



Nuclear, Missile & Space Digest

A Fortnightly Newsletter from the Indian Pugwash Society

Volume 13, Number 17

September 15, 2021



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China

China's military nuclear orders rise fourfold in push to catch up with US

Amber Wang

South China Morning Post, August 20, 2021

The main contractor for China's nuclear projects has seen a massive increase in orders from the military compared with a year ago, signalling Beijing's intensified push to boost its military nuclear capacities. China Nuclear Engineering and Construction Group Corporation Limited reported that the value of its military contracts in the first seven months had surged nearly fourfold year-on-year. Observers said the figures reflected China's steadfast efforts to catch up with the United States, which is increasingly concerned about China's nuclear capabilities, including recent reports about the build-up of missile silos.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3145851/chinas-military-nuclear-orders-rise-fourfold-push-catch-us>

China says it successfully tested two new missiles that can take out military command and communications systems

Amber Wang

South China Morning Post, August 21, 2021

State media says the short-range weapons can overcome ‘multilayer defences’ to paralyse an enemy’s information facilities. Missiles hailed for boosting the PLA's combat capabilities, and military observers say they could be used in event of conflict with Taiwan or the United States. China has successfully tested two short-range conventional missiles designed to take out enemy communications systems, state media reported on Saturday. According to state broadcaster China Central Television, the People’s Liberation Army Rocket Force recently tested two new missiles that can overcome “complex electromagnetic interference” to destroy facilities in a “fast-reaction” operation. “[The missiles] successfully hit the target in an enemy camp equipped with multilayer defences several hundred kilometres away and effectively paralysed the enemy’s key communications node,” CCTV reported.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3145896/china-says-it-successfully-tested-two-new-missiles-can-take-out>

PLA Rocket Force launches two new-type missiles

China Military Online, August 24, 2021

A conventional missile brigade under the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Rocket Force recently launched two new-type missiles during a live-fire drill in the deserts in Northwest China. The missiles accurately hit mock targets in the well-protected "enemy" defense positions hundreds of kilometers away.

http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2021-08/24/content_10080451.htm

China has improved accuracy of its missile force, US Army finds

South China Morning Post, August 24, 2021

The Chinese military has improved the accuracy and range of its ballistic missile force, the world’s largest, according to a new US Army report. The DF-11, the most widely deployed short-range ballistic missile of the People’s Liberation Army Rocket Force, was originally designed to hit targets out to 186 miles, but newer models have expanded ranges beyond 435 miles, according to an August 9 Army publication titled Chinese Tactics released on Monday by the Federation of American Scientists’ Project on Government Secrecy. “Accuracy has also increased, reducing” the intended target point to only 32 yards, “giving theatre commanders a long-range precision strike capability”, according to the Army publication. The DF-11 can employ both conventional and nuclear warheads. The “solid-fuel rocket and mobile transporter erector-launchers enable rapid launch and reload operations”, it added.

The US Army is attempting to reshape its forces from their 20-year emphasis on counter-insurgency to focus on an Indo-Pacific presence geared toward countering China in coordination with the Air Force and Navy. The new publication presents a menu of the longer-range and more accurate Chinese missiles that US forces and Taiwan would face in a conflict.

In addition, the newer DF-15/16 missile has ranges of 600km (372 miles) to 1,000km (621 miles) and “they employ advanced anti ballistic missile countermeasures such as terminal manoeuvres and decoys,” the Army publication says. “Early variants were not accurate enough for precision strikes,” but newer models are much-improved. “These missiles can employ nuclear or conventional warheads, and have a significantly larger payload” than most short range ballistic missiles. The publication, which also covers many other Chinese military capabilities, is the latest to portray the military might of a nation US leaders consider the prime threat driving US strategic planning and spending.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/world/united-states-canada/article/3146101/china-has-improved-accuracy-its-missile-force-us>

Pakistan

Pakistan’s Nuclear Program Posed “Acute Dilemma” for U.S. Policy

National Security Archive, August 30, 2021

In January 1979, State Department officials monitoring Pakistan’s nuclear program were startled by fresh intelligence confirming that Islamabad had secretly initiated a uranium enrichment program using gas centrifuge technology. Among other discoveries, the U.S. Intelligence Community had uncovered a nascent enrichment facility at Kahuta that would eventually produce highly enriched uranium for nuclear weapons, and evidence that Pakistan was “moving more rapidly toward acquisition of [a] nuclear capability than we had earlier estimated,” according to an internal statement by Assistant Secretary of State Thomas Pickering, published here for the first time by the National Security Archive Today’s posting follows the recent admission by Pakistani President Arif Alvi that the country had already developed a “nuclear deterrent” by 1981, long before the underground nuclear tests of 1998. Alvi may have exaggerated in claiming that Pakistan had “joined those nations which were ... equipped with nuclear weapons” as long as 40 years ago, but his remark raises significant historical questions. Furthermore, with the collapse of the Afghan government this month and the potential rise of the Taliban state, Islamabad may now become an even more powerful player in South Asia, making an understanding of its nuclear history all the more salient.

