose its legitimacy if it folds under pressures exerted by the United States over Iran’s nuclear program. In a meeting with Iran’s foreign minister, ambassadors and senior officials, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said Iran had declared from the beginning that the aim of its nuclear work was to develop the technology for civilian purposes, including energy generation.

The West has accused Tehran of seeking nuclear weapons in its pursuit. The allegation has yet to be validated by the UN nuclear watchdog, whose inspectors are monitoring Iranian nuclear facilities extensively. “Propaganda and furor stemming from the West, including

the United States, Britain as well as the Zionists, on Iran's nuclear program is absolutely bogus, and they know they are lying, and their opposition will not be in their favor," Ayatollah Khamenei said.

Despite all their efforts, he said, Iran has made significant progress in its nuclear work and will continue its path to the point it deems necessary. The Leader went on to criticize the recent direction taken by the UN nuclear body about Iran and said, "Some attempts and reports by the [International Atomic Energy] Agency proves that this international body is not acting independently."

"The IAEA should not be under the pressure of the United States and some other countries since such unilateral moves will break trust in the agency and the United Nations," Ayatollah Khamenei said. "It will also damage the reputation of such international bodies." The Leader also touched upon Iran's approach towards global politics and said that the "anti-hegemony policy" is unique to the Islamic Republic.

"There are two sides in the hegemonic system; one is trying to control others and the other is controlled by the hegemonic power," he said. "However, the Islamic Republic of Iran said from the beginning that it would not be dominant nor would it accept submission." The Leader stressed that unlike some revolutions the popular movement of the Iranians had not witnessed a decline since the starting days of the Islamic Revolutions.

"Which country do you know of that after 31 years, the participation of the people in its Revolution anniversary [ceremonies], not only does not decline but also sees a sharp increase?" "The power and influence of diplomacy is no less than the power of military, propaganda and money, it is even greater in many instances." "Therefore, in order to implement the anti-hegemony policy, one must exercise a robust and practical diplomacy that is based on logic, reason and self-confidence."

Source:<http://www.presstv.ir/detail.aspx?id=119704&ionid=351020101>

New U.N. Watchdog Head Faces Rising Tension with Iran: *Sylvia Westall*

The U.N. atomic watchdog's new chief will present a tougher approach to Iran at a meeting of member states starting on Monday where clashes loom over his suggestion Tehran may be trying to design a nuclear weapon. Iran was likely to argue Yukiya Amano lacks competence and independence from Western powers, who want to impose harsher sanctions on Tehran, as tensions grow over its escalation of nuclear fuel enrichment and suspicions of illicit bomb research.

Amano, who took over from Mohamed ElBaradei in December, was seen distilling the tougher line contained in his February 18 report on Iran when he opens a week-long meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) governing board. "The report is clearer and harsher in tone than those from ElBaradei. He will give a summary in the same tone as the report, no more, no less," said a European diplomat who like others asked for anonymity due to political sensitivities.

Amano's approach is important because the discussion at the 35-nation board in Vienna is expected to feed into deliberations on slapping harsher sanctions on Iran taking place among the six world

powers at the level of the U.N. Security Council. Some diplomats said Iran might try an unusual personal attack on Amano, suggesting the veteran Japanese diplomat is a lackey of the West, to deflect attention from his report's findings and try to rally developing nations behind it.

"Iran wanted to kick him as soon as the report was published. They will try and focus on the personal, not the substantial," said another European diplomat. Iran's foreign minister has already criticized Amano, particularly his suggestion that the Islamic Republic may be working on developing a nuclear-armed missile now, rather than having done so only in the past. "Mr Amano is new to the job and clearly has a long way to go before he can reach the experience held by Mohammed ElBaradei," Manouchehr Mottaki told Iranian broadcaster Al Alam last week.

"The report was Amano's first and, like many other first reports, it was seriously flawed."

Western diplomats have praised the new director-general for what they see as his matter-of-fact treatment of the IAEA probe into "possible military dimensions" to Iran's nuclear activity. Amano omitted Iran's repeated flat denials and denunciations of "forged" information and did not flag that the intelligence was not fully authenticated, as ElBaradei's reports often did. "The Iran report shows what the 'Amano effect' means in practical terms: an IAEA staff unburdened and unleashed to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth," a senior Western diplomat said.

