Ukraine Nuclear Warheads Decaying and Dangerous

By Fred Hiatt

Senior Russian generals, pressing for early fulfillment of an arms treaty brokered by President Clinton last week, said Tuesday that nuclear warheads in Ukraine are decaying and becoming increasingly dangerous.

Col. Gen. Yeovmy Moshin, chief of nuclear systems in the main directorate of the Defense Ministry, said Ukrainian strategic nuclear weapons are being destroyed but not being properly maintained. He said the danger of an accident in handling or transportation is increasing.

Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk agreed during a meeting Friday with Clinton and Russian President Boris Yeltsin to ship Ukraine's nuclear weapons to Russia for dismantling. But many Ukrainians, fearing what they see as a resurgent Russian nationalism and imperialism, are reluctant to cede their arsenal.

Such fears are likely to increase following an assertion Tuesday by Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev that Russia should maintain a presence, including military, in former Soviet republics. Kozyrev said a Russian pullout would open the way for forces hostile to Russia to step into a "security vacuum," the Russian word for a military presence.

"We should not withdraw from those regions which have been in the sphere of Russian interest for centuries, and we should not fear the words' military presence," he said.

Kozyrev has generally been regarded as a liberal Russian foreign affairs minister who opposes Russian bullying. But in the wake of nationalists' gains in Dec. 12 parliamentary elections here, almost everyone across the political spectrum has been staking out more aggressive positions in foreign policy.

"The condition of nuclear safety in Ukraine continues to worsen," he said. "A moment can come when (Russian experts) will just simply arrive in Ukraine to cope with such warheads for disassembly."

Ukrainian officials have denied that nuclear weapons on their territory pose an immediate danger. They also have accused Russians of exaggerating the risk for political purposes. But this week, falling in line behind Kravchuk, military and Foreign Ministry officials agreed that the weapons already pose some risks.

By William Hamilton and Christopher Layton

A city buffeted in recent years by riots and wildfires struggled Tuesday to recover from a calamity whose consequences were barely becoming clear, given the number of homeless residents and potential transportation chaos.

At least 34 people were killed as a result of the predawn quake Monday, and more than 1,800 people were reported injured. An estimated 15,000 were homeless, many camping in city parks because they were afraid to return home as hundreds of读后感 continued to ruck the area.

About 95,000 people were without electricity, and as many as 180,000 lost water after the worst temblor here in 23 years. Nongovernment estimates were immediately available on the number of buildings damaged.

But with hundreds of thousands of commuters heeding appeals by city officials to stay home, the full impact on the distraught highway system was partially cushioned. An indication of troubles to come was a massive traffic jam Tuesday at an Interstate 5, which is California's main north-south route and was partially closed when the quake flattened overpasses and buckled pavement.

State transportation officials said that with federal financial help, they hope to repair broken freeways by the end of this year, a significant and more optimistic outlook than was voiced on Monday.

"The real test is, we are using what happened with the Bay Bridge as our example," said Jim Drinan, director of the California Department of Transportation. The Bay Bridge, two sections of which collapsed during the Loma Prieta quake near San Francisco in October 1989, was restored to operation within a month under an emergency plan, he said.

Drinan had no dollar estimate for repair work expected after Monday's quake.

Tuesday, crews were tearing down collapsed portions of Interstate 5, the city's main east-west artery.

The breakup of the Soviet Union, which ended in October 1991 after about 2,200 American servicemen still unaccounted for after the Vietnam War, has been staking out more territory in the region, is the latest of several U.S. officials and Congress members to urge lifting trade restrictions on Vietnam. Clinton's chief foreign-policy advisers have agreed to recommend to do so, according to sources.

Sen. John F. Kerry, D-Mass., chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee on Asian affairs, declared at the close of a visit to Vietnam last week that the embassy not longer served a meaningful purpose and was only hurting American firms denied business opportunities in the region.

U.S. Policy on Eastern Europe Remains Unclear

The Clinton administration's diplomatic offensive in Eastern Europe last week left behind unanswered questions about whether U.S. policy toward the region may move beyond rhetorical sympathy for democratic and economic reforms.

After some early complaining, the American proposal of a Partnership for Peace with the former Warsaw Pact nations and Romania, is the latest of several U.S. officials and Congress members to urge lifting trade restrictions on Vietnam. Clinton's chief foreign-policy advisers have agreed to recommend to do so, according to sources.

Sen. John F. Kerry, D-Mass., chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee on Asian affairs, declared at the close of a visit to Vietnam last week that the embassy not longer served a meaningful purpose and was only hurting American firms denied business opportunities in the region.

U.S. May Lift Trade, Investment Embargo on Vietnam, Bentsen Says

Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen said Tuesday that the U.S. government has moved nearer a decision to lift its trade and investment embargo on Vietnam.

Bentsen, speaking at a meeting of Thai business leaders here, praised the Vietnamese government for assisting in the effort to determine the fate of more than 2,200 American servicemen still unaccounted for after the Vietnam War.

"The progress is there, and I'm optimistic we'll get that family behind us," he said at news conference late in the day. "Some of our older fellows think you ought to move these things and get them done. We've seen a lot of cooperation coming out of Vietnam."

Bentsen declined to speculate on a timetable for lifting the ban, but he suggested that this week's agreement on Cold War-era military cooperation might be a partial basis for ending the embargo.

Also on Monday he suggested that might be amnestied. "That decision has not been made," he said, "but I think you'll see something forthcoming quite soon."

Bentsen, who is on a three-nation Asian tour to demonstrate the Clinton administration's commitment to building stronger relations in the region, is the latest of several U.S. officials and Congress members to urge lifting trade restrictions on Vietnam. Clinton's chief foreign policy advisers have agreed to recommend to do so, according to sources.

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