



BI-WEEKLY TREATY REVIEW



11 March – 24 March 2008

DTRA

ARMS CONTROL (GENERAL)

U.S., Russian Officials Agree to Create Strategic Framework Document

American Forces Press Service, 18 March 2008, <http://www.defenselink.mil/>

After two days of intense talks, U.S. and Russian officials have agreed to a draft of a “strategic framework” document that will hopefully guide the two sides through dealing with tough issues such as a European missile defense plan. (933 words) [Click here for full text.](#)

United States Seeks Negotiations on Weapons Treaty

DOS, 19 March 2008, <http://fpolicy.america.gov/>

The United States is seeking agreement in the Conference on Disarmament to negotiate a treaty that would ban production of fissile material used to make nuclear weapons and other explosive devices. (682 words) [Click here for full text.](#)

France Set to Trim Back Nuclear Arsenal

AP, 21 March 2008, accessed via Lexis Nexis

President Nicolas Sarkozy announced a modest cut March 21 in France's nuclear arsenal, to fewer than 300 warheads, and urged China and the United States to commit to no more weapons tests. (533 words) [Click here for full text.](#)

CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION (CWC)

Blue Grass CW Disposal Site Could Face Delays

GSN, 11 March 2008, <http://www.nti.org/>

Construction of the chemical weapons disposal facility at the Blue Grass Army Depot in Kentucky could be delayed by questions about the plant's design, the Associated Press reported March 11. (331 words) [Click here for full text.](#)

Russia Pursues Italian Chemical Weapons Disposal Aid

GSN, 14 March 2008, <http://www.nti.org/>

Russian lawmakers are considering legislation that to seal an agreement under which Italy would provide more than \$560 million in chemical weapons disposal assistance to the former Cold War superpower, Interfax reported on March 13. (153 words) [Click here for full text.](#)

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CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION (CWC) (CONT.)

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GSN, 20 March 2008, <http://www.nti.org/>

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(164 words) [Click here for full text.](#)

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New Scientist, 22 March 2008, accessed via Lexis Nexis

The last thing you might expect to encounter exploring the ocean floor is a chemical weapon...

The Chemical Weapons Convention does not cover the destruction of the sea-dumped weapons, which are considered abandoned. (291 words) [Click here for full text.](#)

INTEGRATED SAFEGUARDS

India Reviews Draft Safeguards Required for Nuke Pact with U.S.

Inside U.S. Trade, 14 March 2008, accessed via Lexis Nexis

India has concluded negotiations with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and is now in the process of reviewing the text of IAEA safeguards agreement that will allow international supervision over all nuclear materials, including fuel, that India would receive for civilian use under a final U.S.-India civil nuclear cooperation agreement. (697 words)

[Click here for full text.](#)

North Korea, U.S. to Hold More Nuke Talks

AFP, 18 March 2008, <http://news.google.com/>

North Korea has agreed to hold further talks with the United States in a bid to end the deadlock over its nuclear disarmament, the communist state's official media said on March 18. (252 words)

[Click here for full text.](#)

UAE to Set Up Nuclear Agency

AFP, 24 March 2008, <http://www.spacewar.com/>

The United Arab Emirates cabinet authorized the creation of the Nuclear Energy Authority which will have "the mandate to evaluate and develop a peaceful nuclear energy program in line with the recommendations of the International Atomic Energy Agency [IAEA]." (170 words)

[Click here for full text.](#)



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OPEN SKIES TREATY

French Military Inspectors to Fly over Russia, Belarus

Itar-Tass, 17 March 2008, accessed via Lexis Nexis

A group of French inspectors will make a flight on board a C-130H observation plane belonging to France over the Russian and Belarusian territory on March 17-21 in accordance with the International Open Sky Treaty. (170 words) [Click here for full text.](#)

OTTAWA CONVENTION

Burundi Finishes Stockpile Destruction

ICBL, 20 March 2008, <http://www.icbl.org/>

On March 17, Burundi completed the destruction of its antipersonnel mine stockpile, just two weeks ahead of its April 1 deadline under Article 4 of the Mine Ban Treaty. (240 words)