Open Questions

IAEA governors were not expected to rebuke Iran in a resolution as they did at their last meeting in November, when Iran was censured for hiding a uranium enrichment site. But Western nations were likely to condemn it over an IAEA complaint that Iran had begun feeding low-enriched uranium (LEU) into centrifuges for higher refinement before inspectors could get to the scene at its Natanz pilot enrichment facility.

Iran said it started higher enrichment because it was frustrated at the collapse of an IAEA-backed plan for big powers to provide it with fuel rods for nuclear medicine made from uranium refined up to 20 percent purity. Some diplomats also questioned why Iran had set aside the great bulk of its LEU stockpile for higher-scale enrichment when it lacks the technology to eventually convert it into fuel rods for the Tehran medical research reactor.

Iran's enrichment escalation has unnerved the West since advancing from 20 percent to the bomb-grade level of 90 percent purity would need only a few months, much faster than reaching the initial 3.5 percent stage suitable for power plants. Iran has also told the IAEA it is building a production line at its uranium conversion plant in Isfahan to turn powder derived from LEU into uranium metal, raising concerns because this material has both weapons and civilian energy applications.

IAEA governors will also assess a separate Amano report voicing suspicion that Syria engaged in covert nuclear work at a desert site bombed by Israel in 2007 because uranium particles were found there by U.N. inspectors in June the following year. Syria has rebuffed IAEA requests for follow-up investigation.

Source:<http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE61R12E20100228>

Top Israeli Official: A Nuclear Iran Would Endanger World Stability: *Charley Keyes*

Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak said Friday that Iran's nuclear program poses a danger that extends beyond Israel. "Iran is not just a challenge for Israel. I believe it is a challenge for the whole world," Barak said in a speech in Washington. "I can hardly think of a stable world order with a nuclear Iran." Barak said he doubts that Iran is "crazy" enough — he used the Yiddish word "meshugah" — to launch a nuclear attack against Israel, but warned the existence of a nuclear-armed Iran could endanger the region, disrupt oil supplies and empower Iran's terrorist allies.

"I don't think the Iranians, even if they got the bomb, are going to drop it in the neighborhood," Barak said. "They fully understand what might follow — they are radical but not total 'meshugah.' They have a quite sophisticated decision-making process and they understand realities." Iran maintains it is interested in nuclear development only for power-generation and other civilian uses. But Barak said all countries must reject what he called "the verbal gymnastics" Iran uses to justify its nuclear research.

"It means they are not just trying to create a Manhattan-project-like crude nuclear device," he said. "They are trying to jump directly into the second or second-and-a-half generation of nuclear warheads that could be installed on top of ground-to-ground missiles with ranges that will cover not just Israel, but Moscow or Paris." He said Israel supports diplomatic efforts to pressure Iran to change course.

After his speech to the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Barak met with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton at the State Department. The United States is working to rally international support for more stringent economic sanctions against Iran. "Iran is not living up to its responsibilities and we are working with our partners in the international community to increase pressure on Iran to change course," Clinton said in a photo-taking session with Barak.

On efforts to revive stalled peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians, Barak said most Israelis are prepared to do what is needed. "There is a strong, silent majority in Israel which is ready to make tough, painful decisions to reach peace once they feel there is readiness on the other side and we are not having this tango alone," Barak said in his speech. He insisted that Israel will seek peace and protect its security.

"We have to stand firm on our two feet, open-eyed, without a drop of self-delusion about the realities of our neighborhood, but having one hand, preferably the left hand, looking for any window, turning every stone in order to find opportunities for peace, while the other hand, the right one, will be pointing a finger, very close to the trigger, ready to pull it when it is ultimately a necessity," Barak said.

Source: <http://edition.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/meast/02/26/israel.iran.nuclear/index.html>

US Steps Up Diplomatic Pressure on Russia

Over Iran Sanctions: *Adrian Blomfield and Andrew Osborn*

Amid fears that Moscow remains intent on weakening a planned Security Council resolution punishing Tehran for its nuclear programme, western diplomats are seeking to convince Russia to support much more robust measures. They hope the West's case for robust action will be strengthened on Monday when the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the UN's nuclear watchdog, meets in Vienna to discuss a damning new report on Iran's atomic intentions.