The documents posted today have in many cases only recently become available, either through declassification requests to the State Department or from research at the U.S. National Archives in collections that have opened following requests by the National Security Archive. Highlights include telegrams that may be the first declassified records mentioning A. Q. Khan, the Pakistani metallurgist whose espionage provided the means to develop gas centrifuge technology for the bomb. Other materials describe U.S. concerns that “some other country” (unnamed) might be tempted to destroy

Pakistan's budding program. The new records add to our understanding of the history and implications of regional nuclear programs that have historically posed thorny challenges to U.S. nonproliferation efforts. President Jimmy Carter, who came to office as a strong opponent of proliferation, faced an "acute dilemma" over Pakistan because, in the words of another January 1979 State telegram, "we wish to be more supportive" of Islamabad in the wake of a revolution in Iran and growing Soviet influence in Afghanistan. The Carter administration worried that pushing too hard on proliferation concerns could alienate Pakistan – a regional counterweight to Soviet partner India – and produce greater instability in the region. Ultimately, Carter held back from confronting Islamabad over its nuclear program.

<https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/nuclear-vault/2021-08-30/pakistans-nuclear-program-posed-acute-dilemma-us-policy>

USA

US nuke envoy expected to visit S. Korea this month: official

Yonhap

Korea Herald, August 16, 2021

The US special representative for North Korea, Sung Kim, is expected to visit Seoul later this month for talks with his South Korean counterpart and a trilateral session involving the Russian nuclear envoy, a diplomatic source said Sunday. Kim is expected to arrive on Saturday for a four-day visit, the source said. It will mark his second trip to South Korea since taking office as Washington's chief nuclear envoy. He last visited Seoul in June. While Kim is in town, Russia's nuclear envoy, Igor Morgulov, is also expected to visit South Korea for possible trilateral talks with their South Korean counterpart Noh Kyu-duk.

Kim and Morgulov's expected visits come as North Korea has been ramping up pressure on South Korea and the United States over their annual combined exercise that will kick off Monday for a nine-day run. The Joint Chiefs of Staff announced earlier in the day the two countries will stage the drills in a scaled-back manner in consideration of "the COVID-19 situation, the maintenance of the combined defense posture and the diplomatic efforts for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and the establishment of peace."

http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20210815000273&ACE_SEARCH=1

Gyeonggi Gov. Lee pledges to meet with Biden, Kim Jong-un to broker denuclearization deal

Yonhap

Korea Herald, August 22, 2021

Gyeonggi Province Gov. Lee Jae-myung, the front-runner in the ruling Democratic Party's presidential primary race, pledged Sunday to meet with US President Joe Biden and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un to broker a step-by-step deal to resolve the North Korea nuclear issue. In a press conference on his Korean Peninsula peace policy, Lee said it was "realistic" and "practical" for both Pyongyang

and Washington to "seek an agreement and implementation of denuclearization in a phased and synchronized" method.

"The likelihood of success by pushing the North to abandon its nukes first or seeking a package settlement through a so-called big deal is slim," Lee said at the press conference held at the residence of late President Kim Dae-jung in Seoul. Lee vowed to come up with concrete means to conditionally lift sanctions and pursue a phased and synchronized denuclearization approach, then "meet with US President Joe Biden and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un in person and resolve the stalemate." The governor also said he will persuade the United Nations to provide a comprehensive and permanent sanctions exemption on key inter-Korean programs, such as the Kaesong Industrial Complex, and projects to connect and modernize railways and roads between the divided countries.

http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20210822000157&ACE_SEARCH=1

US, Russian nuclear envoys in Seoul to discuss North Korea

Ahn Sung-mi

Korea Herald, August 22, 2021

The top nuclear envoys from Russia and the US are in Seoul to hold talks with their South Korean counterpart on the stalled nuclear diplomacy with Pyongyang amid fresh tension over ongoing US-South Korea military exercises. Sung Kim, the US special representative for North Korea, arrived here Saturday for a four-day visit, days after Pyongyang warned of a "security crisis" over the joint military drills that are due to end Thursday. "I'm looking forward to very close consultations with our Korean government colleagues," Kim told reporters upon arriving at Incheon Airport. Kim said he will also meet with Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Igor Morgulov, who arrived here Saturday for a six-day visit. "So, I think it is going to be a very productive visit," said Kim. Kim met with Foreign Minister Chung Eui-yong on Sunday afternoon and discussed ways to restart the stalled peace process on the Korean Peninsula at an early date.

http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20210822000162&ACE_SEARCH=1

US holds no hostile intent toward North Korea, urges for dialogue: nuclear envoy

Ahn Sung-mi

Korea Herald, August 23, 2021 -

The US holds no hostile intent toward Pyongyang, President Joe Biden's point man on North Korea said Monday, reaffirming a willingness to meet his North Korean counterparts "anywhere, at anytime." Sung Kim, the US special representative for North Korea, held talks with South Korea's chief nuclear envoy Noh Kyu-duk in Seoul on Monday, to look for ways to bring Pyongyang back to the negotiating table. Their session comes as the allies are holding combined military drills until Thursday, which Pyongyang denounced as the "most vivid expression of the US hostile policy" toward the North and warned the allies of a "security crisis."

“The United States does not have hostile intent toward DPRK,” Kim told reporters after the meeting. “The ongoing US-ROK combined military exercises are long-standing, routine and purely defensive in nature and support the security of both of our countries.”

http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20210823000845&ACE_SEARCH=1

Europe

Germany, France and UK share 'grave concern' over Iran IAEA report

DW, August 19, 2021

The foreign ministries of Germany, France and the UK expressed "grave concern" on Thursday over the latest report from the UN's nuclear watchdog on recent developments in Iran's uranium enrichment capabilities. The European foreign ministries' joint statement comes in light of a report from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna that Iran continues to produce uranium metal which can be used in the production of a nuclear bomb. The European trio said that these "serious violations" were the source of "grave concern".