[Click here for full text.](#)

VIENNA DOCUMENT 1999

French Inspectors Finish Evaluation Visit to Belarus

RIA Oreanda, 14 March 2008, accessed via Lexis Nexis

An inspection group from France conducted an inspection of the specified area on the territory of the Republic of Belarus under the Vienna Document, 1999 of the Negotiations on Confidence- and Security Building Measures. (119 words) [Click here for full text.](#)

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After two days of intense talks, U.S. and Russian officials have agreed to a draft of a “strategic framework” document that will hopefully guide the two sides through dealing with tough issues such as a European missile defense plan.

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice presented the draft to Russian President Vladimir Putin and their Russian counterparts at the start of their talks yesterday and have since been hammering out its details.

The document contains about a dozen initiatives, many which are already in the works between the two countries, but it also contains missile defense and strategic arms reduction treaty initiatives – the two most contentious points between the two countries.

“We had the opportunity to elaborate on a number of confidence building measures and measures for transparency to provide assurance to the Russian Republic that our missile sites and radars would not constitute a threat to Russia,” Gates said in mid-day press conference with Rice and Defense Minister Anatoliy Serdyukov and Foreign Affairs Minister Sergey Lavrov.

“I think both President Putin [yesterday] and our Russian colleagues today found these ideas useful and important ... and they will be studying them further,” Gates said.

The bulk of the effort the past two days was working through the missile defense and strategic arms reduction treaty topics, said a senior U.S. official later, speaking on background.

Gates was on hand to clarify some points in the initiatives that were thought to be mistaken or misunderstood by the Russian leaders. Officials worked through the document paragraph by paragraph and an edited document derived from the talks will be delivered to the Russians before the secretaries leave tomorrow. Their leaders have promised to have their experts “analyze” it, the official said.

“I think based on the discussions we’ve had in the last 24 hours, we feel like we’ve moved the ball forward here in Moscow,” the official said.

This is not the first time U.S. officials have put their ideas in writing for the Russians. In the first of these talks officials agreed to submit their proposals in writing. Lower-level U.S. and Russian officials have met about a half-dozen times in the past year. But this document is collective, collaborative and aimed at reconstructing a relationship that was sliding downward on tough

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issues, obscuring in part the issues that the two countries were making progress, the official said.

The official said the United States wanted “to capture those areas where we have made progress and try to frame up those where we have differences in a larger context which includes all the progress.”

Also, with each iteration of the document, levels of detail are added to the complex agreements, the official said.

Russian officials agreed that the United States was working to assuage their fears that the proposed missile defense sites planned for Poland and the Czech Republic will not become a threat to their country. They also agreed that it is important to maintain continuity while both administrations transitioning its top leadership in the next several months.

But, Russia’s Defense Minister finished the talks by reiterating their current stand on the U.S. proposal.

“In principle our positions have not changed,” Serdyukov said. “We can say that we have a lot of work to do but we need to see these proposals to look at them, to understand them, and then, following the work at the expert level, we’ll make a decision on how to move forward.”

The Russian foreign minister also said that the best way to allay their concerns would be to not build the missile defense sites. But he also said that the proposal would be sent to Putin once they are reviewed.

“While not agreeing with us on substantial issues, they [the U.S.] recognize that we have these concerns and they put forward proposals aimed at allaying or making these concerns [minor],” Lavrov said.

Because of the Russians’ concerns about the missile defense plan and a strategic arms treaty, getting them to allow those items into the strategic framework document is in itself progress, a senior U.S. official said.

“No one on either side expected dramatic breakthroughs. But we were pleased by the progress we made. A lot of work remains but it was a productive day-and-a-half of talks,” the senior official said. “This is realistically what we hoped for.”

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Secretary Rice said at the news conference that the two countries had good discussions even on the tough issues.

“We have agreed on the elements that will be included in the document and have made considerable progress on a number of them,” Rice said.

“We have work to do but I think it is fair to say that U.S.-Russian relations ... [are] proceeding in a way that we are able to go forward in various areas of cooperation and when we have differences we can talk about them in an atmosphere of mutual respect,” Rice said.