According to the report, written by Yukiya Amano, the IAEA's tough-talking new chairman, Iran may be hiding "undisclosed activities related to the development of a nuclear payload for a missile". The agency's findings are likely to pave the way for a Security Council resolution proposing a fourth round of sanctions on Iran. Russia, along with China, ensured that the three previous rounds were considerably watered down. But in recent weeks, Moscow's patience with its long-standing ally appears to have evaporated and Russian officials have grudgingly talked of their support for some kind of sanctions.

Vladimir Chizhov, Russia's envoy to the European Union, conceded that dialogue with Iran was no longer working. "This prompts Moscow to think about options for sanctions." Even so, diplomats privately say they expect Russia's cooperation to be, at best, limited. In order to ratchet up the pressure on Iran's leadership, the United States, Britain, France and Israel are understood to back sanctions that would target Iran's central bank and financial sector, its main shipping and transportation companies and assets controlled by the country's powerful Revolutionary Guard.

But Russia favours a much more limited scope to sanctions, insisting that they should be narrowly targeted on individuals and companies directly involved in Iran's nuclear programme. Diplomats concede that persuading Russia to change its position will be tough. "Anything to do with proliferation we estimate the Russians will be cooperative," one said. "But when it comes to energy or arms, a whole different set of considerations comes into play."

Russia and China, both veto-wielding members of the Security Council, benefitted commercially from the previous rounds of sanctions. Russia sold Iran arms, China signed valuable energy deals and neither will surrender lucrative contracts easily. Yet Western officials are still confident that they can win Russia over. Diplomats have made a number of discreet missions to Moscow to make power-point demonstrations, a source said.

Seeking to undermine those efforts, Iran on Sunday presented Russia with two rare Persian leopards — a gift personally solicited by Vladimir Putin, the Russian prime minister. Persuading China, however, could well be a mission to far, according to one diplomatic source: "It's not very encouraging," he said. "We don't have much leverage." Worryingly for the West, the number of sanctions naysayers seems to be growing. This week, Hillary Clinton, the US secretary of state, will visit Brazil in an attempt to persuade its president, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, to end his increasingly cosy relationship with Iran. Brazil is also pursuing commercial deals that the West says could allow Iranian banks that fund Tehran's nuclear programme to avoid sanctions.

Source: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iran/7338680/US-steps-up-diplomatic-pressure-on-Russia-over-Iran-sanctions.html>

Lavrov: No Proof Iran Working on Nuclear Weapons

Russia's foreign minister says Moscow will not agree to harsh sanctions against Iran, reasoning that there is nothing to prove Tehran is working on nuclear weapons. "There is no evidence that Iran has made a decision to produce nuclear weapons," Sergei Lavrov said in a recent interview with RIA Novosti. Lavrov went on to add that he did not believe that sanctions were an effective course to take. "If we go with the sanctions, we'll not go beyond the goal of our purpose of defending the nonproliferation regime.

"We don't want the nonproliferation regime to be used for ... strangling Iran, or taking some steps to deteriorate the situation [and] the living standards of people in Iran," he said clarifying that Moscow did not plan to agree to embargoes that could seriously damage Iran's economy. Russia's foreign minister, however, said Tehran had to clarify several key issues on its nuclear program to avoid fresh sanctions from world powers. "I cannot rule out that the UN Security Council will have to consider the situation once again," he said.

Lavrov did urge the Islamic Republic to answer all the questions posed by the International Atomic Energy Agency, but he acknowledged Iran's right to carry out nuclear activities. He told the reporters that as it said in its latest report, the International Atomic Energy Agency continued to monitor Iran's nuclear activities. "Of course, the agency also reports traditionally that it cannot be 100% sure that Iran does not have some secret nuclear activities," Lavrov said, implying that the UN nuclear watchdog's latest report was not raising any new suspicions.

World powers, led by the US, accuse Tehran of pursuing military applications under the guise of a civilian nuclear program, despite the fact that IAEA inspectors stationed in Iran have been unable to substantiate their claim. Last week, the new IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano issued his first report on Iran's nuclear program, once again verifying the non-diversion of declared nuclear material in Iran. Amano's report, however, did raise some concerns about "the possible existence... of past or current undisclosed activities related to the development of a nuclear payload for a missile."

While the US used that segment of the report to once again threaten Iran with sanctions, Tehran pointed out that the report raised no "new cause for concern", but simply addressed a series of past issues already examined former IAEA Chief Mohamed ElBaradei. In an interview with Press TV, Iran's Ambassador to the IAEA Ali-Asghar Soltanieh said that he had asked the director general why he had included a reference to past issues regarding Tehran's nuclear program in his first report on Iran.