The IAEA confirmed earlier this week that Iran had enriched uranium metal up to 20% for the first time and had significantly increased production capacity of uranium enriched to 60%. The joint statement from the German, French and British foreign ministries noted that "both are key steps in the development of a nuclear weapon and Iran has no credible civilian need for either measure."

<https://www.dw.com/en/germany-france-and-uk-share-grave-concern-over-iran-iaea-report/a-58911651>

Russia

Russia begins construction of new nuclear submarines

DW, August 20, 2021

Russian President Vladimir Putin opened the Army 2021 / International Military Technical Forum outside Moscow by publicly ordering the construction of several new naval vessels, including nuclear submarines, Monday. The event, a combination of war games and arms expo, is designed to showcase Russian military hardware and attract foreign buyers. Jordan's King Abdullah II, for instance, was among those in attendance. The naval order was announced in a video call with shipyards in Severodvinsk, St. Petersburg and Komsomolsk-on-Amur. "A strong and sovereign Russia needs a powerful and well-balanced navy," said Putin. "We will continue to boost the potential of the Russian navy, develop its bases and infrastructure, arm it with state-of-the-art weapons," he added.

"I would like to stress that all the ships will be equipped with modern high-precision weapons, the latest navigation and communications equipment. The majority of these technologies proved their effectiveness during combat operations in Syria," said the president as he addressed shipyard workers. The vessels ordered were of three types: Two nuclear submarines armed with intercontinental ballistic

missiles (ICBM), two large diesel submarines and two corvettes. The move is part of the Kremlin's push to overhaul the Russian navy, a top priority as its relations with the West deteriorate. "We will continue to show the Russian flag in strategically important ocean areas," said Putin on Monday, as he seeks to re-establish a regular Russian naval presence on par with that of the Soviet Union during the Cold War. The nuclear submarines, named Dmitry Donskoy and Prince Potemkin, will be built at Sevmash Shipyards in Severodvinsk; the diesel subs, named after the cities of Mozhaisk and Yakutsk, will be constructed at Admiralty Shipyards in St. Petersburg; and the corvettes, named Grozny (Fearsome) and Buyny (Wild), will be built at the Amur Shipbuilding Plant in Komsomolsk-on-Amur. Putin also said work was underway on "promising" weapons, including the new hypersonic Kinzhal (dagger) nuclear-capable air-launched ballistic missile (ALBM) and the Sukhoi S-70 Okhotnik (hunter), a heavy stealth unmanned aerial combat vehicle (UCAV).

<https://www.dw.com/en/russia-begins-construction-of-new-nuclear-submarines/a-58962328>

South Korea, Russia affirm need to induce Pyongyang back to nuclear talks

Ahn Sung-mi

Korea Herald, August 24, 2021

Seoul and Moscow on Tuesday reaffirmed the importance of close coordination and the need to induce Pyongyang back to the stalled denuclearization talks, in the meeting between the two sides' top nuclear envoys. South Korea's chief nuclear envoy Noh Kyu-duk held talks with visiting Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Igor Morgulov, who doubles as the country's top nuclear envoy, on Tuesday. The pair exchanged views on the overall situation on the Korean Peninsula and ways for the two countries to cooperate for the complete denuclearization and permanent peace on the peninsula, according to the Foreign Ministry. The ministry said Noh acknowledged Russia's continued support for dialogue and inter-Korean cooperation, and requested Moscow play a "constructive role" for the stable management of the situation and bring Pyongyang back to the negotiating table. In turn, Morgulov stressed the importance of stability on the Korean Peninsula and in the region, and the need for a swift resumption of dialogue with Pyongyang among relevant countries, including the talks between North Korea and the US and between the two Koreas. Russia reaffirmed its desire to take on a constructive role to resolve the Korean Peninsula issue peacefully.

The two sides agreed to continue close consultation at all levels to make progress on the Korean peace process, and Noh was invited to visit Russia for future talks. Morgulov's visit here comes as prospects for resumption of stalled nuclear talks with Pyongyang appear bleak amid the ongoing joint military drills between the US and South Korea, which Pyongyang denounced as the "most vivid expression of the US hostile policy" toward the North, warning the allies of a "security crisis." Russia was a member of the now-defunct six party talks -- also involving China, Japan, the US and the two Koreas -- to denuclearize Pyongyang. Seoul believes that Moscow, which is close to the North and a permanent member of the UN Security Council, could wield some influence over the reclusive regime to refrain from provocation and return to nuclear talks.

http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20210824000976&ACE_SEARCH=1

Russia reacts to reports of Iran enrichment acceleration

Tehran Times, August 25, 2021

Russia's Foreign Ministry has reacted to press reports that Iran allegedly accelerated its production of highly enriched uranium, underlining that this was because of the lack of progress on the restoration of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal. The Russian reaction came a week after Reuters reported that Iran has accelerated its enrichment of uranium.