Gates, in coming to the talks, was very vocal about expecting the Russians to be responsive to the United States’ efforts to allay their fears about the missile defense system.

“I would say that they listened very carefully. President Putin took extensive notes and obviously there was a lot done during the day today,” Gates said. “... I would expect and hope that we would hear back from them reasonably quickly.”

A senior U.S. official later said that he expected to be back negotiating with the Russians in less than six months.

“There’s grounds for much more rapid follow up work,” he said. “We’ve really set the stage with these talks here.”

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United States Seeks Negotiations on Weapons Treaty

DOS, 19 March 2008, <http://fpolicy.america.gov/>

The United States is seeking agreement in the Conference on Disarmament to negotiate a treaty that would ban production of fissile material used to make nuclear weapons and other explosive devices.

In 2006, the United States introduced a draft Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT). Now, almost two years later, the U.S. ambassador to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva says it is time for those negotiations, and they should begin without preconditions.

Ambassador Christina Rocca, the U.S. permanent representative to the disarmament conference, says a treaty banning fissile material for nuclear weapons “is a nonproliferation and disarmament measure that enhances international security.” All but a handful of nations in the conference support the immediate beginning of negotiations.

Such a treaty would create a new obligation for states that have nuclear weapons, the ambassador said during a March 12 *Ask America* webchat, moderated by the State Department’s Bureau of International Information Programs. For starters, Rocca said, countries that still are producing fissile material for nuclear weapons should stop.

The United States halted such production in 1988. Once a new treaty is concluded, she said, “we believe that all states should adhere to such a moratorium.”

An FMCT, as it is referred to in shorthand, would serve to codify the existing voluntary moratorium observed by the United States, Russia, France and the United Kingdom, and, according to Rocca, “create a new norm for other states possessing nuclear weapons.” Nuclear reactors and nuclear weapons derive power through the splitting of uranium or plutonium atoms, a process that releases large amounts of energy. These fissile materials are used for a variety of civil and military purposes.

At the same time, Rocca said a new treaty would not place any new demands on non-nuclear states that have signed the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. “Those states are already obligated not to produce fissile material for nuclear weapons purposes,” she told her Internet audience.

Rocca also was asked why the United States does not support the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. She pointed out that the U.S. Senate did not give its consent to the treaty because of

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verification concerns. The Bush administration opposes it for this and other reasons and will not pursue it further.

Nevertheless, Rocca said, the United States still observes a nuclear testing moratorium and encourages other nations to do the same. The United States has no plans to conduct a nuclear explosive test and relies on the Energy Department's Stockpile Stewardship Program to ensure the safety and reliability of the nuclear stockpile.

Even though the United States has chosen to remain outside the treaty framework, it still supports the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization's Preparatory Commission working groups as appropriate, as well as the Provisional Technical Secretariat for the International Monitoring System and related activities.

Rocca also drew attention to U.S. efforts to advance the overall disarmament agenda. In 2004, President Bush announced a dramatic phased reduction in the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile, projecting it would drop by 2012 by half of what it was in 2001.

But by December 2007 that goal was achieved – five years ahead of time. Consequently, Bush directed officials to cut the overall U.S. nuclear stockpile by another 15 percent by 2012.

Additionally, the United States has worked with other nations, including Russia, to reduce their nuclear stockpiles. For example, Rocca said, the United States "has given billions of dollars in assistance to Russia, not only to help it dismantle its nuclear weapons safely, but also to provide meaningful employment to thousands of employees in its nuclear complex."

When asked about weapons in space, Rocca expressed U.S. support for four core space-related treaties: the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, the 1968 Rescue Agreement, the 1972 Liability Convention and the 1974 Registration Convention. Beyond this international legal framework, she said, the United States is opposed to any new, binding space arms control agreements.

The United States takes its existing treaty obligations relating to space seriously, and, Rocca said, "it is transparency of actions by space-faring nations that can make the single most important contribution to strengthening security and cooperation in outer space."