According to Soltanieh, Amano had responded by acknowledging that his reference to the alleged studies was "absolutely nothing new" but simply an attempt to provide a background on all previous issues regarding Iran's nuclear program. "There is nothing new. The alleged studies were forged... two or three times, Mr. ElBaradei officially announced that there is no authenticity to these materials. Therefore, the director general has already questioned the validity of these materials. "Mr. Amano only tried to bring a full background on the issues that were discussed before for the reader to understand the background. Of course it unfortunately has created some misunderstandings," said Soltanieh.

Source:<http://www.presstv.ir/detail.aspx?id=119597&ionid=351020104>

B. DPRK

North Korea Vows to Bolster Nuclear Deterrent:

Kwang-Tae Kim

North Korea vowed Tuesday to strengthen its nuclear deterrent and its means of delivery — an apparent reference to missiles — days after threatening rival South Korea and U.S. forces with attack if they conduct military exercises as planned next week. The threat comes as the U.S. and other dialogue partners are pushing for the North's communist regime to rejoin disarmament talks it pulled out of last year in anger over international condemnation of a long-range rocket launch. Soon after, it conducted its second atomic test — a move that drew tighter U.N. sanctions.

The North's official Korean Central News Agency said Tuesday there will be no progress in denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula unless the U.S. removes its nuclear threat against the North. The U.S. denies posing such a military threat to the North, although it retains about 28,500 troops in South Korea. The North wants sanctions lifted and peace talks to formally resolve the 1950-53 Korean War — which ended in a truce, not a peace treaty. The U.S., South Korea and Japan have responded the North must first return to the disarmament talks and make progress on denuclearization.

“Should the U.S. persist in its unrealistic moves to stifle the (North) in disregard of its realistic proposal, this will only compel it to boost its nuclear deterrent and its delivery means,” the KCNA dispatch said. The North routinely issues threats about its nuclear deterrent, but it is the first time it has referred to how it would deliver a nuclear weapon. The North is believed have enough weaponized plutonium for at least half a dozen atomic bombs, and has been developing a long-range missile designed to strike the U.S. Experts say, however, it has not mastered the technology required to mount a nuclear warhead onto the missile.

The statement comes ahead of annual U.S.-South Korean military drills starting in South Korea next Monday. Last week, the North threatened a “powerful” — even nuclear — attack if the drills go ahead. The North says the exercises are preparation for an invasion, but the U.S. and South Korea say the maneuvers are purely defensive. Despite that dispute, officials from the two Koreas held talks Tuesday on easing border crossings, communication and customs clearance for South Koreans who work at a joint industrial complex in the North.

The officials met for about 80 minutes at the complex in Kaesong, the South's Unification Ministry said, without giving any details of the meeting. The two sides will discuss their schedule for further talks on Tuesday afternoon, it said. The Kaesong complex is the most tangible sign of cooperation on the divided peninsula. It has combined South Korean capital and know-how with cheap labor from cash-strapped North Korea, with about 110 South Korean factories employing 42,000 North Korean workers.

Source:<http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5iURO8fOyWVOA0ytFlaAGuC9F7R9wD9E69GR80>

South Korea Renews Offer of Incentives for Disarmament: *Hyung-Jin Kim*

South Korea's president said Monday that he wants to achieve "genuine" reconciliation with North Korea through dialogue and renewed his offer of a package of incentives for the North's nuclear disarmament. The North has recently reached out to Seoul and Washington following months of tension over its nuclear and missile program. A U.S. State Department spokesman said Friday that the North could rejoin international nuclear disarmament talks in coming weeks.

"For genuine reconciliation and cooperation ... South and North Korea must resolve many pending issues through a dialogue," President Lee Myung-bak said in a nationally televised address marking Korea's 1919 uprising against Japanese colonial rule. North Korea "must discuss with sincerity the 'grand bargain' deal that we have offered," Lee said. Lee's "grand bargain" would provide the North with a set of political incentives and economic aid in exchange for the irreversible dismantling of its nuclear weapons program in a single step, rather than the step-by-step process pursued in the past. The single-step process is aimed at preventing North Korea from backtracking on its commitments after receiving the aid.