Citing a report by the International Atomic Energy Agency, Reuters said that "Iran increased the purity to which it is refining uranium to 60% from 20% in April in response to an explosion and power cut at its Natanz site that damaged output at the main underground enrichment plant there." The Russian Foreign Ministry described the alleged acceleration of enriched uranium production as a "deviation" from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), but said this deviation is because there were no practical results in the talks to restore the nuclear pact. "This yet another JCPOA deviation is mostly due to the lack of practical results of Nuclear Deal restoration, while unilateral U.S. sanctions against Iran & other cooperating countries remain intact," the Russian Foreign Ministry said, according to a tweet by the Russian diplomatic mission in Vienna. It added, "However, we're more concerned that this takes us further away from the initial goal, while the task to create conditions for sustainable implementation of comprehensive agreements gets more elusive."

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/464327/Russia-reacts-to-reports-of-Iran-enrichment-acceleration>

U.S. economic hegemony is waning: Russian diplomat

Mohammad Mazhari

Tehran Times, August 29, 2021

The withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan has triggered a lot of speculation about the decline of America. It was a big political catastrophe that reminds the world of the U.S. exit from Vietnam. But before its military failure in Afghanistan, America ruined its reputation via unilateral policies to push other countries to align with Washington, especially when President Donald Trump weaponized sanctions against Iran, Russia and China.

That is why some politicians talk about the U.S. decline. "My colleagues in Vienna not aware of all the details of possible agreement" "U.S. economic hegemony is waning in a natural way, our task is to strengthen domestic economies and cooperation of like-minded countries," Dmitry Polanski, the first deputy permanent representative of Russia to the UN, tells the Tehran Times. U.S. "sanction diplomacy" coupled with its use of the dollar as a weapon to pressure others, some countries are pushing the international community to take steps to curb American hegemony. "We interact in particular in the UN and try to mobilize support for the UN Charter," Polanski says when asked about multilateral efforts to respond to Washington's sanctions on Russia and other countries.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/464441/U-S-economic-hegemony-is-waning-Russian-diplomatb>

West Asia

Iran

Iran, Russia discuss boosting ties

Tehran Times, August 21, 2021

Iranian Ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalali has met with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov to discuss the need to expand mutual cooperation in various fields. The two sides explored avenues for bolstering and reinvigorating bilateral ties in different areas, Fars News reported. They also exchanged views on developments in West Asia, and the Persian Gulf region, including Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, and Iraq. The meeting was held on Wednesday concurrently with another meeting between the Head of Iran's Supreme Council of World Forum for Proximity of Islamic Schools of Thought Ali Qazi Asgar and Interim Head of Russian Federation Muftis Council Demir Mohyeddinev. The two sides agreed to broaden the level of cooperation on Islamic unity.

In the meeting held at the Headquarters of the Russian Federation Muftis Council in Moscow in the presence of the Head of Moscow Islamic Center Saber Akbari Jeddi, and the Iranian Embassy's Cultural Attaché Masood Ahmadvand, Demir Mohyeddinev said that the Shia and Sunni Russian Muslims enjoy peaceful coexistence, IRNA reported. He added that one of the major objectives of the Russian Federation Muftis Council is the establishment and strengthening of strong friendly ties among the entire world Muslims.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/464153/Iran-Russia-discuss-boosting-ties>

Amir Abdollahian: I will use all my effort to make sanctions ineffective

Tehran Times, August 22, 2021

The Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee has announced its agreement with the nomination of Hossein Amir Abdollahian as foreign minister, the committee spokesman said on Sunday. Mahmoud Abbas-Zadeh Meshkini expressed hope that Amir Abdollahian would garner a high number of confidence votes in the parliament to be endorsed as foreign minister. Amir Abdollahian was deputy foreign minister for Arab and North African affairs when Ali Akbar Salehi was foreign minister. He also held the post in the first three years of Mohammad Javad Zarif who took the helm at the Foreign Ministry in 2013. He also served as Iran's ambassador to Bahrain.

Amir Abdollahian has no affiliation to reformist and principlist camps in and his focus is on national interests. Reportedly, he has also held talks with former EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini and former British foreign secretary Philip Hammond after the British embassy was reopened in Tehran in August 2015. He also served as foreign policy advisor to former parliament speaker Ali Larijani and the current speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf. In the parliamentary session on Sunday a number of lawmakers talked in favor and against Amir Abdollahian.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/464205/Amir-Abdollahian-I-will-use-all-my-effort-to-make-sanctions>

Japan FM meets Iran's National Security Council secretary

Tehran Times, August 22, 2021

Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi held a meeting with top Iranian security official Ali Shamkhani on Sunday during a two-day visit to Iran that included several meetings with other high-ranking Iranian officials. The meeting with the secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) came on the heels of another meeting with his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif. As of this writing, no details have been released about the issues discussed by Shamkhani and Motegi. But Japanese media outlets have reported that Motegi's trip could serve as an opportunity for Japan to resume its mediation efforts between Iran and the United States.