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France Set to Trim Back Nuclear Arsenal

AP, 21 March 2008, accessed via Lexis Nexis

President Nicolas Sarkozy announced a modest cut March 21 in France's nuclear arsenal, to fewer than 300 warheads, and urged China and the United States to commit to no more weapons tests.

In his first major speech as president on France's nuclear "strike force," Sarkozy said atomic weapons would remain a vital component of its defenses to deter potential attackers.

"It is the nation's life insurance policy," he said.

Sarkozy said that while France faces no foreseeable danger of invasion, other threats exist. He singled out Iran's expansion and improvement of its long-range missile forces amid what he called "grave suspicions" about whether the Iranians are trying to develop atomic weapons.

"The security of Europe is at stake," he said.

Sarkozy did not say how many warheads France currently has, and the Defense Ministry said that information is a state secret. The Federation of American Scientists, which tracks nuclear arsenals around the globe, said in a status report for 2008 that France had 348 warheads.

More than half of France's nuclear weapons are believed to aboard submarines, with the rest on warplanes.

Sarkozy said France would cut reduce its airborne force of atomic weapons by a third. "After this reduction, our arsenal will include less than 300 nuclear warheads," he said.

Speaking to workers finishing a new nuclear submarine, *The Terrible*, Sarkozy followed his announcement of weapons cuts with appeals for other nations to scale back their nuclear facilities.

He appealed to China and the United States to ratify a nuclear test ban treaty that they signed in 1996. "It's time to ratify," he said.

Sarkozy also called for negotiations on treaties to ban short- and intermediate-range nuclear-armed missiles and bar the manufacture of fissile material for new atomic weapons.

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Since Sarkozy is France's first leader born after World War II, his underlining of the need for nuclear weapons, despite budget difficulties, was significant in reaffirming the defense policy would continue despite the generational shift in political leadership.

Donning his commander-in-chief cap also was part of an effort by Sarkozy to appear more presidential. Following a divorce in office, a subsequent quick marriage to a former model and outbursts of temper, Sarkozy has faced criticism his behavior is unbecoming for a head of state.

The Terrible is the fourth vessel in France's new generation of nuclear-powered submarines that carry underwater-launched missiles with atomic warheads. Quieter than predecessors, *The Terrible* is scheduled to enter service in 2010 and be armed with the new M51 missile with multiple warheads and a longer range.

France's airborne nuclear weapons are carried by three air force squadrons using the Mirage 2000N and a navy flotilla of upgraded Super Etendard jets. All four forces are set to get new, high-tech Rafale jets.

Bruno Tertrais, an expert on nuclear deterrence, said Sarkozy's nuclear policy was largely a continuation of his predecessor in the presidency, Jacques Chirac, but Chirac was not so open about the number of warheads in the French arsenal.

"Chirac did not believe that transparency was worthwhile or interesting," said Tertrais, a senior research fellow at the Foundation for Strategic Research think tank. "There is more continuity than change, but the level of transparency now is something new."

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Construction of the chemical weapons disposal facility at the Blue Grass Army Depot in Kentucky could be delayed by questions about the plant's design, the Associated Press reported March 11.

Construction was scheduled to begin this summer on a facility to eliminate munitions containing 523 tons of blister and nerve agents. The Defense Department has estimated that weapons disposal would be completed in Kentucky by 2023, but Congress last year set a 2017 deadline for the full destruction of the U.S. chemical arsenal.

The Defense Department Explosive Safety Board last week expressed concerns regarding one or more rooms designed to be explosive-resistant. The specific question revolves around the connection of steel beams that support concrete.

The corresponding space in the chemical weapons incinerator at Anniston, Alabama, had to undergo large-scale repairs in 1998 following discovery of holes and unfilled sections of wall, AP reported.

The rooms are used for removal of explosives from the munitions, the Lexington Herald-Leader reported.

The Pentagon board is scheduled to meet this spring with representatives from Bechtel Parsons Blue Grass, the firm managing construction of the facility. Failure to approve plant designs by June could put an indefinite hold on construction, said company spokesman John Schlatter.

"We have to go back to them and provide additional information about the design, and why we think it is the right design, to try to resolve their questions and get their approval," he said.