"North Korea must show its sincerity to the international community with an action," Lee said. Later Monday, about 50 conservative activists staged an anti-Pyongyang rally in Seoul, chanting slogans like "Blow up North Korea's nuclear facilities!" and burning the North's national flags. There were no immediate reports of clashes or injuries. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton told reporters Friday that the United States was encouraged by signs that North Korea might return to international talks aimed at ending the North's nuclear program in return for aid. The countries participating in the talks are North Korea, the U.S., Russia, China, Japan and South Korea.

Her spokesman, P.J. Crowley, later said the talks could begin "in coming weeks or months." North Korea quit the talks and conducted a second atomic test last year, inviting tighter U.N. sanctions. The regime has called for a lifting of the sanctions and peace talks formally ending the 1950-53 Korean War before it returns to the disarmament talks. The U.S., South Korea and Japan have responded the North must first return to the negotiations and produce progress.

Source:<http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5iURO8fOyWVOA0ytFlaAGuC9F7R9wD9E5N9CO0>

North Korea May Return to Talks in March or April

North Korea may return to nuclear disarmament talks in March or April, Yonhap news agency said Sunday, citing an unnamed senior South Korean government official.

"We believe North Korea will come back to the six-party talks sooner or later, possibly in March or April, although we cannot predict the exact timing," the official was quoted by Yonhap telling a group of South Korean journalists in Washington on Saturday. "Our judgement is based on circumstantial evidence surrounding recent contacts between North Korea and China." China hosts the six-party talks and is the communist North's only major ally.

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, after talks with her South Korean counterpart Yu Myung-Hwan in Washington, said Friday she was “encouraged by signs of progress” toward the resumption of the six-party process. The talks — which involve China, the two Koreas, the United States, Russia and Japan — have been stalled since North Korea rejected them 10 months ago in protest at UN censure of its missile and nuclear tests.

A senior State Department official in Washington said the North may be compelled to return to talks to benefit from international aid after bungled economic reforms. The North has demanded the lifting of UN sanctions and discussion of a peace treaty on the Korean peninsula before it returns to the negotiations. But the United States, South Korea and Japan have said North Korea must return to the talks first and make substantial progress toward denuclearisation before other issues are discussed.

North Korea, which tested atomic weapons in October 2006 and May 2009, says it developed nuclear weaponry because of a US threat of aggression, and it must have a peace pact before it considers giving them up. The 1950-1953 Korean War ended only in an armistice. Seoul officials suspect talk of a peace treaty is an excuse to delay action on the nuclear programme.

Source:<http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5j8siYlXK-qHOfjb5ai-pBHQ1BauQ>

C. Nuclear Cooperation

U.S. Denies Nuclear Deal, Power Plant to Pakistan

The U.S. has told Pakistan that it will not get any atomic power plant or civilian nuclear deal, similar to the one it signed with India. “The United States is working closely with Pakistan to help meet its growing needs. Nuclear power is not currently part of our discussions,” a senior official told PTI.

Pakistan was informed of the decision recently. The official, preferring anonymity, said the U.S. also told Pakistan that there was no way it could get a civilian nuclear deal similar to the one the U.S. signed with India. The India-U.S. civilian nuclear deal was India-specific, and there was no thinking on in the administration to create a template for it.

Moreover, given the past experience that the U.S. had with Pakistan on the nuclear proliferation issue and the episode of Pakistani scientist A.Q. Khan allegedly transferring sensitive technologies abroad, both top American lawmakers and government officials had serious concerns about the safety of Pakistani nuclear weapons, he said.

Source:<http://www.hindu.com/2010/02/28/stories/2010022862451000.htm>

Russian START Negotiators Going Home But To Return: *Stephanie Nebehay*

Russian arms control officials are leaving Geneva at the weekend for Moscow but negotiations with the United States on a START successor treaty are expected to resume in coming weeks, an official told Reuters on Friday. The pause appeared to signal that high-level consultations in the capital are needed on final details of the pact to cut strategic nuclear weapons, analysts said.

It comes after the presidents of Russia and the United States agreed on Wednesday to urge their negotiators to speed up work and prepare for signing a new START deal, according to a Kremlin statement at the time. "Our delegation will be leaving this weekend. I don't know the new date of negotiations, maybe on March 8th or 15th," an official at the Russian diplomatic mission told Reuters.

Russian officials would still attend a negotiating session scheduled for Saturday morning in the Swiss city before departing for Moscow, the official added. There was no official confirmation of the break from the U.S. diplomatic mission in Geneva, where one American official said it had been under discussion by the two sides. Negotiations were continuing as planned on Friday evening. "The teams are still here," the U.S. official told Reuters.