The Japanese foreign minister also met with Iranian President Ayatollah Seyed Ebrahim Raisi. Zarif said confirmed that the Japanese foreign minister's visit had something to do with the tattered Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Expressing satisfaction at receiving Motegi, Zarif said on Twitter, "In what is probably my last meeting with a counterpart as Iran's foreign minister, we discussed strengthening bilateral relations, how to resuscitate the JCPOA and the catastrophic US-engineered situation in Afghanistan." Earlier, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh had announced that the Japanese foreign minister will pay a two-day visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran at the invitation of Zarif.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/464194/Japan-FM-meets-Iran-s-National-Security-Council-secretary>

Raisi says Iran not opposed to nuclear talks

Tehran Times, August 22, 2021

New Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi said in a meeting with Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi on Sunday that Iran Tehran does not oppose the "principle of negotiation" to revive the 2015 nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Iran remained fully loyal to the terms of the JCPOA one year after the U.S. abandoned the deal and this was confirmed by regular reports given by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). However, Iran started to gradually remove bans on its nuclear activities after the European parties to the agreement did nothing to compensate Iran for the sanctions.

President Raisi said Iran complied with all its commitments in the nuclear agreement, but it was Washington that violated it. Naturally, Raisi said, a country that adhered to its obligations should be "commended", and a country that has withdrawn from the deal and refused to fulfill its obligations must be "reprimanded" The Americans must be held accountable to the world's public opinion for violating the legally binding nuclear pact, the president pointed out. In response to the Japanese foreign minister's remarks on the necessity and importance of implementing the JCPOA as an international agreement, the president said, "Iran has complied with all its obligations under the JCPOA and it is the

Americans who have not fulfilled their obligations and unilaterally withdrew from the international agreement and expanded sanctions.”

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/464182/Raisi-says-Iran-not-opposed-to-nuclear-talks>

Iran says position on JCPOA talks has not changed

Tehran Times, August 23, 2021

Iran has reiterated its position on the 2015 nuclear deal that the United States must effectively lift all its sanctions on Iran, suggesting that Tehran’s stance on the Vienna nuclear talks has not undergone any change after the inauguration of a new government. Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh pointed to the change of government in Tehran and said that this may cause some changes but Iran’s position on the Vienna talks has not changed. Iran and the remaining parties to the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), have started nuclear talks in the Austrian capital in order to get the U.S. and Iran back into full compliance with the nuclear deal. So far, six rounds of talks have been held with no tangible success in terms of resuscitating the JCPOA. The last round was concluded in June.

“Some changes may take place during the developments currently underway in Iran’s executive branch. But our positions have not changed. The effective lifting of all U.S. sanctions and other sides’ compliance with the JCPOA are still a prelude to any agreement in Vienna,” Khatibzadeh said on Monday. Speaking at a weekly press briefing, the spokesman also touched on the possible resumption date of the next round but he refused to set a certain date for the talks. He only said that a decision would be made on the resumption of talks. “That a decision would be made on the date of holding a new round of negotiations is natural and this would happen,” Khatibzadeh said.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/464235/Iran-says-position-on-JCPOA-talks-has-not-changed>

Iran articulates nuclear positions ahead of Vienna talks

Tehran Times, August 24, 2021

While the new Iranian president, Ayatollah Seyed Ebrahim Raisi, is busy forming his administration, Western countries impatiently ask the new Iranian government to set a date for the resumption of the Vienna nuclear talks. But the mere resumption of talks is unlikely to break the deadlock over the talks as long as the United States continues to ignore the fact that the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), cannot be expanded, at the least from the Iranian perspective. The United States and its European allies, namely France, Germany, and the UK (E3), have been trying out many diplomatic tactics and stunts to force Iran into returning to Vienna ever since the last round of talks, held in June, end up in a stalemate. After six rounds of talks, nuclear negotiators from Iran and the remaining parties to the JCPOA and the U.S. reached a critical juncture where they needed to make tough decisions.

The U.S. and France called on Iran to make “tough decisions” to break the deadlock over the deal. Iran responded by saying that if a party is to make tough decisions, it is the United States and its European

allies, not Iran, because Iran had already made tough decisions after the U.S. unilateral decision to withdraw from the JCPOA in May 2018. In the meantime, Iran underwent a transition of power, which caused a hiatus in Iran's nuclear deliberations. But this didn't prevent the U.S. from brandishing a tightening of the noose on Iran's oil sales to China in a bid to force Iran to return to Vienna. The U.S. threat of further enforcing oil sanctions against Iran failed to impinge on the country's nuclear calculations as the U.S. already has oil sanctions in place.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/464287/Iran-articulates-nuclear-positions-ahead-of-Vienna-talks>

Russian oblast seeks to bolster technological cooperation with Iran

Tehran Times, August 28, 2021

The governor of Russia's Novosibirsk Oblast, Andrey Travnikov, in a meeting with the Iranian ambassador to Moscow Kazem Jalali, called for boosting bilateral cooperation in the field of technology. The Iranian envoy started a three-day visit to the Russian oblast on Saturday to attend the 8th International Forum of Technological Development (Technoprom-2021), IRNA reported. On the sidelines of the meeting, the two sides formed a joint working group to prepare plans for scientific, technological, and commercial cooperation in the future.

They also agreed to facilitate relations between the private and government sectors of the two countries. According to Novosibirsk's chamber of industry, trade between the Russian oblast and Iran saw a 45 percent rise in 2020, reaching around \$50 million. In July, Iran inaugurated a house of innovation and technology in Russia to find new markets for domestic knowledge-based products in the region. Exporting technological products of Iranian knowledge-based companies is one of the important and key programs of the country, and in this regard, three houses of innovation and technology have already been inaugurated in Kenya, China and Syria.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/464410/Russian-oblast-seeks-to-bolster-technological-cooperation-with>

Iran's drones have customers in the world: ex-defense minister

Tehran Times, August 29, 2021

Former defense minister Amir Hatami said on Saturday that Iran's arms exports in the previous Iranian calendar year 1399 amounted twice the year before. The former defense chief went on to say that now Iran exports arms to 42 countries, adding Iran's drones have customers among "other countries". He went on to say that during four years of his management of the ministry more than 300 products used in ground battles were produced. The former defense minister went on to say that "very good measures" have also been taken in the field of ballistic and cruise missiles. "Today, we are also in a very good condition in the areas of air and electronic defense and electronic warfare."