"If we're able to resolve all that by the middle of June, there won't be any impact on the construction," Schlatter added. "If we're not, we might either have to do some testing to demonstrate that the design is adequate, or we might have to do some redesign. How long that would take and what it would cost, we don't know at this point.

"This board is there for safety reviews, and this is a safety issue, and we're not going to sacrifice safety for schedules. Safety has to be the first consideration," he said.

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Russian lawmakers are considering legislation that to seal an agreement under which Italy would provide more than \$560 million in chemical weapons disposal assistance to the former Cold War superpower, Interfax reported on March 13.

“The 360 million euro [offer] is our Italian partners’ gift, which is expected to accelerate the construction and commissioning of chemical weapons disposal facilities in Russia,” said Viktor Zavarzin, head of the defense committee in the lower house of Russia’s parliament.

The committee on March 11 discussed the bill that would ratify a Russian-Italian chemical weapons disposal cooperation agreement.

“The implementation of this agreement will help Russia strongly to implement the [Chemical Weapons Convention], which meets the interests of Russia and the rest of the world,” Zavarzin said. The legislation requires Moscow to meet legal and organizational requirements to receive the aid, he added.

Russia ratified similar agreements with Canada in March 2006 and France the following November.

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The Umatilla Chemical Depot in Oregon in the coming days is expected to begin destroying 155 mm artillery projectiles containing VX nerve agent, the U.S. Army announced March 19.

Depot employees yesterday began moving the weapons to the Umatilla Chemical Agent Disposal Facility.

“We’ll start [weapons incineration] slowly and deliberately, then gradually increase our processing rate once we confirm everything is working properly,” Doug Hamrick, project general manager for contractor Washington Defense Group, said in a press release. “As always, our focus will be safety and environmental compliance at all times.”

Disposal of the 155 mm projectiles is the 10th of 13 weapons elimination campaigns planned at Umatilla. It is set to be followed by disposal of 8-inch projectiles and land mines carrying VX and finally by bulk containers of mustard blister agent.

The disposal facility to date has destroyed nearly 160,000 munitions, spray tanks and bulk containers carrying VX and sarin nerve agents. All sarin weapons stored at the depot have been eliminated.

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Chemical Weapons on Sea Floor Threat to Exploration

New Scientist, 22 March 2008, accessed via Lexis Nexis

The last thing you might expect to encounter exploring the ocean floor is a chemical weapon. But it seems hundreds of thousands of tons of them have been dumped into the sea, and no one knows exactly where the weapons are. Now, scientists are calling for weapons sites to be mapped for safety's sake.

Between 1946 and 1972, the United States and other countries pitched 300,000 tons of chemical weapons over the sides of ships or scuttled them along with useless vessels, according to public reports by the Medea Committee, a group of scientists given access to intelligence data so they can advise the U.S. government on environmental issues.

But the military have lost track of most of the weapons because of haphazard record keeping combined with imprecise navigation. Even the exact chemicals were not always noted, though there are records of shells, rockets and barrels containing sulphur mustard and nerve agents such as sarin.

The Chemical Weapons Convention does not cover the destruction of the sea-dumped weapons, which are considered abandoned. "There's no piece of legislation or treaty that deals with this stuff," says Peter Brewer, an ocean chemist at the Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute in Moss Landing, California. "It's in limbo."

If the chemicals leak from their containers, they will break down slowly in the cold seawater. But it is unclear what will happen if the chemicals bind to sediment or sink into anoxic zones, says Brewer.

A team led by Roy Wilkens at the University of Hawaii in Manoa is planning to look for munitions dumped off the island of Oahu. Records only note that the weapons were dumped about "five miles south of Pearl Harbor." Finding them will involve a search of 60 square kilometers, says Wilkens.

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India has concluded negotiations with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and is now in the process of reviewing the text of IAEA safeguards agreement that will allow international supervision over all nuclear materials, including fuel, that India would receive for civilian use under a final U.S.-India civil nuclear cooperation agreement.