President Barack Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev have pledged to complete the pact to succeed the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), which expired last December. They have agreed to cut deployed nuclear warheads to between 1,500 and 1,675 on each side. State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley said on Tuesday the United States believes an agreement is now clearly in sight.

"There are still some details to be worked out. We hope we can do that in coming days," he told a news briefing in Washington after U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton phoned her Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov to discuss the talks. Analysts say a deal could boost strained ties between Washington and Moscow and emphasize their shared commitment to nuclear disarmament at a time when major powers are pressing Iran and North Korea to renounce their nuclear ambitions. There has been a media blackout around the intense talks, which broke off for a few weeks for the Christmas and New Year holidays. "The negotiators are closeted and practically living together," a Western diplomat in Geneva told Reuters this week.

Source:<http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE61P50T20100226?rpc=401&type=politicsNews?feedType=RSS&feedName=politicsNews&rpc=401>

UN Urges Iraq to Ratify Atomic Inspection Protocol

The Security Council on Friday urged Iraq to ratify an agreement requiring it to accept intrusive inspections by the U.N. nuclear watchdog, which dismantled a covert Iraqi atom bomb program in the 1990s. The Security Council said it could consider lifting restrictions it imposed on Iraq's civilian nuclear activities after its 1990 invasion of neighboring Kuwait if Iraq ratified the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) so-called Additional Protocol, among other steps.

Iraq has already signed the IAEA Additional Protocol, submitted it to parliament for ratification and agreed to implement it provisionally until it enters into force. The declaration, which was agreed to by all 15 Security Council members, also asked the Vienna-based IAEA to report to the council on Iraq's implementation of the protocol. Baghdad, a major oil exporter, has said it wants a civilian nuclear program to generate electricity.

Its neighbor Iran is under U.N. sanctions for defying Security Council demands that it halt uranium enrichment, a nuclear fuel program that began during Iran's 1980-1988 war with Iraq. The more intrusive inspection regime aimed at smoking out clandestine nuclear activities stemmed from the IAEA's discovery in 1991 of a clandestine nuclear weapons program in Iraq. That regime is known as the Additional Protocol and IAEA officials have long urged nations around the world to sign, ratify and implement it.

The United States only ratified the protocol last year, 11 year after signing it. Before the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in March 2003, the United States and Britain alleged that Iraq had revived its weapons of mass destruction programs. But U.N. inspectors, who returned to Iraq in late 2002 and remained for several months, found no evidence to support the charges. The U.S.-British allegations, which were based on faulty intelligence, are now known to have been false.

U.N. weapons inspectors had spent seven years uncovering and dismantling Iraq's chemical, biological and nuclear weapons programs after a U.S.-led military campaign drove then-Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein's forces out of Kuwait in 1991. Also in its declaration, the Security Council welcomed Iraq's accession to a global pact against the use of chemical weapons, arms that Hussein used against Iran during their bloody war and against Iraqi Kurds in northern Iraq.

It also praised Baghdad's plans to sign a treaty against the proliferation of ballistic missiles and its adoption of a pact banning nuclear tests. The statement did not mention Iraq's long-standing request that the council annul other decisions from the early 1990s, including those requiring that Baghdad pay war reparation payments to Kuwait.

Source: <http://uk.reuters.com/article/idUKN2614179420100226>

D. Nuclear Energy

Nuclear energy: money can't buy love: *David Noonan*

Nuclear energy is not only hazardous, but reliant on government subsidies to survive. Australia would spend its money more wisely on renewables.

On coming to office President Barack Obama cancelled the proposed Mt Yucca deep geological nuclear waste disposal site after 20 years and over US\$9 billion of public funds had been spent on this project. The US has had to go back to the drawing board on nuclear waste. Proponents of proposed new nuclear reactors in the US cannot explain how they will manage their hazardous waste in the long term.

Paradoxically for those seeking a nuclear revival, President Obama's announcement of major loan guarantees of A\$9.1 billion to underwrite some 70 per cent of the massive capital costs for two new reactors shows that after more than 50 years the nuclear sector still cannot stand on its own economics. Nuclear proponents in the US are also unwilling to pay the real costs of insurance in potential nuclear accidents - again leaving the public to foot the bill and carry the risks involved. The US government continues to shield nuclear reactor operators from the real uninsurable costs and hazards inherent to their operations.