Initial purchases for Iran might be solid-fuel rocket motors, guidance systems, optical jammers that could counter drones or anti-tank missiles, and small arms like upgraded anti-tank guided missiles, DesRoches said, with China and former Soviet states as key sellers.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/464473/Iran-s-drones-have-customers-in-the-world-ex-defense-minister>

Mohammad Eslami appointed Iran's nuclear chief

Tehran Times, August 29, 2021

In a decree on Sunday, President Ebrahim Raisi appointed Mohammad Eslami as vice president and chief of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), replacing Ali Akbar Salehi who served the post since August 2013. Eslami was born in 1956 in Isfahan. He got his BS in civil engineering from Detroit University in 1979 and master's degree in the same field from Ohio University in 1981. He also got MBA in global aviation management from the University of Sharif and Royal Rhodes University in 2004. He was also confirmed as housing and transport minister by the parliament in the autumn of 2018 after nomination by President Hassan Rouhani. Eslami became minister after Abbas Akhondi resigned his post. Eslami kept the job until the end of Rouhani's presidency. Eslami also served as the managing director of Iran Aircraft Manufacturing Industrial Company and deputy chief of Aerospace Industries Organization among other top managerial posts.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/464470/Mohammad-Eslami-appointed-Iran-s-nuclear-chief>

Leader: Diplomacy should not be tied to nuclear issue

Tehran Times, August 29, 2021

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said on Saturday that diplomacy should not be tied to the nuclear dispute with the United States. The Leader made the remarks in his first meeting with President Raisi and his cabinet team. The meeting took place in National Government Week. "Diplomacy should not be impacted by the nuclear issue. In the nuclear issue, the U.S. acted extremely shamelessly. They withdrew from the JCPOA but talked as if Iran had withdrawn from it. They ridiculed the negotiations. The Europeans acted like the U.S., too," the Leader remarked. "Biden not different from Trump" Current U.S. President Joe Biden had promised to join the multilateral nuclear pact, however, six rounds of talks, which started in April to revive the agreement, have so far failed to bear a result because the Biden administration is raising new issues. "The current U.S. government is no different from the previous one. They demand the same things that Trump demanded. Behind the scenes of U.S. foreign policy there lies a predatory wolf that sometimes changes into a cunning fox. Today's situation in Afghanistan is an example of this," Ayatollah Khamenei stated.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/464434/Leader-Diplomacy-should-not-be-tied-to-nuclear-issue>

Iran: Vienna talks not intended to rewrite JCPOA

Tehran Times, August 30, 2021

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said on Monday that the nuclear talks in Vienna are not intended to rewrite the text of the 2015 nuclear deal, officially called the Joint

Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), noting the talks to revive the JCPOA does not need “mediation”. The last round of talks between the remaining parties to the nuclear deal was held in June. The talks took place within the framework of the JCPOA Joint Commission as the Joe Biden administration expressed willingness to return to the international agreement endorsed by UN Security Council Resolution 2231. The talks are led by the European Union. The U.S. is participating in the talks indirectly. “We do not have direct or indirect talks with the United States in Vienna or anywhere else, and the talks in Vienna took place between Iran and the P4+1,” the spokesman told a weekly press briefing.

P4+1 refers to the remaining permanent members of the UN Security Council – Russia, China, Britain and France – and Germany that are still party to the nuclear agreement. The U.S. as a permanent member of the UN Security Council quit the multilateral deal in May 2018 during Donald Trump’s presidency. Khatibzadeh added what the Biden administration has done so far is an insistence on the failed policies of the Trump administration. “If they are looking for better results. They must reconsider their behavior in putting maximum pressure on the Iranian people, which is in fact economic terrorism, and only then will they see that the path to dialogue in Vienna is going well,” he pointed out.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/464532/Iran-Vienna-talks-not-intended-to-rewrite-JCPOA>

East Asia

North Korea

Yongbyon nuclear reactor appears to be in operation: IAEA report

Yonhap

Korea Herald, August 30, 2021

The UN nuclear watchdog has detected "deeply troubling" indications that a key nuclear reactor at North Korea's main Yongbyon complex has been in operation since July, including the release of cooling water, an annual report showed Monday. Submitted to the International Atomic Energy Agency's Board of Governors on Friday, the report covered new developments of the five megawatt reactor, from which the North obtained spent fuel rods to extract plutonium -- a fissile material used for a bomb -- in the past. The report based on satellite imagery and other sources came as Seoul and Washington push to resume dialogue with the North, following its furious reactions to the allies' recently concluded annual military exercises.