India must obtain an IAEA safeguards agreement before the U.S. Congress can consider the nuclear deal. Once the IAEA agreement is worked out to the point of signing, the U.S. can proceed to get permission from the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) to supply India with nuclear fuel even though India has not signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

"The sides are close to a final text, but India has to confirm to the IAEA that there is an agreement on the text. Until then, there is in fact no agreement," said a source familiar with the India-IAEA talks.

The text of the agreement will be under review by the government of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and its Communist coalition partners, who vehemently oppose the nuclear deal and have threatened to topple the government if it goes forward with the deal. The ruling Congress party and the Communist parties plan to discuss the safeguard text this month, and it is not clear how long the discussion may take.

How long such a review may last will likely determine whether the agreement can come before the U.S. Congress this year. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Joseph Biden (D-DE) said in February during a visit to India that India must finalize the nuclear deal by the end of July. Otherwise it would be difficult for Congress to approve it in an election year, he said.

The IAEA board of governors must also approve the final agreement text. Its next scheduled meeting is in June, but special sessions can be called.

Sources indicated that the agreement does not give India any fuel supply guarantees, which sources previously said it has sought in case there is a "disruption" in the international fuel supply. The agreement between the United States and India, which would amend Section 123 of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 (123 Agreement), states that India will seek safeguards that will allow it to take "corrective measures" in case of a fuel supply disruption. This would be caused if India detonates a nuclear bomb, among other circumstances. The deal does not specify what those corrective measures are, and observers have expressed worry over this ambiguity.

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However, sources believed that India may have worked out some sort of provision that would allow it to store larger amounts of fuel under the safeguards. This would be important for India, because it has been seeking a strategic fuel supply reserve in case of a "disruption." This would allow it to have a larger supply of fuel on-hand if international supplies are cut off, since the IAEA has no authority to withdraw technology and supplies if a safeguard agreement is broken, sources said.

Under U.S. law, the United States would be obligated to withdraw its nuclear fuel and technology if India detonated a bomb, but other countries are not under such restrictions.

One informed source also speculated that in order to satisfy domestic critics of the deal, India may make a statement when it endorses the final IAEA text saying it will withdraw from the safeguards agreement if fuel supply is disrupted. Communist parties as well as the former ruling BJP party have charged that the nuclear deal would undermine India's sovereignty, and sources have previously said that if India allows too many restrictions in the IAEA safeguards agreement, the Communists will be unlikely to approve the deal and will force elections.

Sources said that unless the Communist parties back down from their threat to topple the government, the ruling Congress party must decide within the next two months whether it will move forward with the deal without their consent and risk early elections.

Having recently released a budget proposal with items such as some debt forgiveness for farmers, the Singh government would likely push for passage of the budget before going for elections, sources predicted, in order to solidify support among certain groups of voters.

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North Korea, U.S. to Hold More Nuke Talks

AFP, 18 March 2008, <http://news.google.com/>

North Korea has agreed to hold further talks with the United States in a bid to end the deadlock over its nuclear disarmament, the communist state's official media said on March 18.

The report by the Korean Central News Agency follows a meeting in Geneva last week between U.S. and North Korean nuclear negotiators.

The agency said the two sides had "an in-depth discussion" in Switzerland on their differences over a six-nation disarmament deal.

"Both sides agreed to sit face-to-face with each other and continue the discussion to seek ways of solving the problems arising in implementing the above-said agreement in the future, too," it added.

North Korea last year signed a landmark deal to scrap all of its nuclear programs in exchange for badly needed energy aid and major security and diplomatic benefits.

Under the current phase, the six parties set a 31 December 2007 deadline for North Korea to disable its main plutonium-producing atomic plants and to declare all of its nuclear programs.

But the U.S. says North Korea has still not answered questions about an alleged covert enriched uranium weapons program and about possible nuclear cooperation with Syria. North Korea denies both allegations.

The chief U.S. nuclear negotiator, Christopher Hill, said last week he had a "very good" meeting with the North Koreans but without any breakthrough.

The six-party talks, which began in 2003, group the United States, the two Koreas, China, Russia, and Japan. They assumed added urgency after North Korea tested a nuclear weapon in October 2006.