The truth is investment in nuclear energy means massive capital costs and very low employment benefits. The two Westinghouse AP-1000 nuclear reactors proposed to be built in the US state of Georgia have capital costs in the order of A\$6.5 billion per reactor. President Obama cited 3,500 construction jobs and just 800 permanent jobs for an investment of A\$13 billion in new energy capacity.

That is an average cost of A\$3.7 million dollars per job in nuclear construction or A\$16 million dollars per permanent job in nuclear reactor operations. The employment benefits that flow from government investment in renewable energy are far, far greater. In responding to President Obama's announcement Professor Ross Garnaut said there was no public policy justification for underwriting nuclear costs given it is an established technology in the US.

It is the Australian Conservation Foundation's view that we should get out of subsidising nuclear risks and make the shift to renewable energy. Across the US and the European Union renewable energy contributed more new electricity capacity than fossil fuels and nuclear reactors combined in 2008. The global capacity in renewable energy has been increasing at 15 per cent per annum and is set for further growth, driven by investment projected to reach US\$450 billion per annum by 2012.

Germany has taken the lead by introducing 300,000 new jobs in the clean green renewable energy sector over the last ten years. A German government policy to get 40 per cent of the country's electricity from renewable energy by 2020 provides a sound target for other countries to follow. Australia cannot afford to be left behind. With only a 20 per cent target for renewable energy in electricity generation by 2020 our share of global renewable energy capacity will at best remain flat, if not fall, as the world continues to ramp up investment.

If Australia aimed to build a renewable energy sector that represented 5 per cent of the global market by 2030 we could realise some 500,000 jobs in our renewable energy industry and finally take advantage of our advanced research base. Responsibly addressing the urgency of climate change cannot afford to be delayed or misled by nuclear industry hype.

There are a number of significant inherent weaknesses in the arguments of nuclear proponents in Australia. Nuclear reactors are unnecessary, too slow to be of use in the urgent struggle on climate change, too costly and too dangerous. It is time we moved on from the nuclear debate and grasped renewable energy and energy efficiency as ways to reach a high employment future in genuine clean green alternatives to fossil fuels.

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/environment/articles/2010/03/03/2835725.htm>

Earthquake Prone Japan Sees Green in New Nuclear Power Plants: *Jonathan Adams*

Christian Science Monitor

Japan is pressing ahead with an expansion of nuclear power, despite public unease and vocal opposition from activists. Poor in natural resources, the country has long dreamed of reducing its fossil fuel dependency through domestic nuclear power. Now it's casting nuclear energy as a key to the fight against global warming, an argument that critics reject. Japan's debate closely mirrors those worldwide, as governments highlight nuclear power as an easier way to cut carbon emissions than boosting wind and solar power.

President Obama, for example, on Feb. 16 announced \$8.3 billion in loan guarantees to build the first nuclear reactors in the United States in 30 years – the first of many, he promised. Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama has pledged to cut Japan's carbon emissions to 75 percent of 1990 levels by 2020, if other major economies set similar targets. His government recently backed a plan for low-interest loans for new nuclear reactors.

"If we want to do this 25 percent reduction, obviously we need more nuclear plants," says Shunsuke Kondo, chairman of Japan's Atomic Energy Commission. But the public isn't entirely convinced. According to the Japanese cabinet's own poll last November, 54 percent say they feel anxious or uneasy about nuclear power, with the top concern being the risk of an accident. Forty-two percent said they feel "safe" about nuclear power.

Meanwhile, activists criticize Japan's nuclear program as dangerous, expensive, and impractical. One concern is Japan's earthquake-prone geology, which they cite in raising the specter of a quake-induced Chernobyl. Just on Saturday, a magnitude 6.9 earthquake hit off Japan's southern coast, shaking Okinawa and nearby islands and rupturing water pipes. In recent months, activists have focused their ire on the government's introduction of "pluthermal" fuel in nuclear plants. The term refers to the use of mixed uranium-plutonium fuel known as MOX (mixed-oxide) fuel.

The government touts pluthermal as a way to reuse spent fuel, saying it's more efficient and produces less high-level radioactive waste than normal reactors. It first introduced MOX fuel at a nuclear plant last year. That drew weeks of protests from activists. A second plant, at Ikata, near the port city of Matsuyama, is set to use MOX fuel in March. "MOX fuel is many times more dangerous than uranium fuel," says Makoto Kondo, a longtime opponent of the Ikata plant. "When it comes to blasts or accidents, far more devastating damage would occur with pluthermal reactors."