"Since early July 2021, there have been indications, including the discharge of cooling water, consistent with the operation of the reactor," the report reads, noting there were no indications of such a reactor operation from early December 2018 to the start of July this year. The report also said that the steam plant, which serves the radiochemical laboratory at the Yongbyon complex, operated for approximately five months, from mid-February 2021 until early July 2021. The plant is used to provide heat to a fuel rod reprocessing facility. "The duration of the operation of the steam plant and Radiochemical Laboratory in 2021 is significantly longer than that observed in the past during possible waste treatment

or maintenance activities," the report said. "The five-month timeframe is consistent with the time required to reprocess a complete core of irradiated fuel from the 5MW(e) reactor," it added.

The report stressed that the North's nuclear activities remain a "cause for serious concern." "Furthermore, the new indications of the operation of the 5MW(e) reactor and the Radiochemical Laboratory are deeply troubling," the report said. "The continuation of the DPRK's nuclear programme is a clear violation of relevant UN Security Council resolutions and is deeply regrettable," it added, referring to the North's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Regarding the report, the foreign ministry said the government is continuously monitoring the North's nuclear and missile activities in close cooperation with the United States. The latest development came after the North responded angrily to the South Korea-US exercise, calling it the "most vivid expression of the US hostile policy" toward the North and warning of a "serious security crisis."

http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20210830000140&ACE_SEARCH=1

Op-ed

The time for equivocating about a nuclear-armed, Taliban-friendly Pakistan is over

John R. Bolton

Washington Post, August 23, 2021

John R. Bolton served as national security adviser under President Donald Trump and is the author of "The Room Where It Happened: A White House Memoir." Many profound ramifications of America's exodus from Afghanistan are competing for attention. Among the top challenges, Pakistan's future stands out. For decades, Islamabad has recklessly pursued nuclear weapons and aided Islamist terrorism — threats that U.S. policymakers have consistently underestimated or mishandled. With Kabul's fall, the time for neglect or equivocation is over. The Taliban's takeover next door immediately poses the sharply higher risk that Pakistani extremists will increase their already sizable influence in Islamabad, threatening at some point to seize full control. A description once applied to Prussia — where some states possess an army, the Prussian army possesses a state — is equally apt for Pakistan. Islamabad's "steel skeleton" is the real government on national security issues, the civilian veneer notwithstanding. Inter-Services Intelligence, or ISI, has long been a hotbed of radicalism, which has spread throughout the military, to higher and higher ranks. Prime Minister Imran Khan, like many prior elected leaders, is essentially just another pretty face.

Now, again in power, the Taliban can return the sanctuary favor to Pakistani Taliban — the Pakistani counterpart of the Afghan Taliban — and other radicals. Obviously, the world doesn't need another terrorist regime, but the risk in Pakistan is of an entirely different order of magnitude, even compared with the menace of al-Qaeda or the Islamic State gaining secure bases in Afghanistan. While Iran still aspires only to nuclear weapons, Pakistan already has dozens, perhaps more than 150, according to public sources. Such weapons in the hands of an extremist Pakistan would dramatically imperil India, raising tensions in the region to unprecedented levels, especially given China's central role in Islamabad's nuclear and ballistic-missile programs. Moreover, the prospect that Pakistan could slip

individual warheads to terrorist groups to detonate anywhere in the world would make a new 9/11 incomparably more deadly. These dangers provided compelling reasons to sustain the U.S. and NATO military presence in Afghanistan. We could have continued overwatch not just of potential new terrorist threats in-country but also observed what was happening across the borders in Pakistan and Iran. Sadly, the Trump-Biden withdrawal policy canceled that insurance policy.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/08/23/john-bolton-taliban-takeover-pakistan-extremists/>

World/Misc

Nuclear power won't fix Iraq's energy crisis

Nils Holst

Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, August 18, 2021

On June 29, Iran halted gas and electricity exports to Iraq over nonpayment of fees. The move left millions of Iraqis without power as temperatures soared to more than 120 degrees, turning cities into ovens and throwing the embattled government of Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi into yet another political firestorm. While the Iranian move was clearly designed to increase Tehran's influence over its neighbor, it also raises questions about Iraq's proposal last month to restart the country's civilian nuclear program, once the subject of proliferation concern. Iraq is the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries' second-largest producer and has some of the largest oil and natural gas reserves on the planet. By rights Iraq should be energy self-sufficient, but decades of war damage and mismanagement, combined with an overreliance on oil and gas exports, mean the country doesn't generate enough power to meet demand. Instead, between a quarter and a third of Iraq's electricity is produced with piped-in Iranian gas, and Iraq also imports about 5 percent of its electricity directly from Iran—an uncomfortable reliance on a historic enemy.

The Iraqi government owed Iran \$4 billion in unpaid utility bills at the end of June, but the coronavirus pandemic and other economic troubles have made it difficult to pay. What money Iraq does release must perform complex financial acrobatics to get around US sanctions on Iran, a process Iran says takes too long. Against this backdrop, Iraq's announcement that it plans to spend \$40 billion on eight nuclear reactors for civilian energy production is puzzling. Nuclear power would diversify the country's energy sources and make the petrostate less dependent on energy imports from its neighbors, but there are faster and cheaper ways to help the millions of Iraqis currently without power in the sweltering heat.