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UAE to Set Up Nuclear Agency

AFP, 24 March 2008, <http://www.spacewar.com/>

The United Arab Emirates will set up an agency to assess and develop a civilian nuclear energy program for the oil-rich Gulf state, local newspapers reported on March 24.

The Emirati cabinet authorized the creation of the Nuclear Energy Authority which will have "the mandate to evaluate and develop a peaceful nuclear energy program in line with the recommendations of the International Atomic Energy Agency [IAEA]," Gulf News quoted the official WAM news agency as saying.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy visited the UAE in January and agreed to help the pro-Western state develop civilian nuclear energy.

The UAE is a member of the pro-Western Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) along with Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia.

Amid concerns over Iran's nuclear aims and regional clout, GCC members decided in December 2006 to develop a joint nuclear technology program for peaceful uses.

Gulf News said the UAE is expected to double its power capacity over the next decade to supply a rapidly-growing population and a myriad of huge industrial projects.

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French Military Inspectors to Fly over Russia, Belarus

Itar-Tass, 17 March 2008, accessed via Lexis Nexis

A group of French inspectors will make a flight on board a C-130H observation plane belonging to France over the Russian and Belarusian territory on March 17-21 in accordance with the international Treaty on Open Sky.

"During the flight along the coordinated route specialists from Russia and Belarus will control on board the French plane the observance of the terms of the Treaty for the Use of Observation Equipment," a representative of the information and public relations department of the Russian Defense Ministry told Itar-Tass on Monday.

The C-130H plane and the equipment installed on it passed international certification, in which Russian specialists took part. "This rules out a possibility of the use of technical facilities, not envisaged by the Open Sky Treaty," the Defense Ministry reports.

This is going to be the fifth flight over the Russian territory in 2008.

The Open Sky Treaty was signed on 23 March 1992. Its implementation began on 1 January 2002. By today, 34 countries of Europe and North America have signed the Treaty.

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Burundi Finishes Stockpile Destruction

ICBL, 20 March 2008, <http://www.icbl.org/>

On March 17, Burundi completed the destruction of its antipersonnel mine stockpile, just two weeks ahead of its April 1 deadline under Article 4 of the Mine Ban Treaty. The final destruction ceremony took place at the Permanent Destruction Center of the National Defense Force (FDN) in Mudubugu in the province of Bubanza.

The ceremony was attended by the President of the Republic of Burundi, the Minister of Public Security, the Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General, as well as representatives from the international community including Ambassadors, representatives of UN agencies, and ICBL members Handicap International Belgium and Mines Advisory Group (MAG).

In this final ceremony, a total of 664 antipersonnel mines – 591 POMZ-2M and 73 TS 50 mines – were destroyed. Burundi is retaining four mines (2 POMZ-2M and 2 TS 50) for mine clearance training purposes under Article 3 of the Mine Ban Treaty.

The Burundi Army and the Burundi Mine Action Coordination Center (BURMACC) were assisted in this destruction by the UNDP and MAG.

Of the mines destroyed, 12 POMZ-2M mines were originally part of the stockpile of the *Conseil National pour la Défense de la Démocratie-Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie* (CNDD-FDD), the former armed opposition. The CNDD-FDD pledged to destroy this stockpile as a signatory of the Deed of Commitment in 2003, but in the end, their stocks were merged with those of the government they joined, and all stocks were destroyed together.

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French Inspectors Finish Evaluation Visit to Belarus

RIA Oreanda, 14 March 2008, accessed via Lexis Nexis

An inspection group from France conducted an inspection of the specified area on the territory of the Republic of Belarus under the Vienna Document, 1999 of the Negotiations on Confidence and Security-Building Measures.

The inspection confirmed the absence of military activity that is subject to prior notification in accordance with the Vienna Document, 1999, in the specified area (part of Minsk, Brest, and Grodno oblasts).

The inspection group included four representatives of France and one representative from Poland.

On March 11-14, Belarusian military visited Poland. One Belarusian inspector was a member of the Russian group which conducted an evaluation visit to Germany.

The two inspection groups confirmed the absence of military activity that is subject to prior notification.

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