Ambitious plans

Officials acknowledge they must work harder to win public trust. But they insist that nuclear plants are safe. Japan now gets about a third of its electric power from some 54 nuclear power plants. It hopes to build eight more by 2018, boost capacity at its existing plants, and upgrade more plants into pluthermal ones. The Atomic Energy Commission's Mr. Kondo and other officials say using MOX fuel allows Japan to recycle its energy resources. Japan currently sends spent

fuel to Europe, where it is reprocessed into MOX fuel and shipped back. “The simple reason for using plutonium is because we want to use our resources as best as we can,” Kondo says, adding that MOX fuel has been used safely in Europe for years.

He says Japan’s plants were built to withstand all but a “once in 10,000 year” earthquake. But he acknowledges that since Japan switched on its first reactors in the 1960s, three quakes have produced vibrations exceeding design assumptions. (Large safety margins in construction prevented any major accidents in those cases, he says.)

According to the Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry (METI), nearly a third of Japan’s planned carbon reduction targets by 2020 will come from nuclear power, making it the biggest source of carbon-emission cuts after energy conservation (60 percent).

In contrast, the government expects less than 6 percent of cuts to come from renewable energies.

“Nuclear power is one of the important sources of Hatoyama’s target,” says Katsuyuki Tada, a deputy director at METI. For Japanese planners, the goal is to achieve a self-sufficient “nuclear cycle,” with fast-breeder reactors sending spent fuel to Japan’s own reprocessing plants, to be turned into MOX fuel.

Public opposition

But critics say it’s a costly and risky pipe dream. The fast-breeder reactor program is technically daunting and has been plagued by delays; 2050 is the current target for commercial use. Japan is set to begin reprocessing this year or next, after many delays, and hopes to produce MOX fuel by 2015. There’s also a proliferation and terrorism risk. MOX fuel is a tightly regulated material that could be used to make a “dirty bomb.” It’s transported by custom-built, armed ships with an elite police detail.

Disposal is also a question. Like many countries, Japan has yet to establish a permanent storage site for high-level radioactive waste, and “not in my backyard” sentiment runs high. But as even the activists admit, those concerns don’t look likely to dissuade the government.

Source: <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Asia-South-Central/2010/0301/Earthquake-prone-Japan-sees-green-in-new-nuclear-power-plants>

Gulf States Keen on Nuclear Tech for Power, Says Kuwait Expert

A Kuwaiti-expert has said that the Arab Gulf states are keen on nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and would seek to exploit its advantages. Nader al-Awadhi, vice-president, Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR), said nuclear energy would be useful in the generation of electric power and in the production of oil and gas.

Other applications of nuclear energy, he noted were in the fields of agriculture, especially in livestock production and in fighting diseases like cancer and also for heart ailments. Asked by Kuna agency, about the extent of co-operation between the IAEA and the Arab Gulf states,

al-Awadhi said it involved three areas namely, preparatory plans for the use of nuclear energy, formulating legislation affecting the utilisation of nuclear energy and in establishing effective programmes to train Gulf citizens on harnessing the immense benefits.

Al-Awadhi, who acts as Kuwait's liaison with the IAEA, said a workshop held last week in Vienna — sponsored by the IAEA — for experts in nuclear energy from Asia, Arab and Gulf countries, aimed at chalking up a framework for nuclear co-operation among IAEA members for a 10-year period. The workshop, he maintained, was particularly useful for Gulf states which have little knowledge about nuclear energy. To drive home what was learned in the workshop the IAEA is organising another one in May, he said.

Source:http://www.gulf-times.com/site/topics/article.asp?cu_no=2&item_no=345881&version=1&template_id=37&parent_id=17

Contribute Articles

Indian Pugwash Society welcomes research articles from students, researchers and faculties on Space, Missile, nuclear technology, WMD proliferation, arms control, disarmament, export controls and other related issues. Articles should be crisply written and should address contemporary debates in the policy arena.

Manuscripts submitted for the consideration of the Indian Pugwash Society should be original contributions and should not have been submitted for consideration anywhere else. Please confirm to the guidelines prescribed in the website before submitting the manuscript for consideration.

Details are available at: http://www.pugwashindia.org/contribute_articles.asp

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