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# International Intelligence

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## ***50th Anniversary of America in Space Marked***

On the evening of Jan. 31, 1958, a group of space pioneers who had come to the United States after World War II, in the hope of working on a space exploration program, successfully launched the first American satellite into space. Explorer-1 went aloft from Florida on a Redstone rocket—an upgraded version of the war-time German V-2—in the first civilian application of what had been, and was being developed as a military capability.

The team of German rocketeers was working at the Army Ballistic Missile Command in Huntsville, Alabama. NASA would not be established until October 1958, and the rocket team, which was obligated to finish its work for the Army, would not be transferred to the civilian agency, until 1960.

Atop the Redstone was the Explorer-1 satellite, and the instrument designed by Dr. James van Allen, which would discover the radiation belts, later named in his honor, which circle the Earth. The Russians had launched their satellite—Sputnik—on Oct. 4, 1957, becoming the first nation to do so.

The German team went on to send the first American into space—Alan Shepard—atop a Redstone in 1961, and to design and build the Saturn V rocket, that took astronauts to the Moon.

On Jan. 30, 2008, the House Committee on Science and Technology in the U.S. Congress introduced a resolution to remember the “birth of the U.S. space program.”

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## ***China Expands Land-Bridge To Central Asia, Europe***

China is planning to begin construction this year on two new key rail links to Central Asia: one a supplement to the “Euro-Asian Continental Bridge,” which goes through the Alataw Pass to Kazakstan, and the other the long-planned railroad from westernmost Xinjiang, up and over the Tian Shan mountains, to Kyrgyzstan and the famous Fergana

Valley, to Uzbekistan and Europe. This railroad has to traverse passes close to 13,000 feet high.

The rail line should be completed by 2010, and will be a key link in the southern passageway of the new Eurasia continental bridge, *Xinhua* reported on Jan. 27, two days after the first “Eurasia Continental Express” arrived in Hamburg, Germany, in a record 15 days. The regional government of Xinjiang, China, made the announcement about the Central Asia lines.

The first rail link will connect Korgas on the China-Kazakstan border with China’s inland railways. This should be finished in 2008. This rail line will extend west from Korgas into Kazakstan, to join the Sary-Ozek railway. It will become the second cross-border rail link between China and Kazakstan, since the Urumqi-Alataw Pass to Kazakstan rail link was finished in 1992. The new rail line will ease the burden of Alataw Pass, which is the largest land port in northwest China, handling 5 million tons of rail exports in 2007, up 60% from 2006.

The second rail line is still in a preparatory stage, and will be a monumental undertaking. The line will extend west from Kashi in Xinjiang the city farthest in the world from any ocean, through Kyrgyzstan to Uzbekistan.

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## ***Russian Nuclear Deal Held Hostage to Iran Policy***

Although Presidents Bush and Putin initialed an agreement in July 2007, during their Kennebunkport, Maine summit, for U.S.-Russia cooperation in civilian nuclear energy, that agreement has not yet been signed and seems to be under sabotage.

According to a Russian source involved with the negotiations, Washington has decided to hold the “123” cooperation agreement, as it was called, hostage to Russian policy on Iran—thus trying to pressure Russia to support further UN sanctions and other punitive measures for Iran.

For years, former Vice President Al Gore tried, unsuccessfully, to get Russia to

cancel its contract to complete the Bushehr nuclear power plant in Iran. When Bush and Putin initialed their approval of the agreement last July, the Bush Administration said Bushehr would not stand in the way of cooperation. But, apparently, Russian action or inaction against Iran’s uranium enrichment and perhaps other nuclear activities, will now determine whether the civilian nuclear pact is signed.

Congress, meanwhile, which has 90 days from the signing to “dispose” on the agreement, has passed into law the Iran Counter-Proliferation Act, which bars any nuclear cooperation with Russia, as long as Russia has any nuclear agreements with Iran.

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## ***India Wants To Export Small Nuclear Reactors***

For the first time ever, the Indian Atomic Energy Commission chairman, Anil Kakodkar, announced that India is prepared to export small civilian nuclear reactors to other developing nations, if it is allowed to do so by the Indian government and the Nuclear Suppliers Group (which serves as the world non-proliferation police).

“India is capable of making viable commercial nuclear reactors of 220-megawatt and 540-megawatt capacity. Small reactors are the best bet to export,” he told reporters at the Koodankulam Nuclear power plant site near Chennai, Jan. 31, in response to a question on the feasibility of exporting nuclear reactors to countries like Egypt. “Some countries are interested in getting nuclear reactors from India,” he said. Kakodkar said the government, in principle, had allowed the construction of six 1,000-MW light water nuclear reactors at Koodankulam and hinted that the number could be raised to eight to make this site a “Nuclear Park,” if the distance between two reactors were narrowed down.

To another query, he said the nuclear power sector could be opened up to private players. However, as per the existing laws, the government should have a 51% stake in any such project, he said.