<https://thebulletin.org/2021/08/nuclear-power-wont-fix-iraqs-energy-crisis/>

Insights into the Nazis' failed nuclear program may lie within this 2-inch-tall uranium cube

Caroline Anders

Washington Post, August 25, 2021

The race to nuclear arms was run in an information vacuum that created anxiety, terror and false impressions all around regarding who was nearing the finish line and how quickly. Scientists in Nazi Germany identified nuclear fission first in 1938, so America called its top minds to arms. At the outset, the Nazis appeared to be far ahead. But having miscalculated the amount of uranium it would take to set off an atomic bomb, the Germans figured that the United States would never be able to produce the quantity needed. The Americans, at first sure the Germans were nearing a workable weapon, slogged away, racing against a nightmarish hypothetical: Adolf Hitler's nuclear bomb.

Many uranium cubes that are probably remnants of the long-since-failed Nazi nuclear program were brought to the United States after the war. Surprisingly to some researchers, these cubes — often seen as part of the Nazi nuclear effort, as two-inch blocks of natural uranium are difficult to come by — have never been officially confirmed to be left over from Hitler's atomic project. Three such cubes are now being studied by the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Washington, one of the U.S. Energy Department's national laboratories, which hopes to prove the uranium's origins once and for all. The United States launched a covert mission in 1943 called Alsos, attempting to peer at Germany's notes to see how far the nation had gotten. Both sides prepared for doomsday, though the mission would eventually show how far German physicists were from success.

History could have been disturbingly different, some historians argue, if the following events did not occur: The German nuclear program deflated as scientists lost hope and governmental support. Then the Americans, successful in their mission, created — and dropped — a workable atomic bomb. Werner Heisenberg, the German physicist perhaps most infamous for his involvement in Nazi Germany's nuclear program, had headed experiments that were hidden away in a cave under a castle as Allied forces closed in, including the final iteration of the experimental reactor that came the closest to being successful.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2021/08/25/nazi-nuclear-program-failed-uranium-cube/>

IAEA: N Korea appears to have resumed nuke reactor operation

Hyung-Jin Kim

AP News, August 31, 2021

North Korea appears to have restarted the operation of its main nuclear reactor used to produce weapons fuels, the U.N. atomic agency said, as the North openly threatens to enlarge its nuclear arsenal amid long-dormant nuclear diplomacy with the United States. The annual report by the International Atomic Energy Agency refers to a 5-megawatt reactor at the North's main nuclear complex in Yongbyon, north of Pyongyang. The reactor produces plutonium, one of the two key ingredients used to build nuclear weapons along with highly enriched uranium. "Since early July 2021, there have been indications, including the discharge of cooling water, consistent with the operation of the reactor," said the IAEA report dated Friday.

The report said there were indications of the operation of Yongbyon's radiochemical laboratory from mid-February to early July this year. It said this period of operation is consistent with previous reprocessing campaigns announced by North Korea of irradiated fuel discharged from the reactor. The

laboratory is a facility where plutonium is extracted by reprocessing spent fuel rods removed from reactors. “(North Korea’s) nuclear activities continue to be a cause for serious concern. Furthermore, the new indications of the operation of the 5-megawatt reactor and the radiochemical laboratory are deeply troubling,” the IAEA said. The IAEA has not had access to Yongbyon or other locations in North Korea since the country kicked out IAEA inspectors in 2009. The agency said it uses satellite imagery and open source information to monitor developments in North Korea’s nuclear program.

The Yongbyon complex also produces highly enriched uranium, the other key nuclear fuel. The IAEA report said “there were indications, for a period of time, that the reported centrifuge enrichment facility was not in operation” though regular vehicular movements were observed. The complex, which North Korea calls “the heart” of its nuclear program and research, has been at the center of international concerns for decades. It’s not clear exactly how much weapons-grade plutonium or highly enriched uranium has been produced at Yongbyon and where North Korea stores it.

<https://apnews.com/article/north-korea-nuclear-reactor-iaea-8ed3f0ba8634094a8e49f9e1b5e4c46f>

IAEA chief, EU discuss JCPOA

Tehran Times, August 31, 2021

International Atomic Energy Agency chief Rafael Grossi has met with the head of the European Union delegation to the UN organizations in Vienna to discuss a number of issues including the situation around the 2015 Iran nuclear deal. The meeting came amid uncertainties over the resumption date of the Vienna talks to revive the Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Stephan Klement, the EU ambassador to the Vienna-based international organizations who also serves as Special Advisor on the Iran nuclear issue to the European Union External Action Service, said on Twitter that he met the head of the UN nuclear watchdog on Tuesday.

“Happy to welcome @rafaelmgrossi at @euunvie to discuss our strong cooperation with @iaeaorg and pertinent issues of common interest including #JCPOA as well as the upcoming Board of Governors and 65th General Conference #IAEAGC,” Klement said on Twitter. The JCPOA was signed in 2015 but the U.S. withdrew from it in May 2018. Since April, six rounds of talks have been held between Iran and the remaining parties to the nuclear deal as well as the U.S. but the talks have not resulted in any tangible results.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/464558/IAEA-chief-EU-discuss-JCPOA>

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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. For further assistance, please contact us at: indianpugwashsociety@gmail.com

The Indian Pugwash Society aims to promote the study, discussion, and knowledge of and to stimulate general interest in, and to diffuse knowledge in regards to problems relating on WMD proliferation, arms control, disarmament, space security, export controls, nuclear technology and other related issues. This newsletter is part of the project "Emerging Nuclear Order in Asia: Implications for India" sanctioned to us by Department of Atomic Energy-Board of Research in Nuclear Sciences (DAE-BRNS).

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